Atua Motu

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CS4483B Game Design

Theme: Fantasy
Setting: Island
Goal: Discover
Genre: Adventure
Core Mechanic: Deduction

Premise

You travel across an island discovering your forgotten past, and finding out what secrets the island holds. You must decide who to trust in your journey to uncover the truth, and who you trust will affect how your story ends. Choose wisely.

Player Motivation

The player will be motivated by the story the game presents. They will be encouraged to complete quests in exchange for information, and this information will allow them to make decisions when encountering the final boss on the last day of the timeline. Throughout their playthroughs, they will discover more about the world and learn more about their backstory. Depending on which non-player characters they interact with, they will learn different things, and they will use these clues to unlock certain decisions at the final stage during their interactions with the final boss. Since there are multiple possible endings and the player is limited to a certain number of quests on each day in the game, the player will be motivated to complete multiple playthroughs of the game and discover different information on each playthroughs to achieve a different ending.

Unique Selling Proposition

Atua Motu encourages users to make decisions based on who they decide to trust. Depending on which quests they complete, they unlock different dialogue possibilities that contribute to a different final ending. Unlike many games with multiple endings, Atua Motu is a game that can be played multiple times without the boredom of repetition. The persistent journal ensures that the player retains the information they've gained in past playthroughs and the diversity of clues given to the player encourages them to achieve all possible endings while keeping the game interesting each time.

Competitive Analysis

As Atua Motu is a story-based adventure game, it will appeal to those niche markets. Its multiple endings and multiple playthroughs make it stand out against other linear adventure games. It combines aspects of the below three types of games and provides the player with a complete gaming experience and a feeling of accomplishment when they achieve their preferred outcome.

Life is Strange

Life is Strange is an episodic adventure game, where the user can play through the actions of the protagonist. The game uses the concept of rewinding time to allow users to discover all dialogue options and understand the world a bit better. Throughout the game, the protagonist makes choices that have a large or small impact on future storylines. Ultimately, regardless of the player's choices, the game ends in two main ways. This can make replays of Life is Strange more boring, as much of the story is the same. The player doesn't gain any new information, and only the minute details of the endings change as a result of choices made throughout the story. The final big choice will remain the same, and will be provided to the player in the last scene. Atua Motu uses a similar branching-realities concept within its gameplay, but not all available choices are immediately provided to the player. Similar to Life is Strange, the player must gain new information for a new option to appear during the conflict with the final boss, Ochano. Since there is a limit to the number of quests the player can do during one playthrough of the game, it allows the game to be played multiple times. Games like Life is Strange with multiple branching paths have gained popularity in the adventure and RPG genres, and Atua Motu will appeal to those audiences.

Stardew Valley

Stardew Valley is a simulation role-playing game in which players can develop their character, their land, and their town. Players can complete quests to earn money and build their relationships with other NPCs. Though Stardew Valley is more of a sandbox RPG than the story-based adventure game Atua Motu, it shares the concepts of completing quests to obtain currency. Currency takes the form of information in Atua Motu, and as the player learn more information, they are able to unlock more options in the conflict with Ochano. Both Stardew Valley and Atua Motu are playable more than once, and share a similar game-day format. However, Stardew Valley is time sensitive unlike Atua Motu, which can put pressure on players to complete a certain task before they need to make their way back home. Atua Motu allows players to spend as much time as they'd like on a quest, and game-days progress upon quest completion rather than upon the amount of real time passed. This allows users to focus more on the world and better appreciate the story rather than face the pressure of time.

Scary Scavenger Hunt

Scary Scavenger Hunt is a point-and-click based adventure game, where the purpose is to find all of the donuts without filling up your Scare-O-Meter. Clicking on some items can result in the player finding tools and clues to help them seek out more donuts. However, clicking the wrong items can increase your Scare-O-Meter value, so the player must carefully choose what to click. The player can win if they find all the donuts, or lose if they fill their Scare-O-Meter completely.

In Atua Motu, the player must also make choices that can lead to different outcomes, however these choices are more about which villager's advice to trust. There is no penalty for choosing to trust the evil villager spirits; instead, the player gets a different ending if they do. There is no winning or losing when it comes to Atua Motu: it is more about learning the story of the island and finishing the story with an ending the user accepts. In Scary Scavenger Hunt, the emphasis is placed on completing the puzzle correctly and it can get repetitive when the player restarts after losing. Once Scary Scavenger Hunt is successfully played through, there remains no more to be learnt by the player. If the user doesn't like a particular ending in Atua Motu, they can choose to try again while retaining the information they've gained in previous playthroughs. This gameplay style will appeal to users who like discovering the world and solving the puzzle to achieve a favourable ending.

Genre

Atua Motu is a story-based adventure game. Like most adventure games, it encourages the user to explore the world and its characters to discover more about the plot and the end goal. Though it is not played in real-time, it does have a limited number of quests that can be completed on each playthrough. This does not allow the player to discover the whole world at once, but instead encourages the player to try again and discover another ending. Unlike most games within this genre, the player discovers both truthful and misleading information, and ultimately has to decide which narratives to trust to get a favourable ending. Atua Motu contains elements of action within the quests, where the objective is to collect items or do some melee combat. However, these action elements are secondary to the story and only serve the purpose of getting information from the non-player characters.

Gameplay

NPCs
The game will feature a number of non-player characters as villagers and animals which inhabit the game world. These characters will help the player push the game's narrative along and provide depth to the game world.

Dialogue
The character will be able to speak to non-player characters about a number of topics throughout the game. Conversations will include multiple options for the player to choose from in appropriate situations. Dialogues will serve purposes including pushing forward the main story, providing background information and context, and providing character and setting information.

Items

There will be items that the character can find through the villager's hints. These items will be stored in the player's inventory throughout the current playthrough and will interact with the later parts of the game and the game endings.

Quests

During the course of the game, the character will go on a number of quests. The quests the player chooses to go on, and the way they choose to do them will affect the end of the game. The player can only do one quest at a time, and can only do a certain number of quests per game-day. Examples of quests include collecting items, destroying small enemies, and engaging in dialogue with another NPC villager.

Hints

As the player progresses through the game, they will unlock a number of "hints". Hints are given to the player by NPCs, primarily as quest rewards, and help the player make sense of the game world, and ultimately face the final boss: the volcano spirit Ochano. However, the hints can sometimes be deceiving, and it is up to the player to learn what is real and what is not. Hints can be saved between playthroughs in the player's journal as the primary form of progress between playthroughs.

Journal

The game will feature a journal which logs some of the player's actions and choices, as well as events in the game. This journal will be available for the player to view at any point during the game to decrease their cognitive load. It will also store the player's learned hints from previous playthroughs.

Island

The game's setting is on an island, featuring different terrains including a beach, the main village area, a cave area, and natural bodies of water. The village area is where many of the NPC villagers are found. Other NPC characters can be found in their appropriate setting. For example, the fisherman can be found by a body of water on the island. The name of the island is Atua Motu.

Movement

The player can move across the map in the following directions:

- Upwards using the up-arrow key
- Downwards using the down-arrow key
- Left using the left-arrow key
- Right using the right-arrow key

They can travel across the island, but cannot go through bodies of water. When they enter a covered area like a house, they will be able to see inside it as they move through it.

Click Interactions

The player can interact with the inventory and journal through click-based interactions. They appear in the corner of the screen, and expand when clicked. Similarly, the player can use mouse clicks to choose a particular dialogue option or move forward to the next line of dialogue.

Discovering the Story

The player starts out knowing very little about who they are, why they are on the island, and what their ultimate goal is. Through gameplay, the player learns more about themselves, better understands their purpose, and gains hints to help them along their journey.

Final Boss

The character, Alex, meets the final boss, the volcano spirit Ochano, at the end of a playthrough of the game. Alex will be able to meet Ochano on the final game-day and answer its' questions depending on what information he has obtained through the villager's quests along the way.

Different Endings

The ending that can be unlocked will depend on which NPCs the player interacts with, which quests they complete, and which clues they trust. Not all of the villagers are going to support the good ending. Instead, many of the villagers lead the character astray with contradicting information that can lead to alternative endings when used.

Isometric Perspective

The game is played primarily from an overhead isometric perspective. An isometric view is meant to simulate 3D look on a 2D display using 2D graphics. The player will be able to see their character move around and interact with the world from above.

Multiple Playthroughs

Although the player can technically complete the game in a single playthrough, they will not likely unlock the best ending on their first time playing. Even if they do, to experience all of the game's content, endings, and quests, the player must play the game multiple times. The player makes progress between playthroughs by keeping the hints they unlock in each, as well as discovering for themselves what's true, what's false, and what's somewhere in between.

Story Synopsis

First Scene

The player wakes up on an island beach with complete amnesia. Beside them is a simple journal with an hourglass shaped gem sewn into the front cover, emanating a faint glow. Upon opening the journal, the player experiences a strong sense of deja vu. The player uses the journal to discover their name, and some basic information about the game world such as a map leading to a nearby village. If this is not the player's first playthrough, the journal will also show hints that the player has already unlocked. The player goes to the nearby village to discover more about where they are and what happened to them. Prior to arriving at the village, the player will receive tutorial dialogue boxes teaching them the basic mechanics of the game.

Game Progression and Backstory

As the game progresses, the player completes quests for the villagers to learn more about himself, the island, and what his purpose is. As he seeks out more quests, he finds some unexpected information about a great spirit and a sacrifice. Though he doesn't know what to make of it, he keeps it in his journal along with all of the other information he has gained, hoping that it'll help him better understand whatever the future holds. On one of the later days in the game, Alex finds that he can speak to animals. The animals tell Alex that they are spirits, and they are imprisoned on this island by a great monster. They act as neutral entities and serve to provide general backstory information to Alex. They warn Alex to be careful about who he trusts, because the great monster has spirits disguised as villagers in his employ that are there to lead him astray. Alex also finds out that he is the only one that is not a spirit on this island, and therefore he is the only one that can free the imprisoned villagers.

Alex's Challenges

Alex must work to complete a villager's quest. This can include doing things like collecting, exploring, or small melees. Every day, upon completing a villager's new quest, he gains new information that is stored in his journal. Sometimes this information is contradictory, so Alex must choose which information to trust.

Villains

The villains of this story are initially not known to the player, but he later finds out that some villagers are leading him to unfavourable endings. These villagers are under the employ of the volcano spirit that Alex will confront at the end. Alex cannot distinguish between these evil spirit villagers and the good spirit villagers except by using hints that he gains throughout the game.

On the final day, Alex is approached by another village animal who tells him that he must confront the volcano spirit Ochano today or else the whole island including him will be lost forever. During the confrontation, Ochano asks who he is, what he wants, and what he is willing to sacrifice in order to gain it. Depending on whose quests Alex has completed, he will be presented with different unlockable options for each question which will branch to different endings. For example, one ending could free all of the island spirits, one ending could only free the good island spirits, one ending could only free the bad island spirits, and another ending could lead to Alex's spirit being imprisoned on the island forever.

Target Market

This game is for players who want some escapism and exploration of a new world. Given that this game can be played on a personal computer and doesn't need access to the internet during gameplay, it is accessible in countries with low wireless bandwidth. Though adventure-style games are not the most popular in North America, there is a niche market for indie adventure games all over the Western world.

This style of game attracts players that want to participate in a story and are very world-oriented. In terms of Bartle's suits, this can include both explorers (who want to learn the whole story) and achievers (who want to achieve all possible endings). This game moves at the pace of the player, and it appeals to some elements of both hard-core and casual gamers. The target player's motivations are to immerse themselves in the story and to master the decisions involved in the endings. The multiple endings aspect of Atua Motu can also attract achievement-motivated players who strive to achieve all possible endings.

Although the protagonist is a male, he has a unisex name and will be depicted in a gender-ambiguous way to ensure that the game appeals to all genders. This game is targeted towards people of all ages that love participating in a story, as there is no explicit violence or sensual content within it. There is a small amount of mild melee that happens during some quests, but it is not graphic enough to get an ESRB rating higher than Everyone 10+.

Target Platform

Atua Motu is built for personal computers. Players can use computers with Windows or macOS operating systems to run the game. It does not require any internet connection beyond what is

needed to download the game. The specific system requirements for Windows and macOS are listed below.

System	Windows	macOS
Operating system version	Windows 7 (SP1+) and Windows 10, 64-bit versions only.	Sierra 10.12.6+
CPU	X64 architecture with SSE2 instruction set support	X64 architecture with SSE2 instruction set support
Graphics API	DX10, DX11, and DX12-capable GPUs	Metal-capable Intel and AMD GPUs
Additional requirements	Hardware vendor officially supported drivers	Apple officially supported drivers

Summary

Given its possibility to achieve multiple endings, Atua Motu will instill a sense of repeated curiosity and accomplishment in its players. This game is also scalable in terms of the number and depth of clues provided to the user, depending on the time and budgets available. This is a unique method of story-telling allows the player to remain engaged and seek out all of the endings to get the ultimate entertainment experience.