

Game Analysis: Burrito Bison

(loosely based on the following frameworks: MDA, input/output, PENS, Norman's three layers of Design)

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I. Overview

Burrito Bison is a simple browser-based launch/toss game by [juicy beast](#). The better the timing of the launch, the higher and further the main character flies, collecting currency as he bounces on enemies and squishes them in the process. Additionally, the player can influence the outcome by taking various actions during flight. There is also a shop, where upgrades can be purchased with the collected currency.

So the loop is: 1. launch and fly a couple of times and collect currency 2. upgrade in shop 3. launch and fly further, collecting more money.

II. Setting/Backstory

While shopping, a mexican wrestler is sucked into a magical candy land where he's supposed to fight for the entertainment of its gummy bear residents. The wrestler decides to escape this pastel colored hell.

Delivery Method:

The backstory is delivered with short comic strips drawn in a cute, colorful style at the very beginning of the game. It uses no words and it is skippable.

What it does:

The short intro very effectively establishes the protagonist and his opponents, as well as a clear long-term goal for the game. With its comic style and the absurd plot, it immediately sets the humorous tone of the game and helps with suspension of disbelief (in a universe where stuff like this happens, you don't stop and wonder later on when you encounter flying rocket pigs).

The short company logo sequence at the very beginning of the game matches the humorous tone as well, featuring a cute and fluffy one-eyed creature rolling around.



Declaring escape as the game's goal is a good match for the game mechanics that are all about movement. If nitpicking, it could be argued that having a big bulky wrestler (of all thinkable characters) opt to run away rather than fight in the ring is a bit inconsistent, but he does make for a very nice silhouette while in the air, so that may have been the reason for that.

III. Game Mechanics

Player actions:

The game is played using one single button (LMB or space bar). The challenges include pressing it at the right moment and pressing it as quickly as possible, as well as holding it and releasing it at the right times. The effects of pressing the button are context-sensitive, but they all affect the protagonist's y-position during flight, as well as his speed on the x-axis.

More specifically, the main character is first launched into the air (the better the timing, the faster and higher). Then, as he soars and bounces through the levels, he can use a rechargeable stomp skill to smash down and collect power-ups or avoid enemies.

In the shop, the player can pick upgrades that affect either the protagonist's various stats or increase the chance of power-ups to appear during flight.

Environment/NPCs:

The environment and NPCs are 2d, and consist of the following interactive components:

- the ground: falling on it slows down the main char quite a bit.
- Running gummy bears (created in what appear to be random patterns): falling on them also slows down the protagonist, but only a little. It also recharges his stomp ability and earns him currency. All gummy bears are squished when you drop on them.
- Flying gummy bears; like the running ones, but less frequent and up in the air.
- Police gummy bears: dropping on them slows the player down a great lot.
- Gummy bears carrying power-ups. Dropping on them triggers various button-pressing challenges, giving the player advantages.
- Doors/Walls at the end of each of the 3 levels. They slow down the player a lot and require a certain speed to break through, but doing so comes with a big reward.

The backgrounds contain various looped parallax layers that give a sense of depth and can scroll fast enough to give a satisfying sense of speed. The 3 game levels are:

- arena
- candy town (more gummy police)
- outside candy town, open landscape



So the levels progress from closed spaces to more and more open spaces, which is very consistent with the “regain freedom”-theme of the game (in fact, in the intro, the main character is in a cage, the most confined space of all).

Game Parameters:

These influence gameplay and can be manipulated in some way or the other by the player:

- x-axis speed and position
- y-axis speed and position
- friction (loss of x-axis speed caused by bumping on objects and NPCs)
- amount of player currency
- amount of currency gained by squishing gummy bears
- stomp ability cooldown status
- number of available stomp actions
- elasticity (“bounciness”, how far you rebound back into the air when landing on gummy bears)
- probability of the various power-ups

There may be further hidden parameters that aren't communicated that also affect gameplay, such as number of attempts, time played etc.

Required player resources:

The game can be played without audio, and it can be played by color blind people. It requires only very short continuous time blocks, because one round is very short and it has a continue function that can be used even if the browser tab was closed earlier. It's f2p and requires no expensive hardware or peripherals (but a working internet connection).

The player needs good reflexes so he can press the button when the situation is appropriate. He does not need strong perception skills, since he only needs to spot one type of enemy, regular gummy bears and a bunch of power-ups that are all similarly beneficial for him. Hardly any strategic thinking is required, because the upgrades in the in the shop don't differ very much from each other.

Weaker reflexes can be substituted by spending more time, because the player gets some currency for every round, no matter how successful, and can then max out on upgrades if necessary.

Goals:

Game Goals are communicated well and emerge from the gameplay mechanics and the game's premise.

- long-term goal: escape from candy-land
- mid-term goals: reach next level; earn enough money for an upgrade.
- short-term goals: make a good run; catch a power-up; do a perfect launch.
- meta goals: get all achievements; finish game in shorter time.

Success/Failure:

No matter how well the player performs, he never loses progress in the game. He is rewarded with currency even for bad attempts, which in a way is a positive limit adjustment, because he can get more upgrades that make it easier for him to perform well. There is no long interruption when a flight sequence ends, so there is no immersion break or even a flow break.

Rewards:

Rewards are handed out very generously: Every single gummy bear you hit earns you money. Additionally, the player gets a satisfying squishing sound. Mid-sized rewards consist in more money, height or x-speed when the payer catches a power-up each accompanied by their own rewarding sounds and animations. Large rewards are the permanent upgrades you can buy in the shop once you've earned enough money and new levels (with new background art and a gratifying sound when the player manages to breach a level's end wall).

There's also a sensible amount of achievements handed out for performing specific tasks. They are well-designed and add to the game. Beating the game earns you such an achievement and you learn how long it took you to finish it, thus challenging you to try to improve. The game does not end when you beat it, you can still play and experiment or try to get all upgrades and achievements.

Interface:

Menues are clean and don't get in the way. The HUD features a speed-meter and displays how much money you have. The speed-meter doubles as a tease, showing you how fast you could become if only you got some upgrades. Every special gummy bear has his own special sound effect, as do all special events (breaking through doors, buying upgrades, doing a perfect launch etc.). The power-ups and enemy gummy bears are easy to distinguish visually. Apart from effectively communicating the necessary information, animations and sounds, while simple, also manage to add an emotional quality.

The interface tells you when you have enough money to buy an upgrade in the shop, so the player can focus completely on the core experience and doesn't have to memorize upgrade prizes or make unnecessary trips to the shop menu to check availability.

What is missing is an indicator telling you how far you got after each flight attempt, which would inspire to try again and improve.

Controls are easy, it's a one-button game, and its modi are always communicated very clearly in the center of attention.

There are tutorial info boxes that pop up when necessary, the game is paused and greyed out at those times. While this breaks the flow a bit, it only happens a few of times and ensures that the player has the (very little) information necessary to play the game.

IV. Dynamics & Aesthetics

Dynamics:

Players show the “just one more round”-behaviour that is the hallmark of great games, playing a large number of rounds (although play time may be interrupted by other activities). The game is not so deep that unexpected dynamics would emerge from the straightforward mechanics.

Aesthetics:

The experience the game offers is similar to common dreams of flying, where you do have some sense of gravity, and thus have to make swimming motions or bounce around in order to stay in the air. The better you get, the longer you can stay in the air, ideally never touching the ground right to the end of the game. Combined with a good sense of speed, it's a heady sensation. There is also a sense of continuous improvement, appealing to the player's desire to grow and master the game.

The stomp ability gives the player a pleasant feeling of control during flight (which can last quite long and would otherwise be boring). What stands out is the balancing of the various speeds (flying, gravity, stomp), they feel really good on a visceral level. But the rest of the balancing is also very finely tuned (e.g. the number of attempts it takes to earn upgrades, cost and reward progression etc.), making for a very smooth, addictive experience.

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