TouchStarr Project Proposal Abstract

Have you ever found yourself bored with social media? Do you ever feel like social media doesn't have the tools needed to express yourself to your full creativity? Well, whether have or not, I've got an app to show you! I call it TouchStarr, it's a cross between the infinite scrolling short form content formula of TikTok combined with the fast-paced microgames of WarioWare. This app will be more than just a minigame collection, it will be a social platform of creativity where users can create, submit, and play minigames. These minigames will be short and fast paced, and to get to the next one you will have to swipe, this is important to "maximize engagement". If you beat a minigame you can look at your play history to replay and share minigames you beat. There will be a premium monetization strategy where premium users can replay and share minigames they lost, as well as playing levels without a time limit. We are considered a limited per-day lives system, but that may not be the most profitable monetization strategy.

There will be a minigame creation studio as part of the app, but a more developer friendly desktop minigame maker will also be available. There will be a handful of starter templates to facilitate easier game making, and there will be three big types of games. Games that use the touch screen, games that use a virtual set of buttons below the game screen, and games that use the gyroscope. Instead of a binary like system we will be using a ranked star economy. Stars will come in multiple ranks, users will have infinite of the lowest rank star, then the higher ranks get more and more rare and valuable. Users can give up to 10 free stars, and as many of the higher tiered stars that they have to a post. The higher tier stars can be purchased in packs that give you random amounts like loot boxes. Once a user has acquired stars they can spend them on profile customization options, as well as premade assets for their games. We predict that many users will be unskilled and may pay for assets. Unskilled users may need some tutorial guides to learn how to make minigames. The basic tutorials will all be free, but advanced

tutorials will be locked behind stars or the premium subscription. TouchStarr has undergone some audience testing with good reception, aside from the name.

TouchStarr Project Proposal Introduction

TouchStarr will be the next big entertainment craze. If you look at the app store right now you will see that all the most popular games are free and have super simple controls and design. TouchStarr aims to be a platform for similar games. Statistics show that app retention in the gaming category, and even more specifically the Hypercasual genre, is less than 15% by day 1. (AppsFlyer, 2024) We want to capture this market by putting all those games in one addictive app. Instead of using the play store to install, play, then uninstall the games, users will be able to scroll to their next game without leaving our app.

The app content will be generated by users, we will facilitate this by making the process of making these games simple and fun to make. Aside from intrinsic desire to create, we will incentivize users to make games with the star economy outlined in the abstract, additionally Verified Developers will be able to turn in their stars for money. This facilitates content creators like those on TikTok or YouTube. The goal is for the payouts for popular creators to be large enough that they can depend on our application. Users who depend on an app are the easiest to monetize because we can “Boil the Frog” by slowly making the platform less and less favorable for them over time.

Another monetization stream will be advertisements, there are two types of advertisements we will offer: native ads, and reward ads. Native ads will be interactive games made by advertisers, these fit in with the other content stylistically. The reward ads will be your traditional video ads that users can watch for, as you could likely guess, various rewards. These rewards will primarily be a slow trickle of stars, with a daily ad limit to keep bringing users back to the app. Additionally, we are open to letting

other premium/paid features become available to those who watch ads depending on how effective that strategy is in focus tests.

TouchStarr Features

The most important “feature” of TouchStarr is the fun tactile UI. Installing TouchStarr should feel like getting a new piece of videogame hardware. Additionally, the UX is paramount to the addictiveness of the application. The primary page of the application is modeled after TikTok and other shortform content platforms. The Store and Social buttons are larger to incentivize socializing and shopping in the app. To Pause the game a user can press the center button labeled “Pause/Skip”, to skip a level they can swipe up from the same button. (Fig. 1) The button will be stylized to make these interactions intuitive. When skipping a game the cartridge will eject and fly up off their screen, briefly leaving the appearance of an empty slot while the next game loads in. (Fig. 2)

After a User is done playing a non-skipped game and when they pause the game they will see the menu in Fig. 3. This menu displays a miriad of information about the game including: the games icon, name, author, received stars, comments. The menu also contains buttons pushing the user to share the game and add stars alongside a gear option to provide users the oppurtinity to favorite the game, report it as innapropriate, or report that they didn’t like it.

The social button will house two major sections; their direct messages and their profile. The direct messages page will be a basic list of recent conversations stylized similar to a server rack. The rack that a user appears on their friends direct message menu is customizable with options from the customization store. If a user doesn’t have a full screen of conversations the empty space will be filled with empty looking rack slots to excentuate the emptiness to subtly push new users to share games with their friends. (Fig. 4) The profile page is what will have the most customization options available in the store. It displays the user’s profile picture, name, received stars, total games made, total plays received,

follower and following counts, and a list of their published games. At the bottom of the screen will be a button pushing the user to the customization store. (Fig.5) The customization store will have daily rotating deals alongside a dily free star reward to bring users coming back every day looking. (Fig. 6) We would like to consult a UX designer specialized in digital marketplaces to really fine tune the design of the rest of the store.

The games that users play and make will be utilizing a node based design system where developers will place different objects on the screen and then hey are able to give individual objects simple rules. We want the barrier to entry to be as small as possible, and this means not making developers learn the complexities of coding. With this system even children should be able to make games. If you want an example of this system working look at the game WarioWare D.I.Y., it succesfully does exactly this. The design of this system will require a lot of user testing to ensure that it is intuitive and easy to use, this is where we predict most of development costs to be.

Project Approach

We plan to build this application using React Native for the mobile app and React for the web interface with a scaleable python AWS backend. The AWS backend will be about $600 per month according to our predictions, with the bulk of the costs being data storage and Content Delivery usage. Due to the nature of the costs, AWS won't be that expensive while in development, and due to the nature of releasing a product to the masses they might exceed expectations due to higher than expected user generated content. The vast majority of the data will be user created games. These games will use a node and object based system instead of making users learning the complexities of programming. This part is still early in the design process and is the part we are primarily seeking funding for. As mentioned briefly earlier, we would also like to consult UI and UX analysts to tweak and optimize the designs for optimal engagement before jumping into development.

The goal schedule is as follows:

Task	Time to complete	Total Time
Design Consulting and Finalization	3 weeks	3 weeks
Frontend Creation	6 weeks	9 weeks
Backend Development for the Existing Frontend	5 weeks	14 weeks
Design Node System for Game	5 weeks	19 weeks
Implement Node System	5 weeks	24 weeks
Integration Testing	3 weeks	27 weeks
Integration Testing	3 weeks	30 weeks
Stress Testing	2 weeks	32 weeks

This timeline puts development at slightly over 6 months, but we would like an extra 2 months leeway in case things don't go smoothly with the chance of releasing early because they did.

Images

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

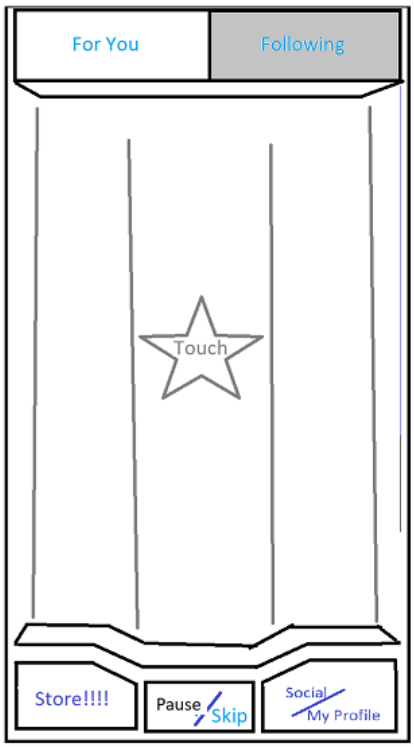


Fig. 3

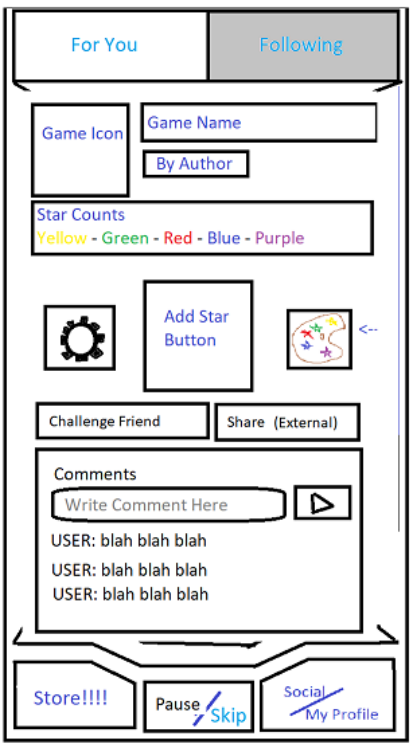


Fig. 4

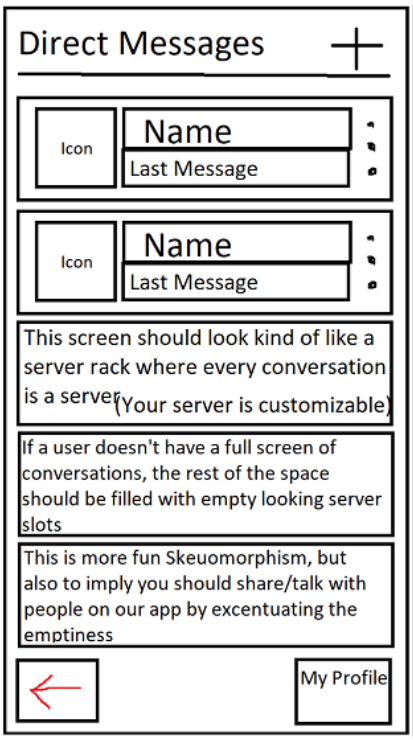


Fig. 5

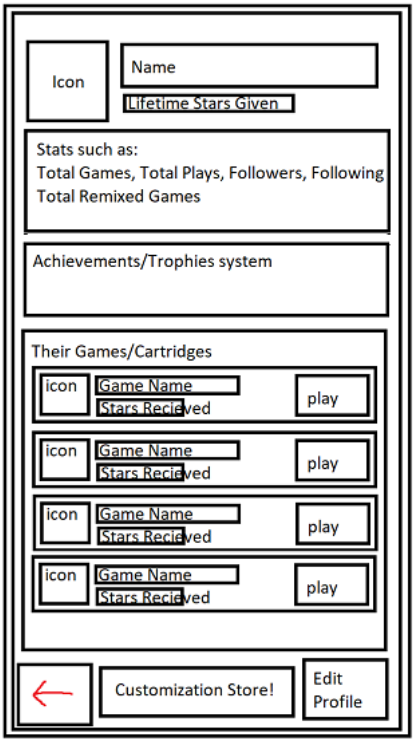
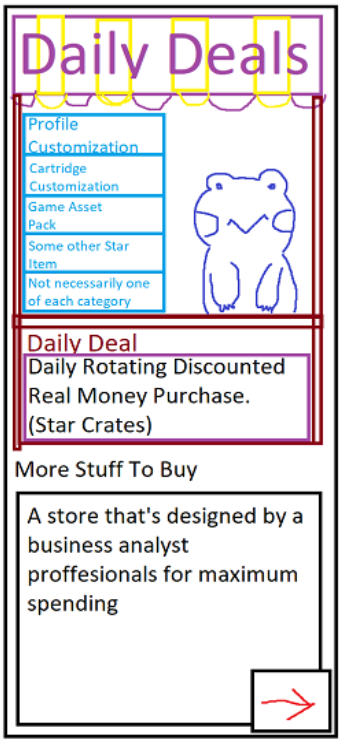


Fig. 6



Sources

AppsFlyer. (2024, January 14). Attention retention: 2022 APP RETENTION benchmarks report. https://www.appsflyer.com/resources/reports/app-retention-benchmarks/