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Sherpa Life – Game Design Document

Concept

Sherpa Life is a two-player mobile strategy game where both players take control of Sherpas in the Himalayas trying to guide tourists to the peaks of local mountains. However, players receive requests from their annoying tourists before they can reach the peak of the mountain and win. These requests range from, "I wanna see local fir trees!" to "Find some exotic red berries, I want to try them." Items that relate to tourist requests are spread out on a grid based map, which each player will take their turn moving and discovering the different items. The first player to reach the mountain's peak and fulfill all customer requests wins. In terms of art direction, the game will be created in a simple, clean and minimalist art style inspired by games such as Alto's Adventure, Alphabear, and Monument Valley. Our primary target market consists of females from 30-50 who casually play games in their free time, and it is something that is meant to be shared with their kids and other family members.

Target Audience

The audience for Sherpa Life is mothers, aged thirty to fifty, whom enjoy casual games with cute visuals. They are not super competitive when playing multiplayer games and enjoy playing said multiplayer games with their children. They enjoy collecting items and learning about cultures. A secondary audience for this game is children, aged seven to eleven since they would be the prime multiplayer partner for our primary audience. Knowing that most matches in our game is being played between children and their mothers, we have to make sure that there is a small chance for "curb-stomping," since the strategic ability of an adult is likely higher than that off a child under the age of ten. In response, many actions within our game are deduced by random numbers. Movement is determined by a random number, requests are given out randomly, item layouts too, etc. Besides gameplay, the art style is also cute and very rounded, to be appreciated by both adult females as well as children. The vibrant and saturated colors are meant to not be too distracting, while also making objectives and elements of the game clear.

Monetization

Sherpa Life will cost $0.99 when released, and will have in-app purchases for aesthetic skin packs (for player characters, maps, and tourists) priced $0.49 per pack. Every month after the game releases, there will be a new in-app purchase for a pack of three or five levels, priced $2.99 per pack. As to how this affects our approach developing Sherpa Life, we will have to work with tiles and character animations that can easily be replaced with other textures and sprites to have aesthetic skins work. Also, obstacles in our game, such as rocks, ridges, and avalanches, will have to be designed so that they make sense in the context of any map. This will make it so that those obstacles can be reused in any new level. Basically, this means that the game has to be visually simple, and that obstacles in the game can't be too map dependent so that we can reuse already developed gameplay elements.

Marketing Approach

The best way we could market our game is by attacking it in various ways through different mediums. We could work with other game companies or games that have a similar target audience and ask them to present our game to their community via social media. We could make advertisements that would provide a sample of gameplay which would give players a quick idea of how things would work. We could create a community by using social media for a place for our players to talk about our game and have have interact directly with them as well. On top of this, we could also ask big name gamers of our general target audience to play and review our game. This would help get our game out to a wider audience which could spike their interest. Also with these gamers, we could also ask "Mommy and me" type bloggers and ask them if they could also play and review our game. This route would help get closer to our target audience. We could invest in making some merchandise to see if we can sell it and we could hold contests and giveaways while using this merchandise.

Content

Players will be taking the role of a sherpa that gives tours of everything the Himalayas has to offer. The players have to take tourists all the way to the top of the mountain, however these tourists have many requests of what they want to see and collect along their way. Tourists want to see different kinds of trees and animals and they want to collect different kinds of berries and

flowers. Each type of request is very specific, for example they may want to see a red berry instead of a blueberry, so players must make sure they get the right kind. Players will be given these tasks at the beginning of the game and will be allowed to look through them freely so they can be completed in whatever order the player wishes. You want to be the best sherpa you can, so players must move around the mountain in order to fulfill these requests. Once all the tasks are completed, it's a mad dash to the top of the mountain. There are obstacles in the game like walls and rocks that will block path. The most powerful obstacle is the avalanche which sets back everyone one space. The player is competing against another sherpa who also has tasks and must take them to the top as well, so only the one who makes to the top first can be the best sherpa on the mountain and is declared the winner of the game.

Player Motivation

At the beginning of a match in Sherpa life, the player will have two general goals in mind: 1. To, overall, be ahead of the other player and 2. Fulfill all of their own tourist requests. As the gameplay continues, the player and their opponent will alternate turns, revealing different berries, animals and whatnot where more of their goals will transfer to specific ones as more items are revealed. Example "I need to move near and see that fir tree" and "I need to make sure I collect the cobra-lily on my way to the next stage of the mountain". These goals are not only anchored in winning the game, but also to the feeling of reward when you pick up an item, learn about it, and know that you are another step closer to finishing the game ahead of your opponent.

Game States

Beginning State- All players start on the same space with the same amount of tasks that they need to fulfill.

End State- The game only ends or stops when a player reaches the "top" of the mountain with all of their tasks completed.

Mechanics

Move - On the player's turn, they roll a virtual 4-sided die which determines how many spaces they can move. Certain obstacles will block player movement or will move the player.

Collect - After the player is done moving, if they stopped on a space with berries or flowers, they can collect them. Berries or Flowers that are collected can complete certain tourist requests for the player.

Sight - After the player is done moving, if there is an item within the player's sight range, the item is revealed. Trees or Animals within this sight range can complete certain tourist requests for the player.

Systems

- **Movement System**
  - Player can select the tile they want to go to and the game will path the player there
  - Player cannot move through obstacles such as ridges and walls
- **Grid-based Tiles System**
  - A grid-based system will lock the players and items into specific points in the map
  - At the beginning of the game, all tiles are spawned into the map
- **Tourist Objective System**
  - Each player is assigned to three tourist requests. Each request is represented in the UI by a different tourist sprite and a following objective for the player to complete.
  - Requests are objects that have a few states
    - Complete: True or False
    - Type: Tree, Animal, Berry, Flower
    - Completion Check: Sight or Collect
  - The requests require items which exist throughout the map
  - Items are objects that have a few states
    - Seen: True or False
    - Color: Blue or Red
    - Current Color: Grey, Blue or Red
- **Player Turn System**
  - When the turn starts, the player touches a button to roll a virtual die

- o Then the movement system is turned on, and allows the player to move
- o Once the player touches a button to stop in that position, any adjacent items are revealed and tourist requests for that player check for completion
- o The turn should then end and move on to the other player
- **End State System**
  - o For a player to win the game, two states have to be fulfilled
    - ▪ That Player's three tourist objectives should be **true** in the Complete state
    - ▪ The Player's tile position is the same tile as the "mountain peak" tile
  - o When a Player wins, text appears that says "Player __ Win!"

Game Engine

Our team is using Unity to create Sherpa life for Android and IOS. Not only are the designers and programmer familiar with Unity, but also Unity is able to relatively easily export to Android and IOS. The systems our game will need to use, such as movement and the grid based map, can be easily changed by designers using Unity, thus making maps easy to iterate on and change for QA testing. Also, with Unity's folder structure, it will be easy to pipeline art and design into any version of the game.

Design Pipeline

Our design will be implemented into our game by first mapping out what our levels should look like such as where wall and rocks should be placed and where we should mark the tourist spots. From there we need to figure out how the levels should progress in their difficulty, whether this would be making the tourist spots harder to reach or by possibly adding a different mechanic to gameplay. For narrative design, we have to make sure that the story is clear to the player and that all of the tasks and gameplay make sense to them in regards to the context of the game.

Art Direction

Since our target market is towards the "Mommy and Me" area, it made sense to choose an art style that would help reflect that. Our art direction features more flat colors and has more of a pastel color palette. Our art has more of a cute cartoon look about it that are made with sharp edges. We wanted our art to be easy on the eyes and to create a fun environment that our players would enjoy looking at.

Sound Design

The overall sound of game will be more on the light and cheery side. Gathering inspiration from songs such as Longest Night - Lost Constellation's "Building a Snowman" and Undertale's "Snowdin Town" provide the type of upbeat and light theme that we are going for. These songs feature many high notes of bells and chimes which will help to set each stage. Using those as our main theme, we can use them as a guide to create sounds for feedback for when things happen in the game.