Milestone Report 5
Play-testing of a Twitch-based Puzzle-Action-Game

1 Play-testing Setup

Since many game functions are highly dependant on Twitch as a platform but can also be played without it, it is equally important to test both the streaming aspects as well as the single-player experience the project provides. The goal was to find out, how both are received by the player and how they can be improved. Thus, a planned play-testing session with players each setting up a stream to test the experience with the streaming service, as well as a simple build distribution for single-player testing was initiated.

1.1 Testing without Twitch

Being able to play the game without the streaming platform always has been an important critic point by fellow peers. While a major focus lies on the Twitch interconnection it is unlikely for people to find themselves a follower base and set up a stream just to test the game's full experience. However, it is fully playable without the Twitch aspect nonetheless due to randomization. A build was offered to multiple persons to play how they felt like and they were then asked to fill out a form which also people who were present during the planned Twitch session had to answer.

1.2 Testing with Twitch

To test the experience including the game's polls via the streaming platform's chat a planned session with five players was set up. The testers were instructed to set up a Twitch Account and the recording program OBS Studio (https://github.com/obsproject/obs-studio) to open a streaming session. They were then asked to simply play while the remaining four players could interact via the streaming platform's chat. After one round of ten minutes the streamer was then swapped with another member of the group and the process repeated.

2 Observations during planned Twitch Session

2.1 Problems with Stream Setup

The general first observation that could be made before actually commencing the gameplay was the general difficulty to set up a streaming session. Testers had to log into their account three times, that is one time on the internet platform directly, a second time to establish a streaming connection between OBS Studio and the platform and a third time to create the authentication token. This caused much frustration right at the beginning since the of 2-Factor-Authentication takes away some time even though it was tried to parallelize this process during testing.
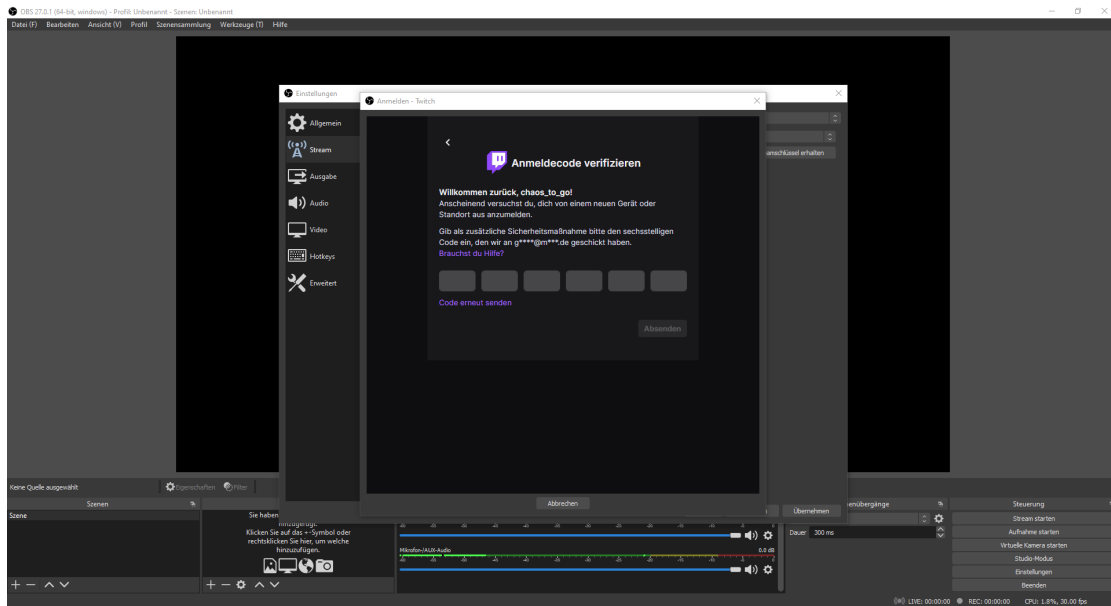
Figure 1: Due to required security mechanisms provided by Twitch, it can take quite some time for a new streamer to set up a running session. This can lead to frustration even before playing the game.

2.2 Missing Feedback for failed Connection

Another issue that could be observed right off the bat was the fact that there was not enough feedback when the set connection to the servers failed due to e.g. wrong credentials. The streamer has to first test out whether the poll system reacts to input by viewers which is not something we want to force to do. Moreover, for some players that were new to Twitch, the difference between "username" and "channel name" was not clear, so they unconsiously entered wrong credentials.

2.3 Visuals

Both on the game and Twitch side, there were some complains about visuals: For some players it was hard to distinguish direction of certain tiles, which they noticed only when multiple ingredients already stacked together. They also adviced to use Twitch emojis that are available for everyone so that they are visible in the chat. However, overall the visuals have been evaluated as appealing.

2.4 Controls

The controls were praised for their simplicity. Only the left and right mouse buttons are used as well as the Escape-Key to pause the game. The entire game-play is mainly controlled by moving the mouse cursor which seemed very intuitive for the most. Players

appeared to never have the problem of not being able to execute an action due to bad control schemes. Rather, some did not know they could perform a specific action like swapping tiles on the board because they did not read the instructions given at the beginning of a run.

2.5 Game-play

One thing that confused some testers to a certain extent was that cooking pots needed to be cleared by clicking on them, which however did not cause too much of an issue during the playing session as they discovered it themselves and then accepted it as a given rule. As the players concentrated mostly on the game board itself, they almost never used new tiles provided by the Twitch chat and a had hard time to discover that they can smash traffic jams consisting of ingredients. When talking with players afterwards, some explained that they would prefer it when a single run lasted a bit shorter than ten minutes. Additionally, it appeared to be a problem, that many ingredients on the board would stack when players are still figuring out the basics. In general, they expressed some frustration when too many objects are present on the board as everything felt like it would be filling up with unneeded items.

3 Observations from Survey

After a playtesting session, the testers were invited to fill out a survey which gave us an overwiew about how the testers experienced the game and what impressions they got.

3.1 Playtesters

The people we invited were mostly our friends and colleagues. The majority labeled themselves as gamers and was fond of playing multiplayer games, but rather with friends. Favourite genres were action-adventure, strategy and role-playing games, but most testers already had experience with puzzle games. There were some dedicated streamers among them, but the testers were ocassional stream viewers in general.

3.2 First impression

The most praised aspects of the game were interaction between participants and own progress, improving own skills during the session, overcoming challenges and scoring points. Unfortunately, most playtesters did not find the controls and visuals perfectly clear and needed considerable amounts of time to get the hang of the gameplay. Lack of experience with Twitch, unknown emojis, fast pacing at the beginning and thus intensified traffic and traffic jams on the conveyor belts significantly influenced the further gameplay and made it harder to score points. Even though some of the testers managed to get a decent final score.

Do you stream games or watch streams? How often?

10 Antworten

- ● Everyday or almost everyday
- ● Once a week
- ● Once a month
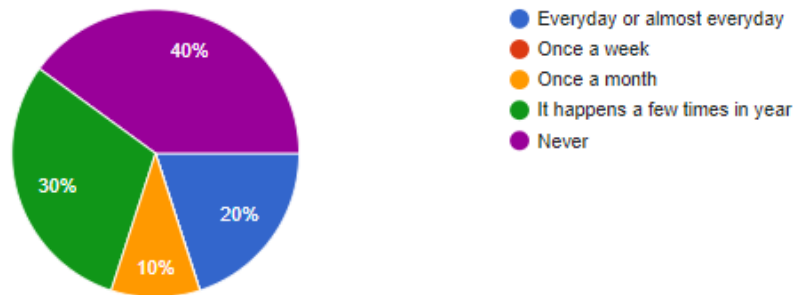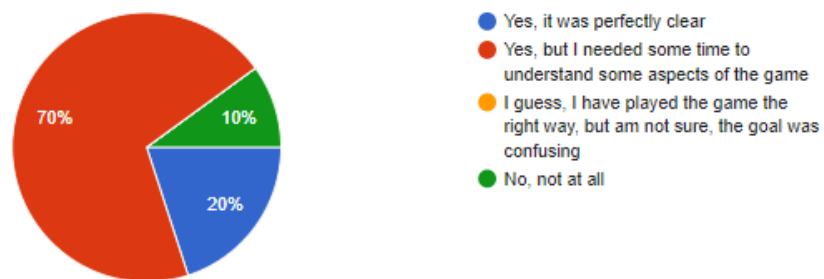- ● It happens a few times in year
- ● Never

Figure 2: Graph showing how many of our Playtesters were familiar with streaming.

Gameplay: Was it clear to you what the game asked you to do?

10 Antworten

- ● Yes, it was perfectly clear
- ● Yes, but I needed some time to understand some aspects of the game
- ● I guess, I have played the game the right way, but am not sure, the goal was confusing
- ● No, not at all

Controls: Were you able to execute all required actions using the controls?

10 Antworten

- ● Yes, the controls were intuitive
- ● The controls felt somewhat clumsy, but I have managed to do what I intended to
- ● I had hard time learning the controls, they were unintuitive

Figure 3: Graph showing that our controls and the game itself were not completely clear for majority of Testers.

Figure 4: Approximated position of Chaos to Go on the Play Matrix and the direction players wanted to move it towards.

3.3 Twitch influence

Tests were carried primarily online, but the testers, who played alone anticipated multiplayer to be more amusing. Those who experienced multiplayer wanted to stick with it. The viewers described themselves as rather malicious, but the players had an impression they were supported. It seems to us, that the viewers had enough empathy to help out, when the streamer was struggling against the controls. In overall Twitch chat users felt that they had influence on the gameplay but rather slight than significant.

3.4 Suggestions for improvement

Playtesters mostly wished for a clearer tutorial and more explanation on how the game works. They felt like some of the gameplay aspects were left out. Suggested was inclusion of additional information about how and when to finish the recipe, how to put the tile back, why they are getting negative points and what the Twitch chat influences exactly. Option to clear the board was desirable. It was also pointed out that some of the emotes used by the game are "paid" ones and so not available for every Twitch user. Use of basic emotes was suggested and maybe an option to add own emotes through settings.

3.5 Play Matrix

'Chaos to Go' was placed far in the direction of mental calculation and visibly towards skill. The testers would like to generally move the game a bit back towards physycial dextrity and further in direction of skill. Proposed solutions for that would be some joker tiles and inclusion of difficulty levels.

Figure 5: Small icon to remind the player to set up a Twitch connection

4 Conclusion

Overall the game was received positively. The feedback contained opinions that it is an interesting idea and the game has a clear fun factor. Notwithstanding, there are numerous things to improve: We need to rethink and redisign our tutorial as it turned out to be not clear enough. Some information about the gameplay intended specifically for the viewers needs to be included. We have to improve the clarity not only through rules descriptions but likewise through visuals. Are the meals cooked corretly? Where will the next ingredient spawn? Is Twitch connected properely? Which emoji should I send? Does order of ingredients matter? Such questions are to be answered quickly, clearly and intuitively. An option to get rid of traffic jams and stacked mistakes e.g. through clearing the board without significant loss of points should also be implemented.

5 Resulted Improvements

5.1 Twitch Connection Label

To account for the issues considering the problem that players would not get feedback when they have not yet linked the game to Twitch, a small label (see Figure 2) was added below the Voting UI to indicate that no login data is present. If a streamer forgets to set up the connection to the streaming platform, this icon should remind that the game is still played offline.

5.2 Issues with Ingredient Movements

One tester encountered a bug in the movement pattern which we were unfortunatly unable to reproduce. It would happen, when objects overshoot the destination area at the end of a conveyor-belt-tile and keep on moving. It is likely that this problem is caused by lagging or in very unfortunate cases where the distance threshold is too small in relation to the object's movement speed. Thus, for now, a failsafe was added which should generally prevent this behavior by adding an additional check which ensures that ingredients can never move to far away from their current tile on the board.