

Introduction

First interactions with a product can influence overall perceptions and set the tone for future interaction. “Out-of-box experience,” or OOBE (Gilbert, Sangwan, & Ian, 2005) measures a user’s experience with a product including its packaging, setup/configuration, and initial use. An OOBE that elicits a positive user experience can mean fewer product returns and calls to customer helplines and increased sales, popularity, and customer satisfaction.

The OOBE technique can be applied to board games as users go through phases of unboxing, initial setup of the components comprising the game itself, playing the game for the first time, and disassembling the game to put it away.

Companies selling board games can learn from OOBE what draws users to the box the game is stored in, how difficult is it to set up the game, how understandable are the rules, as well as other components that make up the experience of playing the game.

Current Study

This study assessed the OOBE of a strategy board game; this method of study has yet to be tested on board games in the current literature. The OOBE was defined by the phases of Unboxing, Assembly/Setup, Initial Play, and Disassembly.

Methods

Materials

Photosynthesis is a strategy game where two to four players play as different types of trees that plant seeds and grow trees to collect sun energy. It was chosen as the board game for this study as it meets the definition of a board game, with no dice or cards (Figure 3).

Participants

Six undergraduate students (4 males and 2 females, Ages = 19 to 24) Three participants rated themselves as casual board game players and had low experience with board games. Three participants rated themselves as experienced board game players and had moderate to high experience with board games.

Measures

Initial and final impressions were gathered using the Microsoft Product Reaction Cards (MPRC). Other measures included confidence, difficulty, points of delights, and points of frustrations. Once the OOBE was completed, perceived usability was assessed using the System Usability Scale (SUS; Brooke, 1996) and the Net Promoter Score (NPS) was used to assess how likely participants would recommend the board game to others. The entire process took approximately 2 hours.

Results

First and Final Impressions

First and final impressions gathered from the MPRC are shown below in Figures 1 and 2.

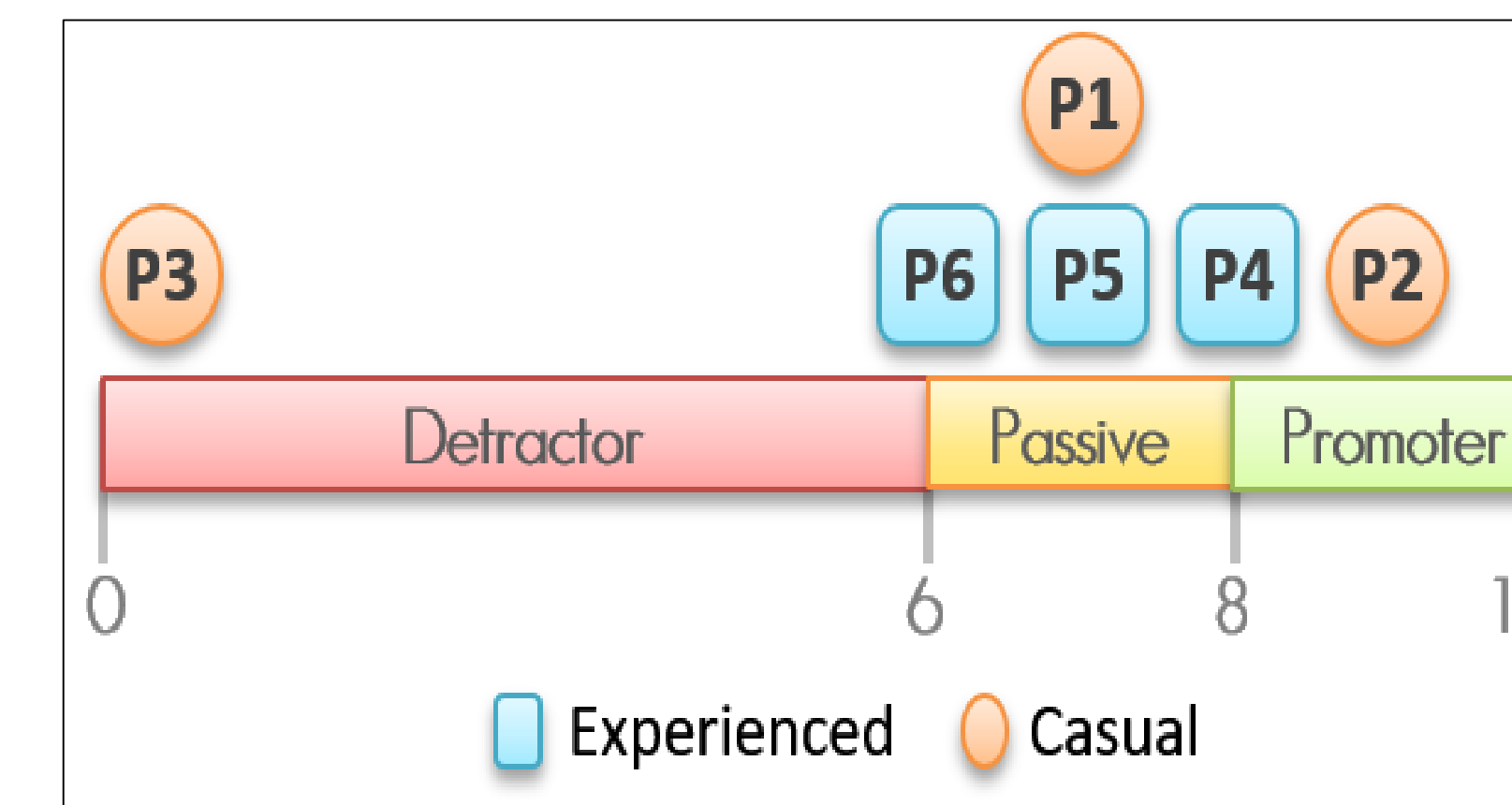
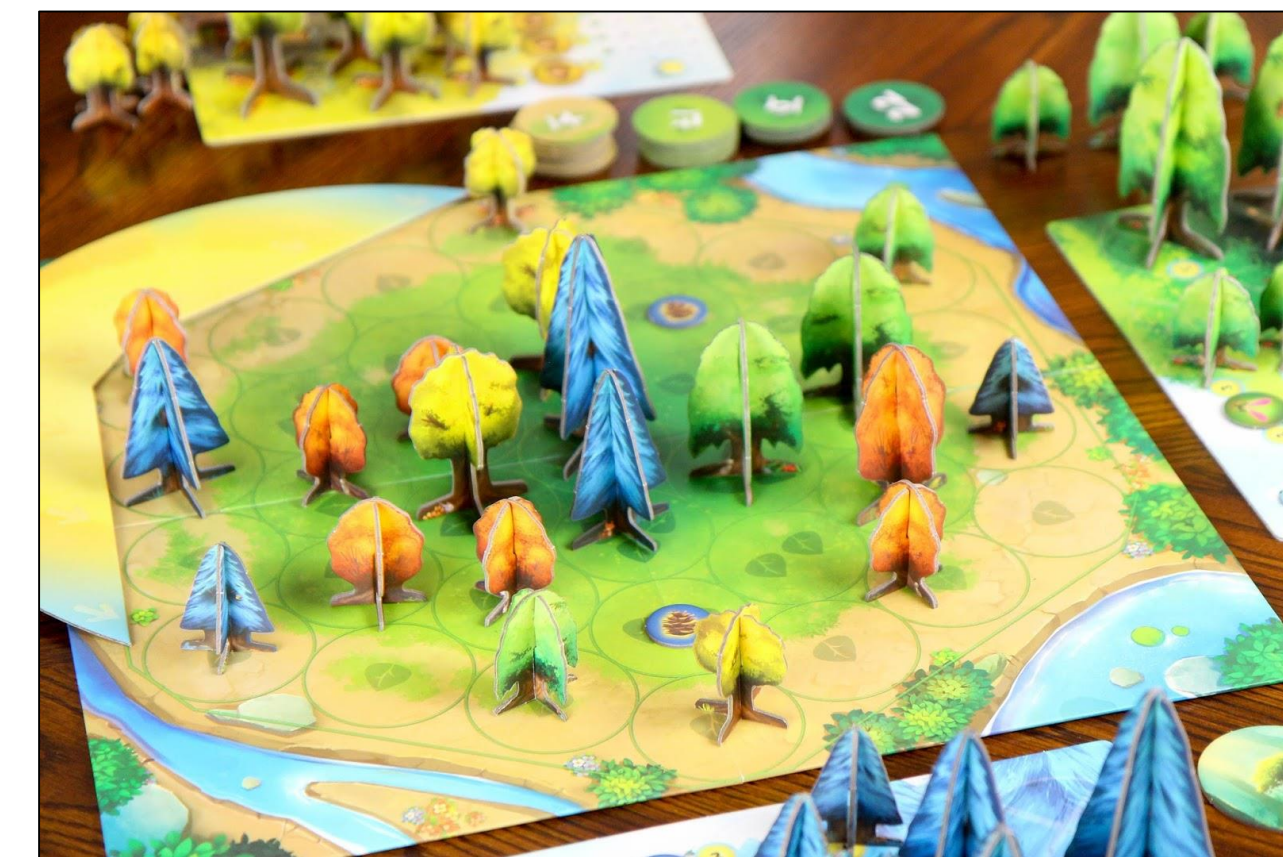


Figures 1 and 2. First (left) and Final (right) impressions of the board game.

Results (cont.)

Perceived Usability and Likelihood to Recommend

- The average SUS score was 59.17 ($SD = 19.41$) out of 100
 - Casual board game players: 45.00 ($SD = 15.21$)
 - Experienced board game players: 73.33 ($SD = 10.41$)
- The average NPS score was 0 (Figure 4)
 - Casual board game players: -16.66
 - Experienced board game players: -33.33
- See Figure 5 for experience map for each phase of the OOBE



Figures 3 and 4. Picture of Photosynthesis (left). Net Promoter Scores (right).

Discussion

This study demonstrated the use of the OOBE method with a board game. Qualitative data was collected for different phases of the initial use of a board game.

Key themes that were identified included:

- Clarity of instructions/rules – Confusion over player actions
- Perceived complexity – Seemed easy initially but actually more complex
- Setup process – Time consuming and lack of clarity of game pieces
- Quality – Design and art of pieces of the board game

This study demonstrated the richness of the OOBE technique and potential to gather user input for aspects of a product that may not be investigated during typical user testing. The OOBE technique could be applied to other types of hobby games as well as user populations to determine how these themes vary and how changes can be made to improve user satisfaction.

Future research should investigate how board games present instructions to users and how well different user populations can comprehend them. Eye-tracking could give insights into what aspects of the box draw interest from users and how users are reading instructions from the game.

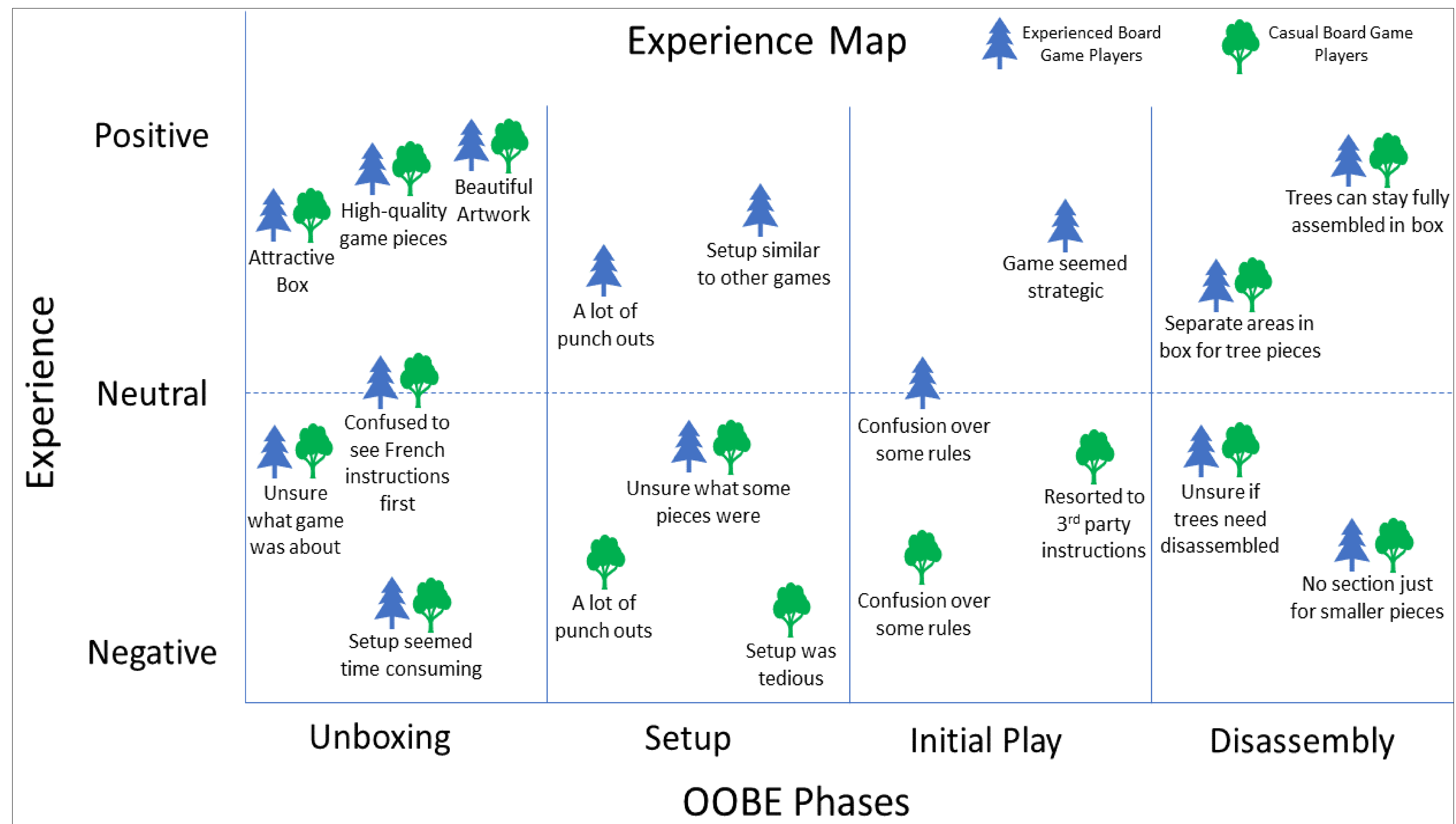


Figure 5. Experience map of the OOBE of Photosynthesis.

References

- Brooke, J. (1996). SUS-A quick and dirty usability scale. Usability evaluation in industry, 189(194), 4-7.
 Gilbert, A. L., Sangwan, S., & Ian, H. H. M. (2005). Beyond usability: The OoBE dynamics of mobile data services markets. *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing*, 9(4), 198-208.