AJE UX Report

Elric Milton

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Introduction

This report shows the process of researching and testing a game related hypothesis on users. The report will cover the data gathered from those tests, and the process used to obtain the data, and analysis and conclusions driven by the data.

Hypothesis: "Kiting is an engaging core gameplay mechanic that has untapped potential."

Summary

- **Product:** A mid core mobile game experience that revolves around the concept of Kiting as a core mechanic.
- **Researcher:** Elric Milton – Game design & development student.
- **Goals:**
    - Do players feel they are making strategic decisions while kiting?
    - What frustrations come with using kiting mechanics?
    - How long can players be retained & engaged with kiting as a core mechanic?
- **Testing Methodology:** One on one interviews.
- **Participants:** 7 Uni students.
- **Test length:** 1 day, with each interview lasting approximately 20 minutes.
- **Key Findings:**
    - 100% of testers entered a state of flow where they played for significantly longer than they thought they had.
    - Players can develop a wide variety of strategies using only kiting and a source of damage (to kite enemies into).
    - Any player can pick up the core concept of kiting enemies into things in under 60 seconds with little to no instructions or prompts.

Methodology

Scenario: Interviews were conducted individually on 7 University students recruited via their teacher. Each interview spanned approximately 20 minutes. The following points describe the setup of the environment and test structure.

- **Location:** Study room with no other people present.
- **Time & date:** 11 am to 3 pm, 22nd of March 2021.
- **Interviewee:** Uni students who have played mobile games before.
- **Interviewer:** The game's designer and researcher (myself).
- **Interviewee task:** Given a mobile device with game loaded up and asked to play the game, no other instructions given.
- **Observations:** Time taken to play and individual play patterns and habits.
- **Interactions:** Interviewee asked a handful of subjective questions with intention to receive emotional "feel" responses during gameplay, and then asked additional questions at the end.

Questions: The questions asked during interviews were designed primarily to prompt emotional and qualitative responses from users. The questions listed below are what users were asked.

1. How do you feel about movement in this game?
2. What kind of strategies are you using or thinking about?
3. Talk me through your thoughts as you play.
4. How do you feel about luring enemies in this game?
5. How many minutes do you think you played for?
6. What did you like or dislike?
7. Is there any other feedback you would like to give?
8. If you could add, remove or change only ONE thing about the game, what would it be?

Results

As all but one of the questions listed above (except question 5) are qualitative and not quantitative, results listed below will be presented as statements created through a process of affinity mapping answers into meaningful user statements.

- **Movement**
    - I like super simple and responsive movement and controls.
    - I enjoy exploring and discovering.
- **Strategies**
    - I like to discover and combine a variety of cool strategies.
    - I like to plan ahead.
    - I want to be able to change my strategy on the fly and learn from my mistakes.
    - I want my decisions to matter.
    - I want challenges but I hate games that are really punishing.
    - I need to be able to see all the information clearly.
- **Luring enemies**
    - I like a variety of enemy types and behaviours.
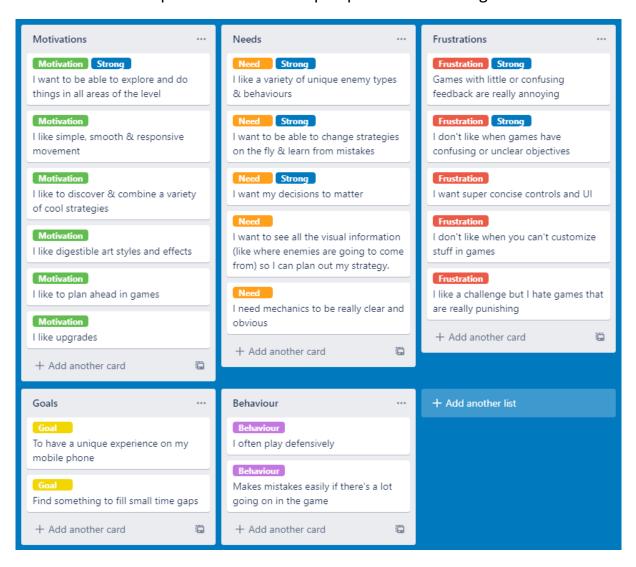   - Luring enemies into traps is satisfying and addictive.
- **Retention and engagement** (quantifiable)
    - 100% of testers thought they played for less time than they actually did.
    - Testers thought they played (an average of) 25% less than they actually did.
    - Using only the core concept of kiting enemies, and one source of damage, players were engaged for a minimum of 5 minutes before they desired some form of additional content or dynamics.
    - Testers took an average of 35 seconds to fully grasp and comprehend the concept of kiting enemies into a source of damage. It should be noted that there were no instructions, visual prompts or tutorials given to the testers to help them come to this realisation.
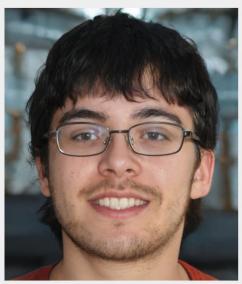
Implementation

Affinity Mapping

After separating all the data into individual qualitative information in Trello, the data has been processed into core perspectives and categorised.

Persona

Through affinity mapping all of the subjective and emotional feedback, the basic motivations, needs and frustrations of the target market have been identified and distilled into this persona. Meet Dave:

Dave

Age: 23

Occupation: Uni Student

Relationships: Single

Location: Sydney, NSW

Bio

Dave is a Software development student who has a long commute. He spends a lot of that spare time looking for a new mobile game to play. He hates advertisements and games that are hard just for the sake of being hard.

Goals

- To fill small time gaps like when I'm on the bus or on break.
- Play unique experiences on my mobile phone.

Motivations

- Accessibility and digestibility.
- Discovering and combining cool strategies.
- I enjoy growing and improving.

Needs

- Variety of challenges.
- Flexibility to change plans on the fly.
- My decisions need to have an impact.

Frustrations

- Lack of clarity.
- When I'm not in control.
- I hate punishing games.

Games

 Archero

Game implementation

Through analysing the data gathered and mapped from interviews, the following changes have been made to the design of the game.

- Directly addressed persona desires:
    - **Desire to combine strategies:** Each tower now has completely unique behaviours so that players are rewarded for combining them.
    - **Desire to change plans on the fly:** Towers now take damage from enemies and can be destroyed, with costs reimbursed, meaning the player can essentially adjust tower placement on the go.
    - **Desire for control:** Towers now attract enemies that get too close. This gives the player more control over where enemies go. The player can then also move back to where enemies are attacking a tower, and regain the enemies' interest, giving the player more control over which towers take damage and when.
- Removed complex meta game upgrade system.
- Simplification of status effects and animations to make it easier for user to see everything and reduce noise and clutter on a busy screen.
- Clarification and simplification of UI to meet persona requirements.
- Reduced length of levels to approximately 5 minutes to reduce the possibility of user disengagement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the hypothesis appears to be proven true in the context of the target market. The target market has also been identified and distilled into a persona. And the game can be improved from the results of the research conducted.

Findings

- Players enter a state of flow while experiencing kiting as a core mechanic.
- Players can develop a wide variety of strategies within the concept of kiting, and this can definitely be cultivated further.
- Kiting and luring enemies into traps is a concept that is quick and easy for players to pick up and requires very little instruction.
- Visual simplicity and conciseness are vital to making kiting an enjoyable and uncluttered experience.
- Kiting is engaging, and only requires a few additional systems to create interesting dynamics and hold strong player retention.