

Documentation of Play & Usability Tests of *Sun Valve*

Game Design

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1. Introduction

This part of the documentation outlines the prototyping and testing aspects of the production cycle of our game. Initially we will describe the background of the testing, followed by detailing the methods employed in the tests. Subsequently we will describe the test process and conclusively elaborate on the results of playtest in question

2. Play-testing

We had originally planned to do two playtests in sprint number 5, i.e. week 47. The first play test was called the Narrative Playtestⁱ, and the second play test was called the “Mechanics playtestⁱⁱ”. The two tests were intended to be done together, but when the gesture recognition failed to respond to player input, the mechanic playtest was temporarily put on halt. We decided to move ahead and do the narrative playtest in isolation.

The testing lead was constructing the test based on principles of Pen & Paper roleplaying games, in which the appointed ‘dungeon master’ talks the selected players through a narrative and the player makes certain decisions on the way. The test itself was placed into the framework for playtesting as proposed by Fullerton (2008, p.253). The goal of particular method was to test if the story of Conrad was compelling and engaging for our target audience. The narrative playtest was pilot-tested with the testing lead’s sister and boyfriend. However the pilot testing made it clear that the results of the test could not be be usable in the sense that that the test progressed in a too linear fashion. This meant that in actuality there was only one way to progress in the test and the linear progression became very transparent and broke the immersion of the testers. The test was therefore abandoned as it did not provide us with answers to the goal we had set up.



3. Mechanic playtest and usability

Next we attempted to set up the planned mechanics playtest, which was also contextualized through Fullerton's framework (2008, p.253). As mentioned the coding of the mechanic ran into trouble which made it impossible to perform the test in question. It took until Sprint 7 to have a sufficiently functional mechanic to be tested. The challenge for both the team and development process was that the test took place at exact same time as the usability testing. We therefore decided that we had to merge the two tests into one testing session in order to have time left for implementing any insights resulting from the testⁱⁱⁱ.

4. Recruitment

To set up the proper invitations to the event, we created a Facebook event for the testing. The event was planned to be held on Sunday 11th of December at the IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark. The people invited were majorly fellow students from the Game design course, as well as some private friends of the team members. However no confirmed testers showed up for the testing, probably on account of it being Sunday, so after an hour of waiting with no testers appearing we changed approach. The testing lead and the team member assisting went around the campus grounds recruiting fellow students for testing. In the end we recruited 7 people, who all were taking the game design course.

5. The Tests

We used our Prototype version 19 of our map for testing. The first two testers were used as pilot tests^{iv}, so that we could flexibly adjust the way we completed the following five tests. Prototype version 19 had its background sounds disabled meaning that there was no sound unless the player reached a sound trigger. This resulted in both of the pilot testers claiming that it felt creepy walking around in this silence. We therefore enabled the background sound in the prototype and in the following five tests^v, it was not noted that it felt creepy. During the pilot tests we had initially started the game before the test commenced. This made it hard for the testers to focus on the introduction and warm up questions so in the following 5 tests we did not start the game until the play session of the game.

6. Results

The results were collected and analysed by comparing the comments, reactions, in-game decisions and answers to the questions of all the tests. We received a lot of useful results from the tests, Due to the scope of this design document; we will only mention a few of the more important results.

Firstly 6 out of the 7 testers remarked on Sun Valve being aesthetically pleasing and a nice environment to move around in. This was a great confirmation to get as Mapprototype 19 mainly consists of pleasure state elements that has been designed to afford an aesthetic and pleasant experience for the player.

Secondly we got confirmation that the poetry mechanic was not sufficiently engaging. In our internal self-testing within the team we had already discussed that it needed the extra feature of the poem appearing in pieces in order to make the mechanic meaningful for the player. Only one player

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mentioned that she liked the mechanic which very much confirmed our initial concerns about the engagement afforded by the mechanic.

The final result that we want to highlight was a usability result. While the input mechanics of moving around came intuitively, without instructions to 6 of the 7 testers, several of the testers struggled with understanding the input mechanic for the poetry mechanic. We therefore prioritized the implementation tutorial screens to assist the player in getting familiar with both the game and its mechanics.

7. Critical reflection

To conclude on this documentation on prototyping and testing, one could point out the various consequences of the way we completed the tests. The scope of the project and its required high workload made proper formal testing a larger challenge than usual. Implementing mechanics and having a ready to play experience for our testers demanded a lot of time, which ended up pushing the actual playtest further and further into the process. If we potentially had conducted the tests further back in the process, it would have made it possible to conduct further testing and reiterating and polishing the design of Sun Valve. Undoubtedly this would have made the game an even more engaging experience.

8. Bibliography

Fullerton, Tracy, *Game Design Workshop. A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games* (Gama Network Series). 2nd edition. Morgan Kaufmann, 2008.

9. End notes

ⁱ Testing Appendix 1: (Incomplete document)

ⁱⁱ Testing Appendix 2



- iii Testing Appendix 3
- iv Testing Videos 1-3
- v Testing Videos 4-8

