

Breaking Down the Elements of Experiences that Contribute to Fun



The background is a rich, colorful 3D game world. It features a variety of blocky, low-poly characters and structures. On the left, a character with white hair and a blue sash stands prominently. In the center, there's a character with a large, ornate headdress. To the right, a character with a large, brown, textured headpiece is visible. The environment is filled with green foliage, blue glowing paths, and various architectural elements like a large blue structure and a yellow structure. The overall aesthetic is bright and playful.

THE SANDBOX

Quality content is key because

Players may come to earn EP

But they stay for the FUN

Deconstructing what makes an experience stand out



OVERALL, THERE IS LITTLE DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN TAG CATEGORIES AND THE OVERALL RATING

THERE IS NO SINGLE SILVER-BULLET "THEMES AND TYPES OR GAMEPLAY" THAT CORRELATES WITH THE PERCEIVED QUALITY OF EXPERIENCES

Tag category	Tag	Avg rating
OVERALL		3.78
Player interaction	Multi	3.85
	Solo	3.73
Gameplay	Exploration	3.73
	Collectathon	3.81
	Action-Adventure	3.73
	Platformer	3.88
	RPG	3.90
	Gallery	3.78
Land size	1	3.90
	2	3.74
	3	3.54
	4	3.61
Atmosphere type	Fantasy	3.84
	Futuristic	3.60
	Medieval	3.81
	Realistic	3.88
	Music	3.70

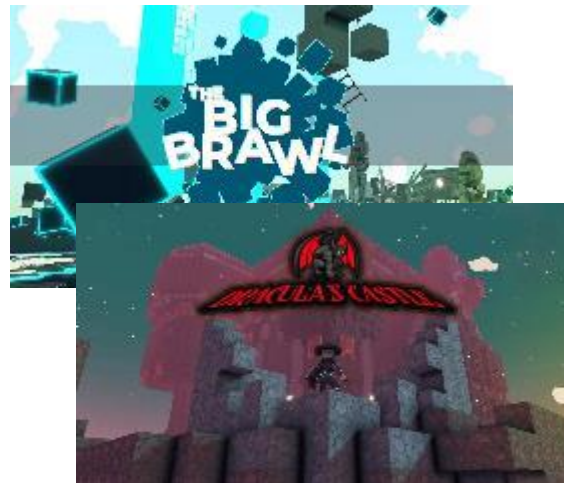
OUR QUALITATIVE ANALYSES OF EXPERIENCES ARE STRUCTURED BY THREE « CONTENT PILLARS »

#1 Atmosphere



- Scenery quality
- Music quality, diversity, loop
- Theme coherence
- Camera use and movements
- Respect of the original IP (if relevant)

#2 Storytelling



- Engaging story
- Feeling of progression
- Coherence

#3 Fun factor



- Game type
- Gameplay design
- NPC, environment interaction
- Environment contribution to fun
- Bugs

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THE MOST USED THEMES AND TYPES OF GAMEPLAY

		Atmosphere	Storytelling	Fun factor
G A M E P L A Y	Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design has to be beautiful Easter eggs add a lot of value IP helps build a good and coherent atmosphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not core 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use 3D/vertical design to create stimulation Add funny/interesting elements in the map Add interaction with map elements (lever, etc)
	Combat/RPG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistence in the bestiary (monster/environment coherence, strength coherence, ...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RPG codes (gearing up, leveling integrates naturally in those game types) and can be served to enhance pure combat games Story is secondary for combat, necessary for RPG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the ennemies present a challenge and are coherent in difficulty (vampire>bat) Ensure a progression in the ennemies with regular mobs, bosses and a end-boss
	Platformer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not core 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not core 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding the right level of difficulty is key, progression in difficulty solves this Avoid any randomness as this is a skill-based game type
T H E M E	Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Music must be flawless (loop long enough, proximity-based sound and balance) The music has to match the theme (have rock music if theme is about rock, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not core to be an « okay » experience but it is an easy improvement to create a story around a real or fictive artist/instrument/group/genre... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Players are expecting the ability to play music/sounds or sing, it can be as simple as jumping on tiles making sounds
	Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scene must be or contain an actual sport space (stadium, gym, tennis or basketball court, ...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not core to be an « okay » experience but it is an easy improvement to create a story around a real or fictive sport/athlete/ team... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Players are expecting the ability to play sport it is made even more frustrating by the environment playing regular sports (basketball etc) that players cannot play
	IP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The atmosphere must be flawless and respect all the codes of the IP Leverage audio use with IP-based audio/voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Necessary but not as important as atmosphere Any IP can easily be turned into a story, even if it is just about the history of the IP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not core

A vibrant, blocky LEGO-style scene of a Smurf village. In the foreground, several Smurf characters are visible: a red-haired Smurfette on the left, a Smurf with a white beard in the center, a Smurf with a white beard and a blue hat on the right, and a Smurf with a yellow hat on the far right. The background features colorful, blocky houses and trees. The title 'THE SMURFS' is prominently displayed in the center.

THE SMURFS

An overall excellent interpretation of the Smurfs' atmosphere, despite the absence of some key characters and a rather repetitive gameplay



Impressive well-made immersion in an IP-based universe generating a satisfying regressive feeling for the player

- ▶ **Nostalgia** is a **strong emotion** well exploited in The Smurfs experience.
- ▶ **Several factors** contribute to successfully connecting the player with his younger self:
 - The **playable character** is a smurf
 - Even when voxelated, the smurfs and the village are easily recognizable thanks to a **high level of detail**
 - Childish and welcoming **danger-free** atmosphere: e.g. fires are not threatening, the river is crystal clear
 - Feeling of peacefulness is furthered by the **slow pace** of the experience **animations and gameplay**: e.g. *papa smurf clock's ticks extra slowly, the Smurf walks long paths with little obstacles, their run animation doesn't make them lean forward, their hands stay close to their bodies*
 - **Touching and mischievous looking Smurfs** and animals thanks to wide **oversized eyes** and raised eyebrows





Atmosphere

- Very **immersive** environment, true to the **original IP**, both for the environment and the NPCs
- **Peaceful** and cute village
- Great **camera** introduction

- The strength of the IP and its accurate rendering are **clear success factors here**
- The **camera rotation** at the beginning of the experience is great and favors the player's immersion

Storytelling

- Plenty of **interactions** with famous Smurfs (e.g. Papa Smurf, Smurfette, etc.)

- **Engaging players with familiar characters from the IP is critical**

Fun factor

- **Fun to explore** with the vertical design of the map
- Good use of **platforming mechanics**

- The experience being an IP-based collectathon, the **key interest for the map comes from the exploration**. In order to make sure these maps are optimized, the maps should be structured with vertical elements, as the Smurfs did well

THE SMURFS: POTION'S LAND



SNOOP DOGG

The success of the map lies in a cliché atmosphere, but while players learn about Snoop Dogg, the key story is not about him



An IP-based experience, immerses the player in a familiar, fun and expected universe

- ▶ **Stereotypes** provide strong markers of the Snoop Dogg universe (decors, characters, music, greeting by Snoop Dogg himself)
- ▶ The **extremeness** of the stereotypes becomes a primary fun factor of the experience: the extravagance of Snoop Dogg's personality is transcribed in the settings and in the gameplay: e.g. *use of the dobermann throughout the experience, as a guard dog, as a guard human, as a costume etc.*
- ▶ The experience brings players expectations to a **surprising level of depth**: e.g. *Snoops' NFT collection, arcade machines of his games, Platinum disc collection, etc.*
- ▶ Few **unfulfilled expectations**



SNOOP DOGG'S FOREPLAY

SNOOP DOGG

Atmosphere

- Land filled with many references related to SD's life and career through **music, visuals, art** (NFT collection)
- **Chill vibe**, including music
- Nice to hear SD's **voice**
- Funny and **exaggerated elements** (bed covered with bills, smoke coming out of the car windows, tiger in the house, ...)

- The theme has been **pushed to the point of extravagance** which fits the players expectations
- It feels amazing for the fan to be **greeted by the celebrity's voice**, additional oral comments can be heard through the game

Storytelling

- Adult themes and implicit jokes are **in line with the player's expectations**
- The player learns about SD through **many hidden anecdotes**
- **Fun and entertaining storytelling** that consists of assisting the guests and becoming VIP inside the villa

- Despite not focusing on what is expected by the player, **many story elements reinforce the atmosphere**

Fun factor

- The quests and **the tone are extravagant**, like the player would expect
- Quick and **interesting** quests

- Part of the **fun actually comes through the storytelling and atmosphere**, through learning about Snoop Dogg and extravagant visuals



BAYC's beautiful environment and fun references keep the player entertained despite very limited gameplay and storyline



Highly angled experiences around flagship IPs of the web3 thrills players who are web3 enthusiasts and want to feel part of an exclusive community

- ▶ **Clear-cut concept and design** of the experience with a strong theme around the BAYC, an iconic figure of the web3
- ▶ Polarizing experience - love it or hate it - that develops the BAYC theme **in-depth**, even if it means losing the non-fans
- ▶ As for the BAYC fans, they dive into a **familiar** universe:
 - Food is a main feature for the “hungry chimp” – Churros, pizza etc. and of course – bananas !
 - Radioactive wastes litter the city, giving it a strange vibe (and echoing NFT “Mutations”)
 - The BAYC Yacht is of course available
 - Exclusive / hard to find places echo the Web3 habit of having to dig to get into whitelists etc.



BAYC MIAMI



Atmosphere

- Good immersion with **BAYC characters**, and funny BAYC or simply **ape references present everywhere** on the map
- The **design** is very good and **detailed** (details of every shop, beautiful park, ...)
- Nice **background music**

- Well designed map with a **strong presence of IP codes and funny additions** (pedestrians stop lights are shaped like apes, ...)

Storytelling

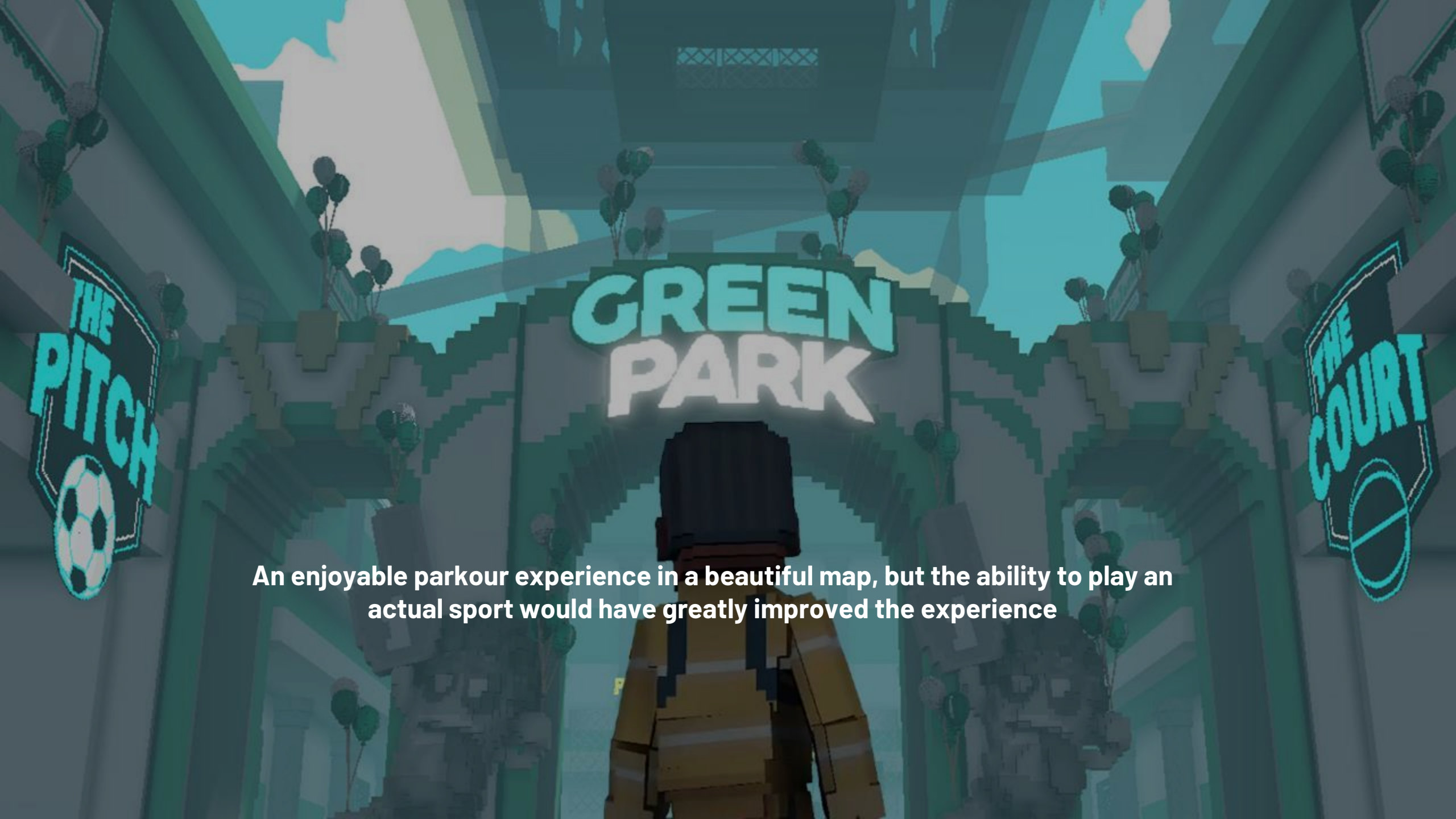
- The quests and dialogues **reinforce the connection to the IP**

- Despite no real storyline, the quests (finding a serum barrel) and dialogues (talks about banana-filled churros), **reinforce the IP codes**

Fun factor

- Exploring a BAYC city is fun in itself and **players are looking for all the easter eggs**
- Collectathon is fun and well done, **does not feel like collectathon**

- Again the gameplay could have been more diverse, but **the game relies heavily on IP through design** and making the player run across a map filled with funny IP references



An enjoyable parkour experience in a beautiful map, but the ability to play an actual sport would have greatly improved the experience



Success of an experience relying on the fun factor exclusively rather than storytelling or atmosphere

- ▶ Simple but efficient gameplay well exploited in the Green Park Sports experience, thanks to **good 3C's** (Control, Camera, Character) **in line with players expectations**
- ▶ **No complex or innovative mechanics, but good fun:**
 - Having to complete the experience as quickly as possible compared to other players to have a chance to upgrade the season pass increased the value of the game by giving it a competitive aspect
 - The gameplay offers the right level of difficulty and matches the theme without requiring any effort in storytelling or atmosphere. **The player can focus directly on his performance**



GREEN PARK SPORTS



Atmosphere

- The combination of nature, street graffiti and neon fits well together. **Atmosphere in line with the name of the game**
- **Music** matches the theme
- Very accessible **game design**, great for a game around sport

- The design of the map and music are exactly what is expected for such game, aligned with the theme and the name of the experience, which **contributes to a good player onboarding on the universe**

Storytelling

- No story but it is not a big deal as **the purpose of the game is simply to do sports and play**

- Even if not a key success factor for this type of game, **a nice storyline could enhance the experience**

Fun factor

- The parkour gameplay is fun, with the **right level of difficulty and matches the theme**
- Multiplayer game

- As those experiences rely on fun factor rather than storytelling, **leveraging multiplayer through cooperative or PVP challenges would be a key to success** (timed parkour for example)



HIDDEN VILLAGE

Immersive world adapted to the engine and respecting all the codes of the RPG genre, but the storyline could be improved



An experience does not necessarily need the support of an IP to be enjoyable, the immersion in a relaxing universe works

- ▶ Feelings of **calm** and **fullness** arising from the exploitation of the nature theme
- ▶ **Beautiful design** of the map, which can be seen from nice high viewpoints, giving the feeling of immersion in a luxuriant forest:
 - The setting immerses the player in a South American forest with models of hanging trees, Inca buildings, cute animals, lots of vegetation
 - The player is immersed in a friendly environment where the normally wild animals seem tamed (deer, rabbits)
 - Use of a non-aggressive color palette, revolving around 3 main colors, green (trees, grass, roofs of the huts), blue (lake), brown (tree trunks, huts, ground)
 - Volumetric fog gives a sense of mystery and warmth
 - The music is similar to what you would typically find in a spa (as well as candles), reinforcing the feeling of relaxation



HIDDEN VILLAGE

HIDDEN VILLAGE

Atmosphere

- Good design for an immersive experience **respecting the medieval-fantasy codes** (loot, beasts, NPCs, ...)
- Relaxing colors, make you **feel like in nature**
- Great **sound design**, long enough and seamless loop

- Being an RPG-like experience, the feeling of immersion should be a co-success factor with the storytelling. However, Hidden Village managed to **compensate for a lackluster story with a truly beautiful atmosphere**

Storytelling

- Good sequencing of the various quests allowing the player to **feel involved in protecting the Village** against villains
- Good amount of **storytelling** at the start

- The storytelling should be a success factor but the game misses the mark: as of now it is a pretty picture **made mostly enjoyable by the atmosphere**

Fun factor

- **Varied and interesting** quests, well balanced
- Progressive **equipment** suit-up is fun
- Good **exploration** part
- The main quest moves the game forward and unlock **exciting new areas**
- Satisfying fight feeling with 3-hit combo and AOE

- The game has **all the right RPG codes** (gear ramp-up, varied gameplay, exploration) combined with a beautiful design which makes the game a success



An amazing atmosphere and a solid story told by a storyteller; the RPG genre is well respected but the experience can feel a bit long



A segmented experience, fed by mini adventures, allows to enrich a story by including several plots that are consistent with each other and with the main theme

- ▶ Dracula's Castle experience takes time to complete. The possibility of **choosing the chapter** acts as a "save mechanism" and allows players to resume the game at their convenience.
- ▶ Good perception of an **incremental progression** in the game enabled by sequencing the experience with numerous quests (32 in total), some of which are optional.
- ▶ Ending gives a number of stat of the player run: e.g. *number of completed quests, deaths, kill count, time to complete*, furthering the player sense of achievement by showing him that his progress was tracked all the way.



DRACULA'S CASTLE



Atmosphere

- Immersion in **Dracula's story and lore**
- **Great variety of environments** (swamp, village, forest, castle ...) and enemies (regular, mini bosses, final boss)
- Music **coherent with the theme**
- Good level design, **verticality and secret paths** make the land interesting to explore

- Nice map to **explore**, the diversity of **environments heavily contributes to the success** of the map
- Matches the player's expectations who feel fully immersed in Dracula's story and **end up fighting the count himself**

Storytelling

- Ability to **choose chapter is a plus**
- Perfect **climax** as the story leads to the final boss Dracula
- Presence of a **storyteller** along the way (when interacting with elements, etc.)

- The experience successfully levers an **existing story and efficiently ramp up to a final encounter**, which is very satisfying

Fun factor

- **RPG-like**
- Use of nearly all of the **mechanics** available on The Sandbox
- Side quests and hidden coins push the player to **explore** the map
- Ability to find or **buy item upgrades**
- Many **enemies**, gears, places to visit, and shop ability

- The presence of **many RPG mechanics and codes is key to the fun factor**, change/upgrade gear, buy gear, diversity of enemies, bosses and final boss with different phases



Tropica

PARK

An experience which combines generic quests with a variety of gameplay, but the map has no consistency



The use of 3D is a lever that The Sandbox must play with in order to provoke different emotions in players

- ▶ Feeling of **impressive** but **not dangerous heights**, accentuated by the use of **glass floors**, with jumps that are fun to do:
 - The player makes smooth jumps that are abnormally high for a human being, causing a pleasant little feeling of dizziness
 - No punishment for falling, which means the player is encouraged to explore with very long / high jumps
- ▶ Hard-to-reach places are **clearly identifiable**: e.g. *tall towers or underground with see-through panels on the floor*
- ▶ The **respawn** is located in the center and in a tower, giving a good overview of the map and making it easy – and fun – to jump from it to explore around, without the pain of having to climb back (just respawning is enough)





TROPICAL PARK

Atmosphere

- **Peaceful** and **dreamy** world, with fun details
- Good peaceful **music**

- The actual game **does not match the expected theme**. If we consider that it should just be a fun mix, then a fun atmosphere makes sense and the peaceful music fits accordingly

Storytelling

- The only cool interactions were with **Rick Grimes and the survivor**, because they are really reminiscent of the Walking Dead series (but it is not the point of an aquapark)

- No storytelling: the whole combination of theme/environment/story is not consistent and does not match what the player expects

Fun factor

- Quests are **varied** despite being generic
- **Parkour** puts you at impressive heights, which allows the player to see the whole map below, and gives a rewarding feeling
- **Color code quest** is original (memory + exploration)

- Despite a lack of coherence, but also thanks to it, **exploring the very diverse parts of the map can be fun to the player**



Rabbids

Fun setting based on finding Rabbids' easter eggs,
rather than on a strong story and gameplay



Level design is a key fun factor

- ▶ Quests contribute to a fun exploration when they are well distributed in **time** and **space**
 - Collecting token is a basic mechanic, but works very well when for exploration
 - Fed-Ex quest also work well in that regard
- ▶ Players have fun exploring a well **designed** and **detailed** map with **varied** but **coherent** universes:
 - Rabbids Villa is composed of many small spaces, each with its own identity but all consistent with what you would find in a luxury villa: garden, swimming pool, barbecue area, terrasse, rooftop, living room, home cinema room, bedroom
 - The player is able to climb trees in the garden, giving him an overview of the 4 floors of the villa, making him want to explore every corner of the house up to the rooftop
 - From the outside, the villa is very colorful with the use of pastel colors, stimulating feelings of relaxation and peacefulness
 - The player enjoys exploring a villa in which he can project his aspirations and dreams (the villa looks like something you would find in Beverly Hills)



RABBIDS INVADE... VILLA DELUXE



Atmosphere

- The villa settings are well designed and in **accordance with the Rabbids' universe**, with Rabbids doing fun and crazy things
- Very **detailed map** and every room or area has its own atmosphere
- Nice **music**

- The atmosphere is really well leveraging the Rabbids silliness and the IP codes!, which is important for this type of IP-based experiences.. **The player wants to enter each space to see all the references to the Rabbids**

Storytelling

- N/A

- N/A

Fun factor

- Presence of a lot of Rabbids everywhere **doing funny things**, like horseback riding, painting on NFTs, sliding contests, etc.
- Very good **collectathon** mechanic with plungers instead of voxelite
- **Decent level of interaction** (NPC/POI) for this type of experience

- Other game styles/**mini games could be added during the exploration**: puzzle, mini games, combat

Key Takeaways



Experiences need to consistently take advantage of The Sandbox full 3D environment

Aims

- Give a feeling of vastness to experiences as it takes more time for a player to make sense of a 3D level design structure
- Give players a sense of awe / power by using scenic viewpoints (diving & counter diving)
- Give players a feeling of achievement by playing into their natural aspiration of getting to the top or hard-to-get-to places (and even place easter eggs there!)

Relevance

- Applicable to all experiences

Seen in

- Meta Dungeon (indoor example)
- Edge of the abyss (outdoor example)

Watch points :

- Camera issues: make sure the players can always get a clear picture of their surroundings
- Traveling distances: make sure the players do not have to travel long distances to reach interesting places or after a failed jump



Smurf Potion land - example of great use of 3D when designing levels

#2: CREATE A STRONG AUDIO ATMOSPHERE

Experiences need to have a consistently good sound design

Basic:

- Have audio
- Have good balance of voice / music / soundFX
- Implement multiple looped audio tracks
- UI sounds

Advanced:

- Implement proper fade-in / fade-out of musics and sounds
- Contextual layered music: fight, progression etc.
- Contextual layered environmental sounds: generic river sound, forest, city etc.
- Surface tagging for different walking sounds
- Reverberation when dealing with interior sounds
- Different spacialization of multiplayer sound

Relevance:

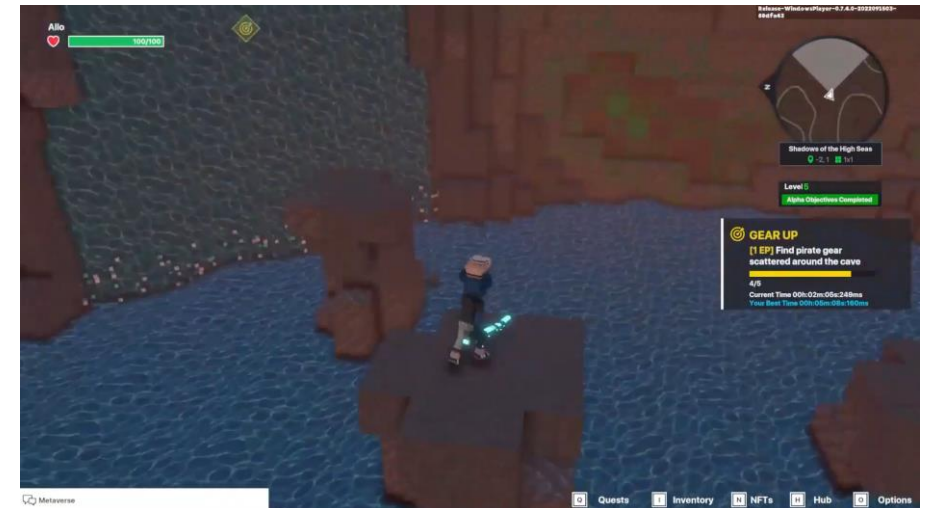
- Applicable to all experiences
- Especially important in music-themed experiences

Watch point :

- Video game music is built differently from other media (use of hooks and layered audio files)
- Additional tooling for experience creators will be required

Seen in

- Sueco's Split Personalities (5+ musics in a 1x1 LAND)
- Shadows of the High Seas and others (environment sounds and different musics)
- Alpha Lobby, Club XYZ, Aldrak Garrison etc.



Sueco's Split Personalities & Shadow of the High Seas - examples of great audio atmospheres

Experiences need to consistently set the scene for players

Experience introduction:

- Show scale – **how big is the experience?**
- Highlight surprising or key element – **what is so special here?**
- Hint to goals – **Why am I here ?**
- Introduce characters – **Who am I? Who will guide me?**
- No unfulfilled promises – **Chekov's gun**

Tools:

- **360-viewpoint** at the start of experience (e.g. Smurfs potion land)
- **Introduction video of key character** (voiced intro, close up video etc.) – can be of the « helper » or the « enemy »
- Use **place and time indicators** – stereotypes that help place the player in the right atmosphere: e.g. A 20's car for prohibition, a dragon for fantasy, etc.
- **Start with the end (contextual)** – give the player a glimpse of the end to the experience before taking it away from him and have him explore / fight / solve for it

Relevance:

- Applicable to any experience with progression

Seen in:

- Smurfs: Potion Land
- Morning Post: Hong Kong Star Ferry



Smurf Potion Land - example of a great scene setting

Level design to support the experience

Lay out answers to short term player questions:

- Where do I need to go?
- What do I need to do?
- What are the tools that help me achieve my goal?
- What are the obstacles that prevent me from reaching my goals?

Use **multiple form of answers** to the same question through the use of signs and feedbacks (e.g. Someone tells you to use the door, the door is in a different color to other doors and there is a special music when you walk in front of it)

Map out player experience independently from visuals:

- Distance to objectives -how long does it take to go from A to B ?
- Time to fulfill objective
- How does the spawn / respawn point impact distance & time
- Do I spend most of my time running, jumping, climbing ?

Use this to define the pace of the experience (e.g.: it does not take more than X time to go from one objective to the next)

Something must change when players achieve a goal to ensure a feeling of incremental progression:

- Quest is completed – progression toward the game pass
- New quest is available
- New area is unlocked / new shop is available
- Unlocked item
- The world changes (e.g. new respawn point)
- Etc.



Rabbids ! - example of a great level design

Good basic 3Cs (camera, control, character) to build experiences based on adequate core gameplay

- Parkour games particularly adapted to 3Cs strength and mostly rely on model control and skill
- Exploration games focused on the vertical dimension leveraging efficient movement and climbing
- Fighting focused on varied mobs and boss fights leveraging efficient combo and parrying mechanics

Light atmosphere and stimulate players through various elements

- Easter eggs to entice exploration, stereotypes to increase the fun factor, leverage the current capabilities for NPC interaction
- Build clear storylines with engaging and light dialogs
- Have heroic storytelling where the player feels like saving the world

Quest tracking to build multiplayer challenges

- Leverage current capabilities of tracking quests/experiences speed and results to keep providing challenges
- Having those challenges leaderboards web-based is a huge limitation but should not discourage builders as the model proved engaging

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