
The Interactive Services Model

Overview

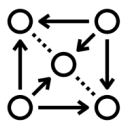
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Introduction

Seeking to build upon the [A-SPARC model of online platforms](#), in October 2022 Ofcom commissioned PUBLIC to develop a representative model of interactive services. The Interactive Services Model (ISM) sets out user journeys, workflows used by platforms, and the trust and safety measures relied upon by different services. The ISM will provide Ofcom with a consistent view of the structure of these interactive services and language for describing their functionality. For the purposes of this project, we (PUBLIC and Ofcom) agreed to define interactive services as:

“Services and experiences in which ‘user-to-user and user-to-user-generated content’ interactions occur in a gaming environment.”

Given the breadth of gaming experiences, we agreed to narrow down the game genres explored for the purposes of the ISM. Four genres were prioritised, namely, Battle Arena, Battle Royale, Shooter, and Sandbox games. Ofcom agreed with PUBLIC to prioritise these genres based on their popularity in the UK, user demographics and interactive functionality. Interactive functionality refers to the level of user-to-user and user-to-user-generated content interactions capable within a given game in these genres.



Battle Arena

Games where users control a character that has set abilities in a team of characters, usually controlled by other users. These games are played in symmetric maps that have a set base, often opposite the other team’s base. The objective of the game is usually to destroy the other team’s base.



Battle Royale

Games where users start from scratch every game and have to survive to be the last person or team standing to win the game. A significant share of gameplay revolves around scavenging randomised loot. The game forces users into confrontation (e.g., by a shrinking safe zone).



Shooter

Games in which the user controls a character which shoots enemies to defeat them.



Sandbox

Games that give the user a large amount of creativity and freedom over how to play the game, what to do, or whether to create the game's content themselves with little to no predetermined objective.

PUBLIC used desk research to inform the representative model by building an understanding of the typical user journey through an interactive services experience. This understanding was enhanced by interviewing employees of interactive services from across the four prioritised genres in order to test our assumptions, and to learn about the diversity of implementation methods across different providers.

The model was developed primarily to support Ofcom in carrying out internal work, but we anticipate that it might be valuable for the broader sector, as it provides:

- A reference for user journeys in the interactive services within our prioritised genres;
- A description of the underlying platform workflows and service layers that support these user journeys; and
- An illustration of the overlapping layers of the interactive services eco-systems, including key points such as account creation and live audio moderation.

The Interactive Services Model

The Interactive Services Model is structured into four main phases of a user journey:

1. **Sign On:** The process by which a user creates an account. This may be at either the game distribution platform or game provider level, or both.
2. **Participate:** The various ways in which a user can participate in interactive service experiences.
3. **Enable:** The service layers adjacent to the 'Participate' stages, happening in parallel with and enabling or complementing the primary user experience.
4. **Moderate:** The platform trust and safety workflows, from moderation to the platform response workflow, and services' internal cycles around trust and safety policies and processes.

Each of these four main phases is then broken down further into key stages of the user journey as laid out below.

Sign On

Games can be accessed directly through game providers or through game distribution platforms. Where accessed through the latter, users may still have to sign on with game providers in order to access certain features within games, such as online multiplayer.

Game Distribution Platforms

Game Distribution Platforms are digital platforms that distribute games to users.

The Sign On process for game distribution platforms covers choosing the access medium and distribution point by which the user will find and access the game. The user must then make an account with the game distributor, verifying any relevant details, choose their game, and make a purchase, if necessary. In addition, some game distribution platforms will provide their own user-to-user communication features or overlay with in-game accounts and communication features.

Game providers

Game providers may design, publish, and/or support games.

The Sign On process for game providers often represents an optional secondary layer of account creation beginning from the launch of the game. A user may opt to use a supported federated sign on process, use an existing game distribution platform account, or opt to sign up directly with the game provider. In some instances, signing up with the game provider is required before a user can play the game or access certain in-game features. The method in which the game is accessed may have implications on the user registration process.

Participate

Set Up

The Set Up process covers actions taken just before the launch of a game session. These include lobbies, choosing teams and matchmaking.

Compete

Compete covers competitive user-versus-user games. This stage describes the basic actions of a game session, and the process a user might follow if they experience inappropriate behaviour.

Build

Build covers Sandbox genre games, whereby the gameplay is much less structured, prescriptive, and linear. This stage covers some of the basic activities a user can explore, as well as the process they might follow if they experience inappropriate behaviour.

Enable

Create

Create covers functionality wherein interactive services provide users with the ability to create their own experiences, which other users can then take part in.

Monetise

The Monetise stage represents the possibilities for service monetisation in gaming. This covers users setting up payment details and virtual wallets, and participating in in-game and out-of-game economies, as well as the associated potential inappropriate behaviours that may arise from these activities.

Moderate

Analyse

The Analyse stage details the measures put in place by interactive services to collect and analyse content and user behaviour to determine whether it is inappropriate. This includes deciding trust and safety measures, collecting data, classification and prioritisation of content and conduct, and improvement of systems.

Respond

The Respond stage provides details on how interactive services respond to the finding of inappropriate content or user behaviour. These may include the process of removing content, sanctioning users and alerting third-parties, such as law enforcement, where necessary and appropriate.

Comply

The Comply stage involves the processes that interactive services undertake to internally audit and report on trust and safety. These may include designing trust and safety policies, setting priority objectives, monitoring data, escalation and transparency reporting.

Future work

Ofcom may review this model over time as it learns more about the range of processes and tools used by interactive services.

Glossary

The following table sets out the terms and the definitions used for the purposes of this project:

Term	Definition
Access medium	The hardware used to gain access to the game experience, for example, mobile device, console, or PC.
Game providers	Game providers may design, publish, and/or support games.
Game distribution platforms	Digital platforms that distribute games to users.
User-to-user interactions	Where multiple users are actively interacting with each other. The types of interaction include, but are not limited to, competing, socializing, and cooperating.
User-to-user and User-to-user-generated content interactions	Environments where players are actively interacting with both other users and content generated by other users.
Interactive services	Services and experiences in which user-to-user and user-to-user-generated content interactions occur in a gaming environment.
Interactive Services Model (ISM)	The Interactive Services Model represents user journeys, platform workflows and trust and safety measures across a set of interactive services, based on four priority game genres identified for this project.
Platform workflows	The non-user facing features that underpin and support the user's journey through their interactive service experience.
Trust and safety measures	Trust and safety measures cover the policies and processes that interactive services put in place to create safer experiences for users.

Term	Definition
User-generated content	Any content including but not limited to text, audio, video, images, manipulation of game environments and avatars, as well as features and experiences created by users as opposed to the service provider.
User journey	The steps that a user takes as they use an Interactive Service.
Virtual worlds	A computer-simulated environment which may be populated by users who can explore the space, take part in communities or activities, and interact with other users.