

Any game that mixes chance and skill walks a tricky line. Players want enough predictability to feel in control, but also some variety to keep things exciting. Unfortunately, when rules are unclear or feedback is lacking, players often blame RNG — shorthand for “random number generator” — for their frustrations. But this blame can mask a deeper design issue: poor clarity around the game’s mechanics and outcomes.

This phenomenon isn’t new. Experts cited by *Scientific American* and the *Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)* have repeatedly explored how humans seek patterns even in purely random processes, and how that impacts their perception of games and chance. Meanwhile, companies like **MrQ**, a leader in chance-based online games, have learned the hard way that player trust hinges on transparency and clear communication.

Predictability vs Variety: How Much Randomness Is Too Much?

At first glance, randomness sounds like the enemy of enjoyable gameplay. Why put in skill if the outcome depends mostly on luck? Yet, without some randomness, games can become boring and repetitive. The key is balance.

Procedural generation, a form of controlled randomness, is a popular tool for adding variety while maintaining consistency. But as many designers know, it needs boundaries. Completely unrestricted randomness leads to outcomes so wide-ranging that players can’t form any reliable expectations.

For example, if an item drop in a game can range from a common peashooter to an absurdly powerful mythical sword, and the rules behind the odds aren’t clear, players will likely label such a win or loss as “RNG screwing me over.” But if the probabilities and mechanics behind those drops were explained clearly or visualized effectively, players’ perception shifts. They begin to see the randomness as part of the challenge, not an unfair barrier.

Case Example: MrQ and Transparency

MrQ, known for their online casino-style games, has invested in helping players understand odds in simple, visual terms. Instead of just showing a spin wheel or card draw result, they offer clear guides on outcome probabilities and relevant mechanics. This transparency reduces complaints about “bad luck” because players understand when chance is truly at play and when skillful choices impact results.

Chance-Based Outcomes vs Skill-Based Response

Players differentiate between games where chance dominates outcomes and those where skill guides their journey. But even in chance-heavy games, players seek avenues to exercise skill — whether that’s through timing, resource management, or strategic decision-making.

When the rules or mechanics governing these skill-based responses aren’t clear, the player can feel confused or powerless. This confusion breeds frustration. Instead of engaging thoughtfully, they simply attribute failures to “RNG,” often with comments like “the game’s broken” or “it’s all luck.” This is where ambiguous rules fail the player.

Clear, consistent feedback loops are critical to help players distinguish between randomness they can’t control and skillful nuances they can develop. For instance, cooldown timers, damage ranges, or probability meters can all signal what portion of the outcome depends on chance and what players can influence.

Insights from the ACM Community

The ACM, a heavyweight authority in computing and algorithm design, recently published studies exploring player perception of randomness in procedural game design. Their work emphasizes that perception often matters as

much as actual mechanics. When players perceive fairness and grasp the rules, they are more likely to accept and enjoy randomness, even if outcomes sometimes feel unfavorable.

Pattern-Seeking and Misconceptions About RNG Streaks

Humans are natural pattern seekers. This is a survival trait, but it thodia.media often misfires with randomness. Players look for streaks or “hot” runs and believe getting a losing streak means the RNG is “against” them. In reality, streaks are expected and statistically normal in truly random systems.



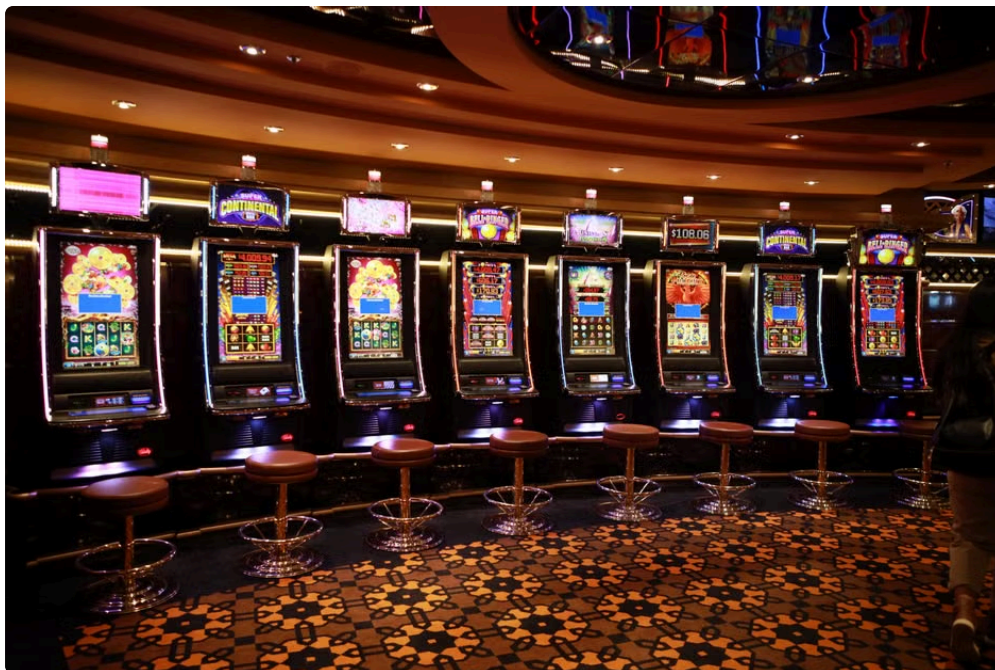
Unfortunately, many games fail to educate players about these natural patterns or visualize them adequately. As a result, players conclude the system is broken or unfair.

The problem worsens when randomness has no boundaries. For example, if a game’s drop rate is a flat 5%, but the player experiences 10 failures in a row, they might blame the game or the RNG. Proper rule clarity, coupled with good feedback like “Your odds remain the same. Keep trying!”, reduces such frustration.

Player Quote From a Recent Playtest

"I feel like the game is playing trick on me — I keep missing the big drop, but no idea if it's me or just luck."

This quote, jotted down during playtests, perfectly captures the frustration stemming from opaque rules and feedback, not RNG itself.



How Clarity and Feedback Enhance Player Perception

Effective game design involves more than just creating fair randomness. It requires careful communication about how randomness works and the player's role within that framework.

- **Clear Rules:** Explicitly inform players of how chance operates, what their odds are, and what factors affect outcomes.
- **Consistent Feedback:** Provide real-time indicators or post-action summaries that explain results in terms the player understands.
- **Bounded Randomness:** Prevent outcomes from swinging wildly without constraints, maintaining meaningful player agency.

These measures improve **player perception** and foster trust. When players clearly anticipate variability yet understand what they can influence, they engage more deeply and blame "RNG" less.

Sharing the Findings and Continuing the Conversation

As a designer, I often share insights and postmortems on this subject via social media. To help fellow developers and players learn more, tools like Twitter Share and Facebook Share buttons make dissemination easy.

The conversation around procedural generation, player frustration, and RNG misunderstanding benefits from broad community involvement — players, scientists, industry professionals, and academics alike, including contributors from outlets like *Scientific American* and communities like the ACM.

Conclusion

When players blame RNG, it's often not a fair indictment of the random mechanics themselves. Instead, it highlights where a game's rules are unclear, where feedback is insufficient, and where player agency feels limited. Balancing predictability and variety through bounded procedural generation, clear communication of odds and skill-based inputs, and educating players on pattern-seeking illusions can transform this perception.

Remember, randomness alone isn't the enemy — unclear design is.

Additional Resources

- [Scientific American: Why Randomness Is Hard for Our Brains to Understand](#)
- [Association for Computing Machinery \(ACM\)](#)
- [MrQ Official Site](#)