

Waiting on the Beat Playtesting

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November 28, 2019

I. INTRODUCTION

THE goal of playtesting is to have users interact with our product and to utilize their feedback to improve the product. Our group chose 11 participants to run through our alpha and give feedback. The playtesting had three components the evaluator followed; we first introduced the product to the player, then we observed the player engaging with the game and transcribing their comments, and finally we had players answer specific questions.

II. PLAYTESTING SCRIPT

To remove biases from our results it's important to follow a script to ensure that all players are introduced to the product in the same way. The final script follows this principle while avoid "hand holding" with the player. The way we compromised these two principles was by thinking about what information would be given to the player in a finished product. Our script consists of the following points:

- Our group has been working on a game called Waiting on the Beat
- It's a rhythm game, so you have to hit the arrow keys to the beat of the music
- There's a helpful visual component that should help you keep the beat at the bottom of the screen
- Use the arrow keys to control the movement.
- The goal is to take orders, get food from the bar, bring the food to the customer and collect money.
- Here's where the bar is to submit orders and here is where you get food.

*Connor Cooke, Sarah Piot, Josh Stanzeleit assisted by proofreading

What was found was that we should've created UI indications for elements that need explaining.

III. OBSERVATION

From summarizing our observations we found that there were many areas of the game that could use vast improvement. ¹ Common problem areas we found for **customization** were:

- Some players were dissatisfied with the skin tone options.
- Female testers unanimously wanted a gender option.
- One player noted a hair texture looked "very pixelated"
- The change direction option has an ambiguous outcome.
- Customization options have no back button making navigation difficult.

For the most part during observation the character creator was well received. Our **gameplay** received the majority of criticism:

- Players often waited until the visual beat bars hit the centre to move.
- Players needed direction to go to the bottom area to submit orders.
- Players didn't get necessary feedback to understand that the lasers were to be avoided, or they failed to understand that the lasers took tip money away.
- Players didn't like not getting instant feedback for drinks.
- All players had no idea how to collect tips after serving customers. Although some happened across the correct answer, it was not intuitive.

¹Full transcript available on Google Drive

- Players were confused as to why they had lost or won at the end of the level. The timer mechanic is not clear.
- Several Players complained about the timing of the beat input and how it syncs with input.
- Players would often try to give the drink to the table instead of the customer.
- Some players didn't understand they could take multiple orders at once.
- Players were confused by a bug where customers south of the table would not place orders.
- Players didn't feel that their performance was good while playing.

During observation we noticed a major error that we may not be able to replicate. The first happened when the game did not show a results screen and instead spawned a bunch of lasers before locking up interactable objects.²

IV. POST GAMEPLAY QUESTIONS

After the player was finished engaging with the game we asked several questions to attempt to get more clear constructive feedback and locating issues with different users. The group decided to use Google Forms to Process feedback which allows the group to correlate similarities between players with better game literacy and players who haven't played many video games. We decided to ask the following questions:

- How much experience do you have playing games?(Linear scale)
- How much experience do you have with rhythm games? (Linear scale)
- Do you have any experience playing a musical instrument?(Linear scale)
- How difficult did you find the game?(Linear scale)
- Was there anything that you found frustrating?(long answer)
- What changes would you suggest to improve the game? (Long answer)
- How intuitive did the controls feel?(Long answer)
- What did you like about the game?(Long answer)
- What did you not like about the game?(Long answer)
- What changes would you suggest we make to the game?(Long answer)

i. Demographics

³ Our participant diversity is adequate for the scale that testing was conducted with. The only underrepresented group that could have interesting insights are people who would rate themselves as having a below average game literacy.

ii. Post-Gameplay Criticisms

A large majority of criticisms were already covered in the observation section. Those criticisms will not be repeated here, however after having time to contemplate; participants did have new criticisms that will be summarized here:

- the speech bubble not being clear as to whether a customer is ready to order, or is giving an order.
- The ordering counter not being visually intuitive.
- The music loop was too short.
- The game's pacing felt slow.
- The music got repetitive.
- Numbering character customization options.
- The beat visualizer was found to be unforgiving in handling user input.
- Customers don't care about sitting in a lobby forever.
- Visual and audio beats did not properly sync up.

V. MOVING FORWARD

This section will provide a list of problems generated from common complaints in the feedback given by the playtesters and what will be done to address them.

²This occurred while testing subject 4

³Google Form result provided here.

1. Many players expressed that they were confused about what they were supposed to do when they started playing the game. This included not knowing the controls and not understanding the goal (how to win) and what needed to be done to achieve it. A simple solution to this would be to add an additional screen before the gameplay actually begins that outlines the controls and gives a clear, concise summary of how to play the game.
2. Another complaint that was brought up many times pertained to the music. Two issues were identified that frustrated players, the slow tempo and the lack of variation in the music. The former is the easiest to solve, we can just increase the tempo and run it through the script to update the list of beats. The lack in the variation of the music will be more of a challenge because it will require creating new music.
3. Multiple players identified a bug that kept them from interacting with the customers sitting at the bottom of the table.