PLAYER EXPERIENCE AND PREFERENCES
- a case study on volunteering as playtester

Introduction

Playtesting is established as part of game development (Flanagan & Nissenbaum, 2008), however, research on volunteering for playtesting appears to be limited.

In this work in progress, our aim is to explore who volunteers for playtesting and how their attitude towards video games in general might have affected their experience.

Different player motivation theories, such as Bartle’s (1996) player typology, are often employed in game design, yet such a practice might result in the typologies becoming self-fulfilling (Toukanen & Hamari, 2012). Accordingly, in this descriptive case study (Schwandt & Gates, 2018), we will analyse the data inductively.

Player type responses

Question: If you would have magical powers and by snapping your fingers you could change the game any way you like, what would you change, add or remove?

Play tester 1 - The Socializer: A health bar, make the map bigger and more maps.

Play tester 2 - The Achiever: More maps and a story, different characters would be more suited for specific maps. To take the same character on different maps wouldn’t work in the long run. You must chose the right chopper pilot.

Play tester 3 - The Killer: More maps, more choppers with different features. You would be able to equip your chopper with weapons and other features. To be able to pick up bonus crates on different places on the map.

Do note that the game in the background is a screen shot from the same game discussed by play tester 1-3.

References


Method

The ongoing data collection started in October 2019. The data consists of pre- and post-questionnaires (SAM, SMEQ, AttrakDiff 2 Lite, and Immersive Experience Questionnaire (IEQ) by Jennett et al, 2008), post-test interviews and video data including eye-tracking.

Preliminary results

The preliminary results indicate that players who considered themselves as gamers tended to rate the games more critically with more specific comments regarding what features they liked and disliked.

Further, we noted tendencies where playtesters offered response on the games in line with the player type they were categorized into.

CASE STUDY STATS

26 PLAY TESTERS
6 FEMALE
20 MALE
24,6 AGE (MEAN)
8 GAMES
3 DEVICES (PC, MOBILE NINTENDO)

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Experience Lab at Åbo Akademi University facilitated play testing for game developers in Ostrobothnia (Finland) and Westrobothnia (Sweden).

The tests conducted were based on heuristic game evaluating (Nielsen, 1994) and free explorations usability test. Experience Lab advertised the need for playtesters through multiple channels; by engaging with students at campus, posters at local university campuses and mass emails for students at ÅAU.

The volunteers filled out a screening survey on gaming habits and preferred devices, from which the playtesters were recruited in line with the intended age group specified by the game developers.

The volunteers received a gift certificate of 20 euros for participating. As the campus in question primarily offers programs in education, health and social sciences, this might have affected the selection of potential volunteers.