

# Game Design for Emotions: a practice-based research on the design of game emotional experience

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This research focuses on the development of emotionally directed gaming experiences demonstrating how the same game, when subjected to targeted audiovisual changes that do not affect its rules, objectives, and mechanics, can provide different emotional experiences. These experiences are related to the psychological and player motivation profiles of each individual. To this end, the research was structured into four main parts.

The first, theoretical-conceptual, explored game design, seeking to find structures and elements that make up a game and the experience it proposes. A bibliographic review was carried out on: the study of emotions, including different classification approaches; a study on the relationships established between player, avatar, and game environment; and the concept of emotional design, proposed by Don Norman.

The second part, analytical-investigative, consisted of the case study of three games (Journey, Amnesia: The Dark Descent, and Thomas Was Alone) with different gaming experience proposals. They were analyzed using a methodology based on game design elements and their relationship with the levels of emotional design. In this way, it was possible to understand how the design of each game contributes to the creation/development of different emotional experiences.

In the third part, a field research was carried out to collect the psychological (Big Five) and player motivation (Quantic Foundry) profiles, through the application of questionnaires. The participants were then divided into groups according to their profiles (psychological and player motivation) to participate in the second part of this stage. Based on the information gathered by the previous steps, a short game was developed. From it, changes in its design were made to generate modified versions that, maintaining the game structure and essential rules, proposed different experiences to the players. All games had a player performance information collection system developed specifically for the research.

The games were then made available to participants from the previous stages, who answered a final questionnaire. The responses, as well as information about the players' performance, were used both to assess how each game affected the perception and to verify whether the psychological and motivation profiles of the player help to understand the emotional experiences of the game. Thus, the fourth part consisted of putting the knowledge into practice and testing the hypotheses developed from the previous steps and listed below.

The research showed that 1) the visual and sound aesthetic influence of a game can have a considerable impact on the experience of playing, even if it does not affect the game mechanically; 2) The Big Five psychological profile and the player motivation profile are related to the emotional gaming experiences and can be used to better understand them.

## KEYWORDS

**Emotional design, Emotional game experience, Emotions, Game design**