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Students' perception of self-presentation towards avatar

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Abstract

This research investigates students' perception of their self-presentation towards the creation of their virtual self, an avatar. Students were provided with an avatar as well as an avatar environment called the Avatar Hall. This research is an empirical research where students have been given access to the Avatar Hall to view their human character avatar. A total number of 56 students were involved. The research instrument used in this research was a Self-Presence Questionnaire (SPQ) inventory developed by Ratan and Hasler [5]. All the items selected address the extension of identity towards virtual character. The inventory was consisted of Likert-type statements, each with five choices of response from "Not At All" to "Absolutely". This research has shown that most of students perceived that their personal identity have influenced their self-presentation towards their avatar in Avatar Hall. This means that choosing an avatar name, appearance, gender, and clothing were mostly related to some aspect of their personal identity.

Keywords: Avatar; Self-Presence; Identity; Personality; Online Environment

1. Introduction

Are we what we are when online? The availability of accessing the Internet and having exist in virtual environment, allow people to present themselves in a variety of different ways, like changing age, physical appearance, gender, and personality [1]. The presentation of avatar is how people manage their identity in virtual world.

An avatar is defined as a character representing an individual in an online environment [2]. It can be presented as an image of the user in the online environments as a medium for communication. Moreover, avatars can be categorised into three types: a real self, a modified self and a fantasy self [3].

Real-self is described as a photo-realistic avatar which is as identical as possible to its owner. Modified-self, on the other hand, is an avatar that is very similar to its owner but differs in one or more attributes from the owner's actual appearance, such as having long, instead of short hair. Lastly, fantasy-self is an avatar that appears entirely different from its owner. It may take the form of a human that is not identical to its maker, but more often appears in a strange form such as an alien. Examples of real-self and fantasy-self avatars are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

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