Thinking “Out-of-the-Box” with Board Games
Emily Rickel, William Shelstad, Matthew Pierce, Philip Young, Barbara S. Chaparro

What is OOBE?

One method that explores the initial impressions made during a user’s first interaction with a product has been termed the “out-of-box experience”, or OOBE (Gilbert, Sangwan, & Ian, 2005).

The OOBE technique typically measures first impressions of the following processes:

- Packaging Investigation: Sensory cues like the look and feel of a product’s packaging and components can set user expectations
- Unboxing: Opening a package, seeing what is first available, viewing how the contents are arranged, and removing contents
- Setup/Configuration: Gathering materials needed for using the product, assembling the product, and reviewing help documentation
- Initial Use: Interacting with the product’s features and capabilities, ability to access all of the product’s available functions

Importance of OOBE

- Smiley face: Fewer product returns and calls to customer helplines, increase in positive interactions with product
- 871%: Growth rate of YouTube’s unboxing genre since 2010
- Dollar sign: Increased sales and popularity
- Product usage & brand loyalty
- Users are less sensitive to prices & competitive products

Method

Participants: 4 males, 2 females; Ages: 19–22
3 casual, 3 experienced players
(based on frequency of board game play, types of games played, and self-reported experience level)

Measures:
- Net Promoter Score (NPS)
- Points of Delight
- Points of Frustration
- Confidence
- Difficulty
- Adjectives (MPRC)

Materials:
- Published by Blue Orange Games, Photosynthesis is a strategy board game that allows 2–4 players to play as different species of trees that plant seeds and grow trees to compete for the sun’s energy.

Procedure:
The above measures were taken during the following stages:

- Unboxing
- Setup
- Initial Play
- Disassembly

Results

OOBE Stage | Points of Delight/Frustration
---|---
Unboxing | • Attractive art style
| • Confusion about storage wells
| • Confusion about initial French instructions
Setup | • Tedious, time-consuming assembly
| • Confusing piece-placement instructions
Initial Play | • Helpful diagram in instruction booklet
| • Lack of clarity for game rules
| • External sources used to supplement rules
Disassembly | • Assumed easier setup for future use
| • Confusion about how to organize pieces

Conclusions

- The OOBE technique can be used with board games to explore a game’s quality, clarity of rules and instructions, perceived complexity, ease of use, and overall impressions
- Experienced board game players find unboxing and playing games for the first time easier than casual players
- Casual players are less confident in their ability to grasp the mechanics of a new game during initial play

References