PROJECT & PORTFOLIO IV (GDN348)

DREAMSCAPE HOTEL

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Image of a liminal hotel. (Anty_2, 2023)

Introduction

This documentation focuses on the data collected by playtesting the Dreamscape Hotel level. 5 unique testers, who know nothing about the level but fit into the target demographic of the level played the game. A form was created and sent to the testers before and after playing to gather their feedback. Their playtests were also monitored by the designer to take notes and collect external data. Additionally, the level collected internal data as well.

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Level Information

- The level is a first-person singleplayer adventure.
- The player wakes up and finds themselves in a strange hotel. They soon realize that they are dreaming and must find a way to wake up. The player explores the dream world by taking portals throughout the hotel.
- The player's main objective is to find their way to the roof by exploring the different paths and finding important collectables.
- The optional objectives are to collect subliminal messages, count sheep, and travel through portal doors.

Test #1

Tester Information

- **Name:** Nate
- **Age:** 17
- **Gender:** Male
- **Favorite Game Genre:** Survival
- **Types of games usually played:** Adventure, Action, Simulation, FPS, Action-Adventure, Casual, Survival, Battle Royale
- **How many hours a week do you typically play video games:** 21-30

Data Screenshot

Test Notes

- **Things the player said:** “Why is the mouse sensitivity so high?” “The look of the portals is pretty cool.” “Cool concept for a game.” “What am I missing?”
- **Things the player did:** Player went into the bathroom first upon reaching the lobby but did not see the subliminal message. Player explored path 2 first. Player initially missed the subconscious key collectable but went back after realizing when the objectives updated. Player looked around for a while before going upstairs and following path 1. Player found the note at the door after collecting the required collectables for the front door, then counted sheep from there to get to the roof.
- **Three words that describe the level:** “interesting, dreamy, backrooms”
- **What did you like most about the level:** “I liked that the level was well made with a lot of stuff in it and the attention to detail in certain areas like the front desk or the book shelves.”
- **What didn’t you like about the level:** “I think that the objectives should have been there from the start, so I know what I need to do instead of just seeing ‘wake up’ for half of it.”
- **Did you get confused or frustrated at any point? If so, please describe:** “I didn’t pick up the key when I first went to the room with the key in it. I realized later that the collectables have lights over them but when I initially went to that room, I didn’t know there would be things to collect.”
- **Recommendations to make the level better:** “Things to make the hallways on each floor look different and having the objectives on the top right more obvious to the player.”

Designer Notes

- Possibly change where the lobby portal is to get players to go in the direction of path 1 or add more leading lines to path 1.
- Adjust subliminal messages and collectables to stand out more than just a simple point light.
- Make objectives clearer or at the very least provide hints/information to which paths will hold which objectives.

Test #2

Tester Information

- **Name:** Isabella
- **Age:** 24
- **Gender:** Other
- **Favorite Game Genre:** Horror
- **Types of games usually played:** Adventure, simulation, first-person shooter, racing, puzzle, casual, strategy, survival, battle royale
- **How many hours a week do you typically play video games:** 21-30

Data Screenshot

Test Notes

- **Things the player said:** “I’m scared,” “What a trip,” “I want to know more about the story,” “There’s something corrupt going on here.”
- **Things the player did:** Player did not collect first subliminal message. Explored every inch of the lobby. Player explored path 2 first. Player had slight trouble in landscape room. Player accidentally found the third path by counting sheep. Player was confused by hearing the count sheep sound come from inaccessible portals. Player explored path 1 last.
- **Questions the player asked:** “What happens if I go through this portal?” “Am I missing anything?”
- **Three words that describe the level:** “dreamlike, immersive, fluid”
- **What did you like most about the level:** “how every room had its own story to tell and there were notes to help with that. I loved how even though it was all in a hotel, it felt as though I was transported to each of the environments”
- **What didn’t you like about the level:** “there was nothing I didn’t like; I want the full game”
- **Did you get confused or frustrated at any point? If so, please describe:** “I went through the same portals a couple times because I forgot what ones I had used to get to the destination I had in mind with my objectives”
- **Recommendations to make the level better:** “Add fully modelled assets. “

Designer Notes

- I will need to put some kind of indication on the front door that reminds the player that they can go through it once they collect the teddy bear and the subconscious key.
- I should also rename the subconscious key objective to “Unlock your subconscious”.
- Finally, I should ensure that the 2nd subliminal message in the landscape room only appears after the player is exploring a different path.

Test #3

Tester Information

- **Name:** Steven
- **Age:** 22
- **Gender:** Male
- **Favorite Game Genre:** RPG/Adventure
- **Types of games usually played:** Adventure, action, RPG, platformer, action-adventure, racing, casual, MMORPG, Party, Action RPG.
- **How many hours a week do you typically play video games:** 31-49 hours

Data Screenshot

Test Notes

- **Things the player said:** Player said that the walk speed was faster than they felt like was necessary for the setting. Player also commented that the view model of the FPS character was buggy, referring to the player not being able to move when the camera is pointed downwards and the shoulders clipping through the camera. Player said that it would be useful to have something further indicate when the objectives are updated.
- **Things the player did:** Player missed the first subliminal message. Player thoroughly explored lobby. Player took path #2 first as well. Player accidentally found the third path by randomly pressing count sheep. Player picked up the count sheep mechanic quickly. Player went back to play again to find the subliminal messages that they missed. Player mainly used path 3 portal to get to the roof instead of the front door!
- **Things the player asked:** N/A
- **Three words that describe the level:** "Confused but enjoyed"
- **What did you like most about the level:** "The uniqueness of the 'Count Sheep' power where you were able to make the dream doors appear and disappear as well as the little sheep on the wall to give an indication that the power could be used there. It could give a fun gameplay experience in later levels, and it even was fun during this level having to make a dream door disappear to go into another room behind it. Cool stuff."
- **What didn't you like about the level:** "I disliked the lack of direction after you got the "Count Sheep" power since I got a little lost on where to go after I had completed a section."
- **Did you get confused or frustrated at any point? If so, please describe:** "I wouldn't say frustrated, it was more so that I wasn't 100% engaged in the storyline

the game was conveying to me through the papers left around so I was left a little confused as to why I was doing the things I was doing. “

- **What recommendations do you have to help make this game better:** “I'd say give clear indication on the next objective and try to lead the player in the right direction instead of just letting them run free after you get the Count Sheep power thing after the brief introduction. Maybe some ambient noises or background music to immerse the player but again, I know the game is heavily in development so that wasn't a priority.”

Designer Notes

- Add hitbox to stop screaming audio when player walks away from “fire” subliminal message.
- Adjust (lower) walk speed of the player
- Disable player ability to type on the end game widget.
- Added a sound or que of some kind to indicate that the “Objectives” have been updated.
- Add more dialogue boxes, update objectives more frequently, or any other ways to indicate where the player should go towards the middle of the level.

Test #4

Tester Information

- **Name:** Retro
- **Age:** 23
- **Gender:** Female
- **Favorite Game Genre:** Open World and Puzzle
- **Types of games usually played:** Adventure, Simulation, FPS, Racing, Puzzle, Survival
- **How many hours a week do you typically play video games:** 11-20 hours.

Data Screenshot

Test Notes

- **Things the player said:** “Why is that objective green?” “I wish I could ring the bell at the front desk” “I can’t really tell if I’ve been here before”
- **Things the player did:** Player collected subliminal message 1 immediately. Player picked up on the objectives immediately. Player went to path #1 but explored path #2 fully first. Player took a while to see the “count sheep” prompt when it popped up. Player seemed pretty immersed in the story. Player went down path 2 a second time. Player went down path 3 next. Player did not hesitate to jump off of the roof. Player played the game a second time.
- **Three words that describe the level:** “interesting, ominous, slightly perplexing.”
- **What did you like most about the level:** “Having the different ways you can complete it is cool but taking the time to go complete the checklist helps you get a better feel for the game. Also, I think the concept of the overall game is really cool cause I haven't played anything like it.”
- **What didn’t you like about the level:** “I can't ring the bell! Haha but I don't think there was anything I really disliked? The only thing I would say is sometimes I was confused on where to go but that could also just be me not fully exploring everything”
- **Did you get confused or frustrated at any point? If so, please describe:** “At one point I did because I didn't realize you could "count the sheep" at the entrance to the bathroom and it took me a second the figure that out. Also, when I had to get out of the one room it took me a second to just straight up turn around the see the doorframe.”
- **Recommendations to make the level better:** “Let me ring the bell.”

Designer Notes

- Extending landscape room audio hitbox.
- The Room number placards do not seem to be an obvious enough indicator of the floors. I will have to add a more attention-grabbing form of information for the player.
- Make the front desk bell interactive and possibly an optional objective.
- Make count sheep UI prompt more obvious to the player

Test #5

Tester Information

- **Name:** Lacey
- **Age:** 20
- **Gender:** Female
- **Favorite Game Genre:** Adventure
- **Types of games usually played:** Adventure, Action, Simulation, Action-Adventure, Survival
- **How many hours a week do you typically play video games:** 5-10 Hours

Data Screenshot

Test Notes

****Player was unable to share screens to allow gameplay monitoring due to poor internet connection, however, the form was still completed. ****

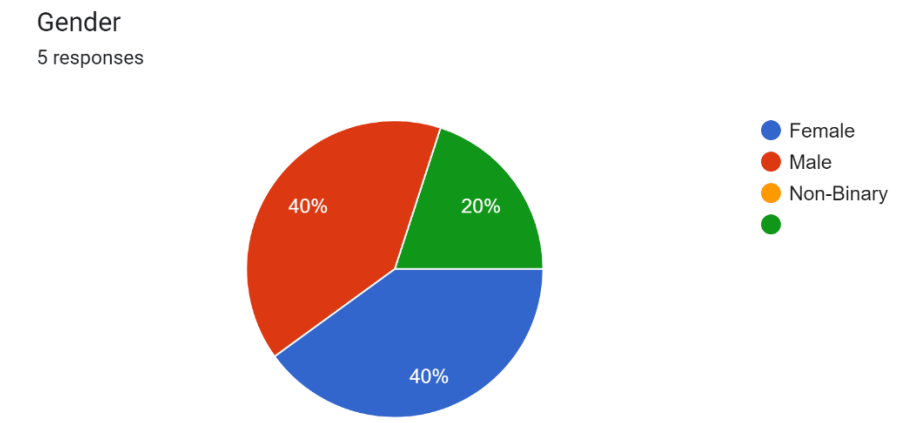
- **Three words that describe the level:** uncanny, liminal, fever-dream
- **What did you like most about the level:** "I love how the Dreamscape Hotel looks as though it's inhabited, even though it's desolate. with everyday things strewn about, it puts me on edge imagining it being so busy with people and what must have occurred to make them seemingly leave all of a sudden"
- **What didn't you like about the level:** "I think the length, collectibles, theme and layout is perfect for 1 part of what would evidently be a full, story rich game"
- **Did you get confused or frustrated at any point? If so, please describe:** "I was confused for a little when i thought i could through a portal in the heaven-esque realm but they're not reachable"
- **Recommendations to make the level better:** "I can't really think of anything but i suppose just for difficulties sake, throwing in a random explorable room or two that don't actually have any significance"

Designer Notes

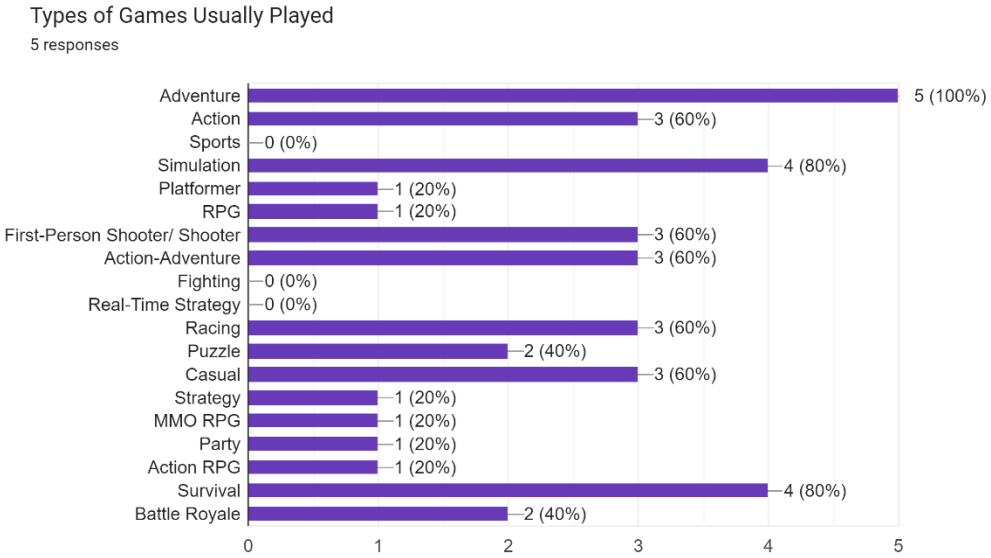
- Make the two valve doors in the landscape room appear to be definitely unreachable. Currently, they are just above jump heigh but still out of reach.
- Ensure there is nowhere on the roof for the player to get out of the level.

Data Collection

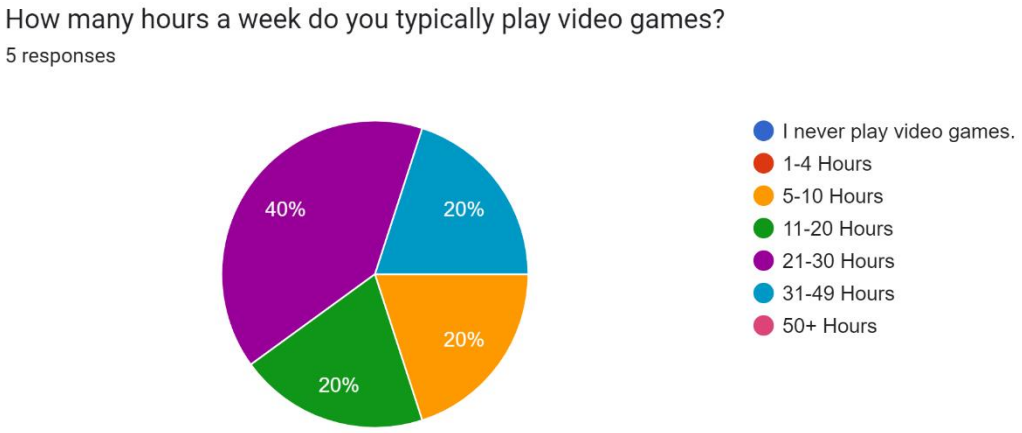
Player Demographic Data



This chart displays the gender of the play testers.



This chart displays the game genres that the players frequently play.

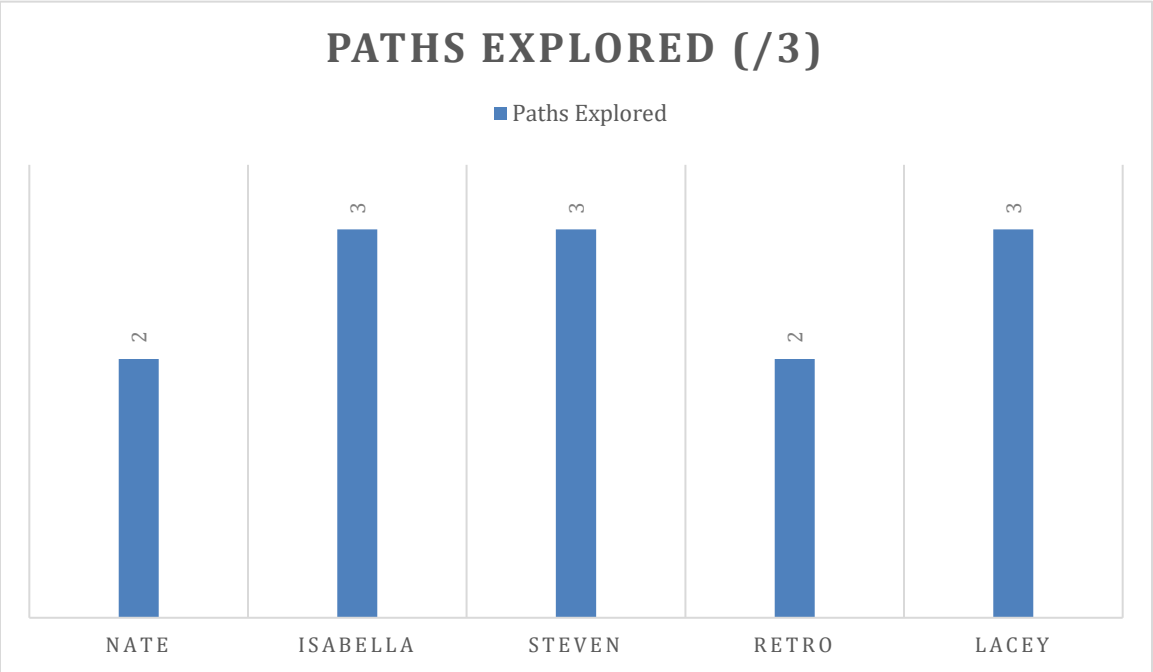


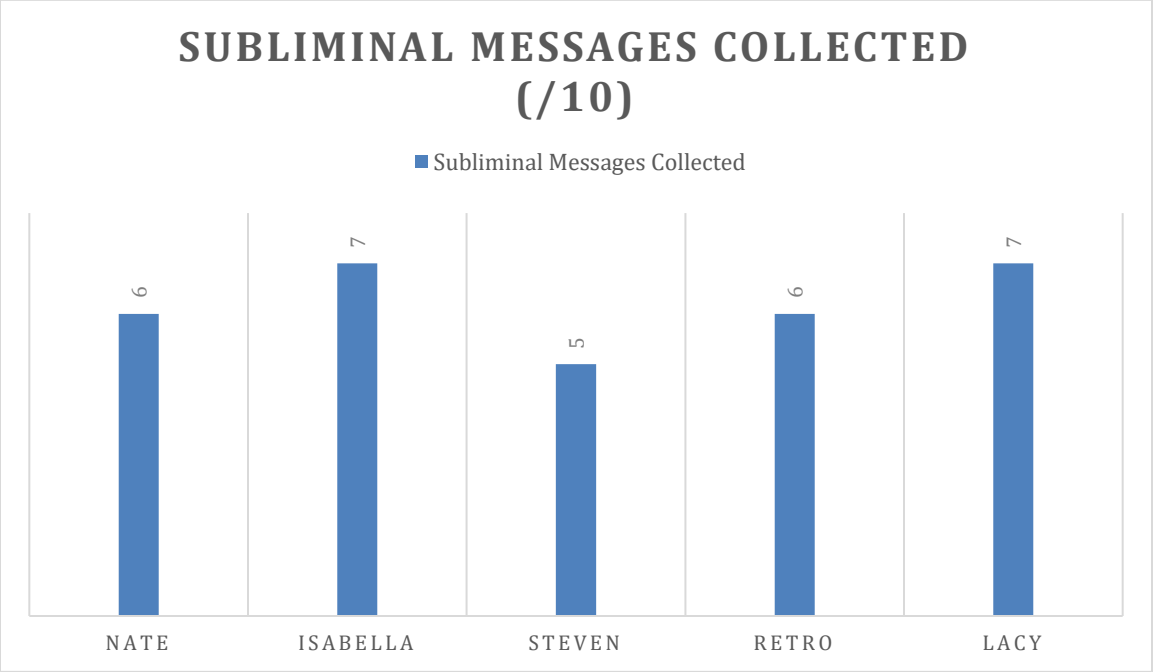
This pie chart displays the average hours that each play tester plays video games each week.

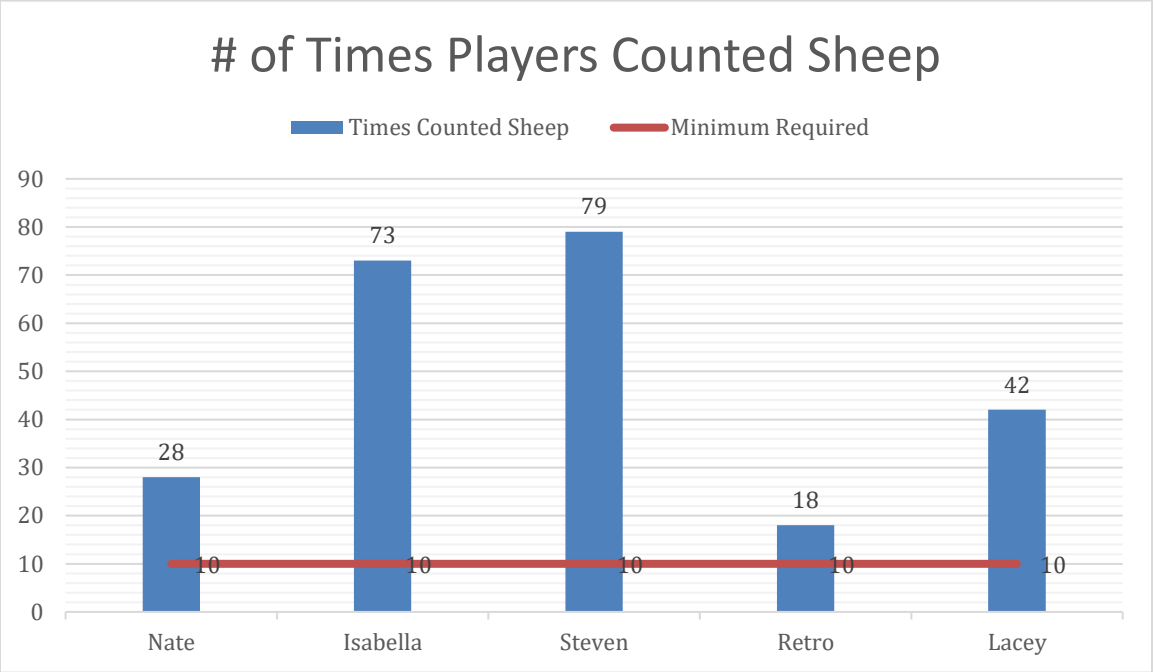
Player Demographic Analysis:

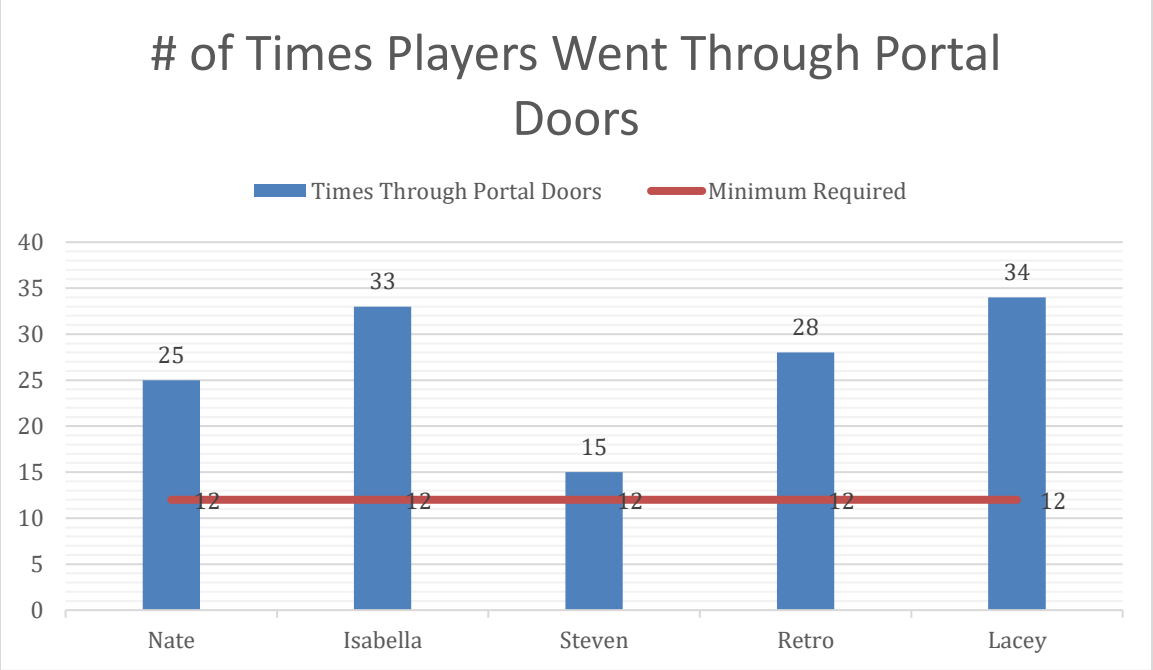
The target audience of Dreamscape Hotel is average experienced gamers between the ages of 15-45. Gender was collected for testing purposes but the goal was to have a fairly evenly split demographic for gender. As we can see by the play testers responses for the games they typically play, all 5 selected Adventure games, which is Dreamscape Hotel's genre. Additionally, most of them also play simulation and survival games. Finally, the average weekly hours that the testers play video games varies, which shows that we were able to collect data with testers of varying experience and skill levels.

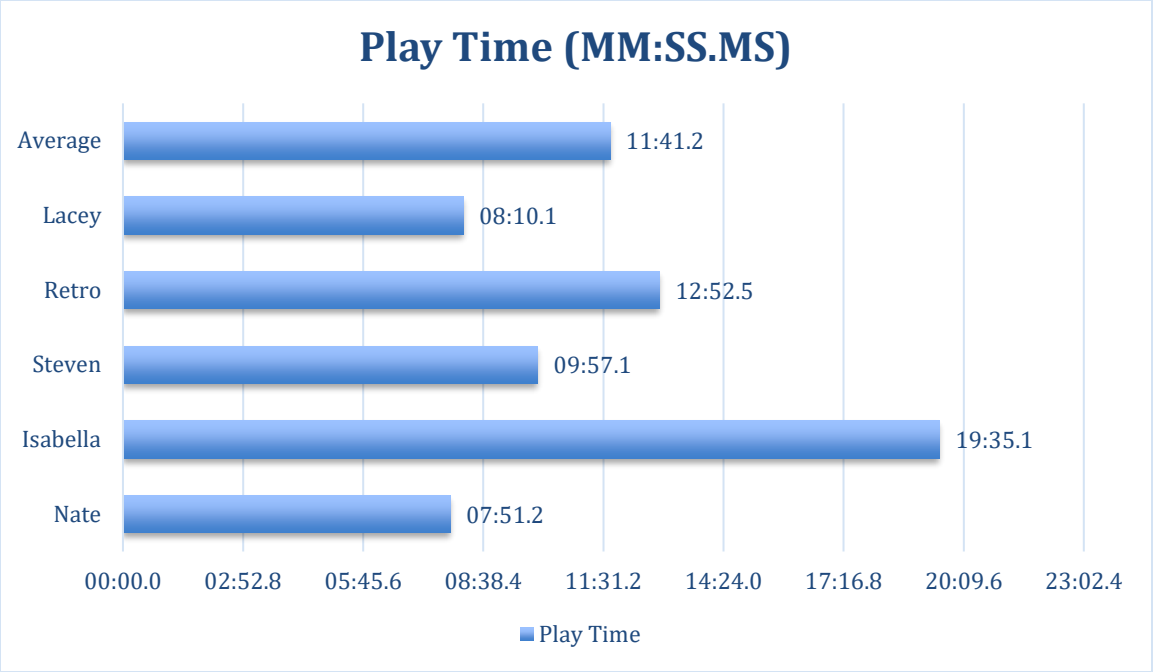
Playtest Data

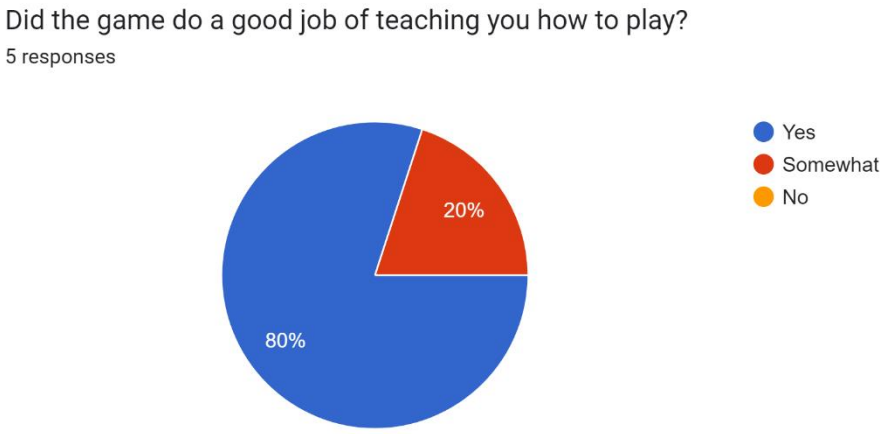


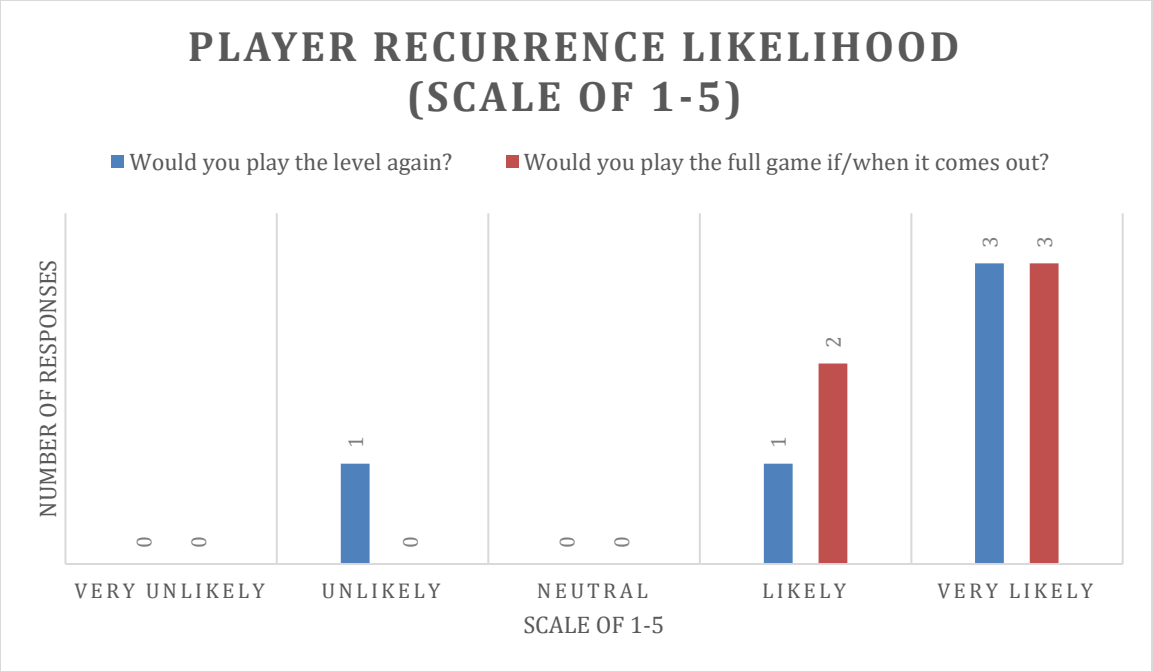



# of Times Players Counted Sheep
Times Counted Sheep
Minimum Required
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
28
73
79
18
42
10
10
10
10
10
Nate
Isabella
Steven
Retro
Lacey


# of Times Players Went Through Portal Doors
Times Through Portal Doors
Minimum Required
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
25
33
15
28
34
12
12
12
12
12
Nate
Isabella
Steven
Retro
Lacey


Play Time (MM:SS.MS)
Average
Lacey
Retro
Steven
Isabella
Nate
11:41.2
08:10.1
12:52.5
09:57.1
19:35.1
07:51.2
00:00.0
02:52.8
05:45.6
08:38.4
11:31.2
14:24.0
17:16.8
20:09.6
23:02.4
Play Time


Did the game do a good job of teaching you how to play?
5 responses
20%
80%
Yes
Somewhat
No



Playtest Data Analysis:

The majority of players were able to explore all three paths on their first attempt, but two of them only found 2 of the 3 paths. Although one path is “hidden” (the third path), there is information that hints that the path is there if the player uses the count sheep mechanic. However, most players found the third path by accident. Even the players who explored all paths did not find all subliminal messages, with the most found being 7. Subliminal messages are an optional objective, so putting some of them in non-obvious places was the designer’s intent. For the majority of players, the number of times that they counted sheep and went through portal doors was well above the minimum. These numbers were typically inflated by players being lost or unsure of where to go next but can also be representative of the linear gameplay. The average playtime was 11 minutes and 41 seconds, which was longer than I anticipated. 4 out of 5 player testers believed the level taught the player well, with the one remaining player only agreeing somewhat. Finally, all of the players overall enjoyed the level and said that they were at least likely to play it as a full game. The one response in the unlikely category has an asterisk, which is that the player played the level 3 times and explored everything, so they said they did not think they would want to play it again.

After Testing - Designer Thoughts

- All play testers enjoyed the level, and the majority of them said they were very likely to play again and/or play the full game. I am very glad that I could make something that people could enjoy playing and resonate with.
    - All play testers fell into the target market, so I know that the target market will likely enjoy the game. Playtests with players outside of the target market would need to be conducted to gauge whether or not the game could expand into other target markets as well.
- Even with the majority of the feedback being positive, there are still a lot of things that I can do to improve the level.
- Players seemed to get lost towards the middle of the game, which is where the internal dialogue is virtually nonexistent due to difficulties with scripting it to only appear during that middle portion. I will need to find more ways to lead the player throughout the entirety of the game. More direction for the player is needed overall.
- Players understood all mechanics fairly well by the end of the game. However, some improvement could be used:
    - For introducing the subliminal messages sooner. Players mainly missed the earlier subliminal messages before the Count Sheep mechanic is introduced, since that is also when the subliminal messages are forced on the player to use.
    - The count sheep mechanic was understood, but the level needs to be clearer about when and where it should be used. The number of times players counted sheep was heavily inflated by them just trying it in random places to see if something happens.

References

Anty_2. (2023). *R/LiminalSpace on reddit: I am literally staying in the Liminal Hotel*. Reddit. https://www.reddit.com/r/LiminalSpace/comments/zaocxn/i_am_literally_staying_in_the_liminal_hotel/