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### Relationship between WOW and leisure time

World of Warcraft (WoW) is an online computer game which has become a prominent part of many players leisure time, worldwide. The massive following of WoW players has lead to many interesting research papers regarding many aspects of the game; from player habits to specific player demographics. This paper will focus specifically on the relationship between WoW and leisure time. Specifically, my research looks at the choices people make when deciding what to do with their leisure time, and whether WoW is a noteworthy factor in that decision.

### Method

To properly find the answers to the questions I desired, this paper had to get past simple one answer quantitative data. For this reason, I found the interview process to be the most effective method to derive the data I was looking for. Plus, qualitative data gave me the ability to ask more in depth questions and ensure that I had a better understanding of why people made the choices they were making. Also, the interview process gave me the opportunity to ensure the participants gave any answer they saw fit, instead of being led into answers as they would be with a multiple choice survey.

As far as interviewee selection was concerned, I interviewed three players in a writing class devoted to WoW at the University of Denver, a private university in Colorado and then two players in the game. While interviewing people in class seemed

more effective because I could read the body language and the tones the players spoke in, both groups provided good data. Both groups were asked the same five base questions. However, I often had to build on these questions in order to get to the “why?”

To make sure that I was interviewing players who had actually been impacted by WoW, I only chose participants who were a level 25 or above. I thought this was a safe number because if I were interviewing players below level 15, it was unlikely that they would have played the game long enough for it to have had an impact on their leisure time.

The amount of time it took to do the in class interviewing was significantly less than the in game interviewing. For every ten people I approached in the game, only one would agree to the interview. In class, the players I interviewed usually only needed about seven minutes to answer all of the questions, while the in game players needed at least fifteen minutes.

#### Research results:

The research was consistent in two ways:

- 1) Almost all players answered the questions similarly.
- 2) All data proved to be completely inconsistent with what I had initially thought about WOW players.

The first thing I had to find out about the participants before I could get anywhere was the amount of leisure time they had available each week. In general, this question was the only one where there was discrepancy between the in class interviewees and the online interviewees. While each of the in class interviewees had at least 35 hours of leisure time available, the online interviewees each said they had about 25 or 30 hours

each per week to play. However, since neither of the groups answers showed a difference on leisure time in the later questions, I was able to conclude that WoW prioritization is generally not played more or less frequently based on available leisure time.

Of the players surveyed, I was very surprised at the types of leisure activities that WoW had replaced in their life. While I expected that most people would have said that WoW replaced other computer games or TV time, the answers truly surprised me and again echoed the diversity among WoW players. Some players said that WoW replaced TV or other computer games. However, other players were quick to say that it had replaced football or basketball and in one case golf. Among the most popular games that were replaced by WoW, Halo was the top answer. The main reason for WoW being preferred over Halo was the style of the game and that there were more aspects and objectives in WoW.

As I said before, the main objective of this research was to get to the “why?” How has this game been able to attract the minds and lives of so many people? As a relatively new player of WoW, the best understanding I could come to beforehand was that WoW players got so caught up in the growth and development of their character that they became attached to it. I would refer to this as the “Tamagochi” effect-thinking that the character was almost like your child. Surprisingly, not one single player agreed with me, confirming yet again that I am completely out of touch with the culture of WoW.

The interviews I conducted showed that most of the players were very attracted to the online contact with friends. This feature of the games attraction was expressed numerous times among the students which I interviewed in class. The online people I

interviewed also agreed that it was nice to be able to stay in touch with friends but also acknowledged the fact that they have several friends that they have met online.

The second main reason players gave for their attraction to WoW was the different types of dimensions to the game. As one online player said, “there is something in WoW for everybody.” In simple terms, most people agreed that the majority of video games are one dimensional, they are either about killing or quests or character growth. WoW is attractive to them because it is all of these things, and there is so much to do.

Lastly, I wanted to understand if the amount of leisure time dedicated to WoW depended on when that leisure time was available (i.e. weekends, nights, rainy days, etc.). Again, as a “newbie” I expected that most people would prefer WoW when the opportunity to do more outside of the house was unavailable. Again, I was wrong.

From the interviews I conducted, not one person suggested that WoW was more likely to be played during certain time periods. The general consensus among the players was that WoW is almost like TV and that you turn it on when you have a minute or an hour, it didn't really matter.

As far as the effect that weather might have on WoW playing, there was none. Players acknowledged that a nice, sunny day's plans could not be dropped for WoW. But, interviewees were quick to point out that one of the best things about WoW was that it was always fun. In other words, they would rather play WoW on a nice sunny day or a weekend then go out and look for fun.

#### Implications

- 1) WoW players have not replaced WoW with another specific leisure activity.

Before starting my research I was pretty convinced that WoW had become a heavily enjoyed leisure activity among people who previously enjoyed other similar leisure activities (fantasy computer and gaming system games). This was not the case as the people I interviewed stated that WoW was a leisure time activity which they were now playing instead of football, basketball or watching television. The reason for this became clearer as I had a better understanding of implication number two.

2) The reason so many people have become and continue to be WoW players can not be understood with one simple answer.

Building on implication number 1, my research has shown that WoW players love the game for a various number of reasons. The reason that caught me the most off guard was that people enjoyed playing WoW because it allowed them to stay in touch with their friends. Part of the reason I was unable to understand this before beginning the research was that this is not a part of the game that I had become exposed to yet. The ability to stay in touch with friends was incredibly common among college students. I believe the reason for this was that a lot of the students liked the fact that they still felt they were doing things with their friends despite the fact that they were so far away from each other. Also, with WoW being a MMORPG there is always the opportunity to meet friends online.

3) WoW playing is not affected by time, weather or date.

I expected that my research would show that WoW players were more likely to play the game in similar situations to that of when a person would enjoy television. I was surprised to learn that not one interviewee agreed. All interviewees stated that they had no preference time for playing WoW because it was just as enjoyable on a sunny day as a

rainy one. As I briefly hinted in my research, it seems that WoW players believe their game is a priority and not a substitute. What I mean by this is that certain activities such as television and other computer games are generally only played when bored. Wow is so popular because it is something that can be enjoyed no matter what the situation is. For this reason players will enjoy it whether it is a Friday night or a sunny day in July.

4) WoW is played by people with all types of leisure time available to them.

Whether players had 20 hours or 60 hours of time available to them in a week, the results were much the same. People did not rate WoW any higher on their priority list based on what time period they had available. Again, this supports my initial conclusion that WoW will be enjoyed regardless of time, date or weather because of its priority among other leisure activities. This belief holds consistent in its relation to available leisure hours per week.

#### Limitations and Future research:

The main limitation in this project was the interview process. It was very tough for me to interview people online for two reasons:

- 1) I had nothing to offer the players in exchange for their time.
- 2) Most people are pretty unsure of doing an online interview with a person whom they do not know.

I found it incredibly difficult to even get the attention of a lot of players in the game, when I did, very few were willing to listen. In the future, researchers should have something on hand to offer the players in exchange for their time such as gold, weapons or something along those lines. Also, researchers should not start off the interview with an in depth question. I found it much easier to get solid answers from people when they

weren't as on guard about trusting you. Lastly, when future researchers are trying to conduct in game interviews, it would be much easier to do it if you were using the chat log save function because it allows you to save your dialog with the player. The first couple of online interviews I tried were very difficult because I had to write things down by hand on paper while I interviewed, often people became tired of waiting for me and just left. With all of this in consideration I think future research could be done that builds on mine based on the following.

- 1) Frequency of playtime between people who use WoW as a means to stay in touch with friends and those who do not.

- 2) Some type of research regarding the number of players who have met friends online.