

Expert tests - on the games

Today we focused our user tests on the mini-games, as they are the interactive part of our movie teaser, they form the rising actions and the climax of our storytelling and therefore are the most relevant for user experience and the overall success of our product.

Goals of the test:

We wanted to find out if our mini-games are understandable (the conversation game), if they are interesting (the decode game) and if they are too difficult (both the decode game and the shooting plane game).

As we want to set a timer on the games, which will make the games more challenging, make the users more engaged and will fit the overall tune of our teaser, we wanted to know as well, how long would the time limit be appropriate.

Who did we test:

With our target group in mind, we picked 2 experienced gamers(both males) and 2 non-gamers(one male and one female). We also did tests ourselves, while we were adjusting the settings in the games.

How did we test:

Because not all the functions/elements on the webpages are finished, we told the users in person about the basic setting of this story, explained the urgency in the story and told them the task for each game. The user then start playing the games one by one. In the end we asked some questions regarding the overall experience, difficulties / confusion during the game, and eventual critics / suggestions.

Tests results and our plan for changes

I. For the decode game

Background:

The task for this game is that the user need to find the correct 3-letter-code. After each try there will be a feedback/hint displayed telling the user whether or not and if yes how many letter(s) they guessed are correct.

We've tried ourselves different ways to give feedback/hint. Some of the more advanced ones tended to make the game too easy, so we decided on a simple feedback/hint to test and wanted to see if the game now is too difficult to play.

One of the aspects we were testing in order to evaluate whether or not the game is too difficult is how long does it take for each user to finish the game. Another aspect is how does the user feel while trying to solve the problem, ie. when does the user lose interest, get frustrated, etc.

Result:

All the users understood what they were supposed to do to play this game and they all knew they could adjust their guess based on the feedback/hint they received.

The feedback/hint itself, for example “one letter is right”, was not clear enough for some users. Many users asked if it means that the correct letter is also in the correct order within this 3-letter-code.

Some users had problem with the input field and almost all of them hit the enter key to perform the “check” function, which now is only working with a click.

The time on how long each user finished the game varied a lot with an average of 03 minutes and 45 seconds to get the right combination.

One user got frustrated while figuring out the last letter, while others didn’t express any negative feeling during the play.

What to do based on test result:

We need to give a clearer feedback/hint so that the user knows exactly what they’ve got right, maybe we can separate the feedback/hint into how many letters are both correct and in the right order and how many are correct but in the wrong order. We still don’t want to make the game much simpler because for user that works with a system to solve this problem, it’s still not a difficult game to play.

We need to add the function that hitting the enter key will perform the check.

Make the font size for the feedback/hint bigger.

Change the typography of the letters and the feedback/hint, so that they all match the style of the very old style machine.

We still need to figure out how long is the appropriate time limit for most users. How long does it take for individual user to finish the game seems largely depend on the way of his or hers analysing and/or habit, and it seems that it would be impossible to find a time that could fit all. Maybe we could add extra hints for the users that has difficulty in the game.

II. For the shooting plane game

Background:

This game is based on the “smacking fly” game from the project pool, but we added many extra figures that made it more challenging and fun. For the first we provide a wider area than the viewport of the screen so the user has to pan over the sky to look for the planes. Then after each successful shooting the rest of the planes will move faster so it gets more and more difficult to shoot them. There is also a small timeout after each gunfire, which reflects the weapons ability at that time and helps to avoid “lucky win”, i.e. the user just keep firing continuously and hoping to shoot whichever plane that flies over.

This is the only game that we already added the sound effects and animation, so we tested these elements as well.

We also needed to find a appropriate time limit / difficulty level for this game.

Result:

All the users seemed to enjoy playing this game a lot — they kept playing and playing even though they expressed that the last stage’s impossible to win! Some users said that they liked the sound the animation effects a lot.

The time for each user to finish this game varied even more than the decode game, ranging from 40 seconds and a little over 1 minute (results from the 2 experienced gamers) to more than 6+ minutes (results from other users and ourselves). 3 users(counting ourselves as well) were not able to finish the game, and commented on how using the computer trackpad instead of a mouse made the game nearly impossible.

What to do based on test result:

Even though our end target group are all teenage gamers, we still feel that a fixed time limit would probably not work for all of them. We are thinking about adding different difficulty levels of this game, so that the user can choose one based on their comfort level or their equipment, i.e. if they

use mouse or trackpad. We could also add an additional check when the user wins the game and if at this point there's still "long" time left, a bonus round will start.

We noticed in the game that all the users are right-handed. The "panning over the sky to look for planes" function now is achieved by using the arrow keys, which sit on the right side of the common keyboard. Users had a hard time both to pan over the sky and shoot at the same time with the right hand. We need to add another set of keys on the left side of the keyboard for the "panning over the sky" function.

III. For the conversation game

Background:

For this game the user needs to play the role of the U.S. President and try to communicate with the "enemy" in the correct, politician manner, so both sides can work together to solve the crises.

In the conversation, the user/President needs to pick the right phrases among other choices to tell Soviet Union about the bad news that they will get attacked and tries to achieve a cooperation agreement instead of making the "enemy" angry. At the beginning of the conversation, the Soviet Union already has the Doomsday device ready, so every time the user/President picks the wrong phrase, Soviet Union becomes closer to press the trigger button.

This is a rather unfinished game, so we wanted to test if the user gets the idea and how do they feel about this as a game (is it boring? Would you be interested in playing?). Because we haven't got the script for the conversation ready, we just explained the idea of this game and showed them the simplified version of this webpage and discussed with them.

Result:

Users seemed to get the idea behind this game and thought this could be fun.

As for how long the conversation should be, one user suggested that 5 sentences, each with 3 different phrases to choose from, should be appropriate.

One concern mentioned by the user is that the conversation between the President and the Soviet Union is one of the most famous scene from the movie and this game could be a spoiler of that scene.

What to do based on test result:

We are considering how big of an issue "the spoiler" could be and if we decide to fix this then a possible solution would be that we make up conversations that are not the same as in the movie but still follow the politician matter theme.