

# Consuming Virtual Assets

- some examples from Habbo Hotel
- designing for socially acceptable trade: open issues



**Mikael Johnson**

MC2 project researcher

M.Sc., Doctoral student

TKK

# Habbo examples: Furniture that make you look cool



- a tv-wall
- cool, because
  - the idea is “new”
  - to place a tv above another, one has to use a “bug/feature” => shows technical competence
  - it takes time

# Cool Furniture II



## ■ cool, because

- you only get a desk by being 10 months member of HC
- either, this owner has 24 different avatars and paid HC fee 10 months for all of them
- or this owner is a successful trader

# Cool Furniture III



## ■ cool, because

- thematic decoration: ice-hockey
- rare furniture:
  - hanging mat
  - samovar
  - royal chair
  - holographic girl
  - space-craft door
  - ice cream-machine

For some, the event is more important than the furniture



# Furniture as props for role playing





## User groups: relation to virtual assets (furniture)

- Furniture as an end in itself
  - traders
  - collectors
  - decorators
- Furniture as a mean for sth else
  - to make friends
  - to make others happy
  - to become famous
  - role playing
- Indifferent to furniture
  - socialisers / chatters
    - keeping contact with friends made in and outside Habbo
  - hackers (against the system)
  - grief players

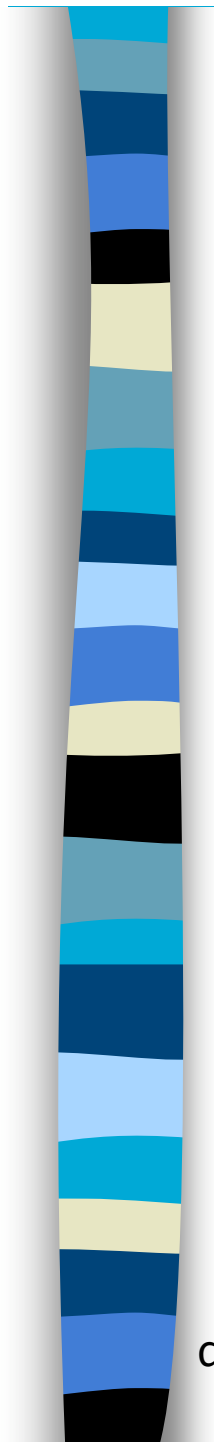
### Popular activities

- Trading furniture
- Casinos
- Dating
- Beauty contests
- Competitions
- Dice games
- Team sports
- Formula tracks
- Talk shows
- Clubs & Hotels
- Orphanages

(Johnson 2005)

# Habbo player dimensions

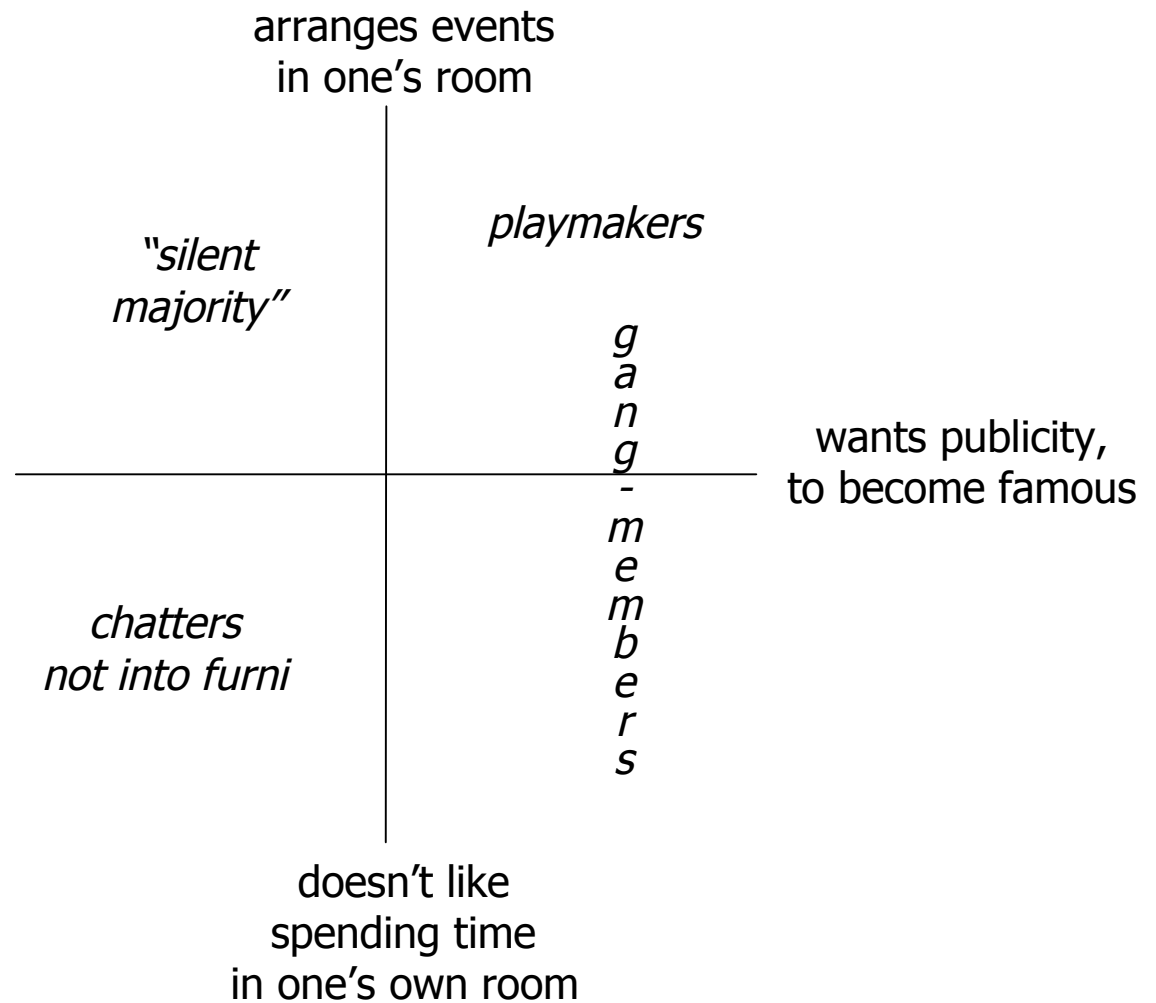
(Based on survey, N=10000)



doesn't buy

buys

wants privacy  
for themselves  
and/or friends







# Consumerism

- consumerism =
  - “consuming and being proud of it”
  - “consumer-power”
- “consumption involves the incorporation of the consumed item into the personal and social identity of the consumer” (Gell 1986)
- consumption (Silverstone 1992):
  - appropriation: the product is acquired and made acceptable and familiar
  - objectification: the object finds a place and a space in the daily life of the consumer
  - incorporation: it becomes fitted into routines
  - conversion: signal of status to others
- add-on: customisation / modification
  - content created by the community (members)



## Under which circumstances are people willing to pay for virtual assets?

- from a design perspective one can influence the following dimensions:
  - user interface circumstances
  - trade interaction context
  - degree of participation
- which dimensions are most interesting to you (the audience)?



# User Interface “variables”

<b>Elements of Virtual World awareness</b>	
Presence	Who is in the virtual world?
Location	Where are they?
Activity Level	How active are they?
Actions	What are they doing? What are their current activities and tasks?
Intentions	What will they do next? Where will they be?
Changes	What changes are they making, and where?
Objects	What objects are they using?
Extents	What can they see? How far can they reach?
Abilities	What can they do?
Influence	Where can they make changes?
Expectations	What am I to do next?

Based on Farschian 2001: workspace awareness



# Trade interaction context

- place
  - market place
    - official use of the place, semi-publicity, assumptions
  - “placeless” trading: mail order catalogue
  - mobile: multiple places
    - travel process, nodes
- buying process
  - once/frequent, preparations needed, alone/group, focused/divided
- organising the trading
  - guilds, mafias, stores, brokers
- larger context: “accepted market rules”
  - economical model, currency, consumer protection



# Player participation in the design

- influencing virtual assets, place, buying process, customer protection
  - in practice, how? => case study?
  - through which communication channels?



# Designing for socially acceptable trade

- ethics
- perception of fairness
- perception of privacy
- perspectives:
  - customer segments
  - non-customers (general public, media, regulative authorities etc.)



## Example: Habbo & children market

- Finnish consumer agency
  - setting a weekly limit for purchases
  - 7€ comparable to going to the movies
  - => responsible consumption
- real-world equivalency
  - Habbo analogies: toy store, equipment for hobbies, going to the movies
- Other contacts giving Habbo credibility
  - EOPH / Unicef bus: education
  - Netari: collaboration with organisations working with the youth