The Application of Three Basic Psychological Needs of Self-Determination Theory in "Destiny II"

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Abstract: After learning about Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a psychological theory that emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in human motivation and well-being, and having been exposed to "Destiny II" as a product more than anything else. This paper explores the embodiment of SDT in "Destiny II" through a case study approach and how the game design promotes player motivation and engagement by providing opportunities to meet basic human needs. This paper finds that the game offers players a high degree of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which contributes to an immersive, engaging, and motivating gaming experience.

Keywords: Self-Determination Theory, competence, autonomy, relatedness, Destiny II

1. Introduction

Although there are few papers related to self-determination theory (SDT) and games in the past research, the case analysis of "Destiny II" is still blank. Due to the lack of this part, the author fills in the blank in this aspect. This paper specifically discusses the application of self-determination theory in a specific case like "Destiny II". This paper mainly conducts research through the method of case analysis combined with literature analysis. The research in this thesis will help game companies to make better changes, make players' experiences better, and theoretically make some of the game's designs more reasonable.

2. Three Basic Psychological Needs in Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a macro-theory of human motivation and personality [1]. It was first proposed by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in the 1980s. SDT posits that human beings have three innate and universal psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which are essential for optimal human functioning, growth, and well-being. The theory explains how these needs interact with intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and a motivation to shape human behavior and development across different contexts and domains, such as education, work, health, and relationships. SDT has been applied to various fields, including education, healthcare, counseling, sports, and parenting, to inform practices and interventions aimed at promoting human thriving and reducing human suffering.

2.1. Competence

Competence refers to the perception of one's ability to master a skill, achieve a goal, or solve a problem. Competence fosters a sense of self-efficacy and mastery, which in turn promotes motivation, engagement, and well-being. On the other hand, the lack of competence or perceived incompetence can lead to feelings of helplessness, frustration, and low self-esteem.

2.2. Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the sense of volition and self-endorsement that accompanies a behavior. Autonomy fosters a sense of personal agency and responsibility, which in turn promotes intrinsic motivation, creativity, and psychological health. The lack of autonomy or perceived control can lead to feelings of anxiety, resentment, and disengagement.

2.3. Relatedness

Relatedness refers to the sense of belongingness and connectedness that accompanies social interactions. Relatedness fosters a sense of social support, validation, and meaning, which in turn promotes motivation, engagement, and psychological health. The lack of relatedness or perceived isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness, alienation, and depression.

3. The Application of Three Basic Psychological Needs of Self-Determination Theory in "Destiny II"

3.1. Competence in "Destiny II"

Competence, the need to feel effective and in control in one's environment, is an important component of SDT. In "Destiny II", competence is evident in several ways. Firstly, the game provides a variety of challenges such as puzzles, high-level bosses, and complex mission objectives that require players to develop specific skills and tactics. The rewards for completing these challenges provide a sense of accomplishment and validation, thus contributing to the players' sense of competence and achievement [2].

Secondly, SDT states that relevant feedback is essential to build and strengthen competence. In "Destiny II", feedback is given in a variety of forms, including experience points, item drops, or rankings in competitive modes. Timely and relevant feedback helps players assess their performance, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and adjust their strategies accordingly. This feedback, combined with the rewards mentioned above, reinforces the player's competence and motivation.

Video games that provide relevant feedback and challenging game mechanics can empower players and increase their motivation to play. The study found that games that support a player's sense of competence and progression are significantly associated with a player's sense of fun and immersion, which is positively correlated with continued gameplay time.

Thirdly, SDT suggests that learning opportunities are important for building competence. In "Destiny II", players can acquire new weapons, armor, and abilities to improve their performance. This enables players to experiment with different loadouts, builds and playstyles, leading to a sense of exploration and mastery as they develop their characters. By providing opportunities for players to learn, experiment and develop their gameplay, "Destiny II" encourages a sense of competence and confidence in players, which in turn reinforces their motivation to continue playing the game.

3.2. Autonomy in "Destiny II"

Autonomy refers to the human tendency to want control over one's life or to have some form of agency [3-4]. In"Destiny II", the game design encourages player autonomy in several ways. First, players are free to choose which activities they want to participate in and how they want to approach them. The game features a variety of game modes, game events, and character customization options that allow players to tailor their gaming experience to suit their tastes and playstyles, offering a strong sense of player choice and control.

Second, SDT suggests that clarifying goals and expectations is important for building autonomy. In "Destiny II", players have clear goals, objectives, and rewards that help them understand what they are doing and why they are doing it. This clarity encourages player autonomy, allowing you to make informed choices about how to approach missions and objectives based on your preferences and playstyle.

Third, player autonomy is another important aspect of autonomy in SDT. "Destiny II" players are free to make choices that affect the game's story, gameplay experience, and social interactions. The game's story missions offer branching paths that can lead to different outcomes. Also, social interactions between players can lead to the formation of clans and communities that can influence how players experience and play the game. This sense of player agency gives players more control over their gaming experience, which contributes to motivation and engagement.

3.3. Relatedness in "Destiny II"

Relatedness, the human need for social connection and love is also an integral part of SDT [5]. In "Destiny II", connectedness is demonstrated in a number of ways. First, the game provides opportunities for players to socialize and bond with other players. The game's clan system allows players to create and join social groups where they can communicate, strategize, and participate in joint activities. This social environment fosters bonding and a sense of belonging among clan members, increasing their in-game engagement [6].

Second, the game's multiplayer modes also encourage social interaction and collaboration. Players can band together in groups to tackle raids, strikes, and other missions and help each other achieve their goals. These multiplayer experiences encourage communication, collaboration, and bonding between players, fostering a sense of connection and investment in the game.

Finally, the game features various holidays and seasonal events throughout the year that facilitate social connections between players. These events often offer unique content, rewards, and challenges that foster a sense of community and togetherness among players.

4. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the Application of three basic psychological needs of Self-Determination Theory in "Destiny II". In summary, "Destiny II" successfully incorporates elements of SDT, supporting players' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The game provides players with challenging gameplay, relevant feedback, and learning opportunities, promoting a sense of competence and mastery. The game design also encourages player autonomy by providing clear goals, expectations, and opportunities for player choice and agency. Lastly, the game provides multiple opportunities for social connection and interaction, facilitating players' need for relatedness and community building. In combining these elements, "Destiny II" creates a highly immersive, engaging, and motivating experience for players. There is much room for improvement in this paper. Some research advances could be added to introduce the basic theory of SDT to enhance the readability of the article. At the same time, more case studies on the game design of "Destiny II"

could be added to illustrate more specifically how to apply the basic psychological needs of SDT. There are many aspects of future research that can be explored, such as the application of self-determination theory in more game genres. The application of other psychological theories in game design can also be studied. Besides self-determination theory, there are other psychological theories that can be applied to game design, such as cognitive flow theory and affective design. Future research can explore the application of these theories in game design and study how to combine them with self-determination theory to achieve better game design results. It also includes exploring the relationship between game design and player behavior.

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