

Roguelike Games - The way we play

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Abstract. The spread of the gameable personal computers and game consoles resulted in the diversification of the video game genre, and from the 7th generation of the gaming consoles, the experience support of the games became largely enhanced. These games are now consumable owing to their resolution, the content, the plots are so fascinating so that they tie the gamer to the seat. Gamers seek experiences in the games. Still, such a special genre called roguelike was established, which is characterized by the constant termination of this world of experience in such a way that the gamer, as a results of the high level of difficulty, is obliged to start the game again and again. These new genre games are now leading titles of the new generation consoles, such as Demon's Souls or the Returnal, gaining huge role in the introduction and sale of the new gaming console PS5. This study aims to reveal specifications of this genre, moreover, aims to describe through empirical research how gamers relate to it, and whether features of these games contribute to the devotion to them or lead to the disappointment from this world of experience.

Keywords: sports management, gaming and esports, gaming consoles, roguelike, permadeath

Introduction

Up to the XXI. century one of the ways of spending leisure time has become the computer platform based playing of games (it varies between mobile, gaming console, pc or even other platforms). It really seems that playing video games gains more and more importance in the personal and common life of people. Some producers, such as the Nintendo emphasizes this community/family-related approach at the marketing, as well. Even these novel, experience based games have also introduced a series of new terms to the general discussions, such as gaming, playing ps, playing xbox, playing mmo, multi, etc. , and the supply of the games, even with a respect to the gaming consoles themselves now seems to be unclear

and unknowable. The interest of science also follows these events on from many professional disciplines, so informatics, marketing, psychology, and even sociology (a discipline researching the general rules of social life) maintains a curious relationship with this relatively new phenomenon [1]. Approaching the topic from this social point of view, and analysing the relevant statistical data it really seems that even the conceptual bases are poorly defined, and actuality of the gained data seems to be disputable. Although the webpage of the Hungarian Statistical Office (KSH) has some minimum information about the time use surveys performed in 2017 [2], only data of 2009/2010 years can be accessed at the relevant publications [3]. Primal categories applied at these time are the „Socially tied activities”, „Physically tied activities” and „Leisure activities”. The closest, but not identical category of our topic is the „Spending time on internet” (inside Leisure activities) with a daily average 11 minutes, or „Social entertainment” (including dancing, playing cards, etc.) with a daily 5 minutes. Pintér (2018) in his article [4] details that in Hungary, based on his large sample based, representative survey, „94% of the internet users plays traditional or computer game on a more or less frequent base”. Researching the motivating factors (attributes) behind the play he has found that entertainment as a motivator leads with 80%, and success orientation only explained 26% of the motives behind playing. Only 11% of the respondents had gaming consoles, by the findings of this research.

Social researchers of GfK and MTA TK, in their really large sample online survey (13 650 respondents), have identified the consumption categories of high culture consumption (attending theatre for example) and and novel culture consumption (such as interneting, visiting social/social network pages) [1]. Relating to these latest two, namely being on internet, visiting social networks have something to do with the culture, moreover, playing on internet, which is in close relationship with these all has even developed to be a way of sport called e-sport. This special integration of sport and culture forms the complexity of this activity, this is why it is often debated whether it can be regarded as a way of sport, and what role it takes in the life of people, especially in the life of youth. In our essay we aim to focus on a special chapter of these activities, the field of roguelike games, which does not equally provide experience and success, and we try to explain and understand the problem behind this topic.

1. The literature background of the topic

Up to now we need to declare that supply of domestic technical literature on the computer games is still poor (namely the professional ones), but on the other hand, the world of related informative, popular materials, forums, blogs, streams, etc. seems to be endless. A related article [5] on one of these popular places refers like this: „It is not an easy job trying to define roguelike games, since currently there is no consensus whether something can be considered as roguelike or not. So as to understand why, we will need to get back in time. The term itself comes from the classic game called Rogue published in 1980, so the word roguelike means something, which is just like the Rogue game.” On the webpage of one the largest game producers [6] the term itself is defined: „Roguelikes are games characterised by levels that are procedurally generated - that is, created by clever algorithms rather than manually designed - meaning that no two playthroughs are ever the same. Level layouts, enemy placements and the weapons or upgrades you encounter change every time you restart, creating an irresistible challenge that demands hundreds, if not thousands of replays”. The author of this same content also reveals further details of the term: “There’s a lot of debate on this. Purists argue that a Roguelike must mirror

Rogue's turn-based, dungeon crawler RPG approach to qualify. Another school of thought is that a Roguelike can refer to any game with procedural elements that will reset your progress completely after each playthrough, whereas a Rogue-lite retains some elements of character progression, such as upgraded stats or unlocked weapons and abilities. Because of this, some consider that a Roguelike is about the journey, whereas a Rogue-lite is about the destination. Through this, Rogue also introduced the enduring concept of 'permadeath' [6]." This related, necessary element of the roguelike games means that "if the character controlled in the game dies then it cannot be applied/used/revived again, all of the features/skills and adjustments is lost. It means that a new/novel character is necessary to continue, moreover, it also may happen that the gamer needs to start playing again from the beginning [7]. Difficulty not only lies in typically defeating the main monster, but the way to reach it is also difficult: the gamer needs to try it again and again, since there are limited possibilities to save the progress in the gameplay. This is a reason why these genre of games are so special, since they provide such a game experience, where mostly the gamer cannot win, even they often loose, moreover, the popular ones do not include adjustment of difficulty or gameplay saving. Skills like patience. tolerance are vital expectations from a gamer. These games are mostly campaign like and story telling ones, so do not include online, competitive parts. The producer referred earlier also names roguelike games [6], where a title is expressed as novelty of the 9th generation consoles called „Returnal”, which is also Playstation exclusive (it is not published on any other types of platforms). The real classic of this genre is the game series called Dark/Demon's Souls, which has achieved many editions of different platforms, and a latest of it also appeared almost at the introduction of Playstation 5, with a really improved and enhanced version. A Hungarian leading online journal has even celebrated the series [8]: „The most difficult game of the world, Dark Souls has become 10 years old....This is the game of which everyone knows that it is brutally difficult and also became precedent of a later appeared series of other games. First published in September 2011, it provided such an experience for numerous gamers just like a trip to hell.... Possibly many controllers were broken just because of Dark Souls, since it has grinded masses of the innocent gamers without any mercy from the very beginning". Former article of this same source has also discussed the topic [9]: „The precedent called Demon's Souls published in 2009 has created a new genre of games, the Souls-like games: these ones are typically roleplaying games including extraordinary dark, baleful atmosphere with horror elements, and these were especially dedicated to the masochist and hardcore gamers. These games were produced so as to test our patience and nerves, and real Japanese self-restrict and samurai-like patience is necessary to meet the expectation of the challenges...As a result: these games thoroughly challenge the nerves of the gamers requiring unbelievable patience and tolerating the monotonous flow of the play owing to the repeating elements." The special feature of the games is the repeated, nerve grinded, mood destroying genre, of which even the article states that it is a hardcore game dedicate to hardstone game core. It seems that the author of the source has a related article where the psychology behind is discussed [10]. According to the author: „Playing Hidetaka-games (the director of the series) is just like the gamer could experience the stages of dying:

1st stage. Time of the first hits and deaths, where the gamer only and solely blames itself-it is not possible that the game is difficult like that.

2nd stage. Phase of the anger. The gamer finally admits that Dark Souls III is a brutally hard one, and not like he/she is used to.

3rd stage. The time of negotiation. The gamer aims to discover the game the most and by doing this tries to ease the situation.

4th stage. The phase of depression. No, I will not reach it. The gamer experiences the permadeath phenomenon. The gamer will be sad and become more and more depressed by every try.

5th stage. The phase of acceptance. The gamer even accepts that it is a damned, rather unfair game and continuously tries by developing the private skills or with some luck and reaches some progress, or simply throws the game or the controller into the corner.

It is now obvious that the psychology of the genre what makes this games exciting. The gamer, who sits down to play a bit seems to be not entertained by the play but continuously fight, just like in the game theory dollar auction, where: "aspects of competing will be more and more important- I would like to prove that I am the better, and I cannot let the game make me a fool [11]." Lately a new, this genre game named Elden Ring has just appeared on the market from the developers called Fromsoftware, and even gained good receptions. As a whole, these games are just like that, and the objective of the essay is try to reveal: if these are like that who, why and how play them?

2. Material and methods

The material/subject of the examination is one of the roguelike games related to the new console generations, and this game is called Returnal. This one is a typical science fictions theme, third person shooter charater based game. The reason for the selection is that it was a ruling title just shortly after the appearance of the PS5 console, moreover, it has raised again the attention of the profession and gamers, receiving praises and critical notices [12]. The analytic approach of the game, as a result, seems to be possible.

Data of a research basically can be achieved from primary or secondary sources [13]. The author states that „primary data refers to that one, which is obtained by the researcher itself based on the relevant variables of the research. Sasvári [14] defines that „qualitative researches can be successfully applied in such cases, when the research aims to reveal motives of diverse forms of behavior, and behavioral specifications.... Qualitative researches aim to achieve deeper, more detailed knowledge and the sample of the data collection is relatively small.” It consequently means that when we would like to know the answers for why/how something happens, it is useful to apply qualitative techniques, in accordance with the specifications of the research. „We apply structured interviews when we know what kind of information we will need. Regarding computer aided interviewing, as a result of modern technique, questions appear on the computer screen, and results achieved can be directly coded into the computer. These records can even appear online” [15]. The research method drafted before was applied, that we have defined some relevant questions, in the framework of structured interview, which mostly aimed to reveal the attitude of the gamers. Three principal chapters of the questions were:

(1) When and why did You buy the game?

(2) What is feels like playing the game? What motives You to play the game (such as entertainment/recreation or achieving objectives/success)? What is Your opinion about the game?

(3) How do you feel after playing the game (such as recreated or got angry)? Does the game have and if so, what are the after-effects (such as since now I am an addicted player or I got so angry that I broke the controller)?

At the data collection we continuously ran into difficulty. A general gaming online data collection among Hungarian players did not succeed, simply we did not have any respondents. One may find the reasons behind that, still, as practicing teachers and researchers we had to realize that these 9th generation consoles, owing to their availability and prices are not widespread at all, this is highly valid for the platform bases, the PS5 itself. Contact identification even in this age group (we may assume that gamers can also be university students as well) was not successful, it really seems that students of the author teachers simply did not know the game, or even if they know it they do not have experience since they do not have 9th gen consoles. Afterall, we have searched for facebook groups, and since it seems that international level Returnal facebook group exists (Returnal community: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/playing101>), this is why we have translated our questions into English and coded them into google docs, and entered this link into the group page. An important finding is the mass of short, basic answers, which is typical of the gaming society. Qualitative data then was analyzed by Voyant tools, where words clouds, terms berry and relevant other types of graphic display methods all contributed to the textual analysis of the results.

3. Results

The analysis followed the order of the originally defined question topics. First was „Why did You buy the game-most reasons are requested?” Results are illustrated at Figure 1.



Figure 1.: When did you first hear about the game? World Cloud of responses when respondents first heard about the game

Source: Formulated by Author using Voyant Tools (2022)

The question "When did you first hear about the game?" received 57 replies. According to the Voyant tool analysis, there were 202 total words and 75 unique word forms in all responses. The vocabulary density of the responses is 0.371, indicating that they contain content with varied words. The Readability Index is 8.971, which shows that the text is easy to read and most of the content consists of basic words. The average number of words per sentence is 7.80, indicating brief responses. The most frequent words in the corpus were release (12); 2021 (8); ps5 (6); bought (5); spring (5); year (5); debut (4); start (4); ago (3); months (3). Analysis of the corpus summary, word cloud and most used words revealed that 55% of respondents bought the game when it was initially launched. 32% of respondents reported hearing about the game for the first time at the start of 2021. 13% of respondents learned about the game after buying a PS5.

Second questions was „Why did you buy the game?“ According to Voyant's tool analysis of all 69 replies to the question "Why did you buy the game?", which had 380 total words and 119 different word forms, the vocabulary density, or the ratio of the number of words to the number of distinct words in the text, was 0.313, which indicates simpler language with repeated words. The evaluated textual replies have a readability index of 6.326 and 8.67 words were used on average per sentence, showing most responses were brief and simple. Ps5 (15), intriguing (8), like (7), looked (7), saw (7), wanted (7), purchased (6), games (6), fantastic (5), and good are the most often used terms in the responses. Examining the corpus summary, term berry, and most frequent words revealed that 75% of respondents stated they purchased the game because they associated a positive emotion such as likeability with doing so. Thirty percent of respondents said they bought the game because it was compatible with their PS5, and they were also fans of video games in general. 5 percent players bought the game as their friends recommended it.



Figure 2.: Terms berry summarizing responses about why respondents bought the game

Source: Formulated by Author using Voyant Tools (2022)

Third questions was titled like this: „What motivates you to play the game-success or entertainment drives the plays mostly?“ We mostly wondered whether persistence is prevalent, and basically, what are the most important drives behind the game? Results are illustrated on Figure 3.



beat
like
better
interesting
adventures

Figure 3.: Bubble Lines summarizing responses- Motivation to play the game the game

Source: Formulated by Author using Voyant Tools (2022)

The vocabulary density, or the ratio of the number of words to the number of distinct terms in the text, is 0.417 according to Voyant's tool analysis of all 69 replies, which included 302 total words and 126 different word forms. This reflects a simpler language with repeated words. The readability index for the analyzed textual responses is 8.341, indicating that the text is simple to read, and that most of the material is made up of simple terms. The top 10 most-used words in the data set were as follows: beat (8), like (8), better (6), intriguing (6), adventures (4), inquisitive (4), pleasant (4), adventure (3), thrilling (3), and game (3). Through the use of bubblelines, we can see how often various terms appear throughout the text. Larger bubbles on the line indicate the greater frequency of use of a certain term throughout the text. Analyzing corpus summary, most frequently used terms, and bubblelines from the survey responses reveals that 55% of players were motivated to complete the game by the desire to achieve targets or beating the game. On the other hand, 45% of players said that they kept playing because the game was full of exciting or interesting adventures.

Fourth questions was „How does it feel to play the game?“ Here we mostly assumed that mostly positive feeling is prevalent during playing. Results are illustrated on Figure 4.



Figure 4.: Word Cloud summarizing responses- Feeling when you play the game

Source: Formulated by Author using Voyant Tools (2022)

Here we also applied graphs to summarize responses (Figure 5).



Figure 5.: Collocates graph summarizing responses- Feeling when you play the game

Source: Formulated by Author using Voyant Tools (2022)

Voyant's tool analysis of all 64 responses, which contained a total of 219 words and 110 different word forms, determined a vocabulary density of 0.502, indicating that the content is clear and simple and employs basic terms. The Readability Index of the evaluated written responses is 12.759, and the average number of words per sentence is 9.9. which also demonstrates that the responses are concise and

straightforward. The most frequent words in the corpus were: exciting (6); awesome (5); time (5); interesting (4); like (4); nice (4); cool (3); crazy (3); new (3); rewarding (3). According to the corpus summary, word cloud, and collocate graph, 83 percent of the players used positive emotions like exciting, awesome, nice, and so on to describe their experience while playing the game. Only 10 percent felt a negative emotion such as finding it tiring or hard to play, whereas 7 percent used neutral words like time-consuming to describe their experience.

The subsequent questions was „How do you feel after playing the game”? Here at this question we assumed that after gaming mostly negative feelings are prevalent at most respondents. The reason for that it is a rather difficult game with scarce saving possibility, so it is possible that You cannot get further in the gameplay even after some hours of playing. Results are illustrated at Figure 6.

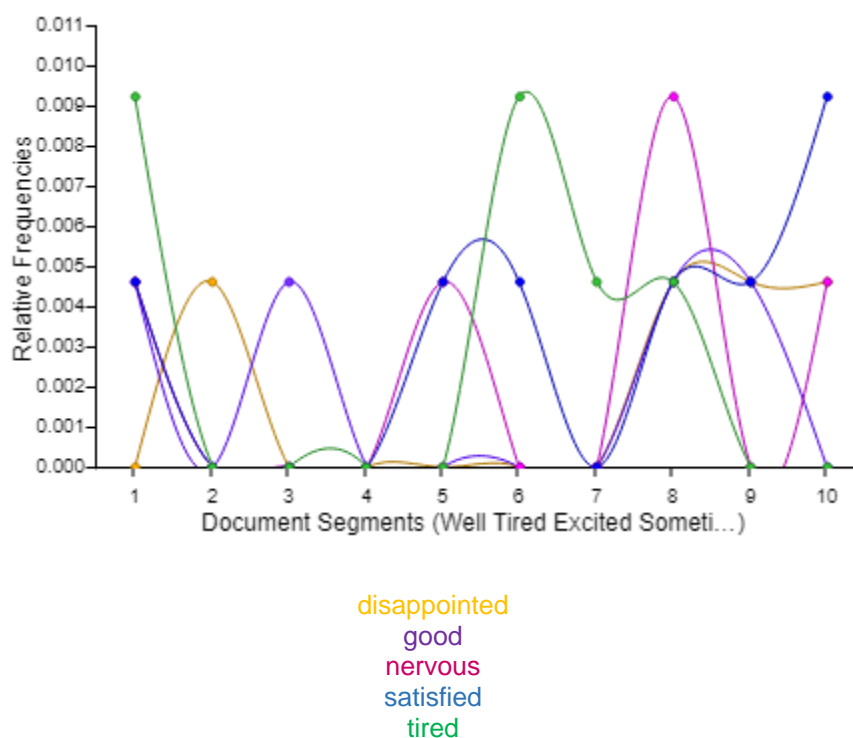


Figure 6.: Trend tool summarizing responses- Feeling after playing the game

Source: Formulated by Author using Voyant Tools (2022)

There were 58 responses to the question "How do you feel after playing the game?" There were 217 terms and 117 unique word forms found in the tool analysis of all responses. The vocabulary density, defined as the ratio of the number of words in the text to the number of unique terms, is 0.539, indicating that simpler language with repeated words is used. The readability index of the evaluated textual responses is 13.217, and the average words per sentence is 7.4, indicating that they were concise and written in simple language. Most common terms in the corpus: satisfied (7); weary (6); nervous (5); disappointed (4); good (4); excited (3); new (3); content (2); cool (2); frustrated (2). Trends is a line graph that depicts the frequency distribution of a term throughout a corpus or set of publications. After reviewing the trend tool and corpus summary, it is clear from the frequency distribution of the most

used terms that 63 percent of the participants used a negative feeling to characterize their experience, such as disappointed, nervous, tired, or a combination of these terms. Only 37% felt positive feelings such as Good or satisfied to describe their encounter.

One of the last question was „Does the game have and if so, what are the after-effects? ” (We meant actions like kicking the controller, etc.). Results are illustrated on Figure 7.

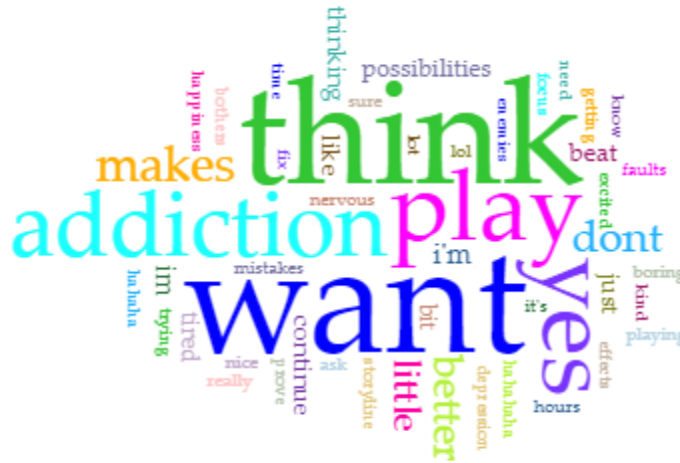


Figure 7.: Collocates graph summarizing responses- Feeling after playing the game

Source: Formulated by Author using Voyant Tools (2022)

All 64 responses to the question "Does the game have and, if so, what are the after-effects?" were analyzed using Voyant's tool, yielding 273 total words and 102 different word forms. The vocabulary density, or the ratio of words to distinct words in the text, is 0.374, indicating the usage of repetitious, plain language. The readability index for the analyzed textual responses is 7.003, and the average number of words per sentence is 6.83, indicating that the comments were short and employed straightforward language. The most frequent words in the corpus are think (16); want (15); play (8); addiction (7); yes (7). The analysis of the corpus summary, most frequent words, and word cloud suggests that 25 percent of players found it thought-provoking, and 35 percent of players found it addictive, so they want to continue playing. According to the analysis of the corpus summary, most frequently used words, and word cloud, 46% of players found the game to be thought-provoking, and 37% of players said they found the game to be addicting or that they wanted to keep playing. Only 17% of players said the game was boring, had flaws, or was difficult.

Final question was „What do you think about the game”. We meant how do they consider the game at all? Here we assumed that mostly they have good/positive feelings about that (Figure 8).

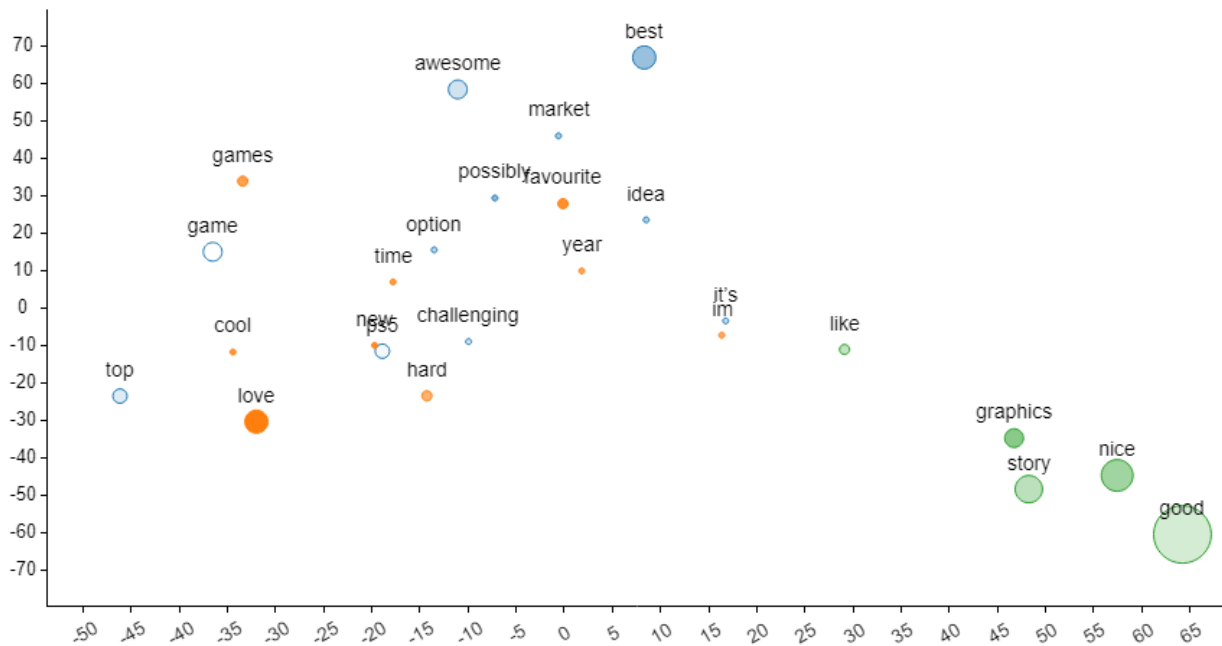


Figure 8.: Scatter plot summarizing responses- Feeling when you play the game

Source: Formulated by Author using Voyant Tools (2022)

The question “What do you think about the game?” received 71 responses. Voyant's tool analysis of the responses uncovered 335 total words and 134 unique word forms. The vocabulary density was calculated to be 0.400, which indicates the use of repetitive terms in a simpler language. The readability index for the evaluated textual responses was 7.966 and the average number of words per sentence was 8.5, indicating that most responses consisted of brief phrases with simple vocabulary. The following words appear frequently in the corpus: good (14), nice (8), story (7), best (6), and bests (6). A thorough examination of the corpus summary and scatter plot reveals over half of all respondents expressed positive sentiments such as feeling good or nice. The storyline, adventure, and graphic appeal of the game received high reviews from 32% of gamers. Only 18% of those polled thought the game was difficult or the plot was dull.

4. Conclusions

The objective of this qualitative online research was to explore the underlying motives and characteristics behind roguelike games. It was quite difficult to reach the respondents, we had serious limitations when recording, and even the answers were mostly short. Returnal is special one, because it captivates the audience with its eerie sci-fi aesthetic, roguelike format and surreal story, many moving parts coming together to create a rare shooter that grips the player. While playing the game, many players are disappointed because it is very difficult due to the unique gameplay, but real players want to overcome the obstacles in their way at all costs. This leads to the fact that, despite all the difficulties, the fascinating story presented in Returnal is somewhat addictive, since until the end the player wants to play it again and again. At first glance, this may seem like a terrible thing, but it is actually something that tickles a certain part of the psyche. Roguelike remains a layered genre for this very reason, as it causes frustration for many when their character, which they have developed for several hours, suddenly dies, and they

cannot continue the adventure from the same place, but have to start from the beginning, but approx. at the same time, there are those who are driven by the challenge and want to win at all costs, this will be their territory.

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