Practicing Octalysis

*The comparison of an Octalysis analysis versus Metacritic’s reviews*

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Abstract (en)

This thesis analyzes how well an analysis using the Octalysis framework of a game coincides with the reviews given by critics and users on Metacritic. The authors have analyzed four games in two different genres, to see if Octalysis is an efficient tool to analyze with. Octalysis is a gamification tool, where the core of Octalysis lies in eight different core drives which are designed to focus on player motivation. The two genres present two games each, whereas one of the games received a Metascore of 80 or higher and the other game a Metascore of 50 or lower. The two genres for this thesis are FPS and platformer games. In the FPS genre the authors analyzed *Half-Life 2* and *Deus Ex: The Fall*. In the platformer genre the authors analyzed *Ori and the Blind Forest* and *Sonic the Hedgehog 2006*. Through the Octalysis analysis the authors concluded that Octalysis looks at systems that can be divided into the eight different core drives. Octalysis cannot see smaller aspects of a game individually, such as the graphics and the feeling the music is trying to convey. Octalysis puts these smaller aspects into systems such as the Epic Meaning & Calling core drive, in which the art and music of the game works with the narrative to create a compelling story which motivates the player to save the world. Octalysis is a tool that works best for designing retention mechanics, which in hindsight is all about player motivation. Games that do not focus on player retention will not be able to use Octalysis to its fullest potential.

Keywords: Octalysis, Metacritic, FPS, Platformer, Retention, Core Drives
Abstract (sv)


Nyckelord: Octalysis, Metacritic, FPS, Platformer, Retention, Core Drives
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1. Introduction

The authors have analyzed four games with the Octalysis framework to understand how well an analysis using the Octalysis framework coincides with the rating given by the reviews on Metacritic.

Octalysis is a gamification framework that helps designers create user retention by focusing on human motivation. The framework defines eight core drives that each focuses on different yet intertwining aspects that represents different ways of motivating people.

The authors decided to practice Octalysis in game development to see how well it worked outside of gamification purposes since the authors are experienced in game development. By writing this thesis the Octalysis framework could potentially become a more known design methodology in Sweden. The authors decided to conduct a study on the Octalysis framework to see if it has any further areas of use, such as identifying why a game has been successful or unsuccessful, besides being a gamification tool for creating retention.

Initially the authors planned to do a theoretical comparison analysis with Octalysis in focus. To achieve a result, the authors decided to face Octalysis against the more common and efficiently proven design methodologies, MDA and O.C.E.A.N. This fell short since that would be a purely theoretical thesis with no practical display of Octalysis. The authors decided to test out Octalysis in a more practical manner, which resulted in the chosen topic for this thesis.

Four games have been chosen and paired up in groups of two depending on their target audience and genre. Each group of two contains one well received game and one badly received game.

The purpose of this thesis is to see how well the Octalysis framework coincides with the popular ratings of the chosen games. The authors of this thesis have analyzed the games with the Octalysis framework in order to see how well the games fulfill the framework’s criterias.

The Octalysis analysis of the chosen games are then compared and analyzed against the scores and reviews that they have received on Metacritic to see how well Octalysis can be used to identify the aspects of the games that gave them their scores, to ultimately see if Octalysis can be used to identify which aspects of a game that makes it popular.
2. Glossary of Terms

**FPS** - First Person Shooter.

**NPC** - Non-Player Character.

**Easter eggs** - Hidden areas, objects or NPCs.

**Metascore** - The final score given to a game based on a minimum of 4 critic reviews made by industry critics. Each game has two Metascores, one given by the critics and one given by the users.

**Positive/mixed/negative Metascore** - Metascore is between 0 and 100 for the critic reviews and between 0.0 and 10.0 for the user reviews. Positive score is above 75 and 7.5. Mixed is between 50-74 and 5.0-7.4. A negative score is below 49 and 4.9.

**Achievement hunters** - Players who strive to complete all the achievements a game provides. These types of players can also be called perfectionists.

**AoE** - Area of Effect.

**RPG** - Role Playing Game.

**Game system** - An aspect of a game that consists of several mechanics. For example a game system can be a loot system or a character level system.

**MMO** - Massively Multiplayer Online.

**PBL** - Points, Badges and Leaderboards.

**PvP** - Player vs Player.

**Gamification** - The method of applying game design elements in non-game contexts to create a more enjoyable experience from a motivational standpoint.

**mHealth** - Meaning Mobile Health, is used for practicing medicine and public health on mobile devices.
3. Background

3.1 Additional studies on Octalysis

3.1.1 Westminster Serious Games Platform, a tool for real-time authoring of roleplay simulations for learning.

The authors of this paper, D. Economou, I. Doumanis, F. Pedersen, P. Kathrani, M. Mentzelopoulos, V. Bouki and N. Georgalas presented the wmin-SPG (Westminster Serious Games Platform) which is a tool that allows educators and domain experts who have no knowledge within game design and development technical skills to create roleplay simulations in three dimensional scenes featuring fully embodied virtual humans capable of verbal and non-verbal interactions with users fit for specific educational objectives.

The experts of the paper evaluated the results of the wmin-SPG against Octalysis core drives. This process was based on six expert users using the Octalysis Tool. The idea for the assessment was to analyze the wmin-SPG play mode features as well as the editing tools that were used to create bespoke game simulations. The experts provided a score for each core drive of Octalysis for the wmin-SPG tools and a short summary justifying the evaluated number the experts provided through the Octalysis Tool.

The paper concluded that the gamified aspects created with the help of the Octalysis framework created a fairly balanced simulation that could have lead to the creation of motivating and engaging experiences. Although the Octalysis framework helped in creating a motivating and engaging experience, it was not able to evaluate the effectiveness of learning (Economou et al. 2016).

3.1.2 Classification of Stress Management mHealth Apps Based on Octalysis Framework

The authors of this paper, Shaimaa Ewais and Ala Alluhaidan used the Octalysis gamification framework to identify how the top rated stress management applications addresses the motivational drives that reward users intrinsically. The authors looks at how gamification has been applied in mHealth applications, which intrinsic motivations that uses self-determination theories, methodologies and findings. Discussed in the paper are different design principles which are more fitting to boost the intrinsic motivations for users who looks for self-stress management.

For the study the authors chose the top twelve mHealth applications for the 2014 and used the Octalysis framework to identify the different game strategies used in the chosen applications to identify the main core drives that focus on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

The authors concluded in their paper that by using the Octalysis framework they were able to
identify that most of the applications they looked at used more extrinsic motivations than intrinsic motivations to help the users with self-stress management. They argued that the intrinsic motivations could be undermined by the overuse of extrinsic motivations. The authors argue that the applications should design for empowerments such as choice perception and voluntary autonomy (S. Ewais, A. Alluhaidan 2015).

3.1.3 Applying gamification to drive persuasion of dating apps: A literature study

The author of this paper, Kien Nguyen, looked into dating apps and how they can be gamified in the purpose of creating more engaging experiences which are linear to the users’ routines and habits. The analysis conducted by the author was done through Yu-kai Chou’s gamification framework, Octalysis, with the purpose of studying how dating applications can utilize game mechanics in context of the motivational aspects of the users. The goal of the paper was to look at gamification in the context of dating applications.

The author used Bartle’s four player types (Bartle 1996) theory in addition to the Octalysis framework to identify the game elements help in creating more engaging experiences which are linear to the users’ routines and habits.

The paper concluded that gamification is a strong method to attract users if there is motivation to act. The author argues that to gamify an application requires a great understanding of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations and how they together can create motivation for the users. If used incorrectly, the author argues that gamification can lead to critical negative experiences. According to the author utilizing Octalysis’ Black Hat motivations can be risky and should be quickly followed with frequent White Hat gamification techniques to continued engagement by the users (K. Nguyen n.d).

3.2 Disclaimers

The thesis used a small sample of only four games. With a bigger sample the results may have turned out differently. The authors might not know every aspect to the games that may lead to faulty analysis of the games. The scores and reviews on Metacritic may be biased towards some of the games as both the critic reviews and user reviews are written by individuals with different preferences and personalities. The authors’ knowledge of the Octalysis framework might not be to the fullest extent which can lead to faulty analysis and conclusions. The Octalysis framework contains several levels that can be used to analyze games, the higher the level the more in-depth and complicated it becomes. The authors only used the first and most basic level of Octalysis in this thesis and had they used a higher level of Octalysis, the results and conclusion might have been different.

A Metascore is provided once four critic reviews have been submitted. This resulted in some games having significantly more reviews both on critic reviews as well as user reviews. For instance, Half-Life 2 had 81 critic reviews and 1921 user reviews. The authors could not go through every review, which lead to undiscovered information about the game which could have aided in the outcome of the study.
3.3 Octalysis & the Eight Core Drives

3.3.1 Octalysis Summary
Octalysis is a human-focuses gamification framework. The entire framework focuses on motivating people. Through eight core drives Octalysis helps games and other businesses to create retention systems to motivate users to return and have fun while working, playing or shopping. The framework is split up in eight core drives that each focuses on separate yet intertwined aspects that help designers to create user retention in most businesses. The author, Yu-kai Chou wrote about Octalysis in his book *Actionable Gamification* (Chou 2015).

3.3.2 Core Drive 1 - Epic Meaning & Calling
The first core drive is all about selfless acts. This core drive motivates people to take actions that have no guaranteed extrinsic rewards and may even hurt themselves during those actions. Epic Meaning & Calling is all about the greater good, motivating people to save the world, volunteer and contribute to something for the greater good of humanity.

Yu-Kai Chou argues that people are more likely to fight for something if given a reason that is larger than themselves. Even though they do not have a guaranteed extrinsic reward, the intrinsic rewards of satisfaction and pride will be enough for them to work hard.

Chou gives an example where he talks about school rivalries and how that elitism can motivate the students to take action. Chou argues that elitism can instill group pride in being from a certain group, whether that is based on beliefs, common interest or ethnicity. Chou continues talking about the University that he attended, UCLA (the University of California, Los Angeles) and their rivals, USC (University of Southern California). This rivalry and pride that the students felt, led for example to many students who were not even interested in sports to attend the matches between their university and their rivals (Chou 2015: 64).

3.3.3 Core Drive 2 - Development & Accomplishment
The second core drive drives people by growth and accomplishment of their goals. This core drive motivates people by showing how far they have come and how much they have grown. This core drive is what motivates people towards certain career paths, to learn new languages and new skills.

Chou talks about PBLs and how these can be implemented into the design to further support the Development & Accomplishment core drive.

Chou argues that this core drive is the easiest one to design for, one of the reasons are that the developers can implement PBLs to clearly show the user’s progress. These PBLs are very popular in all kinds of games, especially MMOs that usually have PvP leaderboards and achievements.

3.3.4 Core Drive 3 - Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback
The third core drive is all about the player’s creativity and how that freedom of creativity can fuel their motivation to take action. A good example of this how both kids and grownups can enjoy something as simple as Legos. With Legos almost anything imaginable is a possibility
and this freedom of creativity is rewarded with accomplishment, pride and a good sense of fun. The second part of the Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback is about the instant feedback that usually comes with activities that have a strong focus on creativity; in the example of Legos, the second the child starts building their battleship they are able to witness the progress and when they finally put the final piece on their battleship they receive the visual feedback and the emotional feedback.

3.3.5 Core Drive 4 - Ownership & Possession
The Ownership & Possession core drive is all about a person’s earthly possessions and the pride that is taken in those possessions. When someone has ownership over a certain object they feel more protective about it and that motivates them to hold onto it and perhaps even upgrade it. This can be seen very clearly in RPGs where the players feels ownership over their in-game character and its possessions. The players feel a sense of pride over their character in its items and feel motivated to improve their character.

This core drive also connects very directly with second core drive, Development & Accomplishment, for when someone receives a trophy for accomplishing a goal they feel pride in that trophy as it is a physical evidence of their development and accomplishment.

3.3.6 Core Drive 5 - Social Influence & Relatedness
Social influence is something that affects all human beings, being driven by what other people think, say and do is something familiar to all of us. This core drive is all about social themes such as envy, companionship and mentorship.

Chou gives an example in Actionable Gamification of this social influence in action where a study was done on the power of social influence. In that study it turned out that people who stayed at hotels with a sign that said that 75% of the other guests who had stayed in that exact room had reused their towels. After the social norm had been established, the future guests became 25% more likely to reuse their towels. This shows both the power of social influence and relatedness as the guests who read the sign felt a companionship with the other guests who had stayed there and felt a responsibility to also reuse their towels (Chou 2015: 145).

3.3.7 Core Drive 6 - Scarcity & Impatience
What drives the Scarcity & Impatience core drive is the perceived value of something, whether that is time, resources or objects. The lack of a resource or an object can motivate people to take actions to gain the object or use their resources wisely.

3.3.8 Core Drive 7 - Unpredictability & Curiosity
The seventh core drive is about the addiction to the unpredictability in gambling. The slight chance of winning and the high risk of losing is exhilarating and drives people to explore with a sense of curiosity.

It is curiosity that drives us to explore the unknown, travel to strange lands and try out new things. Once a pattern has been noticed by the person in question, their motivation from this core drive starts to fall off.
3.3.9 Core Drive 8 - Loss & Avoidance
The last core drive is what motivates people to keep their possessions safe; people do not want to lose precious belongings. Whether those belongings are objects such as trophies and money or relationships that they do not want to lose. This core drive has a strong correlation with the fourth core drive, Ownership & Possession that motivates people to protect and improve what they own.

3.4 White Hat & Black Hat
The eight core drives are split up in two different groups, White Hat core drives and Black Hat core drives.

The White Hat core drives are usually seen as positive reinforcement as they make people feel good about themselves and their achievements. The core drives that belong to the White Hat group are the following core drives.
- Epic Meaning & Calling
- Development & Accomplishment
- Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback

Black Hat core drives are core drives that create addiction and helps in retaining the users. These core drives, unlike the White Hat core drives usually do not make the users feel good about themselves or their achievements. The core drives that belong to this group are the following core drives.
- Scarcity & Impatience
- Unpredictability & Curiosity
- Loss & Avoidance

3.5 Left Brain & Right Brain
The eight core drives are once again split up into two different groups. Left Brain core drives and Right Brain core drives.

The Right Brain core drives are those core drives that require no extrinsic rewards such as money or trophies to make people feel motivated to do something. Allowing the creativity to flow or having fun with friends is enough for these core drives to motivate people. The core drives that belong to this group are the following core drives.
- Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback
- Social Influence & Relatedness
- Unpredictability & Curiosity
The Left Brain core drives are those that reward people with extrinsic rewards such as money or trophies. They are usually related to logic, ownership and analytical thought. The core drives that belong to this group are the following core drives.

- Development & Accomplishment
- Ownership & Possession
- Scarcity & Impatience

The Left and Right Brain core drives are in no way related to the actual biology of our brains, it is just the position of the core drives in the octagon that visually represents Octalysis.
3.6 Octalysis tool

Figure 1: How a filled out version of the Octalysis Tool might look like.

Presented above is the Octalysis Tool. As shown, all different core drives are presented, depending on the score the core drive received (0-10) the blue areas are decreased or increased, the lighter blue around the octagon is a display of the max area the blue can cover and what it would look like if all core drives received a maximum score of 10 on each core drive (these numbers have been set from the authors’ personal opinions, they are not in any way scientific numbers). In this example the follow score has been provided.

1. **Epic Meaning & Calling**: 10
2. **Development & Accomplishment**: 0
3. **Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback**: 0
4. **Ownership & Possession**: 6
5. **Social Influence & Relatedness**: 4
6. **Scarcity & Impatience**: 0
7. **Unpredictability & Curiosity**: 0
8. **Loss & Avoidance**: 2
3.7 Metacritic

Metacritic is a non-scientific site that reviews games based on the world’s largest game critics opinions on games. Metacritic takes all these reviews made by game critics, combine them and assign a score to the games that becomes the official Metascore. Metacritic also applies a summary of every review that can be read on their site as a preview, with a link to the original critic’s site where the entire review can be read.

“The result is a single number that captures the essence of critical opinion in one Metascore. Each movie, game, television show and album featured on Metacritic gets a Metascore when we've collected at least four critics' reviews.” (Metacritic, About Metascores)

There is also a forum for user reviews, where users can pour out their thoughts about their experience of the game into the official page of the game on Metacritic, for other users to read before deciding upon purchasing the product. After a quick review made by the users, they can also assign a score (0-10) of their perception of the game.

Figure 2: Critic and user reviews regarding Half-Life 2 on Metacritic.
4. Method

Octalysis was broken down into eight different core drives. The eight core drives was applied onto several different games, in different genres and Metacritic ratings, to see if Octalysis could measure why a game had succeeded contra failed. To achieve a result and conclusion, the process was divided into three steps.

The subjects of this study were four different games in two different genres and Octalysis. The games were primarily used to see the effectiveness in Octalysis ability to break down the games to see where they were flawed as well as good in comparison to how well the games were perceived on Metacritic. Octalysis was the other subject of this thesis, to see if Octalysis actually could be used in this type of analysis.

The games the authors chose for this study were for the FPS genre, *Half-Life 2* and *Deus Ex: The Fall*. For the platformer genre the games chosen were *Ori and the Blind Forest* and *Sonic the Hedgehog 2006*. The reason why these particular games were chosen was because the authors wanted two different genres. In each genre the authors wanted two games where one had a high Metacritic score (above 80) and one with low Metacritic score (below 50), to see how well Octalysis functioned in different genres as well as poorly perceived games contra well perceived games.

The type of method was created with the help of a test run where an Octalysis analysis was conducted on a game that both the authors had played for around 500 hours. After the test run the authors noticed that they had analyzed the game too in-depth and would not be able to do such an analysis on the games used for this study as they had not played those games as long. By doing a test run, the authors realized to which extensive depth the Octalysis analysis could be done on all the chosen games for this study to keep it consistent and linear without going into too much detail on some of the games. This was done to make sure the depth of the analysis stayed consistent over the different games the authors analyzed.

4.1 Method - Step One

Firstly the authors summarized both the critic and user reviews on Metacritic to use as a base for the comparison between the Metacritic score and the Octalysis analysis of the games. The authors summarized the written reviews and focused on the aspects that the majority argued for.

4.2 Method - Step Two

After the reviews had been summarized, the Octalysis framework was applied onto the games, to see according to the core drives, where the games were flawed or where the games excelled. When the authors applied Octalysis to the games, they did so in an analytical overview fashion. The authors looked at the game systems as a whole rather than going in-depth in each game system.
4.3 Method - Step Three

The authors compared the reviews from Metacritic to the Octalysis analysis to see the differences between them. From the comparison the authors analyzed in what aspects Octalysis excelled and what aspects Octalysis was weak in and the reason behind Octalysis weaknesses and strengths.

![Figure 3: A picture showcasing the authors’ method.](image)

4.4 Equipment

*Half-Life 2* was published and developed by Valve Corporation and was released on PC on the 16th of November 2004.

*Deus Ex: The Fall* was published by Square Enix and developed by N-Fusion Interactive and was released on PC on the 18th of March 2014.

*Sonic the Hedgehog 2006* was published Sega and developed by Sonic Team and was released on Xbox 360 on the 24th of November 2006.

*Ori and the Blind Forest* was published by Microsoft Studios and developed by Moon Studios and was released on PC on the 11th of March 2015.

*Actionable Gamification* was published by Octalysis Media and sold by Amazon Media EU and released on 16th of April 2015 (Kindle Edition).
5. Result

5.1 Metacritic’s Opinion on *Half-Life 2*

*Half-Life 2*, just like its predecessor, has found great success with both fans and professional critics on Metacritic. The game received a Metascore of 96 out of 100 from the critics and 9.2 out of 10.0 from the user reviews on Metacritic. At the time this study was performed there was 81 critic reviews, whereof all of them were positive reviews, and 8863 user reviews, whereof 90% of those reviews were positive reviews.

Both the user reviews and the critic reviews have praised the game for its story, gameplay mechanics and graphics. It is reasonable to summarize the reviews as saying that *Half Life 2* revolutionized the FPS genre, not by doing anything new, but combining so many different techniques and mechanics and combining them so good that the game received an almost perfect score.

“Six years since *Half-Life* rewrote the book on first-person shooters by combining a cinematic presentation with gripping combat and a detailed world with memorable characters. It wasn't necessarily the first game to do all these things, but it was the first do them all together, and do them all well. And in those six years, many games have cribbed from the *Half-Life* formula, but not even the best of them have been able to fully eclipse it.

Until now, that is. From its opening moments to its spectacular closing sequences, *Half-Life 2* assaults you with a variety of gameplay styles and memorable moments, all executed with amazing precision.” (Accardo 2004: 1)
5.2 Octalysis Review of Half-Life 2

Figure 4: An edited picture showcasing the Octalysis Tool for Half-Life 2.
5.2.1 Epic Meaning & Calling

The series that is *Half-Life* is particularly praised and highly appreciated due to the change to the FPS genre *Half-Life* incorporated in their titles. An FPS game that is heavily reliant on narrative and immersive story is what made *Half-Life* stand out from the other countless FPS games. By having a continuous compelling narrative throughout their games that connects the different titles of *Half-Life*, the games became one of the greatest FPS games of all time.

Gordon Freeman became somewhat of a hero throughout the course of the first game by saving the world from an alien race that attacked Earth. The ending of *Half-Life 1* indicates that Freeman’s mission was complete, and he was put into stasis for decades to come.

In *Half-Life 2* Freeman was brought back to consciousness by the G-Man, only to find out that the world is once again in danger and needs Freemans help.

"Rise and shine, Mr. Freeman. Rise and shine. Not that I wish to imply you have been sleeping on the job. No one is more deserving of a rest. And all the effort in the world would have gone to waste until... well, let’s just say your hour has come again. The right man in the wrong place can make all the difference in the world. So, wake up, Mr. Freeman. Wake up and smell the ashes."

This is a strong motivation for the Epic Meaning & Calling core drive. Freeman is the only one suited for this job, making him the one person that can save the world from the monsters. He is instantly portrayed as a hero, a protector of mankind. The idea to put the game in a first person mode, the player feels like he or she is the character they are playing. They become the hero and the only one that can save mankind from the horrific creatures that are attacking the world.

5.2.2 Development & Accomplishment

*Half-Life 2* offers a vast variety of content to keep the players pleased and motivated. The game is driven by an action filled narrative that keeps the players engaged throughout the game where both the characters develop and accomplish their goals as well as the players. The game contains such rich story with many small details that players might miss during their first playthrough. Small details that can only be noticed when interacting with certain NPCs, interacting with certain objects in the world or simply listening in on two NPCs while they are talking to each other.

*Half-Life 2* has 33 achievements that motivates all the achievement-hunters to play the game more than once in order to complete all of the achievements. Some of these achievements are completed by just following the linear story of the game, some are tied to battle and some are about exploring the open world of the game.

The achievements are not the only part of the game that keeps players replaying the game several times after they have already finished the story once. There are many secret areas and easter eggs that the more dedicated players can hunt down to receive either more details about the story or the world that the game sets in.
5.2.3 Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback

*Half-Life* 2 is a game full of interactive environments. The player can really push the limits of gameplay by experimenting with the environment and guns, and how they can interact with each other. The developers of *Half-Life* 2 really pushed the limits of the FPS genre by creating alive and dynamic environments.

This emphasizes this core drive to a great extent, by allowing the players to find intuitive and new ways to slay enemies they encounter. The gravity gun is a weapon that has created a lot of new intuitive ways of killing. By enabling so much interaction in the environment and the purpose of the gravity gun (grabbing objects to throw at enemies) resulted in videos focusing and showcasing the weapon.

“The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur.”

— Adam Smith, The Wealth Of Nations (Chou 2015: 91)

By progressing in the story, the game becomes more difficult to create a challenge to the players, enemies possessing the ability to throw grenades for instance. The community realized the grenades could be absorbed mid-air, and thrown back at the enemies before the grenade exploding, using the weapons of the enemies to kill the enemies. Intuitive and experimental gameplay rewards players trying out new things. Although this was not a big part of the game, it slowly became just that, when players realized how many different ways there were to actually kill enemies. People became empowered to try different ways of winning, to hopefully display a new way of slaying enemies that nobody had done before.

5.2.4 Ownership & Possession

*Half-Life* 2 does not offer many ways to motivate players through this core drive with the exception of the achievements. Though some of the achievements are not difficult at all, or even given for free when just following the storyline, some of the achievements can be very difficult to complete and having those trophies as proof of one’s progress and accomplished goals can be very dear to some of the more hardcore achievement-hunters.

5.2.5 Social Influence & Relatedness

Just like the Ownership & Possession core drive, *Half-Life* 2 does not offer much to motivate players through the social influence part. Though some achievement-hunters might compare the amount of achievements they have finished with their friends.

The second part of this core drive, relatedness, had a strong effect on how well the game sold. As *Half-Life* 1 was a huge success, players expected a lot from the sequel, that nostalgia combined with the trailers and gameplay footage that was released prior to the release of *Half-Life* 2 could have led to an increase in sales. Although the sales is not the only aspect that increased due to the prequel. In the event if a player found the sequel to be a boring game, they might have played it through just to experience the continued story from the first game.
5.2.6 Scarcity & Impatience

*Half-Life 2* does not play on this core drive too much; the only argument that can be brought here is that players might feel impatient to get ahead in the story or experience the rest of the game. Though that factor is not a system and so the Scarcity & Impatience core drive is not utilized in *Half-Life 2*.

5.2.7 Unpredictability & Curiosity

*Half-Life 2*, being a single player game with a linear story, the curiosity of the unfolding story is something that creates interest to see how the story progresses and what happens to the characters in the story. This empowers hours of play in one sitting, and that is what emphasizes this core drive. Wanting to know more about the unknown, which in this case is the unfolded part of the story.

*Half-Life 2* has a lot of different environments, mechanics, weapons and tools the player can experience. Linear to the progress of the story, the game introduces new environments, vehicles, guns and monsters the player can interact with in different ways. This is where the unpredictability section of this core drive comes into play. By never knowing what will be introduced and always keeping the player intrigued with new weapons, vehicles and environments, players are encouraged to continue playing and evidently be introduced to new aspects of the game.

5.2.8 Loss & Avoidance

Loss and Avoidance is usually deeply connected to the Ownership & Possession core drive and as *Half-Life 2* does not play on that core drive deeply, Loss & Avoidance naturally falls with it. There is nothing that the player can lose by either dying except for their own time (as it then takes longer to finish the current mission). The game’s linear story and gameplay simply holds no room for any possessions (except for the achievements, though they cannot be lost) and so there exists no real system for the Loss & Avoidance core drive.

*Half-Life 2* has no systems that supports any loss for the players, such as losing experience or currency. However the players can get immersed into the story and the personal relationships between Freeman and the other characters which can create a motivation to protect those other characters. Although this can motivate players to take certain actions, the players’ actions does not affect the outcome of the story in any way.
5.3 Metacritic’s opinion on *Deus Ex: The Fall*

Unlike its predecessor and sequel, *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, *The Fall* was not at all well received. With many bugs, bad controls, an uninteresting protagonist and mediocre gameplay the game was mostly a disappointment to most fans of the series.

*The Fall* has received a Metascore of 45 out of 100 from critics and 2.9 out of 10 from the user reviews on Metacritic. At the time that this study was performed there was 14 critic reviews, whereof seven of them were negative and seven mixed, and 29 user reviews, whereof 20 were negative, seven mixed and two positive.

Both the critic reviews and user reviews have large complaints about the port from the mobile platform to PC. The reviews reported that the PC version contained many bugs, has large issues with the smoothness of the controls and a few more technical issues. Other than technical issues the reviews talked about other factors that partook in the low score such as instead of having to look up a vendor the players could just buy ammunition and upgrade the characters body augmentations directly from the menu (which was available at any time during the game) and those items instantly arrived in the player’s unlimited inventory. This resulted that the preparation phase before missions were no longer necessary and for some of the reviewers this ruined the immersion that had always existed in the Deus Ex games. The reviews did however compliment the multi-optional play styles that the players could rely on, such as fighting through with heavy firearms or stealth their way through the missions.

But overall, both the critic reviews as well as the user reviews thought *The Fall* to be a complete disappointment, especially when compared to the other Deus Ex games.
5.4 Octalysis Review of *Deus Ex: The Fall*

![An edited picture showcasing the Octalysis Tool for Deus Ex: The Fall.](image)

*Figure 5: An edited picture showcasing the Octalysis Tool for Deus Ex: The Fall.*
5.4.1 Epic Meaning & Calling

*The Fall* does not introduce a story that is about saving the world. Ben Saxon starts his adventures for a drug to keep himself and his companion, Anna Kelso, alive. This is a more selfish reason to fight when compared to games like *Half-Life 2* where the protagonist is portrayed as the only one that can save the world. Instead, in *The Fall*, Saxon is the only one that can save Kelso, which does fall into the theme of this core drive, but it does not portray the same level of emotion in the player as a game like *Half-Life 2*.

5.4.2 Development & Accomplishment

This core drive is one of the strongest core drives to *Deus Ex: The Fall*. Playing a protagonist in a game such as *The Fall*, the player always strives to execute the game in the best manner possible. Character development is also something that strengthens the bond to the protagonist. In *The Fall* the player can level up your character by performing well in the game and executing missions. The player can also upgrade the body augmentations of Ben Saxon which changes the gameplay due to the addition of new weapons, abilities to use and such.

Steam achievements are also obtainable through gameplay, which is a reward that can be compared to other players. Some of the achievements are obtained through the linear gameplay story that *The Fall* offers, but some also rewards the players taking the time to finish the side missions that the game offers. This is also linear to the progression of the story which is about finishing quests, overcoming obstacles and getting closer to finishing the game.

5.4.3 Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback

*Deus Ex* games are all known for their gameplay much more than a unique narrative or amazing graphics, not to say that the *Deus Ex* games lack in any of those department.

The gameplay that the *Deus Ex* games have given the players are full of different options. Whether that is taking a stealthy approach or killing anyone who gets in their way, it is all up to the player.

Though perhaps with a few flaws, *The Fall* has continued to follow this theme. Allowing players to take stealthy approaches or firing down the enemies. *The Fall* has this multi-optional approach to almost every aspect in the game.

This type of multi-optional gameplay creates for unique playthroughs where the players can either try out new playstyles or get through the game with their favorite playstyle; and the more curious players can even find almost hidden ways of completing missions if they take their time and let their creativity flow.
5.4.4 Ownership & Possession
Deus Ex does not have much of core drive four in the game at all, there are not many aspects
of the game the player can feel ownership over, nor possession. However Deus Ex: The Fall
is based on missions. Finish missions to progress through the story and the game, to
eventually finishing it. You can finish the quests in different fashion, which could reward the
player with steam achievements depending on how you finished the mission.

The game also offers side missions, which are not progressing the story, but offers more
narrative to the player, and these can also be finished in a fashion that makes the player able
to obtain more steam achievements for their efforts.

This is something that the player can feel ownership and possession over, due to the fact that
it is rewards for the player itself, due to his or hers efforts in the game. For example, finishing
a mission without taking any damage, or finishing a mission without being seen once.

5.4.5 Social Influence & Relatedness
Just like Half-Life 2, The Fall is quite weak when it comes to Social Influence. Other than the
steam achievements that can be shown to friends there is not anything else to support this part
of Octalysis.

The Fall does play a lot on the second part of this core drive. The Deus Ex series has been
quite popular for many years and that is a big factor in why people both buy games and play
through them (even if they find that game to be boring). What that means for The Fall is that,
even though it’s below average gameplay and graphics, because the game is connected to the
Deus Ex narrative and world, some people might still play through the game to gain insight
into the story that this game offers simply because the story is connected to the other Deus Ex
games.

5.4.6 Scarcity & Impatience
For those players who wish to upgrade their characters can do so by upgrading the character’s
body augmentations through the game menu. The upgrades require both a certain character
level and some in-game currency that are quite limited. The players can gain experience
towards higher levels and currency from both the main quests and side quests.

5.4.7 Unpredictability & Curiosity
As in any multi-linear or linear story such as Deus Ex: The Fall, this core drive is
automatically involved in the game to a great extent, due to the fact that immersed players are
interested in the outcome of the game.

Wanting to learn more about your favorite character, or see how the world and everything
within it progresses, is a strong motivation to keep playing the game and finding out more
about the story and the characters in the world the player is immersed in.

Even though the two departments of this core drive goes hand in hand, curiosity is a stronger
aspect rather than unpredictability. Players are curious to learn more about the story, resulting
in more hours spent playing the game. In terms of unpredictability, the game is as mentioned
previously, a linear story with a generic narrative that can be seen coming from the experienced player in this genre.

**5.4.8 Loss & Avoidance**

Some motivations such as the relation between Ben Saxon and Anna Kelso could emphasize this core drive, however, as opposed to *Half-Life 2*, where Alyx is a part of the game and certain missions, Kelso is not.

*The Fall’s* linear story is out of the player’s control, thus it has no connection to this core drive. When it comes to the gameplay, when the player dies all that happens is that they have to replay from the last checkpoint; meaning that there is nothing that they lose in the game.

**5.5 Metacritic’s opinion on Sonic the Hedgehog 2006**

“There are popular franchises, there are long-running franchises, and then there are legendary franchises. Sonic is one of the very few names that falls into the latter category, and because of that, we tend to expect a great deal from every new installment.” (Dutka 2007).

The Sonic franchise has been around since the first Sonic game that came out in 1991. Calling a franchise legendary might not be exaggerated, but it does create high expectations for any new Sonic game. *Sonic the Hedgehog 2006* unfortunately failed to meet those expectations, at least according to the low scores on Metacritic. *Sonic the Hedgehog 2006* received a Metascore of 46 out of 100 from the critics and 4.4 out of 10.0 from the user reviews. When this study was performed there were 38 critic reviews, whereof 2 positive, 14 mixed and 22 negative, and 216 user reviews, whereof 55 positive, 40 mixed and 121 negative.

Both the critic and user reviews claimed that the game’s many bugs and unresponsive controls brought the game to an unplayable level. The game’s soundtracks were described as average by most of the critics; the best parts of the game were the well-crafted cinematics, but outside the pre-rendered cinematics everything else disappointed the players.

Leaving the technical issues aside, one new character was introduced in *Sonic the Hedgehog 2006*. Silver was the new character that allowed for some new and fun gameplay that seemed to appeal to the reviewers. Silver’s psychic powers allowed for some interesting platforming puzzles and some unbalanced combat where every single enemy could be carried and thrown to their death.
5.6 Octalysis Review on Sonic the Hedgehog 2006

Figure 6: An edited picture showcasing the Octalysis Tool for Sonic the Hedgehog 2006.
5.6.1 Epic Meaning & Calling

*Sonic the Hedgehog 2006* offers a variety in gameplay. Throughout the gameplay, the player can play three different main characters in three different stories. Two supporting characters are played to the main character for each story. All of these different characters has a personal reason to fight that makes their stories intertwine.

One aspect that enhances this core drive particularly, is a legitimate reason to fight for a legitimate cause, which this game offers.

5.6.2 Development & Accomplishment

A commonly used way to reward the player for playing through a level thoroughly are coins, usually a dozen of them lined up after each other at random places throughout the level. By collecting these the player gets rewarded with either a higher complete score of the level, or currency which can be spent in the game, if that is supported.

These coins are used as currency, and after completing a level, or before starting a new one, these coins can be spent upgrading the character's visual appearance, such as the boots of Sonic, which results in additional powers and abilities added to the character.

As many other games, achievements are obtainable through gameplay. By finishing the game in a particular fashion rewards the player with different achievements which is publicly visible on their profile, displaying the skill of the player for the public to see. This is a motivation to finishing the game with flawless execution, for those players that gather achievements.

5.6.3 Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback

*Sonic the Hedgehog 2006* had many opportunities to allow players to be creative in the game. Unfortunately the developers instead created very linear gameplay and levels were the players only have one choice, to follow the only path. One of the characters in the game, Silver, has psychic powers allowing the players to be a bit more creative in their play style, though once again, the puzzles are very straightforward with only one solution. The combat with Silver however is a bit more unique in that the enemies can be picked up and thrown away at walls or other at other enemies, though that is how far *Sonic the Hedgehog 2006* allows the players to be creative in their playing.

5.6.4 Ownership & Possession

*Sonic the Hedgehog 2006* appeals to this core drive through its achievements that players can feel pride in as some of them are required for the players to complete some challenges in an almost perfect manner.

Other than the achievements the players can purchase some power-ups and upgrades for their characters. Some of the upgrades are mandatory for some of the missions but most of the upgrades are completely optional. The upgrades also comes with a visual update for the characters shoes.
5.6.5 Social Influence & Relatedness

There are no aspects of the first half of the core drive, social influence, which Sonic the Hedgehog 2006 touches on. However, as in many game series, people become loyal to the entire series. Although this requires the past games to be successful. The player has to know that the company behind the series are competent enough to make great games, to keep the players trusting the company, ready to buy any successors the company releases. This is both a positive and negative aspect for the developers. In Sonic the Hedgehog’s case, the bar was set extremely high from their past successful games, meaning the average user will expect more from the developers.

That is where the second part of the core drive, Relatedness, comes in. The sales drove up due to the fans of the Sonic series wanting to play the highly anticipated game, due to their trust the community had built up for the developers. Relatedness to the old games of the Sonic series resulted in great sales for the successor, Sonic the Hedgehog 2006.

5.6.6 Scarcity & Impatience

Whenever a game has an upgrade system to characters and equipment the currency needed for those items tend to be somewhat scarce. In Sonic the Hedgehog 2006 the players need to have completed certain missions to be able to buy some of the upgrades and by the time those missions are completed the amount of currency needed for the upgrades have been collected. By locking the upgrades behind certain missions it creates a motivation to complete those missions as players might be impatient to gain access to those upgrades.

5.6.7 Unpredictability & Curiosity

Sonic the Hedgehog 2006 appeals to this core drive quite well through having three different plot lines that are played with different characters that each have their own unique playstyles. The three plot lines are in their own quite strong aspects to motivate players through curiosity but the different playstyles in addition to the plotlines makes for a strong presence of the Unpredictability & Curiosity core drive.

5.6.8 Loss & Avoidance

Sonic the Hedgehog 2006 has a very limited connection to this core drive. There is not much, other than the fact that Sonic tries to save Elise, the princess of his story. Throughout Sonic’s story he is motivated by finding and saving Elise. A particular scene where Sonic is carrying Elise, he gives up most of his abilities, for instance the lightning fast running mechanic, just to carry Elise to safety through one of the levels in the game.
5.7 Metacritic’s Opinion on Ori and the Blind Forest

Ori and the Blind Forest, the 2D sidescroller platformer has received praise for its graphics from 10 out of 12 critic reviews on Metacritic, as well as most of the user reviews praised the game of its graphics. Not to say that Ori and the Blind Forest has not received praise for its gameplay.

Ori and the Blind Forest has received Metascore of 88 out of 100 from the critics and 8.7 out of 10.0 from the users. When this thesis was written there was 12 critic reviews whereof all of them were positive, and 130 user reviews whereof 115 positive, 13 mixed and two negative.

Aside from the praise for the graphics, the reviews on Metacritic praise Ori and the Blind Forest for its music and sound effects that compliments the art style to create a melancholic mood. The reviews go on talking about the faced paced gameplay that plays so smoothly and with the sound and visuals effects makes the gameplay intense and fun. The open world in Ori and the Blind Forest was both liked and disliked by the reviews, some reviewers mentioned that it created long and boring backtracking while others liked the open world as the backtracking allowed them to explore new places when they received new abilities.
5.8 Octalysis Review on *Ori and the Blind Forest*

Figure 7: An edited picture showcasing the Octalysis Tool for Ori and the Blind Forest.
5.8.1 Epic Meaning & Calling

*Ori and the Blind Forest* has a very strong connection to this core drive. That is primarily because of its very compelling narrative which immerses the player right from the start of the game, to the very finish. Kuro, the nemesis of Ori, casts a shadow over the forest which slowly starts to eat the life of the forest away. Food becomes limited and life starts fading away in the magical forest. Naru becomes sick, and due to the lack of food, slowly starts to perish away.

Naru once saved Ori when Ori was weak and dying, creating a very strong bond between the two. They became one, and throughout the first scenes cinematic they do everything together. When Naru perishes, the motivation to save the forest is at its strongest point, the player suddenly feels an urge to save the forest to avenge the life of the player's friend, Naru.

The beginning of the game shows the life of the forest before it became affected with the disease of the shadow, however the two characters, Ori and Naru, is in strong focus and the story are revolved around them. When Naru perishes, Ori is the only one left, destined to protect the life of the forest. Ori is the only one that is fit to save the life of the forest, which is a very strong motivation to heroes calling.

5.8.2 Development & Accomplishment

*Ori and the Blind Forest* has a few systems to motivate the players through the Development & Accomplishment core drive. Throughout the game the players gain experience towards higher levels and can then spend skill points in the skill tree that boosts Ori’s abilities; some upgrades increase the damage dealt by Ori, some upgrade how long Ori can stay underwater and some increase Ori’s health.

At the end of each chapter of *Ori and the Blind Forest* the players enter a dungeon (for lack of a better word) that both rewards the players a new ability and teaches the players how to use it and finishes up with a big challenge where the player has to use their newly acquired ability to complete it. These new abilities also help the players to traverse the world in new ways and access areas they could not reach before.

The open world of *Ori and the Blind Forest* has the players backtracking quite a few times. Though the players can see certain pathways they cannot always take those paths as they are behind certain barriers that can only be destroyed or jumped passed as Ori gains new abilities, like the double jump or wall climb, which makes that each time the player backtracks it feels like a whole new place as new heights can be reached.

5.8.3 Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback

*Ori and the Blind Forest* has many mechanics to traverse the world and fight the enemies but most of the levels are straightforward and linear which does not have any room for creative gameplay.
5.8.4 Ownership & Possessions

*Ori and the Blind Forest* has a linear story, which means the player has to complete the levels in a particular order to get to the final level and ultimately finish the game. Although there are side missions the player can take to make it even more challenging, such as completing the game without dying once and so on.

These achievements bring forth new challenges to the otherwise linear story, which are displayed on the steam profile of the player in a number and percentage e.g. 33/50 achievements (66 % finished) which is a great motivation to complete for achievement hunters.

5.8.5 Social Influence & Relatedness

The only way *Ori and the Blind Forest* appeals to the Social Influence core drive is through the steam achievements that can be bragged about with friends and could also invoke jealousy if a friend has completed any hard achievements.

5.8.6 Scarcity & Impatience

*Ori and the Blind Forest* has many collectables around the world that increase the player’s maximum health and energy. The health is quite self-explanatory; the energy however has a few different uses. Energy can be used to create dynamic save locations, as the game does not have many save points, which makes for shorter backtracks if the players die. Energy is also used for a special ability that is required to get passed some obstacles.

Experience is also a scarce resource that is required to unlock the entire skill tree, though the game can be finished without unlocking the entire skill tree, meaning that if the players want to unlock the entire skill tree they have to work hard for the required experience.

5.8.7 Unpredictability & Curiosity

*Ori and the Blind Forest* has a map the player can see to get an overview of the areas that has been explored. The areas that has not been explored are entirely covered in black until they have been explored, which is a strong motivation to further explore the world of the forest. The knowledge of the unknown is a strong motivation to learn more about certain things, find objects that has not been explored yet to possibly award the player in some way.

The game is divided into chapters which can be interpreted as levels. By finishing one chapter, another part of the game unlocks which contains a new mission that has to be solved by the player. At the end of each chapter the player’s character (Ori) is rewarded with a new ability such as double jump, stronger damaging projectile etc. Not knowing what the next upgraded ability will be, motivates players to quickly progress through the chapters and the story to unravel new content in the form of new abilities that aids in the characters development.

5.8.8 Loss & Avoidance

*Ori and the Blind Forest* has limited saving points throughout the world. Because of the limited save locations there tends to be some long backtracking upon death. This creates a strong motivation to be careful throughout the game, to avoid long backtracking.
6. Analysis

Figure 8: An edited picture showcasing the overview of the four games in the Octalysis Tool.
6.1 Half-Life 2

*Half-Life 2* has received a lot of praise throughout their game series. The game has justifiably received the highest Metascore of any game ever on PC. By combining elements which at the time was quite uncommon for the FPS genre, Valve revolutionized the FPS genre with their game series Half-Life.

Octalysis managed to identify most of the bigger reasons as to why *Half-Life 2* was so successful. However as in the author's’ analysis of the other games analyzed, Octalysis had issues seeing the technical reasons why *Half-Life 2* was such a successful game.

Empowerment of Creativity and Feedback, the core drive that enabled the player to feel the sense of creativity with the countless ways of interacting with the environment and the combat system, was well recognized by Octalysis, however aspects such as the smoothness of the combat system and the bug-free interaction possibilities with weapons such as the Gravity Gun did not touch on any of the eight core drives.

The Epic Meaning & Calling core drive had quite success with Octalysis. By immersing the player through the eyes of Gordon Freeman, putting forth a legitimate reason to fight for something worth fighting for, the player never questioned the intent of Freeman’s reason to fight. The feeling of being the only one fit to save the world is clearly motivated through the narrative of the story, and easily identified in the Octalysis analysis. Though the narrative motivated Freeman and the players through the large presence of the Epic Meaning & Calling core drive, Octalysis is later on not able to praise the game’s narrative for the smaller details that, according to several reviews, made the story captivating. Personal relationships with the other characters of the game, all the conversations and jokes made throughout the game falls through Octalysis view. This results in that, if the game was viewed completely through the eyes of Octalysis, *Half-Life 2* would lose some if its appeal.

One of the reasons for why many of the reviews gave such a high score to *Half-Life 2* was also the fact that the game had so much replayability. *Half-Life 2* has a rich world that contains many secrets and details that are easy to miss through the first playthrough. Although the Steam achievements are just trophies, they represent different challenges and secrets that the player could overcome and find. The Ownership & Possession core drive only identified those achievements, which does fit with the reviews as well as the game does not contain any RPG elements which usually is based around finding valuable items and currency, and the amount of content gave the game more room for the Development & Accomplishment core drive to identify many elements that, according to the reviews, made the game very good.
6.2 Deus Ex: The Fall

The reviews on Metacritic were quite unanimous that the game’s bugs, bad controls and low quality graphics were not up to standard with previous Deus Ex games or any other PC game. Although these are not design matters (Octalysis being a design methodology) they are still crucial to how well a game is received. That being said, Octalysis was not able to criticize these errors as they did not fit in any of the framework’s eight core drives.

The focus of Octalysis lies in the game systems that motivate and affects the players in their decision making. The Fall was able to appeal to all the core drives except for the Loss & Avoidance core drive. Even though the seven of the core drives were active to motivate the players, the core drives of Octalysis were not able to identify the quality of the aspects that Octalysis identified (and of course the aspects that were not identified by Octalysis are also of unknown quality in the eyes of Octalysis).

From the reviews on Metacritic it is clear that one of the most appealing parts of the Deus Ex games (something that is expected from any new Deus Ex game) is the option of multiple playstyles to complete missions, either run in heavy armed and spray down or stealth through the missions. The Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback core drive was able to identify and acknowledge this part of The Fall as the game allowed for this, although with some design flaws that removed some of the satisfaction of choosing to be stealthy. The reviews on Metacritic argued that the stealth approach was not as attractive as the enemies’ corpses instantly disappeared after a few seconds of being killed, this also meant that there was no corpse left behind that other enemies could detect. Not having the extra depth in having to hide the body ruined the immersion and in result there was less motivation to fully commit to the stealthy approach. The fact that the reviews thought of this to be a big part of the Deus Ex games brought down the score of The Fall quite a bit. The comparison to other the Deus Ex games is not fully necessary as Octalysis was capable to identify that the game allowed players to be more creative in their playthroughs, however by removing the important aspect of being able to hide corpses to avoid detection it did not become as motivating to put in that extra effort to sneak around patiently in order to kill off the enemies one by one.

Some of the reviews argued that the way The Fall handled their vendor system, an in-game menu that all items were purchasable and place of the usual system of having a vendor NPC, ruined some of the immersion as well as it completely nullified the need to prepare before the start of any mission, as the shop could then be accessed at any time and also pausing the game when opening the shop window. This resulted in that players could purchase items such as ammunition during combat. Although this is perhaps not the biggest flaw in the game, as only a few reviews mentioned this, it still dealt a hit to how much the players got immersed. This aspect was however not identified by Octalysis as it did nothing to motivate players. Had the game however had a designated NPC that had to be visited in order to buy items, it had been more of a fit in the Octalysis framework. It had then added some motivation to properly prepare before missions in order to not run out of ammunition during combat, this had then been part of the Loss & Avoidance core drive.
6.3 Sonic the Hedgehog 2006

*Sonic the Hedgehog 2006* received quite the blow when it came to Metacritic’s critic reviews as well as user reviews. The series of Sonic has been described as a legendary game series by critics where every successor to the first game has received great praising due to its intense and high paced gameplay. When *Sonic the Hedgehog 2006* was released, it was quite the disappointment to the fans of the series. With very linear level design, countless bugs and unresponsive controls, the game did not do well at all. This affected the critic and user reviews quite a lot in their rating of the game.

Finding the correlation between the Metascore and the Octalysis analysis becomes quite difficult when the reviews of the game are heavily focused on the disappointment, correlating to the expectations the players had, as well as the bugs that made the game almost unplayable. Octalysis focuses on game systems and how they motivate the player’s decision making, rendering the Octalysis tool quite flawed to analyze a game that has most of its faults in the bug section and plain disappointment that comes from the high expectations due to the success of the predecessors. Despite all of this, the Octalysis Tool gave Sonic quite the low score in comparison to the other games the authors analyzed.

Some things were praised in the reviews regarding *Sonic the Hedgehog 2006*, such as the introduction of the new playable character Silver that brought forth new mechanics related to the character. The well-crafted cinematics were quite praised as well. Octalysis managed to identify this part of the game, primary regarding the Unpredictability & Curiosity core drive. The new set of mechanics introduced with the release of Silver, encouraged a new and fresh way of playing the game, with a new character with unique abilities that has never before been seen in the Sonic series. This also touches on the Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback core drive. With the new mechanic of Silver that enables Silver to pick up enemies and throw them wherever the player see fit, a new method of killing off enemies was introduced. Throwing them off cliffs, throwing them into other enemies to create AoE damage gave the player the sense of being creative.

Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback, that had the potential to blossom in this game due to the high paced gameplay with Sonic’s abilities to build momentum and get through the level with great speed. However this fell short, due to the level design being quite linear with only one way to reach the end of the level, giving the player a false sense of creativity, since the path the player takes is predetermined by the level design. The Octalysis Tool had no problem identifying this issue, rendering Empowerment of Creativity and Feedback quite untouched and ultimately receiving quite the low score. According to the Octalysis analysis, *Sonic the Hedgehog 2006* is flawed in most of the core drives, altogether presenting quite the flawed game. This seems to correlate with the score given by Metacritic.
6.4 Ori and the Blind Forest

What made *Ori and the Blind Forest* a successful game in the eyes of the reviews on Metacritic, both the critic reviews and the user reviews, is mainly the aesthetic of the game that is set by the graphics, music and the narrative which in combination created a very melancholic aesthetic.

The melancholic mood was set directly in the beginning of the game with an opening cinematic showing how Ori falls away from her family in the tree and is then all alone. The cinematic then turns away from the sad and melancholic mood to a happy one when Ori is found by Naru, who embraces Ori and takes care of her, the cinematic then show Ori and Naru after a timeskip where Naru has taken care of Ori as a child of her own. Both Ori and Naru are shown happy as they live together and in their small home paintings of them together are drawn on the walls. Ori and Naru spend the days together looking for food and expanding their hunting grounds. The cinematic once again changes the mood of the game when the forest starts to die as a shadow falls over the forest. With the death of the forest a lack of food weakens Naru and Ori desperately tries to find food, but fails to do so.

In the short few minutes of the game the mood has gone from sad to happy and once again to sad and melancholic. Ori is then all alone and the players sympathizes with Ori as the forest is no longer the beautiful and living forest she once knew. Although Octalysis recognizes the motivational reasons for why Ori and the player wants to find a way to bring back the life to the forest and why the players can sympathize with Ori so quickly (the contrast between the bright forest and the dead forest), Octalysis falls off and fails to give its opinion on events further in the game. The ending of the game also had a large effect on the players as mentioned in some of the reviews on Metacritic. Although as Ori’s mission is then completed, Octalysis gives no extra credit for the ending of the narrative as there is no motivation for any further actions (other than sitting around and enjoying the beautiful forest).

As Octalysis only focuses on the aspects that motivates the players to act, it is not able to directly comment on how well the aesthetics of the game have been executed, this applies both to the graphics as well as the music. Although both of these two factors contribute to the motivation that comes from the Epic Meaning & Calling core drive, Octalysis fails to credit the music and graphics individually, unlike the reviews on Metacritic that mostly brings up these two aspects as their starting reason for why they think that *Ori and the Blind Forest* is a good game. This shows that Octalysis cannot fairly credit the aesthetics of a game as it only cares about the motivations that the different aspects of the game creates. The mood set by the narrative, graphics and the music that created the strong motivation to bring back life to the forest was strongly recognized by Octalysis, but the graphics and music did not receive their individual recognition due to the fact that they only support the Epic Meaning & Calling core drives motivations.
What Octalysis is better at recognizing is the game systems such as the new abilities Ori gets after each chapter, upgrades from the skill tree and the completed achievements that all show development and becomes a valued possession. The achievements represent both the steam achievements and the difficult endings to each chapter that rewards the players intrinsically as overcoming the difficult challenges comes with a feeling of satisfaction and pride. The reviews on Metacritic were mixed when it came to how difficult the challenge was at the end of each chapter, but they all commented on how satisfied they were when they overcame the challenge. With the core drives like Development & Accomplishment and Scarcity & Impatience aspects of the games such as progression in the story or the limited resources (in the case of Ori and the Blind Forest the health and energy are the limited resources) can greatly motivate players that continue playing and completing certain challenges or just wander around the world to find any secret areas in hope of finding collectables that, in this case, increase the maximum health or energy. Although, smaller aspects and systems like the collectables are not always talked about in reviews, they are strong motivations that gives the game an extra edge, especially for players who like to fully explore the entire world and its secrets (this is where the steam achievements comes in handy as some of them are very difficult and can keep the players playing the game for several hours after completing the game for the first time).
7. Conclusion

Octalysis has been an efficient tool in analyzing the game systems of the games analyzed throughout this thesis, however there are smaller systems of the games that have been unidentified by Octalysis, resulting in an unfair analysis of the games in comparison to the Metacritic reviews.

A conclusion that has been drawn during the writing of this thesis is that Octalysis is a useful tool to break down the components of a game into pieces and analyzing the pieces by dividing them into Octalysis core drives. The authors looked at the bigger components of the games to see why it has been a success or a failure. This resulted in smaller aspects of a game that has been unidentified that otherwise could be a strong reason to why a game has succeeded or failed. Octalysis is designed to look at what motivates the player to continue doing what they are doing. Octalysis cannot praise certain aspects individually, aspects such as the graphics or the music as they individually do not fall under any of the core drives.

Octalysis looks at the smaller aspects such as the music and graphics in combination with the narrative to identify if there is a strong presence of the Epic Meaning & Calling core drive. In the reviews on Metacritic Ori and the Blind Forest was highly praised for its graphics and music, however to Octalysis that was only recognized together with the narrative that in combination created a strong motivation to save the forest. As the graphics and music of Ori and the Blind Forest was a large focus in the reviews from both the critics and users on Metacritic, Octalysis takes a significant hit as a tool to review the success of a game as it was not able to praise these aspects individually.

The same concept applies to the bugs and controls of a game. While Ori and the Blind Forest had smooth and responsive controls, Deus Ex: The Fall and Sonic the Hedgehog 2006 received quite a bit of criticism for that from the reviews on Metacritic. But Octalysis did not identify those issues but instead focused on the systems that fell under the eight core drives. Whether or not there were game breaking bugs in The Fall, the gameplay still had certain aspects that appealed to the core drives of Octalysis. This concludes that Octalysis looks at the design of the systems in a game without minding the technical execution of those mechanics and systems.

Octalysis has proven to be flawed in many scenarios as the authors have concluded, however Octalysis has proven to be effective in identifying some issues that the games had, judging by the tests conducted in this thesis. Octalysis has the ability to take smaller systems of a game, put them together to a larger system that can be put into one of the core drives which identifies the motivation the player has to execute that part of the game. One example of this is Octalysis analysis of Ori and the Blind Forest. As mentioned above, Octalysis does not care about the smaller aspects of the game, such as the graphics and the music, which was a strong factor to the success of Ori and the Blind Forest, however Octalysis was able to see how the narrative (which is combined with the graphics and the feeling the music conveys) motivated the player to save the forest, through their compelling narrative. Octalysis took the smaller aspects of Ori and the Blind Forest, that were unidentified by Octalysis (the art and the music) and put it into the Epic Meaning & Calling as part of the compelling narrative Ori and the Blind Forest mediates.
With the background research conducted by the authors of this thesis, it is safe to assume that the conclusion concluded in this thesis seems to correlate on some level to the previous studies conducted on Octalysis.

The paper presented regarding the wmin-SGP (section 3.1.1) concluded that despite Octalysis having the ability to aid in developing an engaging and motivating experience, it had no success in identifying and evaluating the effectiveness of learning (Economou et al. 2016).

This conclusion correlates quite linearly with the conclusion of this thesis. Octalysis has the ability to identify larger game systems to assess player motivation, but does not have the ability to see the smaller aspects that might have aided in the success or failure of a game, such as impressive graphics or poor technical execution.

In the picture above from *Actionable Gamification*, the author Yu-kai Chou analyzes the game *FarmVille* with Octalysis and in that analysis he has not analyzed the mechanics in-depth, instead he shows the readers how Octalysis can look at a game and summarize what systems that game has that creates retention through the eight core drives. In the Ownership and Possession core drive, *FarmVille* has virtual goods, and this fulfills the same purpose as the steam achievements in *Half-Life 2*. But although Octalysis has taken notice to that aspect, it does not actually care about how it is implemented and so by only using Octalysis, a game cannot be fairly reviewed as certain games might not have all these retention systems, like *Half-Life 2*. 

*Figure 9: A picture showcasing the Octalysis Tool for FarmVille (Chou 2015: 33)*
The difference in the eyes of Octalysis between *FarmVille* and the games that the authors analyzed in this thesis is mainly that *FarmVille* is a game that contains several mechanics and systems that focus on player retention while games like *Half-Life 2* and *Ori and the Blind Forest* does not care so much about retention. In this thesis the authors have concluded that Octalysis is best used as a design methodology to create retention mechanics. Analyzing games that do not focus on player retention will not be able to use Octalysis to its fullest potential. This can also be seen in the conclusions of the papers mentioned in section 3.1, the common denominator in the other studies on Octalysis and this study is that Octalysis does fulfill its purpose, but outside the gamification and retention focused area of expertise, Octalysis is not able to function well as it misses valuable points such as the quality of the ability to teach (in the case of the study mentioned in section 3.1.1) or the quality of the graphics and technical execution (in the case of games like *Ori and the Blind Forest* and *Deus Ex: The Fall*).
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