

Immersive Stories: How Agency, Aesthetic and Perspective Effect Player Experience

Fenn Merlin Ingram

(1806379)

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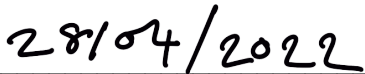
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INTRODUCTION

Immersion is a powerful tool for use in many media from film and TV to TV books and on to video games. Cheng, She and Annetta [1] found that players who felt immersed in the game they were playing, played better and were more successful because of it. There are many important traits to consider when creating a game, and perhaps the most important is the immersive effects it will have on its players.

Immersion is such an intangible and immeasurable quality that it becomes hard to define categorically. This creates various definitions to consider. Crawford says that Immersion “is an attribute of 3D graphics environments, which immerse the user in a visually complete and consistent space” [2]. Meaning, that the key to immersion lies in the game world itself. In contrast, Novak says that for a player to feel immersed in a game “it is necessary to make the player feel as much a part of the game story” [3]. This places a large importance on the game’s narrative.

But can video game immersion be as simple as either of these descriptions? Adams claims that there are multiple kinds of immersions within games. He speaks of Tactical, Strategic and Narrative immersions. Tactical immersion involves the player achieving a state of playing on impulse, this occurs in games with high-speed action that the brain reacts to without needing to think about this action before inputting the control. Strategic immersion, Adams describes as becoming totally absorbed in winning. And finally, Narrative immersion is “the feeling of being inside in a story, completely involved and accepting the world and events of the story as real. It is

the same immersion as that produced by a good book or movie, but in video games, the player is also an actor within the story.” [4]

This suggests that narrative immersion in a video game story creates a more profound sense of immersion than the same kind of immersion in stories presented in other forms of media, and that a large part of a successfully immersive story rests on the quality of its writing [5].

There are many different ways immersion can be created in games, from its sound design through narrative structure to the layout of the game and the presence or lack of a User Interface. This report aims, through critical reflection, to create a guide for creating a game with the highest immersive qualities pertaining to a game’s narrative by looking at several criteria across three sections. The first section will look at Player Agency, the second will look at Art Style and the third will look at Camera Perspective. The findings within these sections will be used to answer the following questions:

- Does complete freedom and control over the appearance and actions of the player’s Avatar increase immersion into the game’s storyline?
- Does the realism of the game world’s art style impact the player’s immersion within the game’s story? And is it a positive or negative impact?
- Which type of perspective (First Person, Third Person, etc.) elicits the greater feeling of immersion into the game’s story?

Then, using the conclusions drawn from these questions, the guide will be created and then this last question will be answered:

- Which of the three above criteria are most important in creating immersion into the game's story?

AGENCY

AGENCY INTRODUCTION

Agency is the control a player has over their experience with the game. It's important to guide the player through the game to an extent but they must feel as though they are making a genuine difference to the game [6]. Freeman states that the player must not feel like a pawn and by allowing the player to have agency over the game, the player experiences a self-created story. Agency manifests itself in many forms, this section will look at a few specific criteria: The player's avatar, the story-based choices they can make, and the stories that allow the player to have very different story experiences.

This section, then, will look at the immersive qualities of player agency across three key criteria: the player's avatar, the choices they make, and how varied the player's personal experiences within a game can be in order to find which properties from these criteria create the largest sense of immersion.

AVATAR

The character or object that the player controls throughout the duration of the game is the player's Avatar. The player can have many Avatars during a game but never more than one at any single moment [3]. According to Adams and Rollings [4], an Avatar is a protagonist under a player's control, however, the term for this was originally Sanskrit, which means a bodily incarnation of God. In this way, the player is God over their Avatar, exhibiting complete control over their actions. The player chooses where to move and when to jump, all of the steps the avatar must take to accomplish their goal are inputted by the player. This level of control often

extends only to the creation of the avatar and gameplay functions, and does not play a part in the player's, or the avatar's, control over the game world and the narrative steps within it [4].

The creation of an avatar's appearance has become a sub-game, with some players spending hours at a time perfecting the appearance of their avatars as a way to enhance the gameplay and their immersion within it [7].



Mass Effect character backstory construction [8].

The game Mass Effect [8] asks the player to not only create the avatar of Commander Shepard, but also create their history from a handful of options. These choices are instantly and repeatedly referenced throughout the start of the game, providing instant gratification to the player's

decisions and bridging the gap until the player has made enough choices to have started down their own path.



Create a sim inside the Sims [9].

The creation of an avatar's appearance and, in cases like The Sims [9], their personality, has become an experience entirely in itself, with some games releasing their character creator before the rest of the game, showing players the control they will have over their avatar [10].

Many kinds of games ask the player to select the abilities or skills of their avatar when starting. This allows the player to personalise their character even further than their story. By selecting these skills, the player brings the personality of their character into basic gameplay, which often doesn't have any story implications.

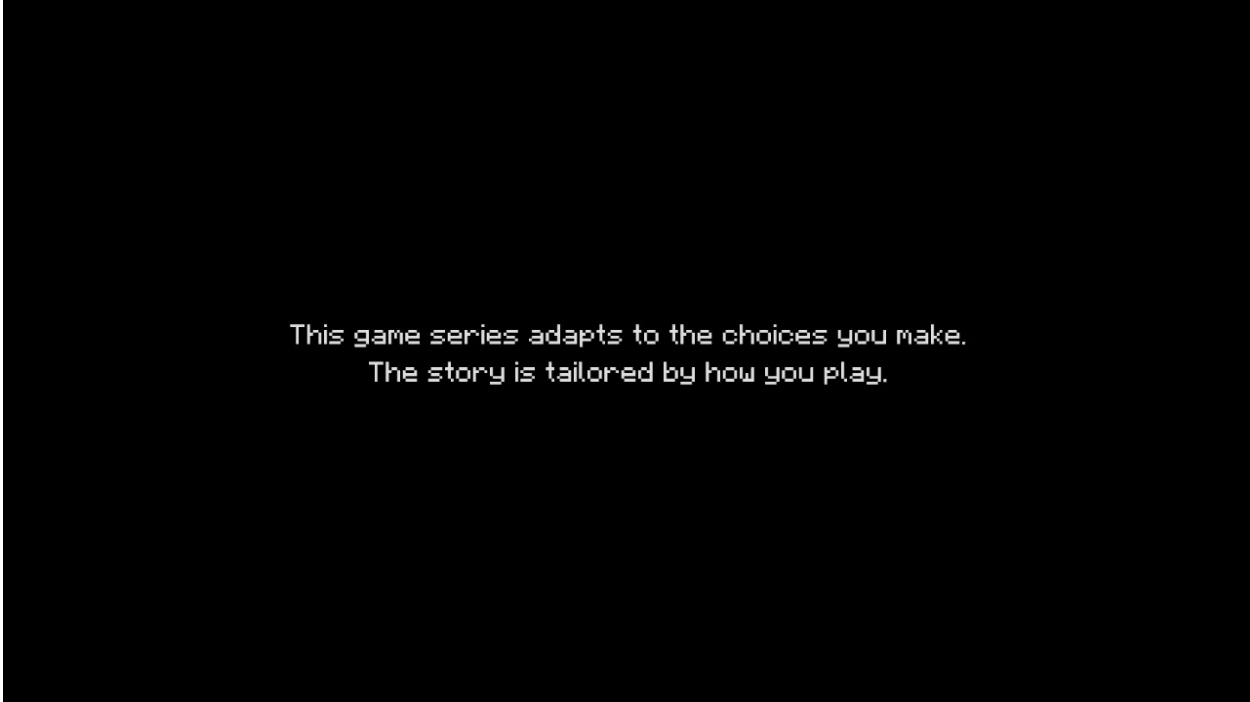
Calleja states that a player is immersed through an anchor that ties them to the game world, and that this anchor is the Avatar [11]. Calleja also states that while a player can have many avatars within the same game, a more personal link is created when there is only one avatar to be controlled.

An immersive avatar would appear to be one that allows for the largest customisation options in both appearance and personality.

CHOICES MATTER

Choice is an essential part of any game, if the player feels as though they never have any choice then they will not enjoy the game [3]. There are different types of choices the player can make, from the selection of skills to the specific movements taken during the game. This report concerns itself with decisions that affect the player's relation to their avatar and the effect they and their Avatar have on the game world and narrative.

Many games that feature choice and consequence exhibit a divide between player and avatar, where the avatar mostly makes decisions for themselves and only occasionally does the player get to choose the story direction. This creates a separation between the player and their avatar and lessens immersion [12].



This game series adapts to the choices you make.
The story is tailored by how you play.

Quote shown at the start of all Telltale games, including The Walking Dead [13].

The gameplay of games like The Walking Dead game [13] is almost entirely centred around the idea of making difficult decisions that affect the story through multiple episodes. The game stresses the importance of choice and consequence the moment you start the game and reminds you of this fact throughout the story.

Despite its praise, however, The Walking Dead game [13] has been criticised for its choices having little impact on the direction of the story itself [14]. You can save a character's life in one section but they are guaranteed to die later.



The needs bar in The Sims [9].

In contrast, The Sims [9] gives players complete control over everything their avatars do. Putting the player in the position of God, able to create a story all of their own. They can choose to help a sim out with their needs or make them live in discomfort. However, the player is not immersed in their avatars despite the presence of complete agency over them. This would suggest that, for a game to be immersive, a certain amount of choice, or indeed agency, must be taken away from the player [15].

Choice and consequence manifests itself in gameplay through the technique of risk versus reward [16], the principle of earning a reward by running a risk. This makes overcoming the risk feel gratifying to the player because they have really earned the reward they receive. The reward can be anything from a new item to a faster path through the world.

Richard Rouse III [17] states that an immersive game is one that gives the player as many choices as possible, and that consistency within the game world is equally important.

An immersive story appears to be one that gives the player a wealth of choices throughout both gameplay and narrative decisions and has these choices have a genuine and profound impact on the player's experience.

NON-LINEAR STORIES

Many games now support the ability to have different conclusions to the story the player is experiencing. However, this is often a minor difference in the long run and, when you do reach the unique endings, it is often one of two or three options which, while entertaining, sometimes does a game an injustice if the journey was filled with many player choices.

Mass Effect 3 [18] was heavily criticised upon its release for its endings. After three full games of decisions carrying across into the trilogy's climax, many were disappointed that these decisions surmounted into one cutscene that always plays, the only difference being a different colour of explosion and a different context in the player's mind.

Divinity: Original Sin 2 [19] splits its story into different acts, with each act taking place in a large open area where the player is given a goal. For example, the first section sees the player trapped on a prison island and asks the player to try to escape, the player can achieve this goal in any number of ways and gives the player the freedom to find their own path.

When considering games that offer non-linear story experiences, it is noteworthy to mention the Massively-Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) genre. MMORPGs have the player be a smaller part of a larger world, in some instances becoming a small part of an in-game ecosystem. Players can then choose to be a merchant or a soldier, and experience very different stories within the same game. The player's story in these games is often very much their own, with some story paths they can follow or ignore completely, offering a lot of freedom. The issue with having so many real-life people playing within the same game is an issue with continuity, some players may be invested in playing their character while others relish the opportunity to kill these characters. To combat this, a multitude of servers are offered where different types of players can find the ecosystem that suits their needs most, whether that is roleplaying or fighting one another. These games twist the narrative structure of most games though, leading to a story that is often created solely by the player and exists only in their mind.

While there is a lot of freedom for individual stories in MMORPGs, these exist only in the mind of the player and in their ability to play the role of their avatar, this is separate from the design of immersive stories that this report is analysing. With that in mind, an immersive non-linear story is one that provides a player with a destination, an ultimate goal, but does not provide a set path for the player to follow to reach that goal.

AGENCY CONCLUSION

Now having analysed the previous section, it is now possible to answer the question set out for this section:

Does complete freedom and control over the appearance and actions of the player's Avatar increase immersion into the game's storyline?

Having looked at Agency through the creation and implementation of an Avatar and the choices they can make through a game's world and the general freedom of experiences offered by a game, it is clear that an immersive game must provide the player with a robust character creator to create a single personal avatar, consistently meaningful and frequent choices that impact and change a player's personal journey and gives a general mission to the player but no rules or restrictions on how to get there. The addition of being able to select a basic history for an avatar before gameplay and the ability to select their abilities in a way that impacts upon story and gameplay can also help build immersion.

ART STYLE

ART STYLE INTRODUCTION

The appearance of the world a player inhabits when playing a game can have a profound impact on the experience a player has within that world. A game's art style sets the tone of the world and the parameters within which a player's avatar can be created (A fantasy styled character in a sci-fi world can appear very strange). Add to that the fact that the appearance of video game graphics has long been a focal point of whether or not to put time and money into it, with many developers advertising their game's art style before showing the public any gameplay, it is obvious how important the graphics across the entirety of a game are [20].

A game's Art Style and appeal are very important for a player's immersion [21], there are many types of styles each with its own unique effects. This section will look at differing kinds of Art styles, Photo-realism, Stylized, and the effect of time on these styles to ascertain their various effects on player immersion.

PHOTO-REALISM ANALYSIS

Games have been referred to as photorealistic for over 30 years. In that time, the quality of game graphics has increased considerably.

For decades, games have bragged about their photo-realism with a few examples becoming a benchmark that would endure for a year, or maybe two, before being usurped by a newer game and a newer benchmark. This trend continues ever onwards with more and more games being dubbed photo-realistic and there are no signs of it stopping.

Because of this, if the game being created is not on the cutting edge of visual technology, it will already be viewed as being not as realistic as other games currently on the market. And, thus, be potentially detrimental to the immersive qualities of the game that has been created.



Crushed snow in Red Dead Redemption 2 [22].

Red Dead Redemption 2 [22] advanced several graphical landmarks upon its release. Not only was the world consistent, but it was also highly technical, with great effort put into making the weather realistic. The avatars even crushed knee-high snow wherever they stepped or fell. The level of detail put into not only the textures of the objects, but the way the player can interact with them, increased immersion significantly.

By definition, a realistic-looking game will create a sense of immersion in its player, especially when coupled with an interactive and evolving environment. However, this creates a certain expectation in the mind of the player, they know the rules of the real world (such as physics) and, if those rules are not adhered to inside a realistic looking game world, then a player's immersion will be lessened. When a game manages to both look and feel real, by both matching the real world visually and adhering to a set of rules, it creates an environment for a player to feel a profound sense of immersion within that game.

Many of the games that are benchmarks in visual quality are played in third person, so that the player has better control over the views within the game that they can see. It is debatable whether this is of benefit to a player's immersion and will be discussed in the relevant section.

It is clear that the more realistic the game can be, the better for immersion, however, this immersion may be short-lived before being usurped by newer and more advanced games with better graphics.

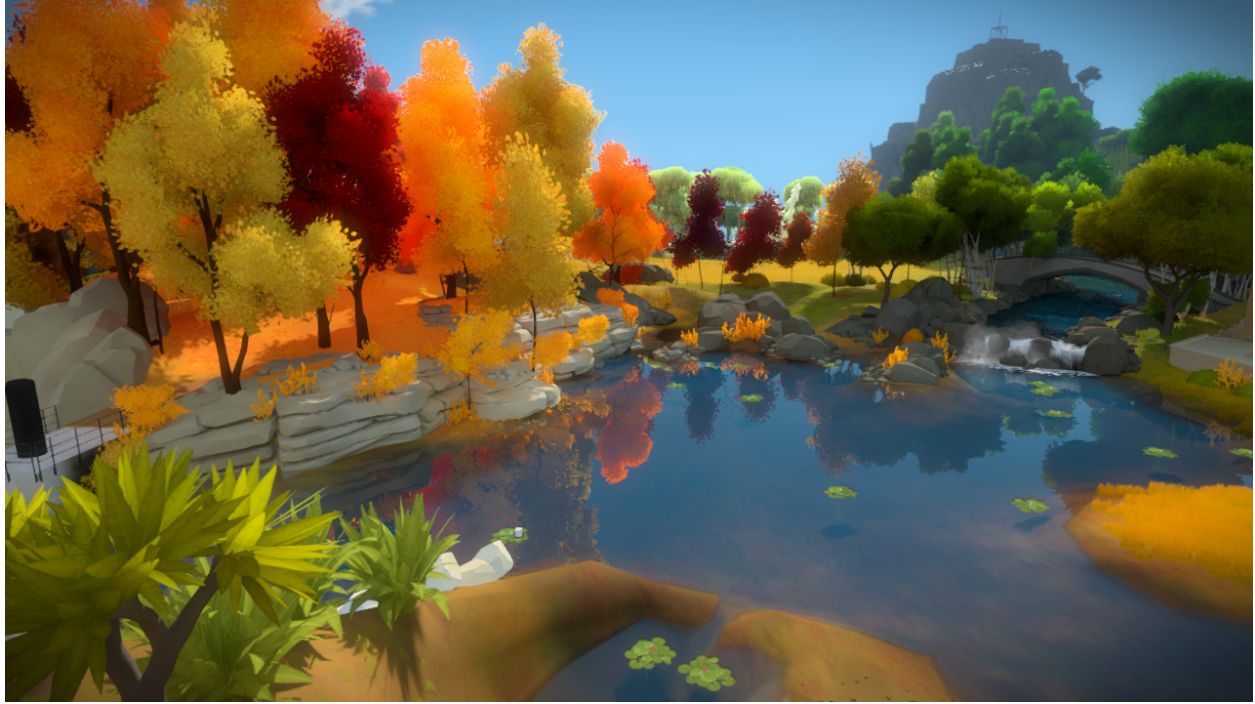
STYLISTED ANALYSIS

Many games attempt to look as realistic as possible, however, many also adopt a style. For example, the cell-shaded look of *Borderlands* [23]. The style chosen tells the player a lot about the game world and what to expect from it. This foreknowledge of theme allows a player to approach the game from the right mindset (provided the game has selected its style well) and find their immersion in that way. However, this also limits the player to a specific theme which, while not offering broad constraints on a player's freedom, are still constraints. Many games use

a non-real art style to set their games apart and make them more appealing to a certain target audience.



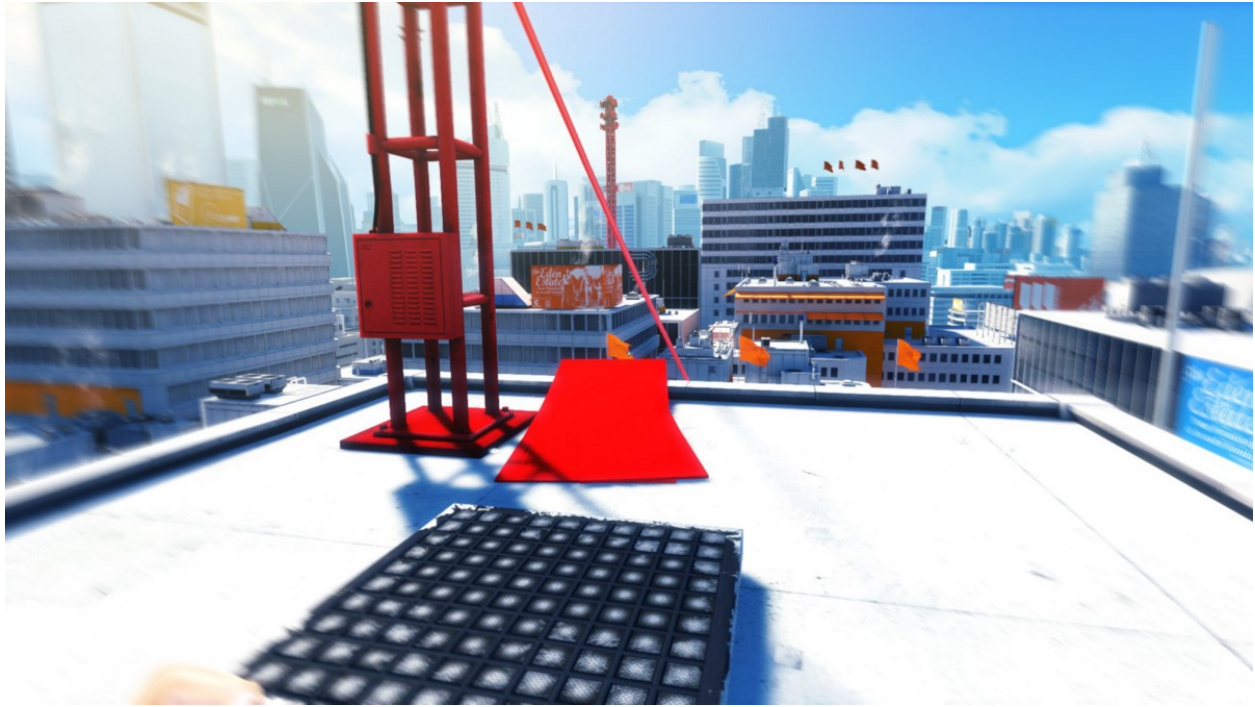
Playable characters in Borderlands [23].



Art Style of The Witness [24].

The Witness [24] uses a stylised art style to great effect, toning down the detail of textures and leaving the detail to exist only where necessary. The player rarely interacts with the world itself, and immersion is not created through realism, but through a dream-like appearance. The feeling of immersion is different from realistic art styles but is still present.

A stylized art style is one that has been heavily considered by a developer, it is very easy to design an art style that looks like real life. If a game has a style then it has been selected for a reason. For instance, in Mirror's Edge, [25] colour is used to guide the player through the levels. Colour theory plays a large part in creating a style that is appealing to a player. Roohi and Forouzandeh [26] discovered a link between colour theory and levels of immersion. This use of colour is far easier to implement in a game with a stylized art style.



Use of colour to direct the player in Mirror's Edge [25].

Games with photo-realistic art styles can still use colour to help guide players, but this is harder to accomplish. It is noteworthy to mention that the use of colour is not restricted to stylized art styles, it is just harder to implement.



Examples of the use of colour in realistic styles. Use of red to show climbable objects in Jedi: Fallen Order [27] (left). Use of yellow to illustrate important destinations in The Last of Us [28] (right).

Perhaps the largest benefit of a stylized approach is its freedom, it allows a game to bend rules that a realistic world could not. A player that knows not to expect real-world constrictions is more open to being immersed in the fantastical.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As games age and fall further behind the visual benchmark players have come to expect, some games manage to look good regardless of time, but others have aged poorly and what was once cutting edge becomes unwieldy and confusing.



Art Style of The Witcher III: Wild Hunt [29].

Upon its release, The Witcher III: Wild Hunt [29] was heralded as the pinnacle of modern graphics. But, returning now, it is clear that it has degraded over time. Even with that, the game is still very much playable. In contrast to this, Star Wars: Battlefront II [30] was easily playable when it first came out, but returning to it now can be difficult for players that have become too accustomed to modern graphics.



Art Style of Star Wars: Battlefront II [30].

Seyama and Nagayama [31] studied the effects of increasing and decreasing photorealism over time, discovering that participants noticed when photorealism decreased more often than increased. Meaning, that we are more aware of the fakeness of graphics when we have recently seen graphics of a higher level elsewhere. This also means that, as graphics increase in quality, people are less likely to notice the benchmark being moved, and will only notice how far these graphics have advanced when returning to an older game.



Examples of stylized art styles through time. Modern example in Crash bandicoot N. Sane Trilogy [32] (left). Historical example in The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker [33] (right).

As shown above, stylized game graphics have advanced significantly, however, the older example of The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker's [33] art style still holds up and is still easily playable today.

Some games, like entries in the Dread X Collection [34] are designed to look like games that use older technology, as if they were made for retro consoles. These games are still able to immerse their players within their games despite this because of the atmosphere they create with these more limited tools.



Art Style of The Dread X Collection [34].

Naturally, games age in other ways than just art style, control schemes fall out of fashion, technology advances and everything from sound design to AI can become dated. This report concerns itself with only the visual aspect of this phenomena.

Many games that have tried to look realistic become constrained by the technology of the time and, in comparison to modern games doing the same thing, they look bad. Whereas, stylized games do not have these same benchmarks to be compared to, and these games tend to stand the test of time [35].

ART STYLE CONCLUSION

The question this section aimed to answer was:

Does the realism of the game world's art style impact the player's immersion within the game's story? And is it a positive or negative impact?

Having analysed Art Styles that look as realistic as possible, ones that adopt a stylized aesthetic, and the effects of time on both of these approaches, it is clear that both can create the same kinds of immersions, provided the game's atmosphere and gameplay are immersive. There is still a bias towards photo-realism for immersion, but the benefits are short-lived. Stylised games, however, may have lessened immersive qualities upon release but their art styles are more likely to retain their immersiveness over the years. Additionally, the use of colour can be used to heighten player immersion by making players more likely to feel a certain way while playing.

It is also noteworthy that there appears to be a lack of research centred around the subsection of this report titled "Historical Context," on the effects of time on the immersive qualities of different art styles, and this warrants further research in the future.

PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE INTRODUCTION

A game's perspective is the type of camera angle used during its gameplay, it is the point of view of the player and their gateway into the game world. The perspective a game is played through can create very different gameplay experiences and, thus, it can have a profound effect on a game's immersive quality [4].

There are many of these perspectives in which games can be played, from first person to third person to top-down. Each provides the player with a different experience. This section will look at the most common of these perspectives (First Person and Third Person) and contrast their effects on immersion, before touching on other perspectives and their effects. Finally, the effects of Virtual Reality (VR) will be analysed and the best of these perspectives will be identified as the most immersive experience.

FIRST PERSON VERSUS THIRD PERSON

First and Third person views are the most common camera perspectives used in games. Both produce very similar effects in gameplay, but offer different benefits for immersion.

The Resident Evil game series offers an easy contrast between these perspectives by looking at its different entries. Resident Evil 7: Biohazard [38] and Resident Evil 2 [39], are played entirely in First and Third person respectively. When playing these games, there is always an adjustment period before the player has become comfortable with the game's controls. This adjustment

period is seemingly longer in first person games than in third. Making third person easier to step into, but first person more realistic.



First person perspective in Resident Evil 7: Biohazard [38].

First Person gameplay creates a sense of immersion within the avatar, the player literally living inside their head and operating their body. However, this kind of gameplay makes it harder to navigate through the game world, it is possible to press the camera unnaturally close to surfaces and often get caught on objects that cannot be seen.



Third person perspective in Resident Evil 2 [39].

Alternatively, Third Person makes it far easier to walk past objects without difficulty, but it is harder to be immersed in an avatar that moves independently from the camera [36].

When playing in first person, games can become easily disorienting, for instance, in GTA V [37] players will often crash vehicles or trip, this can be very confusing in first person. Whereas, in third person, the player can follow what has happened. While it is easier to play during these particular actions, the disorientation created by first person is more accurate to the experience of crashing a car in real life.

There is often a discrepancy between the perspective used in gameplay and in a game's cutscenes. This can take the player out of their avatar and lessen the immersion, this is for a

reason, however, because during these cutscenes there is lessened control by the player. By changing perspective the player is told to sit back and let someone else take over for a moment. Once the immersion is lessened, it takes longer to get back to the levels of immersion that had existed beforehand. Some games have taken note of this and have started maintaining gameplay perspective through the cutscenes. Some games, like Resident Evil 7: Biohazard [38], allow the player to have a small amount of control over the camera when in cutscenes.

In large part, a camera's perspective is decided by the genre of the game being made. It is common for horror games and shooter games to be played in first person, and for adventure games and RPGs to be played in third person (naturally, there are exceptions). The guide being created by this report is being created irrespective of genre and as such assumes a neutral position.

Richard Rouse believes that immersive games benefit from a first person viewpoint [16]. This is corroborated by the results of Denisova and Cairns' [36] study into the immersive qualities of first and third person. Which resulted in players finding first person more immersive regardless of their personal preference of perspective. This suggests that first person is the superior perspective for immersive games.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

Other perspectives in games offer different feelings of control. Side-Scroller has the player watch the avatar like a film, a tracking shot from left to right. Top-down gives the player a deific perspective, as though they are a God controlling the avatar down on the world below. Fixed

camera views create immersion within the world by creating an atmosphere for each room, the avatar is separate from this immersion.

Some games, like *It Takes Two* [40] or *Nier: Automata* [41], move between various perspectives throughout gameplay, using the camera to change the kind of control it wants the player to have. In some sections, it moves from third person to side-scrolling, limiting one dimension of movement normally available to the player. This lends itself to games that offer very diverse experiences throughout their story, but this diversity lessens a player's immersion because of how much the perspective changes without the player's control.



Side-scroller perspective (left) and top-down perspective (right) in It Takes Two [40].



Side-scroller perspective (left) and top-down perspective (right) in Nier: Automata [41].

Once again, we can look at entries into the Resident Evil franchise, the first games made in the series throughout the late 90s and early 00s were exclusively played in Fixed Camera views. These perspectives created a tense atmosphere throughout the setting that immerses the player in the world, but this immersion can be easily broken when the player is expected to defend themselves from an enemy that is standing in front of the avatar, but is hidden by the camera's angle. These games also rarely stick to the fixed camera perspective for their cutscenes, creating a separation between the player and their avatar.



Fixed camera perspective in Resident Evil: Zero [42].

It Takes Two [40] and Nier: Automata [41] are both examples of games made in the last five years that use these alternative perspectives. If, while first and third person games are easy to

create, developers are still creating games in these alternative perspectives, then this raises a new question: are players still able to immerse themselves within them?

The value of these perspectives is in immersion, but it is not the narrative immersion but strategic and tactical immersions mentioned by Adams [4].

Having looked at other perspectives it is clear that immersion is more difficult when using these viewpoints because of the disconnect that is created between the player and their avatar. Containing a game within a single grounded perspective adds more to immersion than these alternatives.

VIRTUAL REALITY

The increase in popularity of Virtual Reality technology heralds a new avenue of immersion for video games. However, these games currently lack the same photo-realistic qualities as non-virtual reality games.

Even without the same level of graphical quality as non-VR games, VR offers unique immersive qualities, by having two different camera angles, one for each eye, means the game world looks three-dimensional. By moving the head and hands of the avatar with the player's own head and hands, more than any other alternative, they embody the avatar. A study by Pallavicini, Pepe, and Minissi [43] found that playing the same game in 2D, 3D and VR yielded very similar results in terms of engagement, but the physical effects of playing a game in VR created a heightened heart rate, along with other physical effects. This would suggest that, currently, while the mind doesn't

perceive a large difference between both types of gameplay, VR can create a far more tangible, physical experience that would inherently add to immersion.



A stylized art style within the VR game Superhot VR [44].

Superhot VR [44], one of the most popular VR games on the market, is, in part, successful because of its stylized appearance and that, narratively, the avatar is inside another headset playing the game. This framing allows the player to enjoy the game without overthinking and being critical of the appearance of the game.

One issue with the use of VR is cutscenes. When playing Resident Evil 4 VR [45] the player is removed from control entirely when a cutscene is playing, the screen retreating away from the

player's viewpoint and seizing control from them, shattering the immersion the game otherwise provides.



A cutscene in Resident Evil 4 VR [45].

Many VR users suffer from motion sickness or as Ewalt [46] describes it, simulator sickness, which he describes as a disconnect between the movements of the player and the images they are witnessing. This is because, while a headset moves with the user's head, the images do not move with the user's eyeline. VR technology still requires a number of advances to be made before it can offer the same usability as console or PC gaming.

It is clear that VR technology holds massive potential for immersion by adding a physical element to controlling an avatar, but, considering the number of players who suffer from motion

sickness while playing, it is obvious that there is still a large distance to go before it will be clearly beneficial for immersion.

PERSPECTIVE CONCLUSION

The question this section aimed to answer was:

Which type of perspective (First Person, Third Person, etc.) elicits the greater feeling of immersion into the game's story?

The immersive distinction between first and third person games is a difficult one to draw and reach a definitive conclusion. The difference would have to be in external criteria, for instance, the genre of game that was being created (Horror games lend themselves to first person and RPGs to third.) For an immersive game, it is best to stick with these two perspectives as others do not produce the same level of narrative immersion. And while VR technology would, at first, appear to be the best choice and does indeed lend itself to a heightened sense of physical immersion, until the technology has become more streamlined and less likely to cause motion sickness, it will lessen the immersive qualities of both this and other criteria.

CONCLUSION

Having looked at the effects of immersion through various sections, looking at Avatar, Choices matter, and Non-Linear Stories in Agency; Photo-Realism, Stylized and Historical Context in Art Style; And First Person versus Third Person, Other perspectives and Virtual Reality in Perspectives, it is now possible to answer all of the questions set out within this report:

- Does complete freedom and control over the appearance and actions of the player's Avatar increase immersion into the game's storyline?
- Does the realism of the game world's art style impact the player's immersion within the game's story? And is it a positive or negative impact?
- Which type of perspective (First Person, Third Person, etc.) elicits the greater feeling of immersion into the game's story?

The guide that has now been created is as follows: an immersive game is one that allows its players to create their character and backstory, gives the player numerous choices and consequences caused by their decisions (decisions including ones made in character creation), and gives the player a general goal, but does not tell them how to reach it. The game is photo-realistic to the highest modern standard and is in first person or VR (depending on how streamlined VR technology becomes). The use of colour to help direct players can be used within the selected art style and colour, in general, should be used to subconsciously guide the player into the most immersive frame of mind. And finally, the player should only play as one avatar throughout the game to maintain as personal a connection as possible.

The final question to be answered by this report is: Which of the three above criteria are most important in creating immersion into the game's story?

The most important of the three criteria is Agency, a player's embodiment in the game. It ties the player directly into the game world and, regardless of the style of that world or the view the player has into that world, no profound narrative immersion would be achieved without a self-created avatar. And, by being designed by the player, makes the player invested in that character right from hitting the start game button. The feeling of affecting the world that the avatar exists in enhances that immersion.

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