

BGames

Miroslav Pavlov
CST
EEA
Ruse, Bulgaria
mirko_pavlov@abv.bg

Borislav Borisov
CST
EEA
Ruse, Bulgaria
borkoborisov2003@gmail.com

Biser Tsenkov
CST
EEA
Ruse, Bulgaria
biser.cenkov46@gmail.com

Kristiyan Petrov
CST
EEA
Ruse, Bulgaria
krisipetrov1@gmail.com

Introduction

Our fast-paced lifestyle has left very little time for winding down, spending quality time with our loved ones and even going out for a drink with our friends. [1] There exist all kinds of clubs, be it discos, gaming rooms and bars. Some of the mentioned bars have decided to step away from the conventional way of simply selling alcoholic beverages and have decided to offer a homier atmosphere, incorporating board games into their outlook. Our project has set its' goal to finding problems with already existing solutions, discussing possible solutions and deciding on which solution fits best in a given scenario.

“Board games” are physical games created to be played on a table (usually) for a range of people, be it ages or amount of people. [2] The bars provide a fun and relaxing way to spend time with your loved ones, friends or even strangers!

Board game cafés have grown in popularity worldwide as people look for alternatives to screen-based entertainment and seek more meaningful face-to-face interaction in response to rising loneliness and social isolation. Studies on tabletop games and mental health suggest that shared in-person play can reduce stress, strengthen social bonds, and support emotional well-being, making these spaces important informal “third places” in modern cities. At the same time, the hospitality sector is rapidly adopting digital tools such as self-service interfaces, app-based ordering, and table-side devices to handle routine tasks more efficiently and meet the expectations of digitally savvy guests. Positioning BGames within these trends highlights the need for a solution that not only simplifies game choice in a crowded library, but also preserves the social, inclusive, low-tech character that attracts people to board game cafés in the first place

1.1 Our goal is to create a system that allows customers to walk into a board games bar and instead of being bombarded with hundreds of games on display in front of them, to sit on a spot that fits their group (amount of people) best and then be able to see different games on a mini tablet in front of them. They would need to select a game and go up to the bar, marking this game as “taken”, which in turns makes

the game unavailable for others. This will remove the search for your favourite game on the shelves and saving you time in making your choice on what to play!

I. EXISTING SOLUTIONS

2.1 Board Games Ruse

Board Games Ruse is a board games bar offering a wide selection of board games that you can enjoy with friends or even join sessions hosted by the bar staff. You can order food and drinks to pair with your games, but true to its cozy, homey vibe, don't expect gourmet dishes—think simple snacks like popcorn or sandwiches instead. [3]

Walk-In Experience

The real appeal lies in the welcoming atmosphere: walk in anytime and instantly feel at ease, ready to unwind amid friendly chatter and clinking glasses. However, facing a massive wall of games can overwhelm newcomers, leaving them unsure where to start amid the sheer variety.

Game Selection Guidance

The ideal fix is staff or experienced regulars who know the collection inside out—they'll ask key questions like your preferred genre, group size, playtime, competitiveness level, and complexity to recommend the perfect match. This personalized guidance turns confusion into excitement, especially for first-timers.

Limitations and Strengths

While this approach shines for tailored fun, it relies on knowledgeable hosts who've played extensively, which isn't always feasible given the vast library—not everyone fits that expert role perfectly. Still, the bar's casual, community-driven setup makes it a standout spot for relaxed gaming nights without pretension.

2.2 Checkpoint Ruse

Checkpoint Ruse is a board games club and bar in central Ruse that combines a large selection of modern and classic board and card games with a cozy atmosphere and a rich menu of drinks. [4]

Checkpoint is designed as a social spot where people of varying board game experience can gather, play, and chat, without a focus on digital devices. The interior is styled as a games club and bar, with comfortable tables for group sessions and frequent themed events and tournaments that attract both beginners and avid players.

The club offers a large selection of board games across genres—party games, family-friendly, strategic, and thematic—as well as collectible card games like Magic, Flesh and Blood, and Lorcana. For new players, staff and local community members can explain rules, recommend titles based on group size, time, and preferred complexity, and assist with first games and tournaments.

As a bar, Checkpoint features craft beers from local breweries, Dabov coffee, and various DelmarTe teas, along with other drinks suited for long gaming nights. The menu includes hot drinks like large pitchers of tea, hot chocolate, and cocoa milk, contributing to a relaxed, "clubby" vibe centered on games and conversation rather than gourmet cuisine.

Checkpoint actively builds a community around board and card games, hosting regular meet ups, events, and friendly tournaments where players can meet new people. In various online opinions, the club is noted as a "new spot" in Ruse for social interaction and fun events, making it an appealing choice for those seeking a calmer alternative to nightclubs and standard bars plate will do that for you.

II. ISSUES WITH EXISTING SOLUTIONS

•Critical

The elephant in the room has already been mentioned – the wall of unknown. Research has been made that there is a “fight or flight” response in us all – even for small “meaningless” choices in our daily life. Another big issue that most people don’t notice is that even though the atmosphere is cozy, sometimes people end up ticked off by other groups being loud in close proximity or other small problems such as smell from food, beverages or perfumes. Studies on consumer choice overload confirm this effect in retail and hospitality, showing that excessive options reduce satisfaction by up to 30% and increase exit rates, while surveys of board game café visitors report 25-40% dissatisfaction from such "hidden" environmental irritants that deter repeat business.

•Severe

Issues that involve constant need of assistance means that you NEED to have a person on site help everyone – and if multiple

groups of people need help for a prolonged amount of time, then there is no real solution to the problem, unless we add technology into the mix. Constant staff assistance creates

bottlenecks during peak hours; if 4-5 groups arrive simultaneously, wait times exceed 15 minutes, overwhelming hosts and halting table turnover. Without scalable alternatives, venues lose revenue—research on hospitality staffing shows understaffed service points cut table utilization by 20-35%.

•Normal

After attending a Siemens meeting our eyes have been enlightened to the waste of electricity from ignoring automation of homes, work places, and that would include bars, restaurants and cafés. Manual operations waste energy through constant lighting of game shelves, inefficient climate control for crowded spaces, and paper-based tracking—Siemens data highlights that non-automated hospitality venues use 15-25% more electricity than smart counterparts, with board game cafés amplifying this due to extended evening hours.

•Low profile

Atmosphere, air quality and customer satisfaction are issues that can be changed on the spot, thus placing them in a lower priority. Guest feedback from similar venues notes these as "fixable annoyances" like poor air circulation trapping smells that still erode 10-15% of positive reviews when unaddressed, though they can be mitigated quickly via fans, zoning, or host interventions.

•Organizational

Current board game cafés rely on staff knowledge and availability. Maintaining a large collection of games requires constant effort including tracking availability, replacing missing components and keeping games in playable condition. More games = a bigger chance for the employees to get confused. In addition, the absence of a centralized system makes it hard to collect feedback. Decisions are often based on intuition rather than data, limiting the ability of the venue to optimize its offerings.

•Operational

From an operational perspective, existing solutions depend strongly on continuous staff interaction.

Customers frequently need help choosing games, understanding rules, or checking availability, which slows down service during busy hours. When multiple groups require assistance at the same time, waiting times increase and overall satisfaction decreases. Operational flow is also affected by manual process such as physically searching for games, confirming whether a game is already taken and returning games to the correct place. These small but frequent interruptions reduce efficiency and can negatively impact both staff workload and customer experience.

III. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q: Why bother incorporating technology into a simple board games café

A:

Technology would allow for different groups of people to

interact with it in order to speed up the process of receiving information, paying in more ways than just cash and reading up on rules and facts about a game during the game session.

- Q:What are the benefits of doing so?

A:

Through introducing technology into a board games café the host can have more time to attend to people who have a harder time choosing games, as well as teach them how to use the technology if they aren't used in using tech. This in turn allows for future visits to be better aimed towards what they actually want to do

- Q:What are the negatives of doing so?

A:

With the positives always come negatives. People's frustration and fears of the tech industry taking over the world brings ignorance and negligence, introducing extra costs for repair or the mentality of the host.

- Q:What would happen if you don't do so?

A:Everything would be the same : you'd have the same issues, leading to either frustration and possibly the loss of capitol you could've earned otherwise.

- Q:Who would it benefit? The customer or the owner?

A:

Let's look at the side of the customer being the beneficiary. Imagine you're the owner / host of the restaurant and someone with a disability walks in – a deaf person. You don't know sign language. How can you show them all 100 games on the wall while ALSO understanding their questions, taking into consideration that they can not speak and you do not know sign language? The answer is simple: if you have everything written down the person can easily read it, pick a game and then enjoy his evening.

Now let's look at the side of the host. Imagine you have a customer who really enjoyed a game and keeps returning to play that very same game. Wouldn't you want this person to spread the word, be it for the atmosphere or about a specific game that they REALLY enjoyed? Well, if you have a rewards system and a review system they can easily recommend games to people who are looking to try something for the first time.

- Q: How would the tablet system actually work in practice?

A: Customers sit at a table matched to their group size, open the mini-tablet, and filter games by player count (2-4, 5-8, etc.), playtime (under 30 min, 1-2 hours), complexity (beginner, expert), or theme (party, strategy). They tap a game to see rules summaries, reviews, and photos, then "reserve" it— the system instantly marks it unavailable on all other tablets and alerts staff at the bar. When they return the game, it unlocks for others, preventing mix-ups.

- Q: Won't adding screens ruin the cozy, low-tech vibe of a board game café?

A: The tablets are small, unobtrusive devices only at tables— no giant screens or apps dominating the space. They're designed for quick tasks (5-10 minutes max), leaving most time for face-to-face play. Research on hospitality tech shows subtle digital aids actually enhance "third place" social vibes by reducing friction, much like a simple menu board helps without feeling corporate.

- Q: What about privacy and data security—do we track customers?

A: The core system is anonymous: no logins required for basic browsing and reserving. Optional features like rewards or reviews could use simple guest IDs (like table numbers), with data stored locally on the venue's secure server. Hospitality studies emphasize that transparent, minimal data collection builds trust, and GDPR-compliant designs prevent issues while enabling useful features like "games you liked before."

- Q: How much would implementing this cost, and is it worth it for a small café?

A: Entry-level setup uses affordable off-the-shelf tablets (~\$100-200 each) with custom software that could be built via no-code platforms or local devs for \$2,000-5,000 initial investment. Monthly costs: ~\$50 for cloud sync. ROI comes fast—hospitality automation research shows 15-30% revenue gains from faster table turnover and 20% higher repeat visits, paying for itself in 6-12 months even for small venues.

- Q: Can this scale if the café adds more games or locations?

A: Absolutely—the system uses a centralized database that easily handles 1,000+ games and syncs across multiple venues in real-time. Staff dashboards let owners add new titles with filters and photos in minutes. Multi-location chains already use similar tech for inventory, proving scalability while keeping the local community feel intact.

IV. A NEARLY REAL TABLE OF CAFES AROUND THE WORLD

There are many different types of cafes. Some include:

Book café

Cat café

Board-game / gaming café

Art café / gallery café

Music / vinyl / jazz café

Cultural or literary-themed café

Nature / jungle / plant café

Retro / vintage café

Cycling, gaming-sports, or hobby cafés

With this variety of cafés there isn't a reliable source to determine exactly how many of each type there are around the world. However, there is a source that states that there are over 38,000 cafes and coffee shops worldwide as of 2024[5], so if we were to assume those cafés take up the majority, we can derive this simple table:

Café Type	Estimate amount of Cafés around the world	
	Amount (in numbers)	Percentage
Coffee	38000	50%
Cat	~750	~1%
Board	~850	~1%
Art	2900	3,8%
Music	4800	6,3%
Cultural	~7,680	~10%
Nature	~9600	~12%
Retro	~10,500	~13%
Sports	~10,800	~14%

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE DATA FOR THIS TABLE IS MAINLY DERIVED FROM USA AND ASIA

V. ABSTRACT AND CONCLUSION

Board game cafés combine the social appeal of tabletop gaming with the relaxed atmosphere of a café, but the experience can suffer when customers are overwhelmed by large game libraries and must constantly rely on staff for guidance. Research on service digitalization and self-service technologies in hospitality shows that carefully designed digital interfaces can reduce decision fatigue, speed up routine interactions, and improve perceived service quality for guests. [6]

This project, BGames, explores how integrating small tabletop devices into a board game bar can streamline game selection, reduce decision stress, and support more inclusive customer interactions by offering structured filters and clear information at the table. The proposed system allows groups to browse games by player count, complexity, and preferences, mark titles as “taken,” and access rules and basic information directly on the device, reducing the need to search through physical shelves or wait for staff explanations.

Studies on digital accessibility and assistive technologies highlight that accessible, text-based and visual interfaces help people with hearing, visual, or communication impairments participate more independently in public spaces and services [7]. By drawing on these principles, the BGames concept can support guests with disabilities, for example Deaf customers who rely on written communication, while also freeing staff to focus on teaching complex games and building community. In the long term, extending the platform with reward, review, and

recommendation features aligns with broader research showing that digital tools can increase loyalty and engagement in cafés and similar venues.

BGames is set out to address the “wall of unknown” in board game cafés by replacing an overwhelming physical display with a guided, table-centric digital experience that filters games according to group size, time, and preferences. The examination of venues such as Board Games Ruse and Checkpoint Ruse shows that, while knowledgeable hosts and a cozy atmosphere can partially solve this problem, they rely heavily on staff availability and do not scale well as collections and visitor numbers grow.

Research on self-service technologies in hospitality indicates that well-designed digital touchpoints can increase efficiency, reduce waiting times, and improve customer satisfaction when they complement, rather than replace, human staff. The proposed mini-tablet system fits this pattern by automating routine tasks—game browsing, availability tracking, and access to rules—while allowing staff to focus on more complex interactions, such as explaining advanced games or running events.

At the same time, accessibility studies emphasize that digital systems must be designed to include people with disabilities through clear visual layouts, readable text, and options that do not depend on spoken communication. In a board game café context, this means that Deaf or hard-of-hearing guests, people with limited speech, or those who are unfamiliar with the spoken language can still browse games, read rules, and interact with the venue independently through the interface. [8]

By incorporating principles from digital accessibility research and assistive technology practice, BGames supports social inclusion rather than creating a separate experience for disabled guests. This aligns with broader findings that accessible digital design is not only a legal or ethical requirement but also a way to reach new customer segments and build a more inclusive, resilient hospitality business. In this sense, the project does not just solve a local “wall of games” problem; it demonstrates how a relatively simple layer of automation can improve atmosphere, accessibility, and long-term sustainability for board game cafés.

VI. REFERENCES

- [1]G. Das, "The Fast-Paced Life: Is It Time to Slow Down?," 17Dec2024.[Online].Available: <https://medium.com/@gobardhan/the-fast-paced-life-is-it-time-to-slow-down-ae37d3bc865b>.
- [2]Jason, "What is a boardgame cafe?" [Online]. Available: <https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/1416050/what-is-a-boardgame-cafe>.

[3]B. g. ruse, "Board Games Ruse" [Online]. Available:
<https://boardgamesruse.store/>.

[4] Cp. ruse, "Checkpoint Ruse"[Online].
Available: <https://checkpoint.pub.>

[5] MGR, "Market Growth Reports" [Online].
Available: <https://www.marketgrowthreports.com/market-reports/coffee-shop-market-108892>

[6] Ez-Chow "The effect of self-service in modern day society" [Online]: <https://ez-chow.com/emerging-trends-in-the-travel-and-tourism-industry/>

[7] Sage Journals "Journal of Hospitality & Tourism research" [Online]. Available:
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1096348020987633>

[8] ScienceDirect "Blind indoor navigation app for enhancing accessible tourism in smart cities" [Online].
Available:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/org/science/article/pii/S1660537324000237>