Little Nightmares

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To think that video games started out as something as banal as those two white bars, imposed on a black void, bouncing around a tiny dot in seeming perpetuity.

Today, the boundaries of modern-day video games and interactive media are constantly being pushed. As games seem to get more detailed and nuanced as the years fly by, one can only wonder when the line between reality and the virtual world will inevitably be blurred.

Within the hectic landscape of the video game industry, there exists one genre that might benefit from that blurred line the most.

And that genre, is horror:

 If there is one form of media that does horror best, it's video games.

An unfortunate downside of movies and books is that they put a layer between the audience and the story; the audience is nothing more than a spectator observing the journey of the characters.

The interactive medium of video games allows for a more complex take on the horror genre. Instead of letting the audience see these harrowing events unfold before the characters, video games let the audience experience these events themselves.

When given the responsibility of control, fear becomes much more effective. Make the game uncannily realistic, and you have yourself a great horror experience.

And unnervingly realistic these games have gotten indeed. However, while horror games have been getting more and more grotesque, gory, and unsettling over the years, there is a unique series of games that have taken a more peculiar approach to the genre:

LITTLE
NIGHTMARES

LITTLE
NIGHTMARES
II

The Little Nightmares series of games consist of two main entries:

- Little Nightmares
- Little Nightmares II

Instead of opting for your stereotypical horror aesthetic, the Little Nightmares games take a more stylistic choice in terms of both gameplay and visuals.

With second game having just been released, and our curiosity piqued, we dove headfirst into the world of Little Nightmares.

Our aim? To figure out how the two games fare against each other in terms of *gameplay*, *story*, and *visuals*. What do people think about each game? Which one does what better?

With this in mind, we got to work.

Preparation

TARGET USERS

It wasn't long after we had settled on a main topic, that we already knew who our target users would be:

- Our main focus would be on those who have played both Little Nightmare games before. It's these people that will give us the most reliable data regarding both games.
- Second come the opinions of those who have only *indirectly* experienced both games before. While these users might not have directly played the games themselves, they may have watched other people play the games, in real life or on the internet. Data gathered from these individuals might not be as reliable, but is important, nonetheless.
- Last on the list are individuals who have only played/experienced *one* of the games, but not the other. Seeing as our research is about finding the main differences between the two games and how they fare against each other, it won't do us well if we focus too much attention on those who haven't yet experienced the entire series yet. That being said, their opinions regarding the one game they *have* played/experienced, could still be worth something. After all, we want to cast our net as wide as possible.

WHAT TO ASK?

Now that we had our target users, we would have to ask them specific questions about the three main elements of the games we were focusing on:
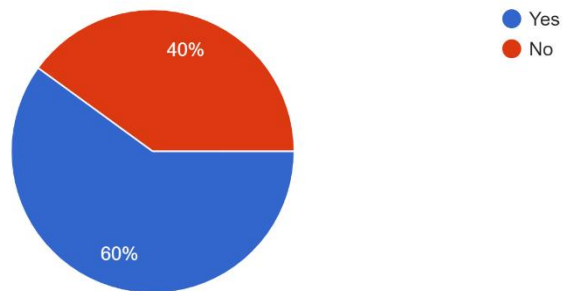
- Gameplay
- Story
- Visuals

Both in the interview and survey, we aimed to ask users how they felt about each of these aspects in regard to each game.

Survey Questions and Results

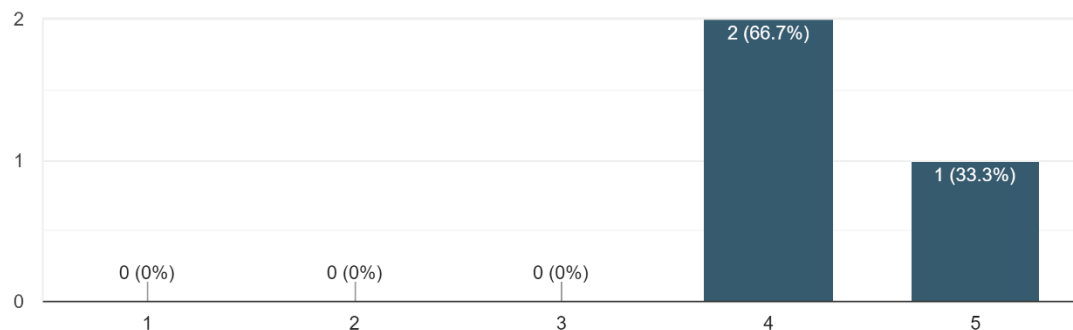**Have you played the Little Nightmares games before?**
5 responses

- ● Yes
- ● No

40%
60%

Here in the first question, we deliberately focus on separating our target users. Who has played the game? Who hasn't? These are important questions to ask when going over the collected data.

**If so, how much do you feel the gameplay has improved since the first game?**
3 responses

With this question we try to gauge if people take kindly to the gameplay of the second game. Especially when compared to the first game. We can see that the overall response is positive.
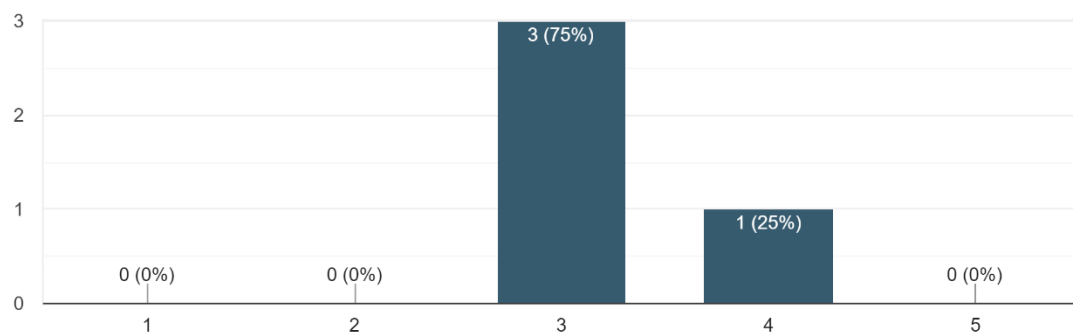
Would you consider the second game to be more challenging than the first?

5 responses

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

40%
20%
40%
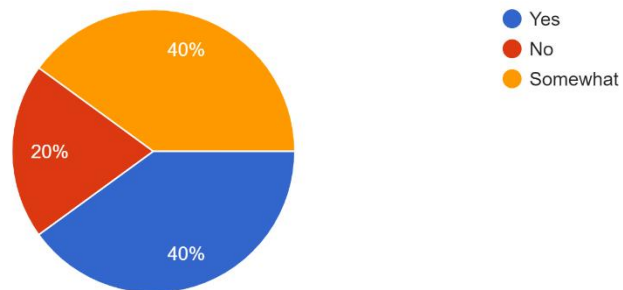
If so, how would you rate the second game in terms of difficulty when compared with the first game?
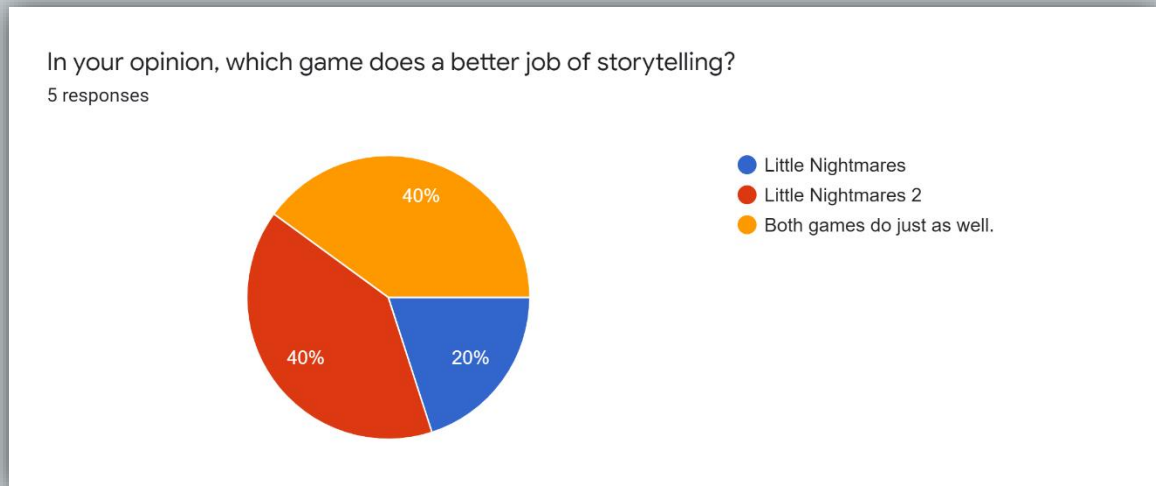
4 responses

Two gameplay oriented questions mainly concerned with difficulty. As far as we can tell, people don't feel strongly about the difficulty of the second game, picking neutral options such as "Somewhat" or a rating of 3.

Two questions which ask the user about their experiences with the narrative of the two games:

Does Little Nightmares 2 convey its story well?
5 responses
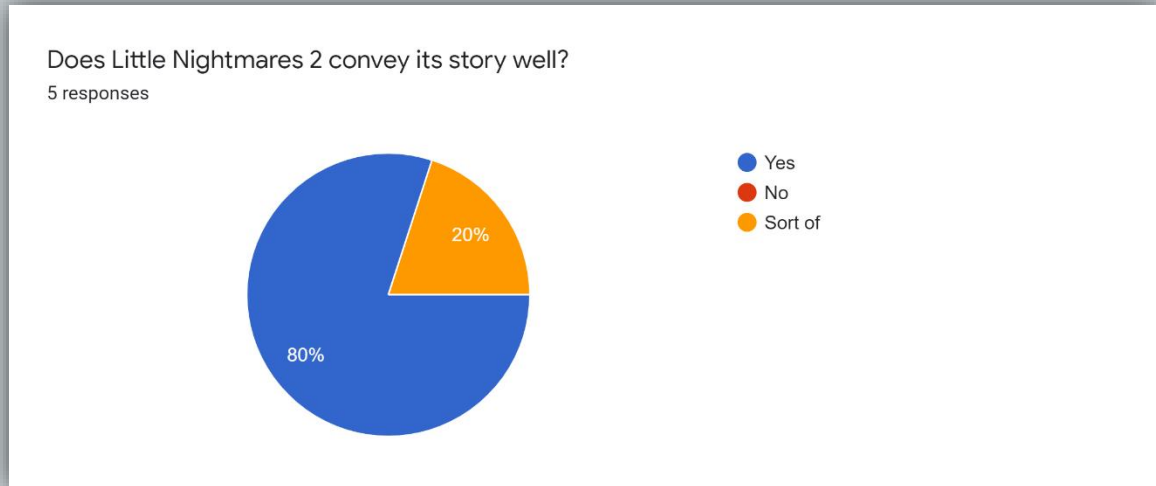
The large majority considered Little Nightmares 2 to have conveyed its story well.

In your opinion, which game does a better job of storytelling?
5 responses

When looking at the bigger picture, however, it becomes evident that most people consider both games to have done a great job at storytelling.

## Do you feel like the story of Little Nightmares 2 added to the experience of the first game in any way?

5 responses

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

100%
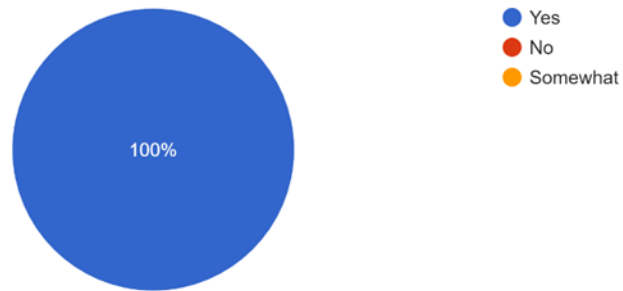
Another narrative focused question. The reception seems overwhelmingly positive, and tells us a lot about the reception of Little Nightmare's 2 story in particular.

As a horror games fan and considering the aesthetic of the franchise, is it a game you considered playing?

5 responses

- Yes
- No
- I need to check it more

20%

80%
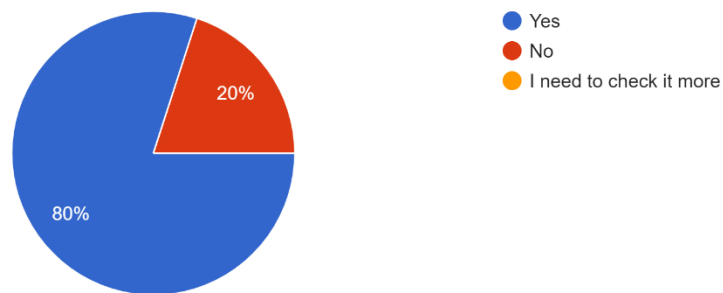
It's here that we decide to inquire the users more about their experience with the visuals of both games. Seeing as the Little Nightmares games have a unique take on the horror genre, we wanted to know how these games fared aesthetically.

Do you think, with it's visuals, it is indeed a scary game?
5 responses

- Yes
- No
- Some parts are scary, some are not

40%

60%
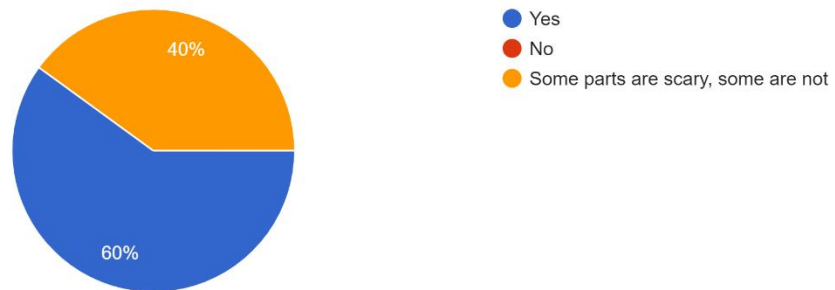
Here we really try to gauge the fear-factor of both games, with most individuals considering the games quite scary. We do admit that with this specific question, we could have tried to narrow it down to the two games respectively, instead of one general question.

Interview

The interview conducted by Matias has been documented in a separate pdf file, which you can access by pressing the button below:

Interview.pdf

Personas

Likewise, the two personas have also been documented in a separate pdf file. Click the button below to check that out:

Personas1.pdf

(NOTE: If the above buttons aren't clickable, try holding down CRTL while clicking. If that doesn't work, please refer back to Nick!).

Final Analysis

After our extensive research, frantic persona creating, and trying to drizzle our own perspective into the mix, we came to a definitive conclusion regarding our main question:

How do the two Little Nightmares games fare against each other?

QUICK OVERVIEW

Data shows that the two games are generally agreed upon to be positive experiences; each game delivering a unique horror experience that really does satisfy the demands of the players. When asked to compare the second game to the first (and vice versa) in regard to our three main points (gameplay, story, visuals), people generally find the second game to vastly improve on the first in almost every aspect.

So, how do the two games fare against each other? While both games are pleasant horror experiences, Little Nightmares 2 does come out victorious in this fight.

USER REQUIRMENTS

Both the interview and survey results have painted a clear picture of what the Little Nightmares games meant to those that played it, and if the studio behind the games should want to make a third entry in this beloved series, they would have to touch on these three requirements:

- The gameplay should challenge the users, while staying fresh and dynamic, avoiding stagnation.
- The story should be enthralling, clear enough, and perhaps even expand upon the already established plot from previous games.
- The visuals, while not every horror lover's cup of tea, should capture the aesthetically unique and experimental atmosphere that the Little Nightmares games are known for.

FINAL WORDS

It has been interesting diving into the world of video game horror. While most associate the genre with over-the-top gore and similar heinous matters, the Little Nightmares games try their hand at a different form of horror; a form of horror which might not be for everyone, but has definitely been interesting to crack open and see the public's reaction to. Along the way, we also learned a little something about what makes a game *good*.

*Gameplay, story, and visual*s are almost the trifecta to any successful game. So, when, and if, a Little Nightmares 3 comes out, this user study will be the basis of our criteria.