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10/15/14

Team Naden

**MacMan Usability Report**

**Background**

Team Naden created the Macman game to be played by its users. It is delivered as a web application.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the website is to allow users to effectively play the MacMan game. The website contains information on the developers, details of the game and MacMan which is a game based on PacMan.

**Objective**

The objective of this usability report is to discover how the website layout effects and influences the user experience. It is also important to understand how the website will flow throughout any instance of its use.

**Methodology**

The usability report was completed by interviewing three individuals of different backgrounds. The individuals all came from different backgrounds and experience with web design. All of them are Macalester students with non-computer science majors. Each of the participants were presented two mock up designs, both of the main window. One window showed the basic layout with the game map, high score box, instructions etc. The second window showed the same layout as the first window but with the addition of the window that would pop up at the end of a game and present a place to enter your name and submit a high score. An interview was conducted based on a prewritten script of questions.

**Dates and Participants**

10/15/14 9:00 – 9:30 PM Elena Baker

10/16/14 3:00 - 3:30PM Taro Takigawa

10/16/14 4:00 - 4:30PM Devin Palmer

**Context**

The interviews were conducted in very informal environments. It allowed the participants to feel comfortable answering questions and give casual feedback. The interview with Elena occurred in an indoor classroom while the other two were conducted outside in a sitting area.

**Discussion Guide**

*Thanks so much for taking the time to meet with me. I am developing a website, and I would love to get feedback about people’s unique experiences with the current mock-up. I am testing the usability of the website itself, so there are no right or wrong answers. I would like you to “think out loud” as you are using the website. If it helps, you can imagine that you are talking to a friend who can’t see what you’re doing. Please share any comments you have, even if they seem obvious or boring to you.*

*If you have any questions as we go along, just ask them. I may not be able to answer them right away however, since we’re interested in how people do when they don’t have someone sitting next to them to help.*

***Part 1***

*Click on the Google Chrome icon in the dock.  Please do not resize the browser window.  Consider the following questions, talking out loud.  Use the provided piece of paper to cover up future questions, as some of them may lead you to answer the current question in a certain way.*

*What is the purpose of this website?*

*How would you begin to play this game?*

*What are the controls, and which figure on the screen do you control?*

*How would you contact the developers?*

*Who has the 4th best score?*

*What is the logo for this website?*

***Part 2***

*Click the forward arrow in the chrome browser (top left of window).  Imagine that you finish a game and this screen appears.  Consider the following questions, again reasoning out loud.*

*What does this mean?*

*If your score were 59, where would you expect it to be placed after submitting your name?*

*Whose name would not appear in the high scores box anymore?*

*What would you do after typing your name, and where would the site take you?*

*How would you play another game?*

***Part 3: Wrap-up***

*What are your overall impressions of what you saw today?*

**Findings**

Part 1 – Initial impressions and MacMan experience

It was evident that each participant knew that the window presented a game called MacMan. However, one individual had no prior knowledge of the PacMan arcade game, the basis of MacMan. Therefore, they did not know have a prior knowledge of how to operate the characters in the game. The participants believed that there were different means of control input. It was not obvious that the arrow keys were the primary controls of the character. One individual believed that the mouse would be used to navigate the board. Another individual who did not have background with the PacMan arcade game did not know which character was being controlled. This is useful information for future designs of the game. It will be important to make it obvious how to control the character and which character will be moving prior to beginning gameplay.

The logo and name of the webpage gave proper indication of what the website was designed for and what it presented. The high score window was also very well received by the audience. It was obvious how the high score window was laid out and how it would theoretically be managed. They believed a restricted top score count would be kept, kicking off the bottom score if a new high score was achieved. The score table would be updated after every entry.

The controls, goal description and link to the developer page were somewhat difficult to find for all three participants. They were inclined to just assume what the controls and goals of the game were without looking for their formal descriptions. The participants also only found the link to the developer page after asking them to identify it. Overall, the location and implementation of these elements of the webpage need to be better managed. The solution will have to be evaluated by looking at the balance of webpage elements.

Part 2 – Game completion and high score submissions

The three participants each understood that the pop up screen after a completed game run was for score submission with an associated name. They predicted how the high score table would dynamically respond. It is clear that the table should change in real time after a score is submitted. The bottom score would drop out of the table if a new high score was submitted.

An inconsistency occurred for users after they clicked “Enter” to submit their score. They all believed that the window was disappear and the option to play the game would appear. However, they all had different suggestions on how it would be presented. One individual believed that the game would have a window every time before a game began that asked if the user would like to start a new game. Another user believed that the game would be set up to play and simply moving the control keys would initiate gameplay. The third individual believed that clicking the mouse would be the start of new gameplay. This insight was very helpful in identifying an area that may require more thought on how it would be finally implemented.

Part 3 – Final suggestions and wrap up

Each participant had some suggestions that were quite similar. They all believed that the controls and goals were a little clustered at the bottom of the screen. This resulted in them to overlook the details and each user relied on their intuition to proceed with operating the website. It seems that the controls and goal need to be more brief, concise and highlighted in some way to grab the user’s attention to improve the application experience. Again, the designer info link was obvious to the users after they looked for it but should probably be presented in a more sophisticated manner.

One user pointed out that the high score window is a little unnecessarily large. The window should be smaller so that the game map has more attention and focus. However, they enjoyed the simplicity of the layout and agreed that there shouldn’t be any more additional elements to cluster the layout.

Another user did not believe that the MacMan title and logo at the top of the screen should take up the amount of space it currently does. They suggested that maybe the title of the website should be held in the windows tab and have it appear in the game window prior to initiating gameplay.

A final suggestion that two users presented was a window prior to gameplay that introduced the games name followed by the goal and controls. This would force each user to become informed about how to play with the game and not risk them overlooking the documentation at the bottom of the screen where it currently resides. Overall, it seems that a larger game window that includes some of the window elements would help consolidate the space and allow for a cleaner and more simple look.

**Conclusion**

The usability study returned good feedback on the layout and flow of the website. However, the entirety of the website could not be assessed due to the limited design of the MacMan game. It was assumed that the game functioned properly. It was particularly beneficial to understand how users intuitively navigated through the web layout and accessed different parts of the website. Each participant contributed a unique approach to initiate gameplay and control the character.