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Uppgift 2

Target Audience in Video Games

Discussion with Overwatch and TIS-100

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1 Introduction

In this report I will discuss about the target audience on two games: Overwatch and TIS-100. I selected these games because their clear difference in target audience. While Overwatch objective is to have a broad audience, TIS-100 target audience is a small niche of players, made in purpose in that way.

2 Overwatch

Overwatch is a team based multiplayer first-person shooter with roles, released by Blizzard in 2014. Its main genre as a shooter should point to an audience of hardcore males that prefer violent action games with competition (Adams 2014). However, Jeff Kapplan from Overwatch development team stated that Blizzard had experience in making online games, especially accessible to a broad range of players, as their game World of Wordcraft and so they wanted to create a shooter that was welcoming and inclusive (Pcinvasion PC Gaming 2014).

The game modes of Overwatch point to multiple kinds of audience. In a spectrum of hardcore to casual, overwatch offers: *Competitive* matches, Q*uick Play* matches, *Arcade* includes multiple game modes that are not specially valanced. Those players who want to learn the game by practicing can use the game modes *Practice Range* and *Play vs A.I.* to improve their skills. Adams' attributes of hardcore gamers include the desire to modify and extend games (Adams 2013). Overwatch has the *Workshop* where the players can design their own game modes by scripting programming. These game modes can be played in another game mode called *Custom Game*.

In addition, this game includes multiple attributes to attract players. For instance, there is customization for the characters, with skins, line voices, etc. Players can also customize their accounts with the several ways Overwatch has to show progress to the player. We have level account badges and achievements for each character. The characters by themselves are diverse, we can find in their cast people from all the continents, all genders and LGTB. Overwatch also includes multiple roles to play with that make the game non-repetitive. As a result, these characteristics make Overwatch an inviting game for females and underrepresented groups.

Overwatch as no much storytelling in the gameplay but it is complemented by several comics, short stories and videos that Blizzard provides for free in the Overwatch page. This way of providing background will not interrupt the immersion of hardcore action players while giving a narrative and an excuse to fight during the matches.

Moreover, during the matches the player can get *medals*, after the match there is a *Play of the Game* (PotG) video, but if the player yet not gets it, the game saves a *Highlight* with the player's best action in the game. After that the players can see *cards* with some of the most valued players. Then the player can reward the

behaviour with *endorsements points*. It may sound ridiculous, but this continuous deliver of positive feedback helps novice players to keep playing.

2.1 Possible Changes

I do not think Overwatch needs more public. Furthermore, I think Overwatch has more public that the one needed and may be problematic. Characters are not valanced to be equally used in all game modes because the mechanics of some characters, for instance builder characters that require some time to prepare their turrets, are not able to keep up with the fast action. There is no role queue for competitive matches what is frustrating if you are specialised in a role. Overwatch do not need more players, it needs to keep the ones they have and decide what they want to be more like, an FPS or a MOBA with role dependencies.

2.2 Discussion

I would consider myself what is commonly called a *Millennial*, people born in the late ´80 – early ´90, first generation of using Internet as their main resource for information. In my teens years I would play shooters as Duke Nuke or Doom, so I was aware of the genre of first-person shooters. Consequently, I am part of the demographics of Overwatch. I may not have a peak of dexterity as Adams says (Adams 2013) but the addition of roles makes the game more accessible for adults that like the genre. Because of my age and profession, I have no time to play videogames as much as I would like so even if I could be a hardcore in my teens, I became casual with the time. The matches are fast enough to provide entertainment for the little free time I have.

3 TIS-100

In an interview with Gamasutra, the developer of TIS-100 Zach Barth said:

> "TIS-100 as a game almost pushes you away", says Barth. "It's arguable how fun it is; I think it's fun to a small subset of people, but it's not designed to be this widely-accessible game that anyone can play. […] There's a lot of programmers, it's easy to reach them because they're all playing computer games for the most part, and they all have money! So it's not a bad niche"

(Wawro 2015)

TIS-100 is a puzzle-programming game where the puzzles must be solved with a language that resembles assembly language in a HUD that is like a console. The language of TIS-100 is explained by a "14-page technical manual that we designed, printed out, marked up and scanned back in again" (Wawro 2015). There is only one game mode. The game provides one or several inputs that the player must work with and create an algorithm and provide the output asked. The game as little focus on the narrative, the graphics are most of the time monochromatic, white over a black screen. It looks like this game pretend to be the opposite of each domain of Play (Adams 2013). The audience is concise: Programmers.

3.1 Possible Changes

Adams said talking on generalities on female players that females use to play puzzles, but TIS-100 is not aesthetically beautiful (Adams 2013). If the game was reworked with a different user interface and changed the 14-page manual to short puzzles that explained the language, it would be able to reach a bigger audience. For instance, the game Human Resource Machine mechanics are identical to TIS-100 but the visual design and linguistics are much more appealing for players not related to programming. In any case I would change the platform to mobile, so casual players can play it easily in their free time.
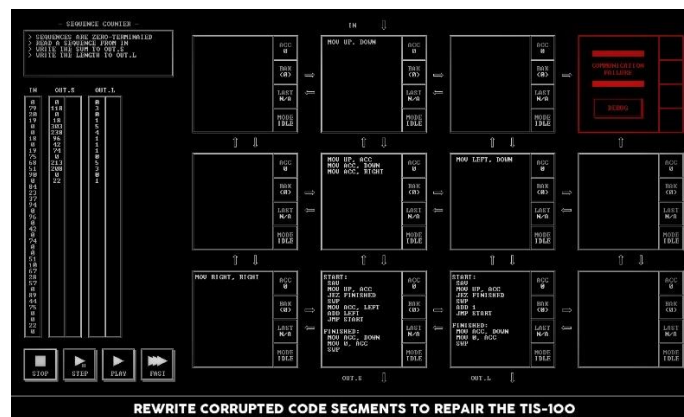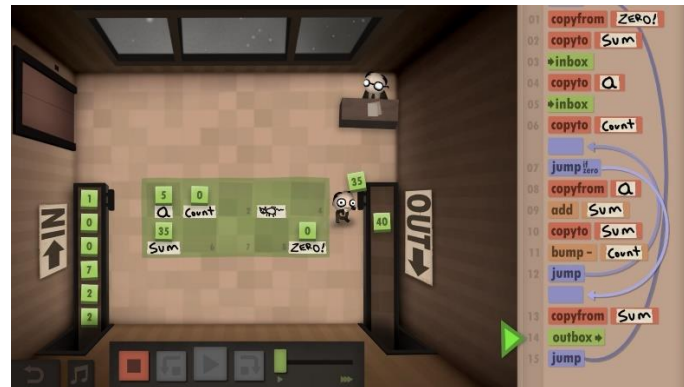

Figure 1: TIS-100 (Steam 2015b)

Figure 2: Human Resource Machine (Steam 2015a)

3.2 Discussion

I always get some reaction when I say that I am a social science magister that also is a computer scientist. In this case of TIS-100 I found the game appealing and fun because I have a little of experience with assembly code and I use command line every single day. This game is my first recommendation to everybody who wants to improve their problem-solving thinking in their free time. As a programmer I do find myself as the target audience of TIS-100 but I do acknowledge their lacks, it is indeed a small niche of players. I understand that novice programmers would find it complicated and players with not technical background will find it tedious. Not my case, I do find it consistent and fun, I missed playing this game and I would love it

for mobile. I felt into the strategic immersion because in two hours I do not remember anything about the story, just the puzzles.

4 References

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