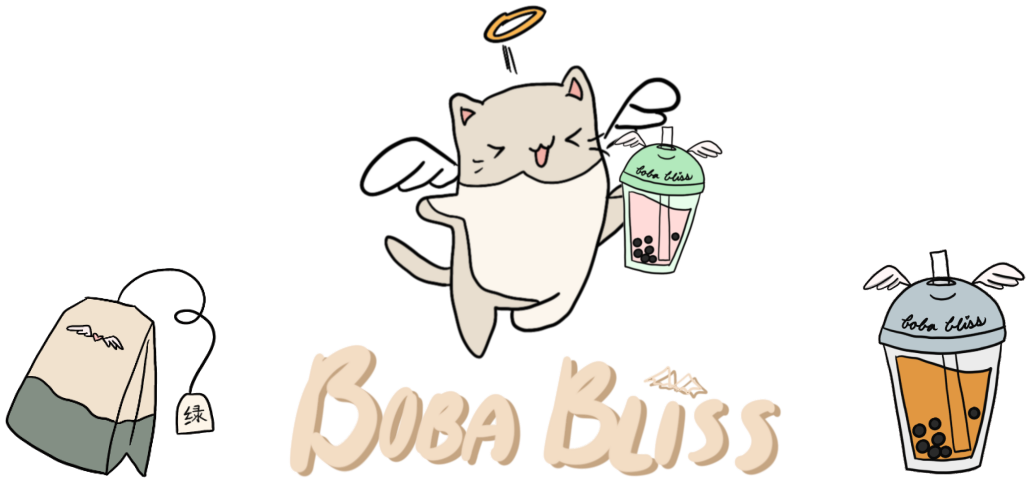

Boba Bliss – P3 Report

CS377G – Winter 2023
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Concept Statement

Our intention for the game was to immerse players in the context of running their own small food business – in the case of Boba Bliss, they play as an angel cat running a boba shop in heaven for all their angel cat customers. We all have small businesses from our communities that are near and dear to our hearts and a place that we keep in our recollections fondly. Whether it's the go-to hang out spot with friends, or if it's a shop you've been going to ever since your childhood and the owners have watched you grow up, or a product or initiative started by people you know, small businesses and mom-and-pop shops are a staple of community. However, especially within food service, it can be difficult to be a small business owner and run everything yourself, especially when you're first starting out! As fun as making boba drinks for customers may seem, there's a plethora of preparatory work and management and time and energy required to run the whole endeavor. This requires skills like resource management and allocation, maintaining high customer satisfaction, what elements to prioritize in the face of limited resources, etc. There's also a myriad of elements to consider that are outside the scope of our game, including, but not limited to competitor and market research, sourcing the most optimal suppliers, marketing initiatives, customer behaviors, etc.

We want to reassure and/or inspire players to take on the daunting task of starting and running a small business by giving them a taste of what it may be like and educating them about the numerous moving parts involved. We also hope to foster feelings of empathy towards people who

start and run small businesses, especially in the spaces that surround us and the communities we live in, and especially across all of the different causes that people support!

To do so, we will simulate an environment in our game where players and users will have to make these sorts of decisions to have a taste of the considerations that would be made in a real-world scenario and implicitly teach them through how they learn to strategize their way through the game and make a profit in their boba store!

Diagramming and Modeling:

We coded up our game as an online platform with GameMaker, which is based in a C-esque language. Players interact with the system fully digitally through the GameMaker interface. This creates an immersive atmosphere, complete with visuals and audio and physical interaction to simulate the atmosphere of a boba shop. The way we designed all of the different features were informed by the playtests we conducted and the feedback we received to create the most intuitive and seamless experience for our users.

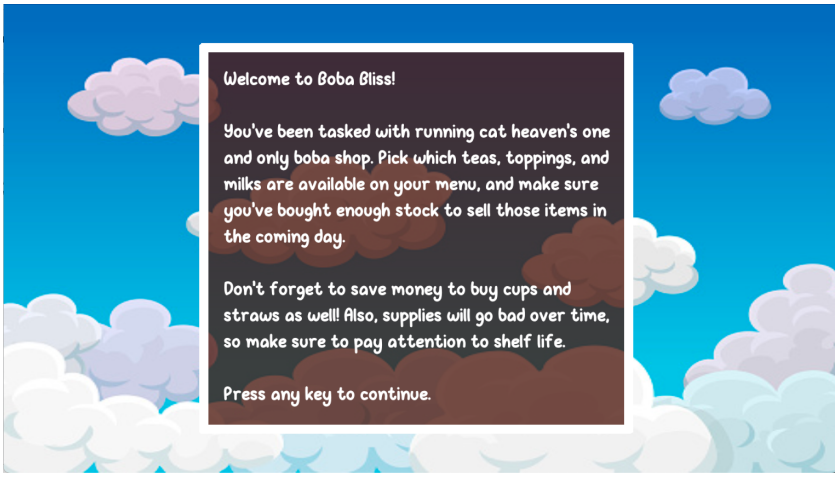

Figure 1: Welcome screen to introduce users to the mission and interactions of the game.

Figure 2: “Home” screen of interactions

Figure 3: Supply purchasing and managementflow

Figure 4: Boba shop simulation during the day

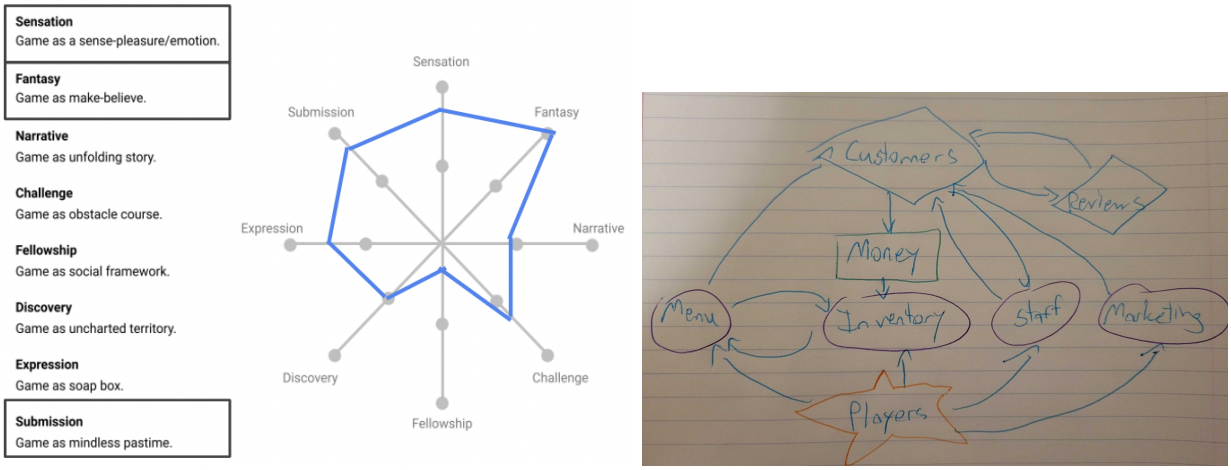

Figure 5: Initial concept maps

Testing and iteration history

We conducted a series of playtests of our platform during its various phases of development, both with classmates in class and other playtesters we found as well to obtain holistic feedback. We incorporated peoples' feedback and iterated through several different types of modifications to our system and game framework to best emulate our initial mission as well as convey that mission accurately and genuinely to our players while still retaining a sense of charm and comfort and fun through the overall atmosphere of the game. Below, we've summarized some key themes gleaned from various findings and highlights throughout our playtests, and documented the changes we made throughout the development process to leverage those insights.

Playtest Takeaways:

- Mission and system:
  - Authenticity of the simulated experience
  - Boba shop and ingredient details
- Customization and creativity:
  - Blend different ingredients together and create new flavors
  - Would like to see more interesting flavors
  - Recommend combos (food + drink combos)
- Game/code mechanics
  - Sound clarity
  - Menu interaction and game flow clarity
    - Error states, tutorials
  - Customer history + recording user inputs (less memory intensive for player)
  - Trends over time -> strategizing

- Aesthetics, Look, Feel, Vibe, Environment
    - Design and ambiance through mixed media and immersiveness
- Arcs and Loops
    - Understanding game mechanics and end/success conditions and outcomes
    - Milestones in the story
    - Storytelling and immersiveness:
        - Different endings based on how much revenue you get + how good your reviews are
        - What is the backstory of the boba shop and the cats? Why are you running a shop?

Iteration:

- Mission and system:
    - We really wanted to focus on recreating the authenticity of the "small business" experience along the axes we originally targeted, such as resource management, etc. To simulate the "realness" of the experience, we decided to incorporate the notion of shelf life/expiration for the products themselves, such as how different types of teas stay fragrant for longer periods of time than others, or some dairy sources keep longer than others. We incorporated this in price as well – we were informed by one playtester that some types of dairy alternatives are charged more in boba shops, so we created the notion of customizing prices on the menu for different items and having a relative assignment of the raw supplies' costs as well. We also added the notion of having to buy "essential" supplies such as a cup and a straw, without which a drink cannot be sold.
- Customization and creativity:
    - We allow the users to assemble their own menu based on a selection of teas, milks, toppings, etc. We thought this would allow users to have a sense of customization in getting to assemble an individualized experience and allow room for strategizing based on popularity of certain drinks that customers liked.
- Game/code mechanics
    - We included an onboarding process and a tutorial to explain to users what they need to do to run through the pre-day ordering and assembly process as well as how to navigate through the game environment itself. We have included logical error states and fallbacks in case users make an error.
- Aesthetics, Look, Feel, Vibe, Environment
    - We incorporated hand-drawn assets of cats and boba and toppings as well as included feedback music appropriate for each action and background music similar to something you would hear in a standard cafe to simulate the environment.
- Arcs and Loops
    - We included the notion of a backstory and setting and different endings for the game based on the outcome. There are a few different endings that you can earn based on how much profit you make and how satisfied your customers are that are

suited to the exact results you earn from running the shop (such as ending up in cat hell if you have unsatisfied customers but high profits..)

Initial decisions

We wanted our system to authentically recreate the experience of digitally running a boba shop through a game setting. To do so, we worked through the main formal elements of games and decided how we wanted to execute on creating our framework to achieve these values as well as push for our overall mission throughout the game and teach users about our system and gain empathy towards members who exist in that system in real life and in the communities around us.

Players:

- We chose to make this a single-player immersive game. We thought this would fit well with the spirit of being a small business owner and having only yourself to rely on initially for all of the decisions and logistics and management. The game itself is very localized as well and suited for individual interaction.

Objectives

- The objective of this game is to learn some of the decisions required for resource management when running a small business and understanding some of the considerations that are made. The overarching objective is to reach a win-state of the game by being a successful business owner!

Outcomes

- The outcomes of the game are determined by how successfully you ran your business on the axes of customer satisfaction or your business reputation, and your physical profit made from running the business.

Rules

- The rules of the game are to assemble and plan your supply management and resource allocation well before the simulation begins and your customers start coming in. Prices and item shelf life create realism.

Procedures

- The game is run in two stages – one stage is the user-input stage of the game where the menu is determined and supplies are ordered. The second stage is the simulation that emulates customers and their purchases. Afterwards, the profit and sales are used to drive strategy and future thought for subsequent iterations of this 2-stage cycle before reaching the end of the game.

Resources

- The game itself is run on GameMaker's engine. A laptop/computer with keyboard are required to play the game. Main resources within the game include raw ingredients and supplies that are ordered for the days.

Boundaries

- The "magic circle" of the game exists when the game is running on GameMaker itself and the user is playing the game. But it could also be something to keep in the back of your mind whenever you're visiting a small business or local cafe or boba shop!