Embodiment of User Generated Content in Electronic Game: A Case Study of the Party Game *Eggy Party*

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INTRODUCTION

This research explores the contemporary role of electronic games as a primary form of entertainment and a cultural vehicle with diverse societal implications. The study focuses on the intricate relationship between players and the game, emphasizing the concept of 'embodiment' to deconstruct phenomena and relationships. Using *Eggy Party* as a case study[1], the research explores the unique utilization of User-Generated Content (UGC) and its impact on gameplay and player's embodied experiences, through interactivity, and agency.

The concept of embodiment has been used in game studies in recent years, which refers to the media's capacity to make itself transparent through its content, is utilized to deconstruct intricate phenomena and relationships. The study of Embodiment begins with an inquiry into the meaning of the body. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2001), Don Ihde (2001) and Hubert Dreyfus (1996) have analyzed the meaning of the body from the perspective of philosophy, which revealed that the body is not merely the flesh but also includes human consciousness, personal experiences, and the immediate or long-term effects of social, cultural, and technological factors.

Recent research on embodiment and the body in game study can generally be categorized into two types: The first focuses on the body itself, addressing its presence and absence in games, as well as gaining embodied

[1] The core gameplay is based on survival competition, social interaction development and park map creation and exploration. This research focuses on its unique park map gameplay facilitated by a built-in UGC map editor.

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experience through various new technologies. The second type concentrates on technology, exploring the fusion of body and technology, and the withdrawal and invisibility of technology in gaming experiences. This study focuses on analyzing how social experiences and consciousness are created and disseminated through the reproduction of the body in gaming, analyzing the collective performance and interaction of players as both designers and players within games. The embodiment will be interpreted on two levels: the self-expression of the player who creates (map-making player) and the gaming experience of the player who interprets or navigates (map-reading player).

The study places embodied experiences within the UGC model for discussion, while also investigating the specific impacts of the UGC model on embodied experiences. In Eggy Party, players can autonomously create maps in the Eggy Workshop using the game's built-in UGC map editor. Based on the operational principles and characteristics of the editor, the map creation process is an interactive behavior within a three-dimensional (3D) virtual space. Drawing on Norman's (1986) "Seven Stages of Action" model for human-computer interaction, scholars in the field of interaction design suggest that interactive behaviors in 3D spaces can be categorized into four types: navigation, selection, manipulation, and system control (Hou et al. 2007). This research disassembles the function of the map editor according to the type of interactive behavior implementation, so as to better investigate the behavior and relationship of players. The investigation unfolds in two dimensions: first, UGC as a platform for players to capture and express their embodied experiences, particularly through map editing; second, UGC fostering inter-player interactions by providing equal access to personalized content. Interactivity and agency emerge as critical lenses to understand the dynamics of player relationships with the game and with each other.

The concept of "agency," drawn from Murray (1997) and Mateas (2009), is employed to explore the balance between player freedom and game constraints. Agency shapes *Eggy Party* players' gaming experience from two levels: the capacity of map editing, and player's interaction with the game. The study adopts procedural rhetoric, as defined by Bogost (2008), to analyse how games, through their design and mechanics, convey arguments and shape player beliefs. This approach is expanded by Sicart (2011) and Šisler (2017), emphasizing player engagement and the interactive dynamic between games and players in shaping discourse, particularly on complex sociocultural topics.

A total of 15 fan-made maps in *Eggy Party* have been chosen to scrutinize various players' video recordings of their experiences. The selected analytical subjects are categorized into three types based on the interaction characteristics between the map creators and "readers". Firstly, Designer-Centric maps typically feature linear narratives where player actions determine the map's completeness. Secondly, Hybrid-Centric maps, often devoid of storylines, serve a basic function (observation), offering players route and observation choices without design-imposed constraints. Thirdly, Player-Centric maps, lacking narratives but themed, allow players limited action choice and self-narration without impacting map experience completeness. Within these three categories, the player's gaming experience, comments, and interaction with the map designer imply that through the

eyes and steps of eggy, and the player's control, the player is not merely playing, but actively involved in the experience. In addition, the absence of competition in particular fan-made maps enables players to give priority to the map's experience and expression over the game.

To comprehensively analyse player's embodied experience with UGC, this research employs Fairclough's three-stages model (1989, 1995) of critical discourse analysis: description, interpretation, and explanation. It treats map creation and interpretation in UGC as texts for analysis. At the micro-level, map creation by players is analyzed as text description. The meso-level examines other players' experiences and interpretations of these maps, while the macro-level explores the broader socio-cultural implications, including self-expression, power dynamics, and cultural narratives. This method provides a comprehensive understanding of games as societal discourse forms.

This is still an ongoing research, but it aims to fill a gap in micro-level discussions about embodied experiences in electronic games, focusing on the interplay between UGC and embodiment in Eggy Party. The findings and discussions will be detailed in subsequent stages, with the goal of applying this research to the game industry. Examining the UGC model from an embodied viewpoint holds the potential to introduce innovative considerations for electronic gaming platforms, players, developers, enterprises, and other stakeholders.

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