

Why do you WoW?

Hannah Reynolds
Scott Reed
Jason Wilson

University of Denver

Intro

Videogames have found their niche as an integral part of many people's lives; everyday, millions of people sit in front of their computers to play massive multiplayer online role-playing games, commonly known as MMORPGs. The average MMORPG player plays online for 22 hours per week (Yee, 2006). World of Warcraft, or WoW as it is commonly referred to, is the most popular MMORPG and boasts an online subscribership of over 11.5 million players per month (Blizzard). But, why do these 11.5 million people take so much time out of their days to sit in front of a computer? What is the pull, the motivation, of a game that has no conceivable end? Certainly something has to be keeping a community of online players half the size of Australia busy. Our study looks directly into this question. According to Nick Yee, asking MMORPG players why they play World of Warcraft reveals a wide variation of motives. Yee also states that a wide diversity of genders, ages, and people with different education levels play MMORPGs. While other studies have researched certain motivations for playing WoW, we plan to further this research and explore both internal and external motivations of a sample of WoW players. We hypothesize that by creating a survey that ranks these motivations for playing, and evaluating how each player's account gets paid for, we can interpret our data to make conclusions on what inspires and keeps people playing MMORPGs.

Method

Our survey was the centerpiece in our study. We created a three-part questionnaire. The first part was focused on defining who was taking our survey with questions that evaluated education level, gender, employment information, and how long and often each participant played WoW. Part A of our survey also included a sub group of our study, which evaluated how the participant paid for his or her WoW account. Part B of our survey was the second category. This section looked into the motivations for playing WoW. We broke our motivations up into internal and external motivations when we interpreted our data. All of our choices but one, entertainment, were obvious when we were deciding on which motivations were internal and which were external. We ended up putting entertainment as an internal motivation because entertainment is different for everyone. For example, some people like to read for entertainment when others like to play WoW.

Motivations from Survey: Internal vs. External

Internal Motivations	External Motivations
Addiction/ Ritual	Time with friends
Stress Relief	Making new friends
Entertainment	Competition
Achievement	Most Popular MMORPG
Escaping Reality	

Table 1: Illustrates which motivating factors we deemed as internal and external from our survey. Our tenth factor was an “Other” category, which did not receive sufficient data to be incorporated into our study.

The ten possible motivations for our survey were each followed by a Likert scale containing the numbers one through five. Above all of the motivations was the phrase “I Play WoW for”. To complete Part B of our questionnaire the participants were asked to respond to each motivation on as to whether they agree or disagree and circle the number corresponding to their feelings. Circling a one indicated a strong disagreement and a five indicated a strong agreement with the other numbers falling somewhere in between. An example would be: “I play WoW for” ... time with friends, if I agreed with this strongly I would circle a 5 where as if I simply agreed I would circle a 3. We decided that a response of a 3 or above on our scale would represent a motivation when a response of a 1 or a 2 would not. Our survey ended with an open response question that looked outside the MMORPG into other activities of our surveys lives. The question asked, “What other activities do you enjoy to participate in? (Give at least 3)”. Once our survey was complete the last step was to add an IRB (Institutional Review Board) statement, which was done for legal reasons, and stated that the survey was done voluntarily. Our survey can be seen in Appendix 1. After this we then distributed our survey to the known WoW players in our community. To receive more responses to our survey from a wider variety of people we also posted our survey online and posted a link to it on the Bizzard forums. We let our survey sit online for a week and in the meantime we collected the surveys that we gave out to the local WoW players. Once this was completed, we imputed our data from the surveys into an Excel spreadsheet. From this spreadsheet we derived our results.

Results

From our data, we were able to make many correlations involving the incentives the public possesses to play World of Warcraft. The data was split up into two main groups: external and internal. These motivations were also broken into subgroups of payment and a Likert scale containing other factors, both defining internal and external motivations.

By separating the reason for motivation into two main groups, we were able to look at the external and internal motivations of payment. We found that the majority of the people who play WoW, play for under 10 hours a week. However, the results of the people who pay for the game personally (internally) are far more diverse. In our studies, 83.4% of the people whose guardians or parents pay (externally) for the World of Warcraft subscription played under 10 hours a week and only 2 people played more than that. The majority, 61.5% of the people who pay personally, played under 10 hours a week as well, but 10 people played more than 10 hours, two of those people playing over 25 hours a week. This shows that more people who personally pay for their WoW subscription play World of Warcraft more often. We found that these people are far more internally motivated to play World of Warcraft than those who do not pay for their own subscription.

Similarly, we found that 54.5% of the people who we surveyed have jobs. Of these people, 82% personally (internally) pay for their WoW subscription. Likewise, of the 45.5% of the people we surveyed who don't have jobs, 68% have their subscription paid by parents or guardians (externally). Therefore, the far

majority of the people who have jobs, whether they are in college, high school, or graduated, pay for their own subscription and the majority of those who don't have jobs, have their WoW subscription paid by someone else.

From our research, we also determined that in general, internal motivations played a higher role in the investment of playing World of Warcraft compared to external motivations. Within the males, entertainment was the leading motivation to play World of Warcraft. This internal motivation had an average score of 4.47 on a five-point scale and a standard deviation of 0.94. Much to our surprise, a primary motivation was not found for the females. While the females' highest motivation, achievement, had a mean of 2.75 and a standard deviation of 1.28, (see Figure 1). We did not consider this an incentive to play World of Warcraft based on our Likert Scale.

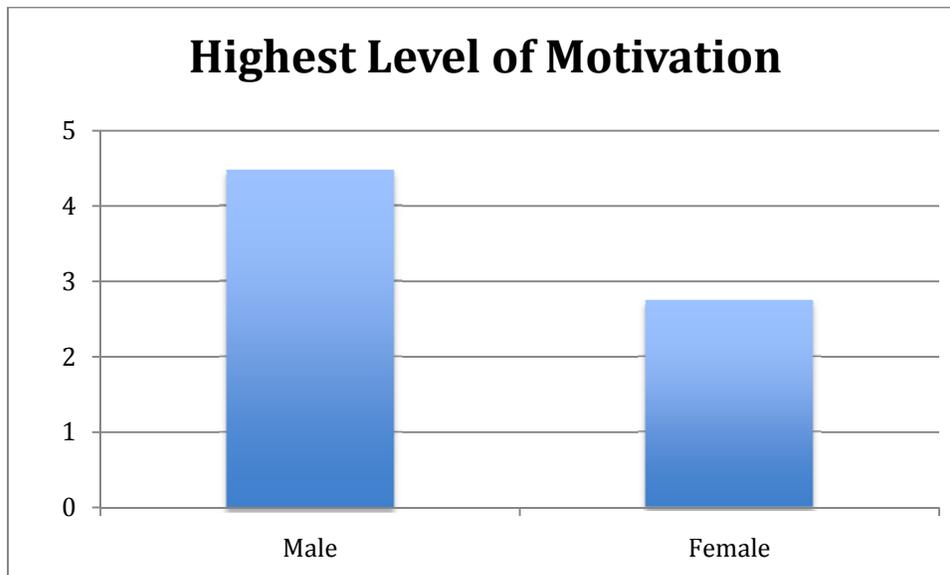


Figure 1: Shows the highest level of motivation comparing men to women.

We also looked at the top enticements to play WoW based on how many years each participant has been playing. In order to do this, we broke our research into four different groups: less than one year, one to two years, two to three years, and since the day it came out four years ago. We found that the highest motivational factor for all of the players, no matter what group, was entertainment.

Entertainment scored a mean of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 1.44 for participants who have only been playing less than one year and a mean of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 1.04 for participants who have been playing for one to two years. We also found that entertainment had a mean of 4.57 and a standard deviation of 0.65 for participants who have been playing for two to three years, and a mean of 4.6 and a standard deviation of 0.55 for those who have been playing since the day it came out four years ago. (See figure 2).

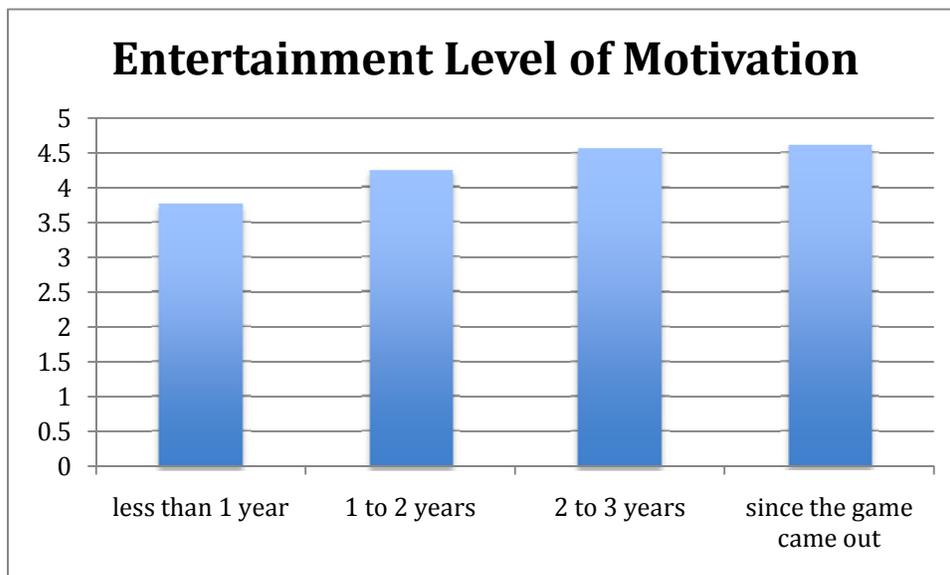


Figure 2: Depicts how much entertainment motivates players, players are divided based on how long they have played WoW.

Because every group's highest motivator was entertainment, we thought it would be interesting to research further into our study and examine the second highest motivator for each group. In doing so, we discovered that for players who have been gaming for less than one year, the second highest motivator was achievement with a mean of 2.82. The second highest motivational factor for players who have been competing for one to two years was stress relief with a mean of 3.5. For the group who has been playing for two to three years, the second highest motivation was also stress relief with a mean of 3.625. Finally, for those who have been playing since the day it came out four years ago, stress relief and because friends play were tied for second highest motivator with a mean of 3.8. (See Figure 3)

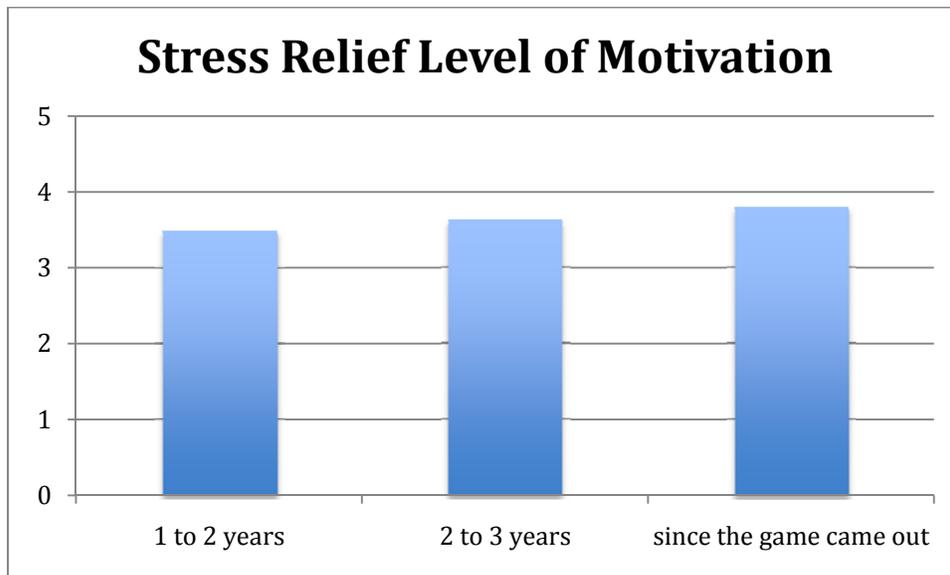


Figure 3: Shows how much stress relief is a motivation for playing WoW, players are divided based off how long they have played the game.

In Conclusion, the far majority was motivated more internally (mean of 2.99) rather than externally (mean of 2.39). (See Figure 4). Internal motivations far exceeded external motivations with 33 out of 44 of our participants being more internally motivated. Only nine participants chose external motivations for why they played the game. Just two were equally motivated internally and externally. Of the nine people who were externally motivated, five played sports.

We took this information and split up each motivator into internal and external motivations. Under the internal motivations, entertainment was the highest enticement with a mean of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 1.11. Following entertainment, the second highest motivation was achievement with a mean of 3.00 and a standard deviation of 1.33. Next was stress relief with a mean of 2.98 and a standard deviation of 1.28. Addiction was fourth with a mean of 2.41 and a standard deviation of 1.31 and finally the motivation to escape reality, with a mean of 2.36 and a standard deviation of 1.35. (See Figure 5)

In comparison, the external motivations were not quite as high. The highest incentive for external motivations was the social aspect of making friends with a mean of 2.77 and a standard deviation of 1.55. The second highest external motivator was competition with a mean of 2.75 and a standard deviation of 1.16 followed by the aspect that World of Warcraft is the most popular MMORPG with a mean of 2.14 and a standard deviation of 1.37. Lastly, making new friends was the lowest level of motivation for all external motivators with a mean of 1.89 and a standard deviation of 1.10. (See Figure 6).

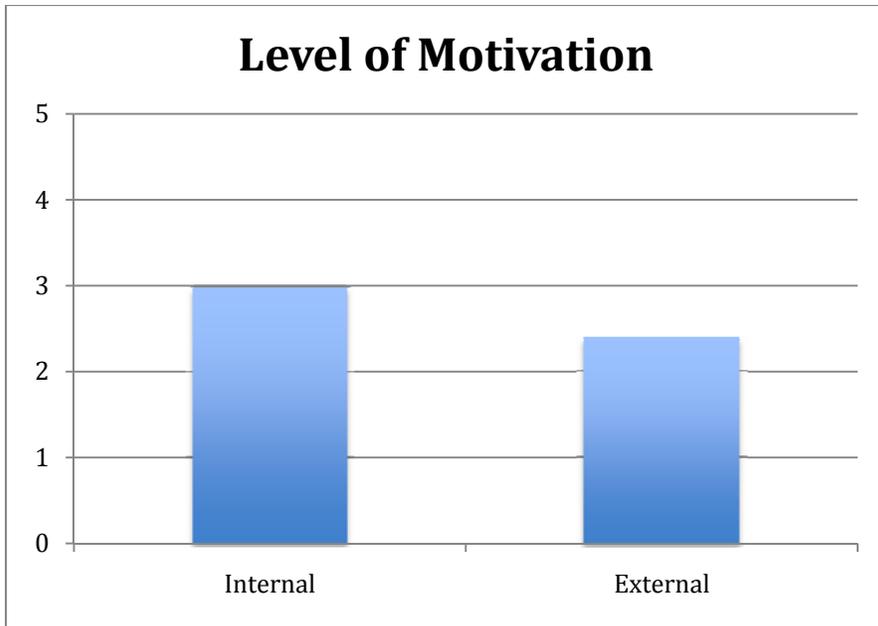


Figure 4: Compares how players are motivated, either internally or externally

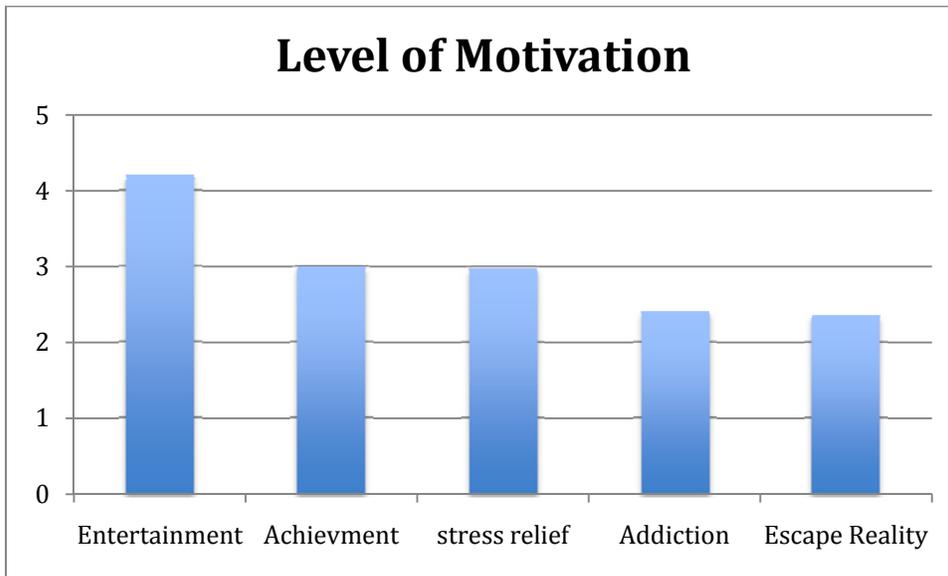


Figure 5: Depicts all of the internal motivation graphed against each other.

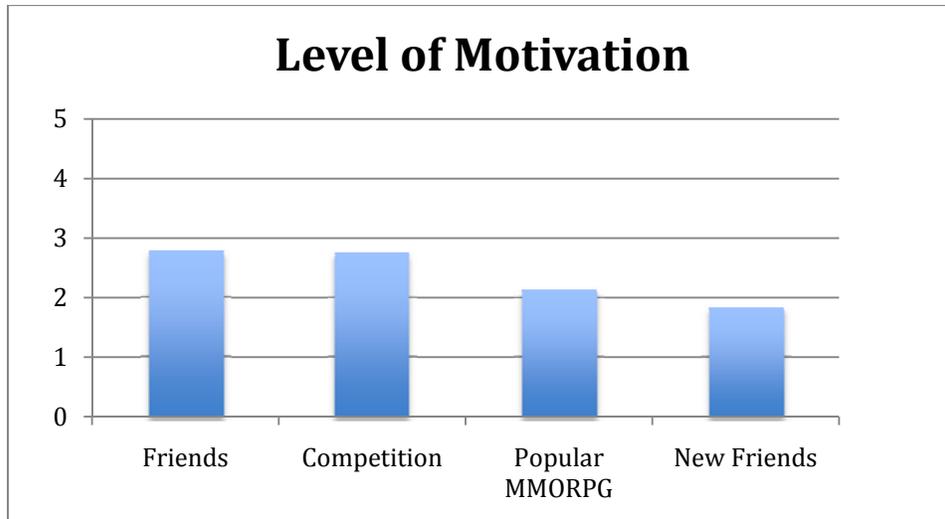


Figure 6: Depicts all external motivations graphed against one another.

Discussion

As shown from our results, everyone who plays WoW plays for their own personal reasons. Whether their motivation is being the best, or making friends while conquering foes, all players are motivated to play in some way or another. Some of the internal motivations we have found are achievement, addiction, entertainment, stress relief, and to escape reality. Whereas the external motivations are time with friends, making new friends, competitive rivalries and simply the fact that WoW is the most popular MMORPG.

We looked at several aspects of our participants of our survey. Some of the characteristics were age, gender, stage in life, employment history and education. Most of our test subjects were males, which we expected when we came up with this project. It was very surprising to us when we found out that woman's highest motivational factor was achievement and seeing that their achievement percentage was higher than that of males, this is something we did not expect when formulating

our hypothesis. The males' highest motivational factor was entertainment with an average score of 4.47. This we found logical seeing as a videogame is a form of entertainment. Another aspect we found quite interesting about entertainment was that the longer people had played, the higher they scored for entertainment. We can infer that the longer people play WoW, the more enthralled they get with the game and thus it becomes more entertaining to them.

We found it is interesting that females chose an internal motivator such as achievement, because the game is a challenge and they want to feel successful. One inference that could be made is that women do not look at the game as a way to make friends because they like to do that in person.

For men the second biggest motivational factor in playing WoW was different based on how long people had been playing for. The people who have played for less than one year gave achievement the second highest rating. The next three groups felt that stress relief was second with a gradual increase just like entertainment. Tied for second place with stress relief, was time with friends for the people who have played since the game came out. This data shows us that the game really does relieve stress and overtime people feel this incentive more and more. Based on our results, the participants also showed that they make good friends while playing and they look forward to playing with these friends as time goes on. We believe that beginning players chose achievement as a leading motivation because they are looking for something unique that they can say they have accomplished. Likewise, stress relief becomes more of a motivation because playing

WoW becomes more of a ritual to players as they begin to feel more comfortable in this alternate world.

Another factor we looked at was whether people were more externally or internally motivated. In our results, we found that the majority of people who are externally motivated play sports. Playing sports is a competitive activity usually played as a team. This is interesting because both of these are external motivators and it appears that the people who are externally motivated seek more motivation in activities with others. We found it is interesting that females chose an internal motivator such as achievement, because the game is a challenge and they want to feel successful. One inference that could be made is that women do not look at the game as a way to make friends because they like to do that in person.

We believe we did not yield much data from part C, the open-ended section, of our survey, because many of our surveyed did not take it seriously. We also did not use the "Other" part of our survey on part B because the information we received was inconclusive. Our survey was taken mostly by a writing class of college students and some forum users on blizzard, who could have cared less about the overall quality of the results. We found the results to be very interesting, with some of the data matching our hypothesis and other parts being a complete surprise.

For further research into this topic it would be wise for researchers to draw data from a more diverse group of World of Warcraft players. Our data came mostly from college students whom comprised around 50% of our sample so we believe it would be wise future researchers to receive their data from a larger population in

order to salvage more accurate results. In addition a larger sample of WoW players would also help uncover better results seeing as our sample was only 44 players. SurveyMonkey.com was a great asset in our data collection and allowed us to create an online survey, which we then posted to the Blizzard forums. Unfortunately, some responses for our survey were not taken seriously. If Blizzard created an online survey feature and integrated it into their webpage, it is likely that more people would take these surveys seriously; especially because the word "Monkey" would not be incorporated into the URL of the page.

In conclusion, the culmination of our data showed that the majority of WoW players in our sample are more internally motivated rather than externally motivated. In addition, we concluded that the amount of time a participant played World of Warcraft had a strong correlation on his or her primary motivation. Therefore, a player's motivation is dynamic, which can be seen in our results.

Appendix 1.

Why do you play World of Warcraft (WoW)?

Part A. Who are you?

Age: _____ Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Are you currently enrolled in school? (Circle one and answer questions accordingly)

A. High school B. College C. Graduated D. Did not go to college

GPA _____ GPA _____

Major _____

Do you have a job? (Circle one) Yes No

How many hours per week do you work? (Circle one)

A. Less than 10 hours B. 10 to 20 hour C. 20 to 30 hours D. More than 30 hours

How does your WoW subscription get paid?(Circle one)

A. Personally B. Parents/Guardians C. Other (specify) _____

How do you renew your WoW subscription?

A. Monthly B. Every three months C. Every 6 months

How long have you played WoW?

- A. Less than one year B. 1-2 years C. 2-3 years D. Since the day it came out 4 years ago
 How often do you play WoW in an average week?
 A. Under 5 hours B 5-10 hours C. 10-15 hours D. 15-20 hours E. 20-25 hours
 F. More than 25 hours

Part B. What motivates you to WoW?

Circle the answers that fit you best. A response of 1 indicates a strong disagreement when a response of 5 represents a strong agreement.

I play WoW for....

Time with friends	1 2 3 4 5	Entertainment	1 2 3 4 5
Making new friends	1 2 3 4 5	Achievement	1 2 3 4 5
Competition	1 2 3 4 5	Escaping reality	1 2 3 4 5
Addiction/ritual	1 2 3 4 5	It's the most popular MMORPG	1 2 3 4 5
Stress Relief	1 2 3 4 5	Other _____	1 2 3 4 5

Part C. What other activities do you enjoy to participate in (Give at least 3)

By completing the following questions, you are also granting consent for this information to be used as part of a research exercise that I am completing for my WRIT1133 class. Your participation is completely voluntary. The information you provide may be used in a class project. While profile information may be included in my essay(i.e. your age, sex, class standing, etc.), your name will NOT be used.

Works Cited.

1. "Media Alert." Blizzard Entertainment. 27 May 2009
 <<http://www.blizzard.com/us/press/081121.html>>.
2. Yee, N. (2007). Motivations of Play in Online Games. *Journal of Cyber Psychology and Behavior*, 9, 772-775