

Making videogames more fun for passive audiences

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Credit: Antonio Fucito, from FlickrR

You might think watching other people play videogames is boring, but researchers at the Microsoft Centre for Social Natural User Interfaces (SocialNUI) at the University of Melbourne say it does not have to be this way.

John Downs, who has just submitted his PhD thesis, 'Audience Experience in Domestic Videogaming', says games makers don't really understand or cater to the experience of [audience](#) members.

Mr Downs has been observing players and audience members in both a laboratory setting and with [video cameras](#) set up in homes.

He found the design of a videogame and the way the player interacts with the [game](#) affects how much people watching enjoy it.

Games that involved a lot of physicality, like those played with the Xbox Kinect, were more fun to watch than when the player was just sitting and holding a controller.

Also, the audience was more engaged if they knew that they were soon going to get a turn playing the game.

Audience members might be parents watching their children play, friends waiting for their turn, or girlfriends or boyfriends fiddling with their phones or reading a book while tolerating their partners' hobby. Mr Downs says there are ways of creating games that can cater to any of these audiences.

Associate Professor Frank Vetere, the Director of SocialNUI, says we need to change the way games are designed, to include the audience experience.

"Advances in gaming technology open up design possibilities for game makers to produce games that are more engaging for the audience," Dr Vetere said.

One innovation that is on the rise is the use of second screens to augment the main gameplay.

Mr Downs said people might not want to commit their whole attention to playing the game, but they might be interested in contributing to the game through their mobile phone, through which they could, for

example, control an enemy or some kind of obstacle, or in some way help the main player.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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