



Second Life perceived by its residents...

● Research objectives

This exploratory study (mainly open-ended questions) was conducted from 16th to 19th of November with 137 residents from our panel Reperes Second life.

We asked the residents of Second Life to give us their definition of what Second Life is, to describe its strong points, its values, the prevailing atmosphere and state of mind, and the things about it that made them feel comfortable or uncomfortable.

● Summary of research findings

The main conclusion was that the perception of Second Life propels it beyond its initial reason for being. The slogan “*Your world, your imagination*” announced a total and all-powerful freedom which might make one fear the negative effects of egocentricity, isolation or transgression. Such phenomena occur very rarely. On the contrary, what we are witnessing is the emergence of a highly constructive approach and world.

The following are the two main and virtually unanimous dimensions defining Second Life as seen by the residents who responded:

- Second Life is perceived as **the largest community ever created**: Far from simply associating freedom with individualism, Second Life is, above all, a meeting place. This dimension may even be the reason for the existence of certain avatars. Meeting does not only involve chatting but also involves:
 - discovering other people in all of their diversity and uniqueness: definite enthusiasm was expressed in being able to go beyond borders, discover different cultures and tastes as well as being able to discover affinities with a resident from the other side of the world.
 - helping other people, guiding them and even building to improve their living conditions
 - learning from other people, educating oneself, following others
 - building together,
 - making friends

This platform goes far beyond the conventional chat room since there is a shared experience in addition to discussion. This makes Second Life a unique world, superior to all forms of digital communication today. Some even see in it THE means of communication for tomorrow:

“Friends across miles”

“A way to meet people online that really isn't available anywhere else: probably the best and most advanced chat platform out there”

“SL is a massively-multiplayer chat application taken to the extreme”

“A 3D chatroom, where you can roam, explore, make friends”

“A glorified chat room with much potential. Definitely not a game in the general sense”



- Second Life is also perceived as **a definite step forward for humanity**: there again, it could have been seen as an open door to all sorts of excesses. But on the contrary the freedom offered opens up the prospect of new areas for collaboration:
 - that of authenticity, of access to the real self and to self-expression (without discrimination or normative repression)
 - that of developing and even surpassing oneself via apprenticeships, experimentation, and the use of formerly unexploited skills
 - that of an infinite potential for discovery, creativity, extension of the universe

What transpires here is that Real Life (physically, materially and socially) is limited and therefore limiting for the human mind. The latter being in a way oversized in relation to RL finds therefore in SL a dimension that matches its potential. Hence the conviction for certain residents that Second Life is the future of Real Life.

But, careful, this concerns a socialised human element since this world is far from immorality or amorality: the attitude combining openness, friendship and respect answers the requirements of the residents (the main complaints are addressed to avatars that are too personal, sectarian or scornful):

“The future of real life”

“Here is the place to stretch the borders of your first life and make impossible things possible”

“Expand your knowledge and try to see what skills you have”

“Express there true self as you could not in real life”

“What would life be without SL?”

“There is just so much to learn, to see, to do. I don’t think there is enough hours in ones life to do it all but I will certainly give it a good try”

“It is truly your second chance in which you can live again and learn new things. Moreover, it may even help you learn lessons which will be useful in real life”

As far as the **gaming dimension** is concerned, it is of course present but to a lesser degree and rarely as the sole reason for existing in Second Life. The residents in this case, express the pleasure and enjoyment of a game offering extremes:

- total freedom to do what one wants, as one wishes
- the possibility to have fun, escape and dream,
- the possibility to conduct experiences, seize opportunities and reap benefits limitlessly.

This dimension rarely takes an abusive form (prostitution, money games, addiction or escape into Second Life) but exudes an engaging and dynamic atmosphere.

“Fun and cool, you can literally do anything you want”

“Open playground”

“Have fun and explore”

“An open platform to make anything you can think of, with the least limitations”

“That is amazing virtual reality to make dreams true. Warning about possible addiction”

“A world where anything can be created for your amusement and enjoyment. An escape from real life to a second life where you’re free to be anything”

“A great place to escape from the realities of modern day to day life and an opportunity to express yourself in ways that maybe you couldn’t in your real life”



On the border between game and construction is a notion still new and rarely invested in but which is nevertheless present in people's minds: **the economic notion**. The possibility of producing or selling for some people is very exciting, for others it is simply amusing and for yet others it presents a real challenge. The position regarding the Linden Dollar is still hesitant but is already showing up the ambivalences that exist in Real Life concerning currencies:

- « *Sometimes I think, people take money too serious in this game* »
- « *Potential to make money* »
- « *L\$ drives most people, casinos, shops & more shops are everywhere* »

Second Life is a place for creativity and production which challenges "Real Life", inviting it to reflect and opening it up to interesting prospects for the future. Among the questions residents wish to ask other residents are issues concerning the notion of the contribution of SL to RL, of the changes and evolutions that SL operates on RL. We see that **RL and SL are intimately interwoven and complete one another** thus becoming the new human space that RL was unable to embrace on its own. Sometimes there is even the regret expressed of RL coming to contaminate SL (and not the other way round!) with its shortcomings (consumerism, capitalism, competition and domination):

- « *How much of your RL influenced by your existence in SL ?* »
- « *Can we live in SL the way we should live in RL and not screw it up like RL is, have real word community ?* »
- « *Does your avatar make you a more complete person in RL too ?* »

These few answers correspond to the perception the residents have of Second Life. By perception, one should understand the projection of a potential, a promise and, for some even, an ideal. But as far as the actual experience is at present, many residents are still at a more basic stage: they visit and explore Second Life and among the first activities engaged in are shopping (to improve their appearance essentially), dancing and frequenting clubs. People start to build but only a minority knows how to programme. Without it being openly declared, there is a feeling of the need to accompany the "newbies" to help them benefit from the potential of Second Life. Second Life as a life... is not so simple.



● A few words about Reperes Second Life

REPERES Second Life is the 1st market research institute on Second life. REPERES Second Life is meant to accompany companies in the development of their products and offers on Second Life thanks to:

- A watch on this new universe in full expansion,
- The creation of a community: a panel of avatars which may be called upon to address issues faced by brands seeking to establish themselves or develop their offer on Second Life,
- A space for tests and innovations.

Visit us on the web at :

www.reperes-secondlife.com

Blog <http://francoisabiven.blogspot.com>

François Abiven
CEO
Repères
9, rue Rougemont
75009 paris
Ph : 00 33 1 44 29 60 00
f.abiven@reperes.net

Emilie Labidoire
Head of the Repères Project - Second Life
Repères
9, rue Rougemont
75009 paris
Ph : 00 33 1 44 29 60 00
ela@reperes.net