IGNIS

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Abstract

The process of research and development, which DRACO IGNIS structured to reach the plug-in based high fidelity prototype named "IGNIS", will be shown at the redaction of this paper. The purpose behind the creation of "IGNIS" was to find solutions that could decrease at a considerable percentage the number of antisocial, also known as "toxic", interactions around multiplayer video games and online communities.

Throughout the past 4 months, work was based on user-centered design methodology which consists of working with a context, the pains and goals, solutions and evaluations focused entirely on the user. This can be summarized in the following path we took: pointing out the main causes of antisocial interactions and personalities around gaming communities, getting to know the user and their environment through secondary research and approaching them through design methodologies, interacting with professionals and experts on topics of user and community interactions, finding out the best ways to solve the problem, proposing user-based design principles and complementing it with theories inside and outside of the career realm that may solve their frustrations, and finally, reviewing different stages of the prototype, from concept testing to user testing.

As of now, IGNIS is a high fidelity prototype that interacts with teen gamers in their favorite online video games, with the main goal of giving an accompaniment for new or recently arrived young gamers who are barely interacting with online communities. IGNIS keeps disruptive and negative interactions out of daily gaming sessions by teaching through the promotion of self reflection and motivating users to keep the healthy and respectful ways of communicating with others.

Keywords

harassment, toxic, antisocial, conducts, video games, insights, design, prototype, accompaniment, teenager, teen, safe interactions, online, game communities, education, multiplayer .

1.   Introduction

Since the start of COVID-19 pandemic, most of the outdoor activities that human beings were accustomed to doing were temporarily paused, or in some cases, they adjusted and evolved to function from the safety of each person's home. This lockdown promoted the diffusion of other indoor activities, one of them being the interaction with digital devices which gave people around the world the opportunity to be entertained but most importantly, in constant socialization through hard times. The reason why online environments were so valuable was how easy and practical it was to connect, share and enjoy content together, without anyone having to risk their wellbeing. That being said, videogames were an outlet of fulfillment for both social and leisure needs, and the role that it played became very evident from very early on.

This global event unintentionally stimulated the rise of online gaming audiences, and as a result, the number of people interacting with each other inside of these video game ecosystems. As a whole, interactions between users were predominantly satisfactory, gaming and the need to socialize motivated users to create and build up large amounts of communities, but as its known, the growth of gaming as a crucial space for social experience also included plenty of "bad" interactions, which are referred to as the antisocial activities or behaviors that users carry out on others of their same community, it is no surprise that the stress generated during lockdown exponentiated these practices.

Disruptive interactions are caused and continue to exist for several reasons, such as cultural stigmatization, lack of parent/educator involvement, high costs on human involved moderation, gamer stereotypes, wrongful interpretation of competitiveness, but most importantly and generally speaking, lack of education, just as *Raising Good Gamers* (an organization focused on healthy interactions in gaming communities) show on their *shared agenda against antisocial and disruptive behaviors.*

2.   Justification

The relevance of looking into this problem is based on the importance of developing social and cognitive skills to improve the personal formation of a person in their early teenage years.

The user that decides to develop these characteristics by playing and interacting on online games should make it under the basic rules of coexistence that other activities, such as physical activities, use to promote healthy interactions and prevail full development of these abilities that every human being requires.

3.   Teen gamers interacting in online video games

Through a survey hosted on Google Forms in which 17 gamers answered questions about their game communities and experiences, it was decided that working with teens would be the best option. Despite there being multiple age ranges that the investigation could be based on, it was discovered that it is way better to work with early arrived gamers that have not yet developed nor a positive or an antisocial profile yet.

Gamers at this stage are interested in being part of a community, in creating an identity and being recognized by the members of the same community. Sometimes the involvement

of an adult (like father, mother, tutors, educators, etc.) isn't enough to completely know where or how the user is growing up on these communication outlets and even less when teens tend to navigate autonomously on digital devices and online communities.

Discovering new online interaction mediums may expose users to many antisocial or negative experiences without any accompaniment that could support or give him/her the resources to learn what to do. At this point the user is unable to reach the spaces where they can develop social and cognitive abilities that are fundamental to have a complete personal formation in healthy environments.

4. Research methodologies

After breaking the ice with the survey and a fair amount of secondary research, we decided to take our first steps into primary research by working with research methodologies.

A method is a structured procedure for reaching a certain goal.

To know more about users' lives, frustrations and thoughts, a brief examination was done through a couple research methodology processes and eventually, some were chosen based on the ones considered the most suitable for approaching the user. These methodologies were retrieved from the *Universal Methods Of Design* book

Graffiti Wall and Directed Storytelling

1. Graffiti Wall//Directed Storytelling, Alexis.

This first approach with the user was face-to-face with both users.

Thinking about the users' interests, it was decided to apply research methods that may catch their attention. The Graffiti Wall gave the opportunity to visualize the experience of the users with their nearest social circles. Alexis and Eduardo, teen gamers from México, were asked to answer with drawings or sentences to questions based on how other users, parents, educators and friends interact with them and who was the quality of those interactions.

Along this activity "Directed Storytelling" was utilized to deepen on some answers they gave us, like their thoughts, feelings and answers in view of antisocial encounters and imaginary situations where they had to make decisions.

Notes from approachment:

- Playing with friends of the same age makes gaming sessions more bearable as there is good communication and trust within it, which improves their gaming experience.

- There is no supervision and accompaniment by an adult when playing, in most cases it is uncomfortable for the user to be watched by an adult while playing with other users.

Users interview

2. Discord call with Jared, User

For this session, it was decided to use Discord, a social network for gamers, to schedule the interview with Jared, mexican teen gamer who had suffered and replied to negative experiences with antisocial gamers.

The reason for making an interview was to take some answers of the user and redirect the talk to know more about his reasons to broach antisocial situations in the way he did.

Notes from approachment:

When there is any doubt about online video games and their interaction in them, they

always turn to their friends for more information.

- He usually releases his daily pressures by playing video games, but the presence of antisocial gamers and interaction with them causes Jared to replicate these behaviors or leave this activity for the rest of the day.

- Being recognized by video games for being an exemplary player motivates him to maintain good behavior.

- Also, he mentioned that being recognized for being a "toxic" player makes him uncomfortable when his social circle stops including him.

Experts interview

Having known some of the disruptive situations where the users feel powerless, the next step was to discuss these moments with experts on the subject.

The first expert that was reached to interview was Engineer Frida Karina López Marín, who worked on projects that lead to improving competitive gaming communities by linking them with educational values, one of those projects was "Esports for education".

Through a deep interview, the next statements were highlighted:

-Working with values promotes education, learning and personal development in younger audiences.

-There is autonomy in teen's behavior when discovering and exploring digital media.

-Lack of positive dissemination of video games through digital media as well as lack of involvement by tutors and educators through supervision and interest.

After this approach, there was an interview session with Mónica Lorena Palafox Guarnero, child psychologist. In this interview the discussion was centered around the interests of teens at their growing stage, also, the main rules of approach to generate moments of reflection for them.

Notes from approachment:

-Adolescents turn to their peers since they usually understand the complexity of the problem or importance to the same degree that the user perceives them.

-Adolescents are distinguished by seeking to belong and part of the process is to be recognized for their contribution. (Socialize)

-They replicate attitudes and actions of older players who usually live with them since they can perceive them as authoritative figures within gaming communities.

-It is important to encourage reflection and avoid criticism at all costs in order to develop user awareness.

5.   Design principles

At this moment of prototyping development the main insights and design principles were about to be exposed. After categorizing the results from research, some evident discoveries were pointed out to start the proposal:

1. *(Insight)* Teenagers prefer to turn to their friends over any other authority figure when they need to learn how to interact, as they perceive them as their equals. However, the lack of experience on both sides leads to a chain of misinformation that ends in misunderstanding and misuse of online interactions.

The *design principles* that may attend these insights are that the prototype should: **feel like a friend, it must keep the user aware of the quality of their interactions, and it must have a pleasant presence without being intrusive.**

2. *(Insight)* Pointing out achievements and good behavior gives recognition to adolescents, thus generating or increasing a sense of belonging, which leads to the commitment and motivation they acquire with and for online games and their community.

The *design principles* that may attend these insights are that the prototype should: **celebrate small and big achievements, it must make the user feel part of the community, it must promote a healthy coexistence and it must not encourage individualism or an erroneous concept of competitiveness.**

3. *(Insight)* The lack of empathy and recognition by online video games causes detachment from their actions in-game in adolescents and inhibits reflection, therefore, there is no in-depth analysis that leads adolescents to question the decisions they make and their consequences in order to correct or maintain them.

The *design principles* that may attend these insights are that the prototype should: **feel like someone who understands you, someone who motivates reflection, who is attentive to your well-being and who does not use punishment or sanctions as a way of learning.**

4. *(Insight)* Toxicity is not a natural characteristic of the gamer. Video games are used (consciously and unconsciously) as a "sanctuary" for momentary escape from problems and situations external to online video games, however, the antisocial interactions of other players empower the user to replicate these attitudes in response to the tension and accumulated stress.

The *design principles* that may attend these insights are that the prototype should: **receive the user in such a way that they feel comfortable, make the user aware of the decisions they make, should minimize the feeling of defeat and emotions that derive from it.**

6.   Design proposal

In this section are registered the steps taken after the insights and principles. At this point, all the information collected is used to pose some situations where the user seems to be in the problem to exemplify and point out the exact actions to take into account to develop the prototype.

6.1 User

As a first step in the design process and based on the information gathered, a goal user was created, a representation of what a common teenager using IGNIS would look like .This user was designed based on a teenager who is highly active on online video games but poorly accompanied by their parents, he is a good gamer that keeps fair and healthy interactions. This is important to simulate certain situations in which the prototype could interact with the user. The user is continuously receiving harassment and insults when playing, this toxicity is unjustified and he just tends to ignore it but as time goes on he seems it slowly starts to become a heavier burden unknowingly.

6.2 Journey Map

A journey map is a day in the user's life, the main purpose of this activity is to set different situations in which the user may come across the problem and how they interact with it.

In this case, the user's day is like any other, until he gets annoyed by antisocial actions, but this time he cannot tolerate this disruption. He could replicate the same toxic actions to defend himself but here is where the prototype induces the user to reflect and decrease the "annoyed" feeling and max out the victory moment. That's why a journey map is important, to point out the high and low moments of the user and important opportunity moments where IGNIS could get involved.

6.3 Flow chart

Once the crucial moments were identified from the journey map, a flow chart was designed.

The flow chart is a diagram of the sequence of actions involved in a complex system or activity, usually used as a step-by-step approach to solving a task.

The design of this flow chart is based on "Valorant", one of the most played online games and also one of the most toxic.

6.4 Dialogue development

Along with the Flow chart there was a work managing texts that could empathize and feel friendly to the user, also depending on the situations and the emotions desired to be provoked on the user, as it was stated, decrease the sense of defeat and max out the feeling of victory.

On the moments of justified approach before antisocial actions of the user, it became highly helpful remembering the interview with Mónica where she had explained how to make these approaches.

6.5 Low fidelity prototype

The development of the first version of the prototype was established as an app apart from the video games with a forceful registration to play. At this point, the team wasn't confident in the way the insights were connected with the prototype idea but it was a good start to see what worked and what didn't. The goal was to create an all-in-one social ID app for gamers that contained earned achievements, friends, reputation levels, played games and some of the most memorable multimedia material that represents the user as a great player, allowing the interaction between all gamers.

6.6 Medium fidelity prototype

Medium fidelity required to reformulate the base media where the prototype could be shown. Considering the moments where the prototype was supposed to act it was tedious

to change between windows to have access to the app. Taking this into account the base media was changed to a plug-in that could operate on the second plane when the user is playing.

At this level of prototyping it was decided to include a visual accompaniment that could make an act of presence when it is required. The Reddit mascot was a great example to visualize the presence of the accompaniment while ours was being created.

Concept testing with users turned out positive, letting the team know that customization was a need for teens and also that a gaming buddy AI was a very pleasant idea. The project was heading in the right direction.

6.7 IGNIS, high fidelity prototype

IGNIS is an accompaniment system presented as an active plug-in while the gamer enters his preferred online video games. This system consists of two main elements, which are:

1.- A social interface: which has the specific objective of motivating the social development that the user can reach with his circle of friends from all the platforms that exist for online video games. The navigation suggests a quick system of inviting or searching for friends to encourage moments of social gathering.

In this interface, the results of the reputation system will also be displayed, which will be actively working to award points to players with healthy interactions that improve the game experience for the community, while it will take away points from players who promote toxic interactions that impede the social and cognitive development of the user.

Using the reputation system, the player is offered the possibility of configuring the prototype to block text messages, voice messages and/or invitations from other players that have a low reputation level and that could very possibly damage the integrity of the user.

2.- Empathic accompaniment: Ignis will live within the online games that the user plays. This accompaniment will initiate from the start of the game and will accompany you through your interaction with the platform to, from the first interaction, give you a tour of the social interface. Its main objective is to get closer to the player by being a friend who celebrates achievements and victories in a big euphoria but minimizes defeats, always looking for the user's motivation, promoting social interaction and pointing out the cognitive development that the player acquires when reasoning and acting. better during gaming sessions. The accompaniment will also seek constant reflection through the approach and empathy that his presence and personality can give at the opportune moments for the player in case he is reported or commits antisocial actions that mean a setback on the path to a healthy community . The accompaniment will also advise and remind the user to communicate and interact with respect for everyone, so they are aware of the actions they are taking when interacting with other players.

7. Special mentions

Draco Ignis would like to appreciate the users and experts that shared their time talking and discussing their personal pains and their knowledge with us.

Likewise, mentioning our appreciation for the accompaniment and guidance of our project adviser Arturo García Muñóz and the general project advisers Manuel Siordia Aquino and Roberto Razo Rodríguez. Also important to express gratitude to suggestions that all our project classmates shared.

And last but not least, a special recognition goes out to all the families and friends who accompanied the team through all adversities giving out support and confidence when it was most needed.

This project is a love letter dedicated to the great moments video games and its community gave us ever since we were kids, the memories it also left on our parents when they were young and the ones it will leave on to the upcoming youth generations.

8. Conclusion

Through the process of research and prototyping the team discovered that the main problems of interaction, in and out of video games, is the base education given, independently of the cultural beliefs. Tolerance and respect are base values that every human being has to recognize to keep a good communication and coexistence line.

Even though freedom of expression is valid there's no justification to disparage others.

Readers of this paper are invited to make consciousness about the dignity everyone deserves and to stop normalizing antisocial profiles as well as taking the possible measures to decrease the number of socially disruptive interactions, promoting communication and understanding with fundamental values such as respect and friendship.

Finishing off, it is also worth mentioning the team's individual growth as designers throughout the project, which has been a gateway to becoming prosumers of the gaming community, as well as going out of any and most comfort zones , growing a vast amount of expertise in tools and sources personally known and used before, but also skillful in those never explored prior to the start of this project.

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