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# Overcrowded Postmortem

## A Tycoon with emotions

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#GDC23

# Who we are

## ZEPTOLAB

A global gaming company dedicated  
to the science of fun





# Innovation is part of Zepto DNA



Physic Puzzler



Platformer



Machine Battler



Stealth Shooter



Tycoon / Idle

- Zepto is well known for making unique games
- Each of these games belong to a different genre
- That is exactly what everyone recommend not to do
- But hey! We love challenges!



# Talk Content

## Zeptolab Insights

- Initiatives to encourage innovation
- Initiatives to mitigate risks of being innovative

## Overcrowded Tycoon

- Steps to move from Idea to Global Release
- Learn from failures, turn them into success



# Encourage Innovation

## SearchLab Team

- Dedicated team creating prototypes
- Small, Autonomous, Fast
- One playable prototype every 3-4 weeks



# Encourage Innovation

## Game Jams

- Everyone is invited to propose a concept
- Group of experts curate the concepts
- We assemble small teams (4-6 members)
- 1 week of development
- (At least) 10 Playable prototypes



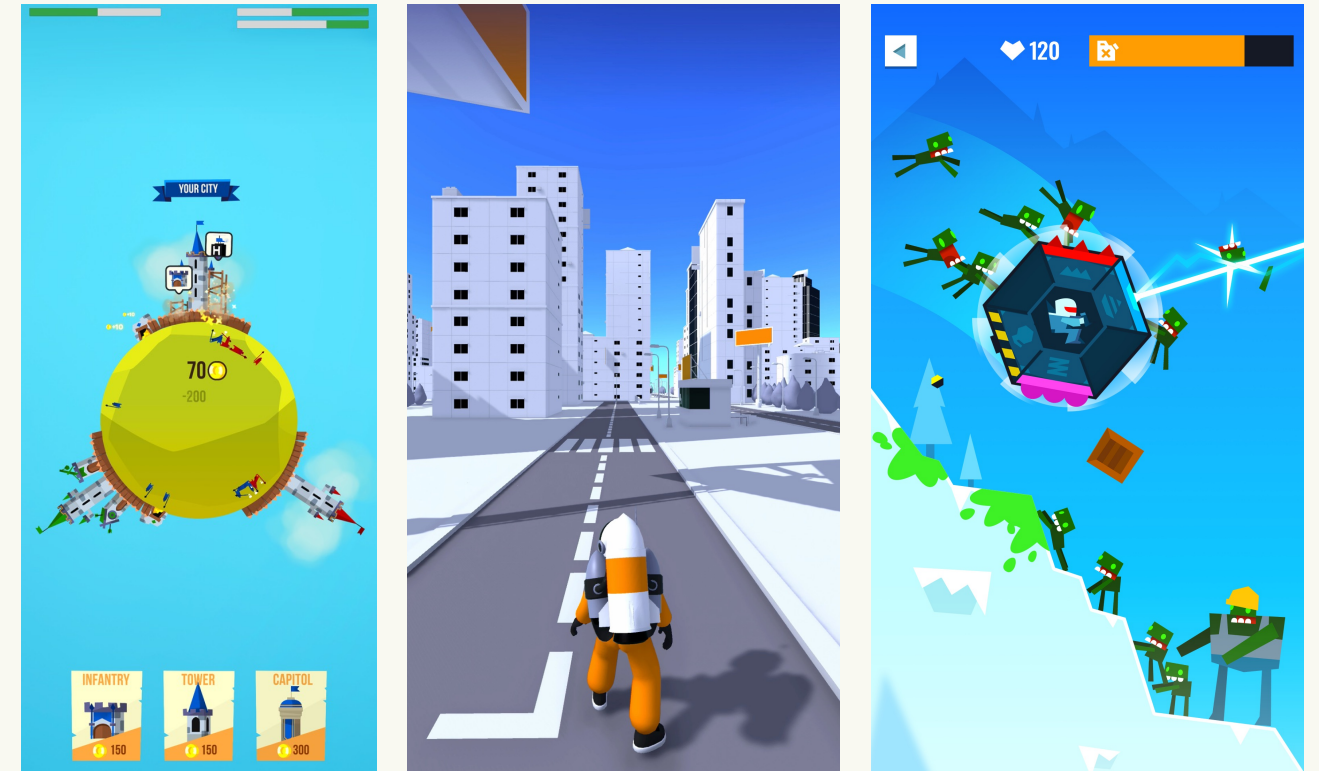
# Validate Innovation

Dozens of playable prototypes per year

Ready to validate thru test campaigns

- Marketability potential > CPI
- Engagement potential > D0 Gametime

To help us identify Go/No-Go projects



(\*) CPI cost per install, how much it cost to get one (paid) install

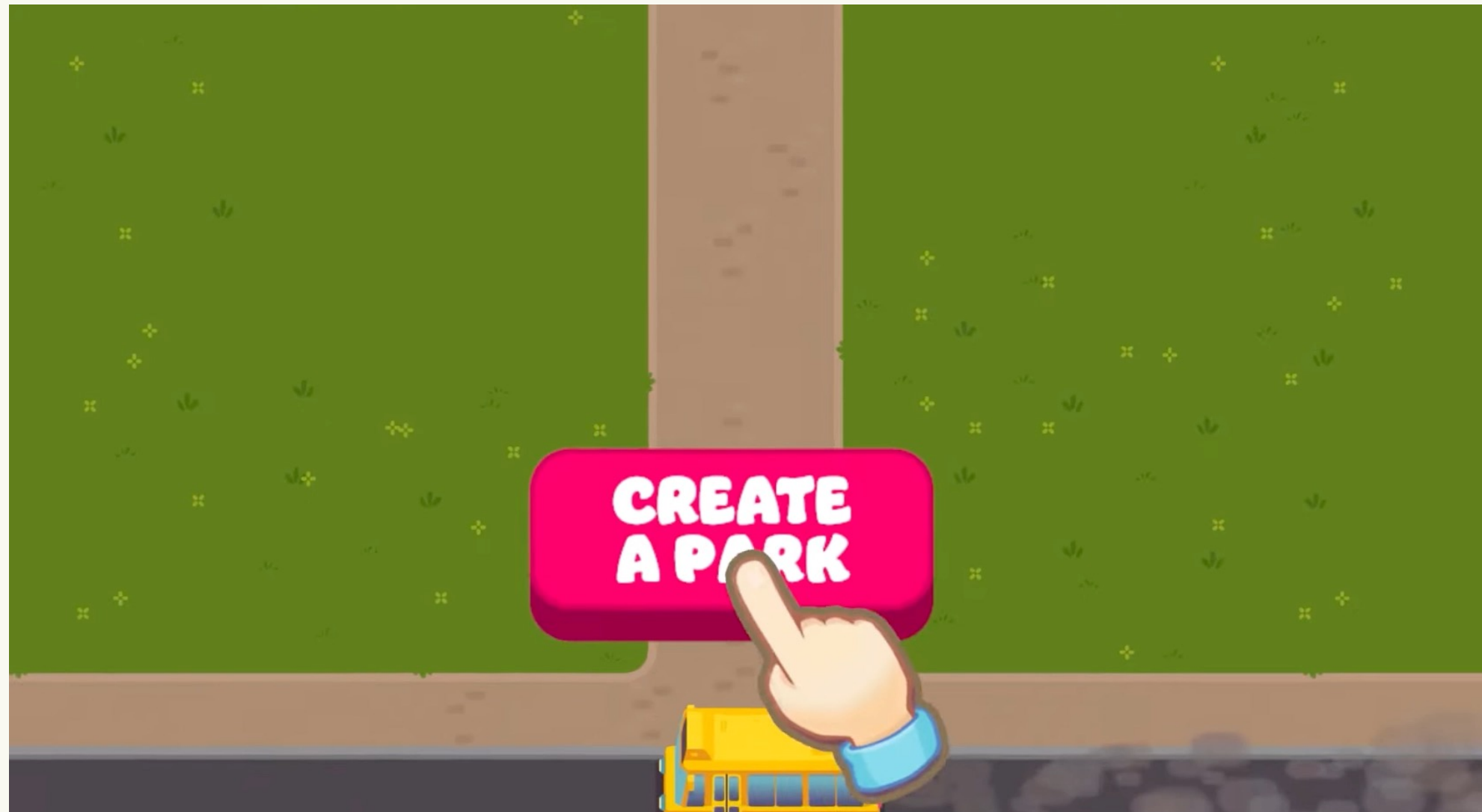


# Mitigate Risks

## How we mitigate risks over innovative ideas

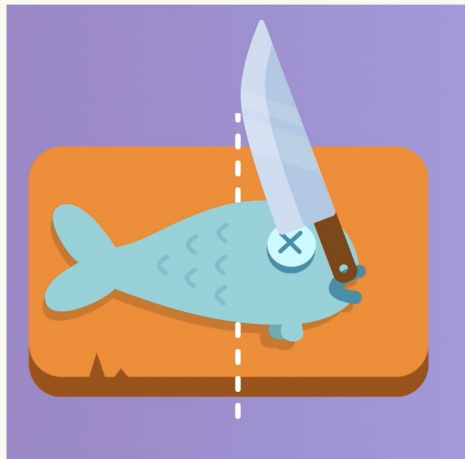
- **Validate ideas first**       $\text{CPI} < 1\$ / \text{D0 Gametime} > 30 \text{ mins}$
- **Optimize production**      Small teams (4 guys) Soft launch fast (1 month)
- **Greenlight gates**      Measurable milestones to keep going or cancel

# Overcrowded Tycoon

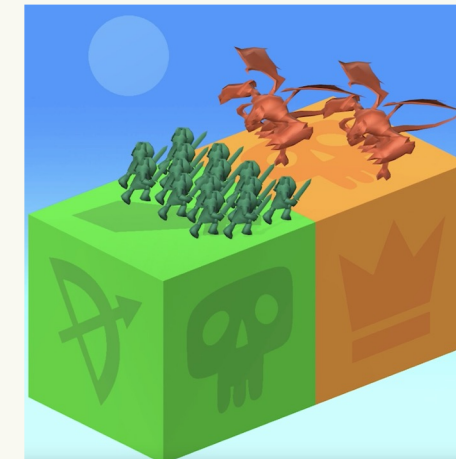


# Step 1: Concept Ideation

Overcrowded won the Game Jam in Q1 2020



Cut the Food



Dice Wars

(\*) Indeed, this time it was a Video Challenge not a Game Jam 😊



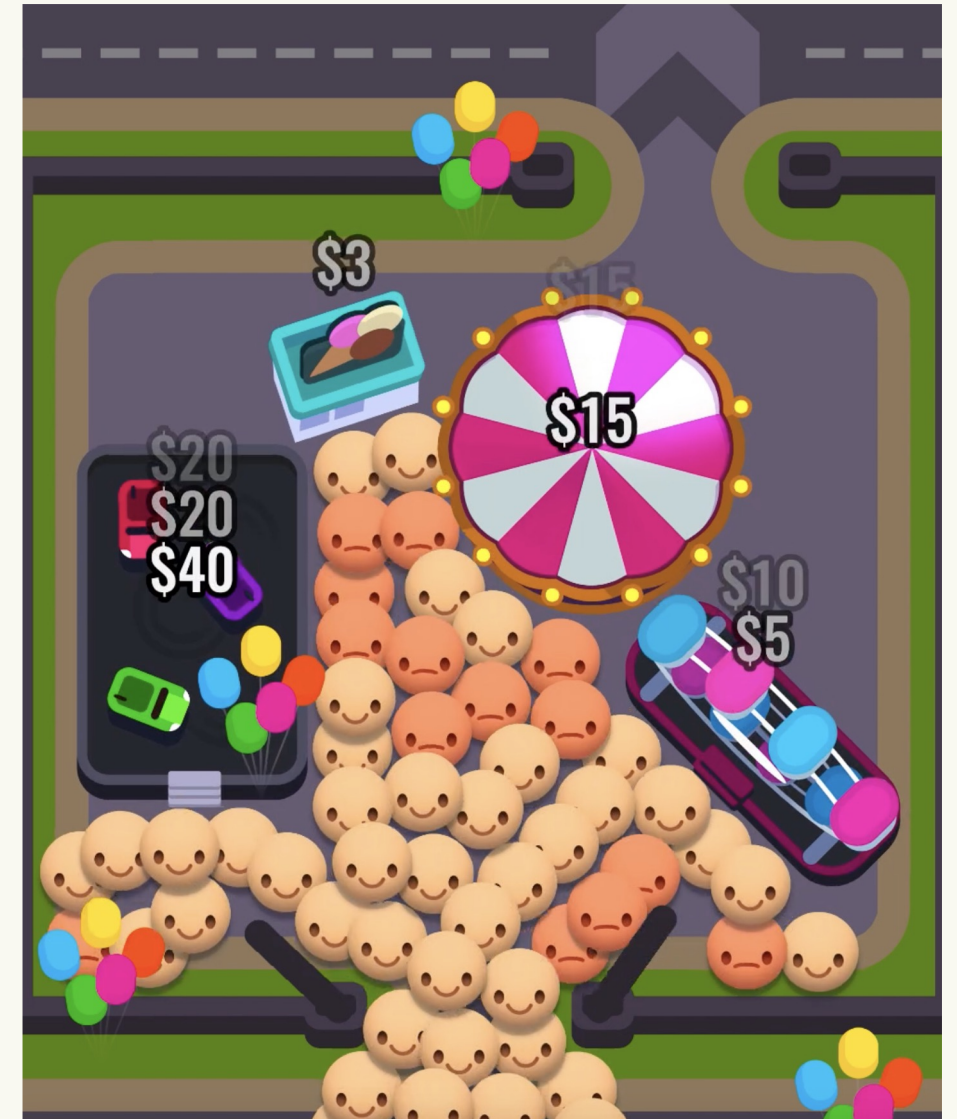
# Step 2: Market Validation

## Succeed on Market Validation

CTR Test	CPI Test
2.80%	\$0.19 - \$0.27

- A CPI below \$1 is “ok-ish”
- A CPI below \$0.5 is “great”

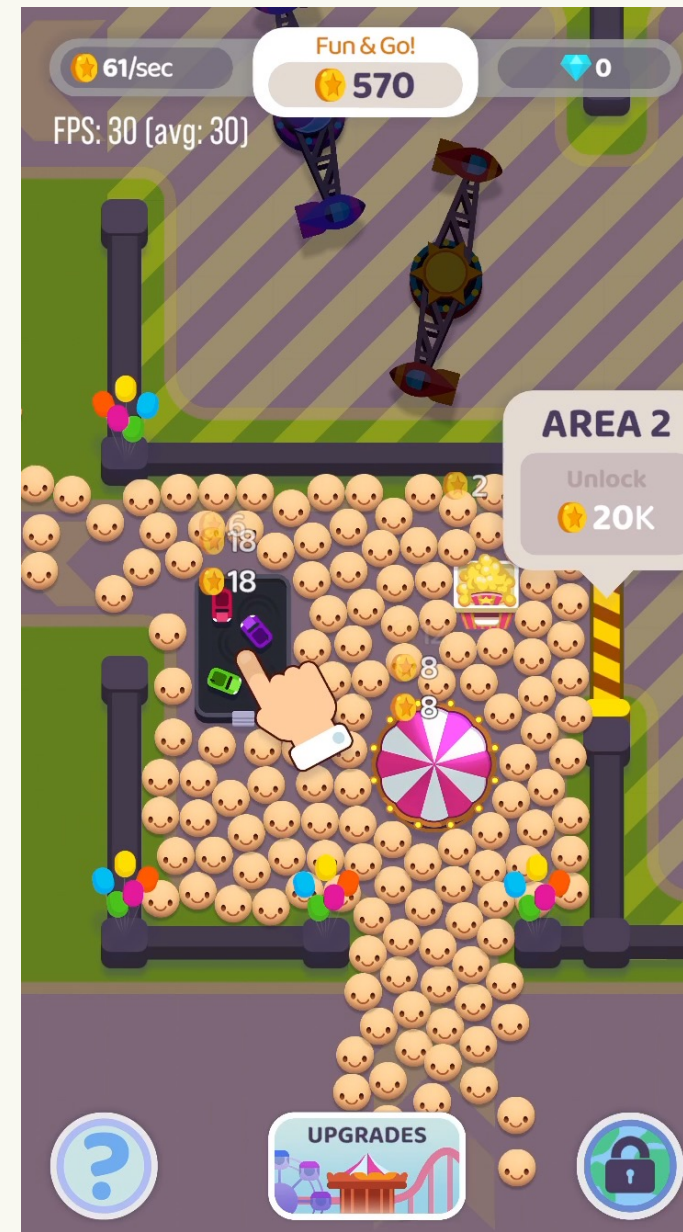
(\*) We were not able to test engagement since there was no playable prototype



# Step 3: Setup the Vision

## Vision Pillars were...

- Theme Park Idle game
- Emoji visitors
- Crowd Physic based
- Puzzle Rides - Visitors





# Step 4: Soft Launch

## First soft launch took us

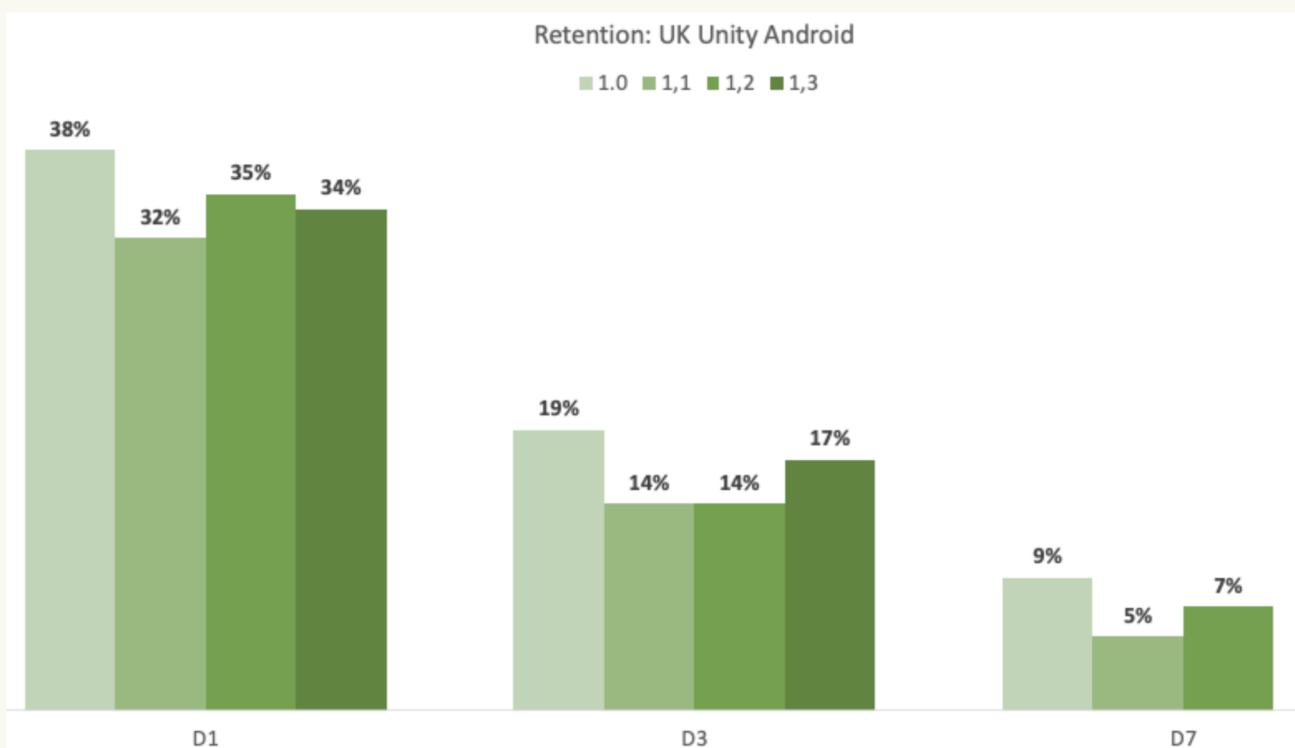
- 6 Months
- 5 People team
- Up to 5 releases during the soft launch





# Step 5: Analise Data

- Our retention was healthy (although we didn't manage to grow)
- Monetization was far from good (goal was reach ROAS > 100%)



ROAS				
		ADS LTV D3	CPI	ROAS D3
iOS	Unity	\$ 0,09	\$0,34	26%
	Facebook	\$ 0,06	\$0.31	19%
Android	Unity	\$ 0,05	\$0.20	25%
	Facebook	\$ -	\$0.22	-

(\*) ROAS return on ad spend, a metric to measure revenue performance

# Step 5: Analyse Data

From quantitative (data ) and qualitative (surveys) analysis we observed

- Players cared about visitor emotions (all should be happy!)
- Players found crowded physics appealing (use rides to push visitors)
- Players got hook on unlock more rides (more content grow retention)
- Players didn't understand economy loop (too random - tied to physics)
- Players didn't care much about upgrade attractions (distracted by other stuff)
- Players got confused with the puzzle elements (hard to identify best layout)

# Step 6: Identify Positive Signs

But there were still some positive signs!!!

Market wise, concept was still strong, CPI below our \$0.5 benchmark

ROAS				
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# So, we decide to rethink our vision

Double down our USP's Visitors Emotions, Crowd Physics...



But this time adding Tycoon elements into the formula

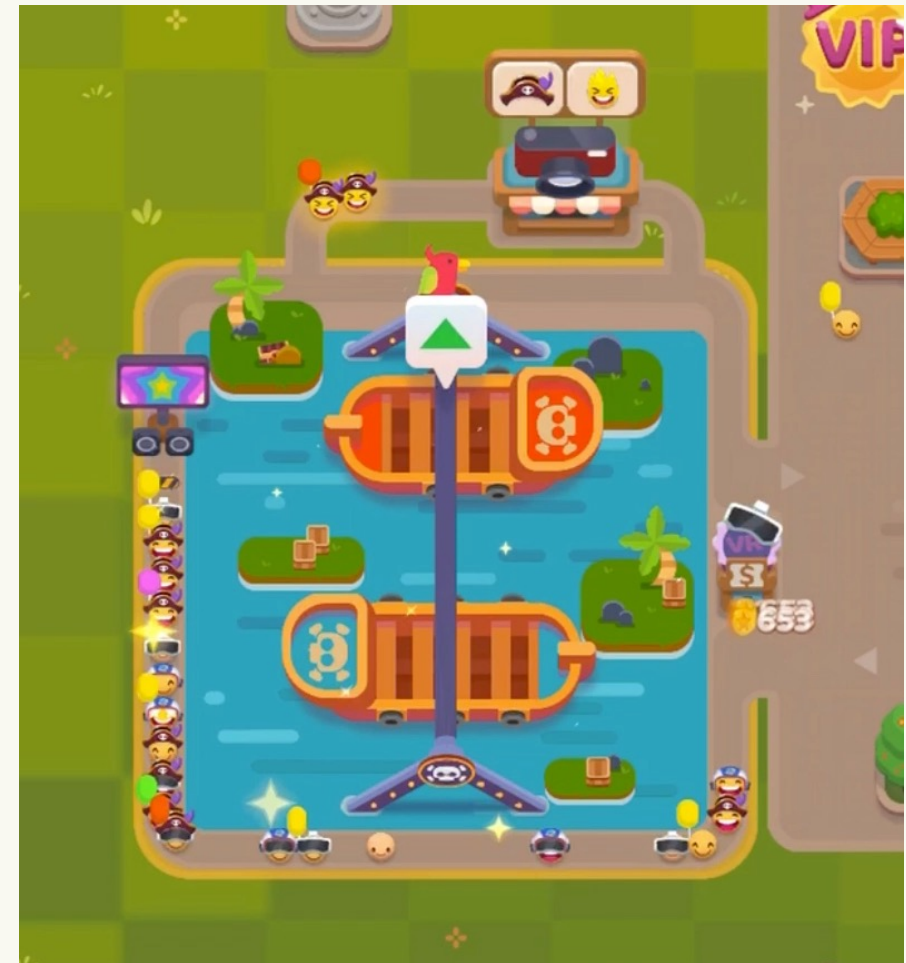
# Deeper Upgrade System

Visitors **ACTUALLY** ride the attractions

- Wait in the queue
- Jump in the ride
- Leave thrilled!

More upgrades than just tickets

- Increase amount of seats
- Increase length of queue
- Increase speed of ride



**Better understanding of Economy Loop = Higher Retention**

# Long Lasting Content

## Attractions Evolve visually...

- Additional goals to pursue. Grow Bigger!
- Cooler visuals, more vfx!

## But also introduce more gameplay!!!

- 3D Glasses > introduce Nausea!
- Mascots > relief Anger and Hats!
- On-Ride Photo > introduce Hats Rules!



Rebuild a ride several times introduce Timers and Hard Currency sinks



# Horrible day in the Park



**MAD**  
If queue too long



**HUNGRY**  
If not Food close



**DIZZY**  
If no Toilet close

Our Emotion System allowed us to scale adding new emotions

# Limited freedom to choose

- Fixed slots to place rides
- Fixed road expansions
- Free placement for shops
- Free placement for mascots



Sweet spot between simplicity and interesting choices

# Crowd Physics Sandbox

We gave players tools to mess with visitors

- Fans that push visitors
- Elastic barriers that guide visitors



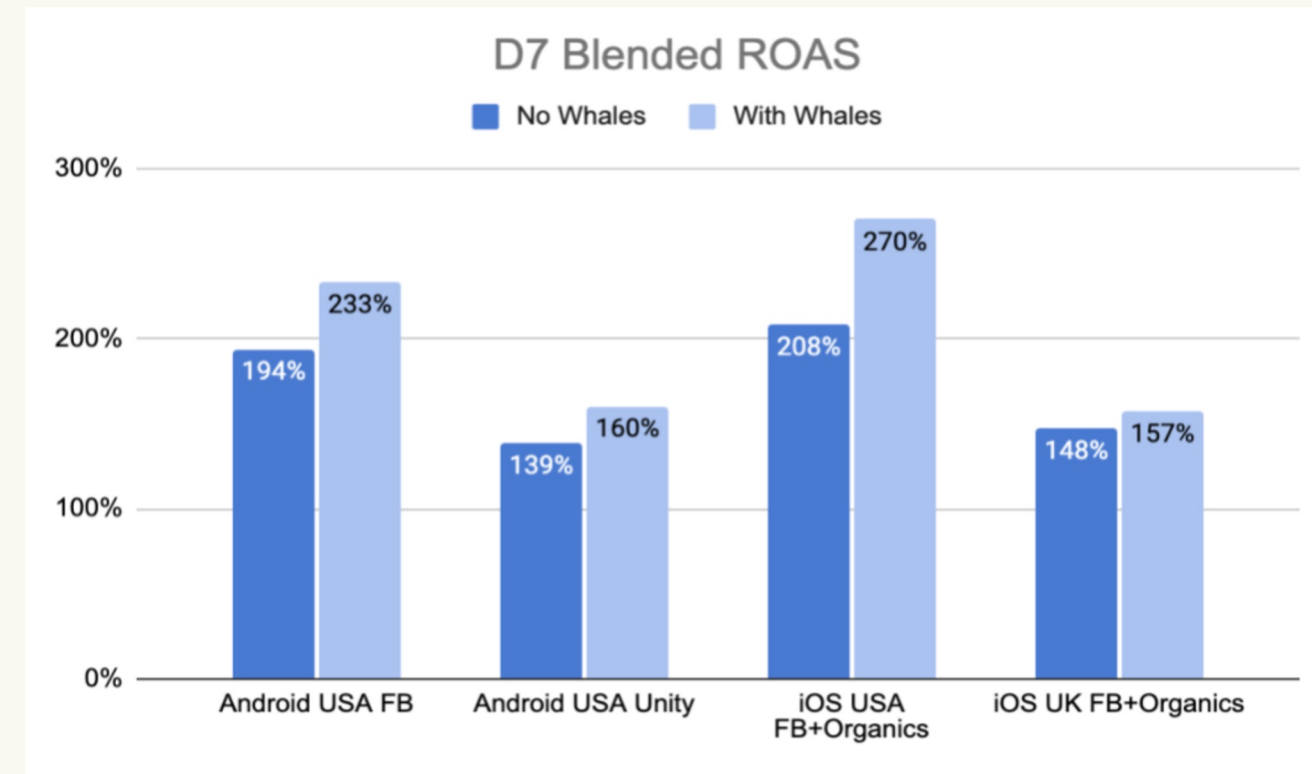
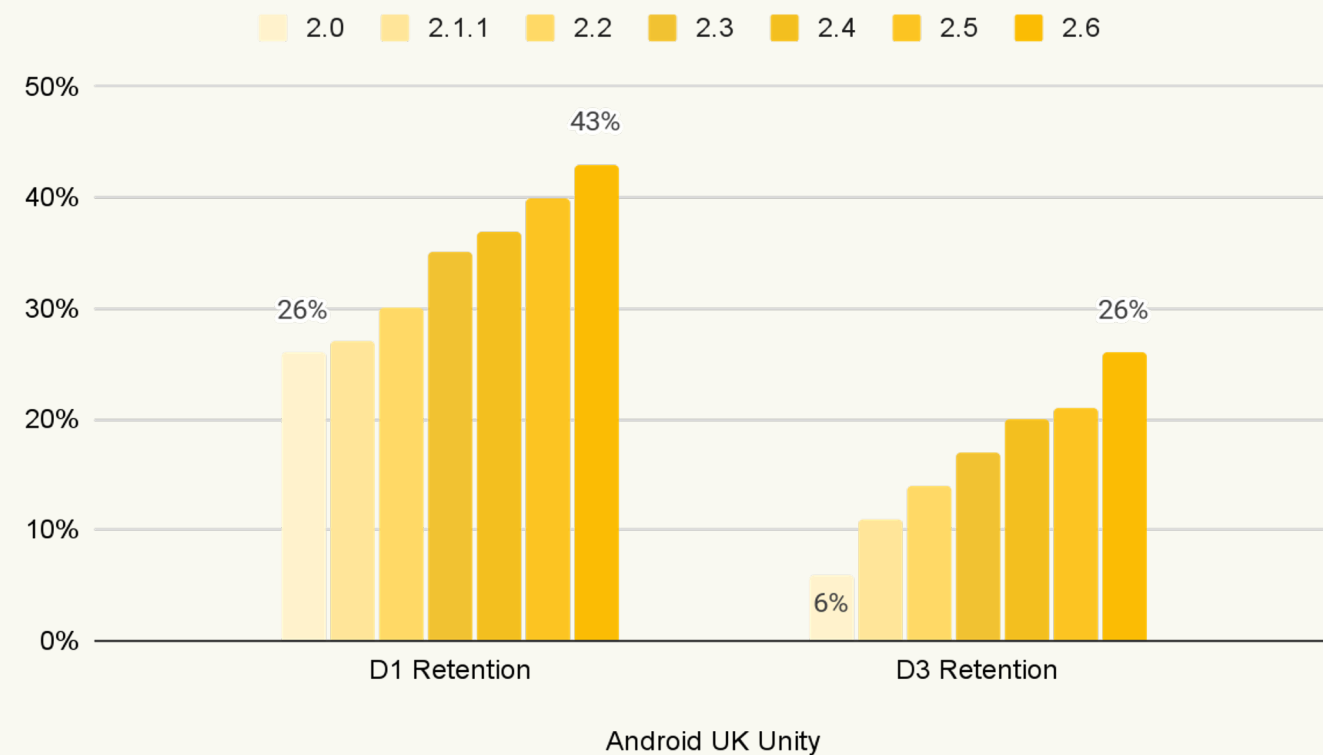
And they show us how to use them in creative ways



# Results improves significantly!

We managed to grow retention on each new release

We surpassed 100% ROAS (LTV>CPI)



# Stay small, Grow safe

Till reach ROAS positive

- 8 months (10 updates released)
- 5 People team
- Allow fast iterations

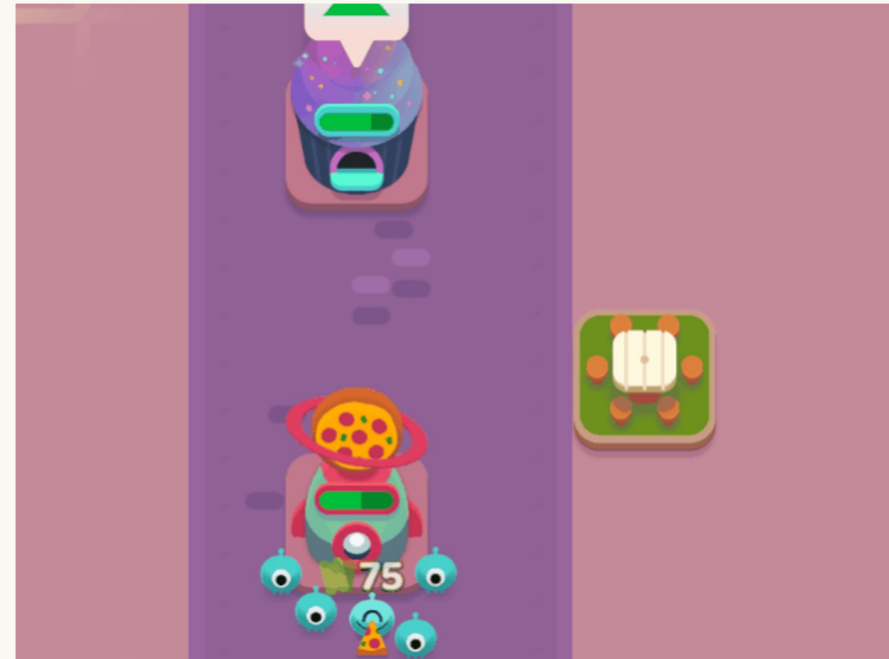
From ROAS positive till Global Launch

- 6 months (6 updates released)
- 12 People team
- Allow grow content



# Successful features that help growth

Special Parks (Events) triple player engagement (higher gametime)

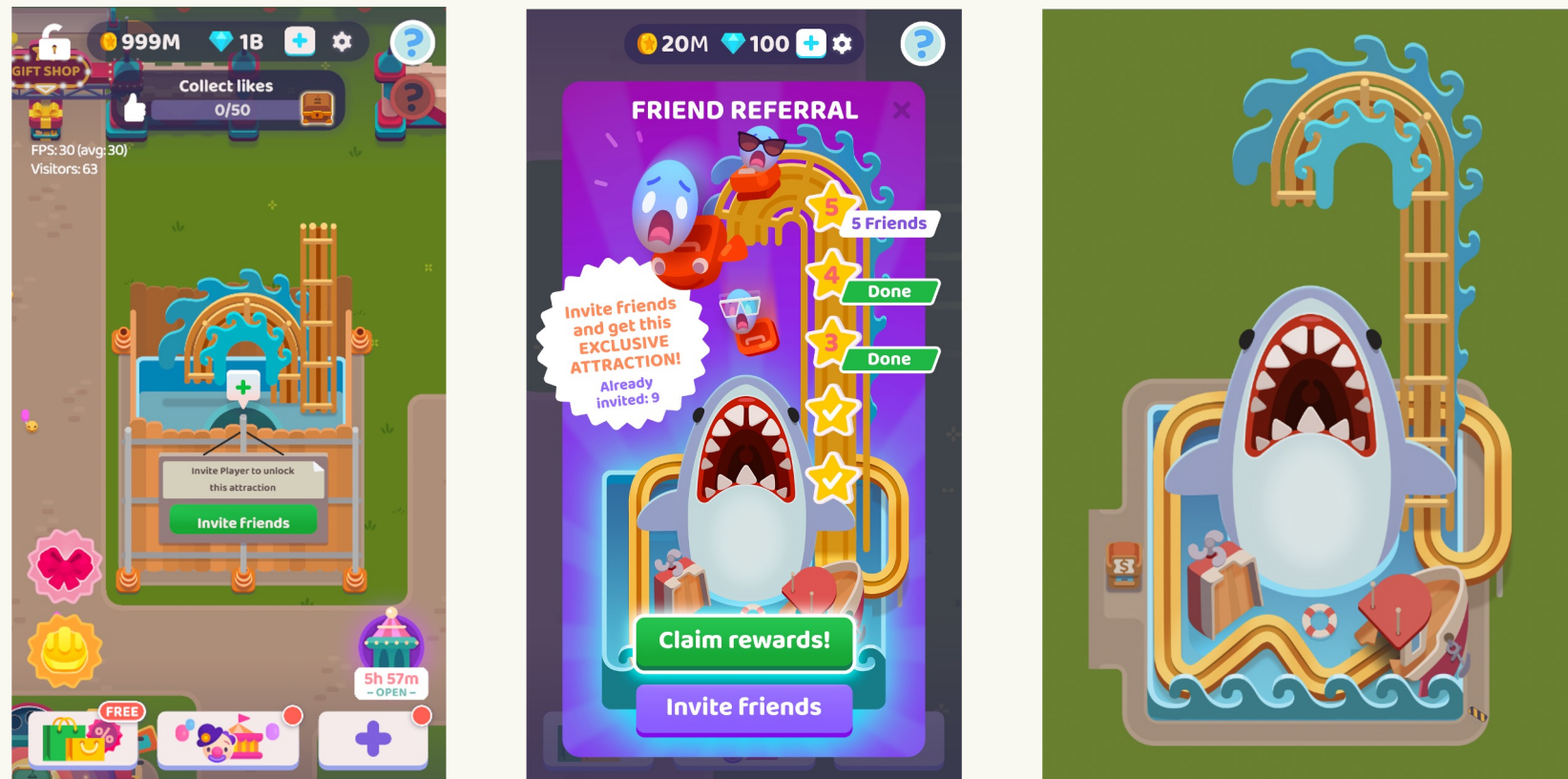


Not just a reskin, each event introduce a new gameplay twist



# Successful features that help growth

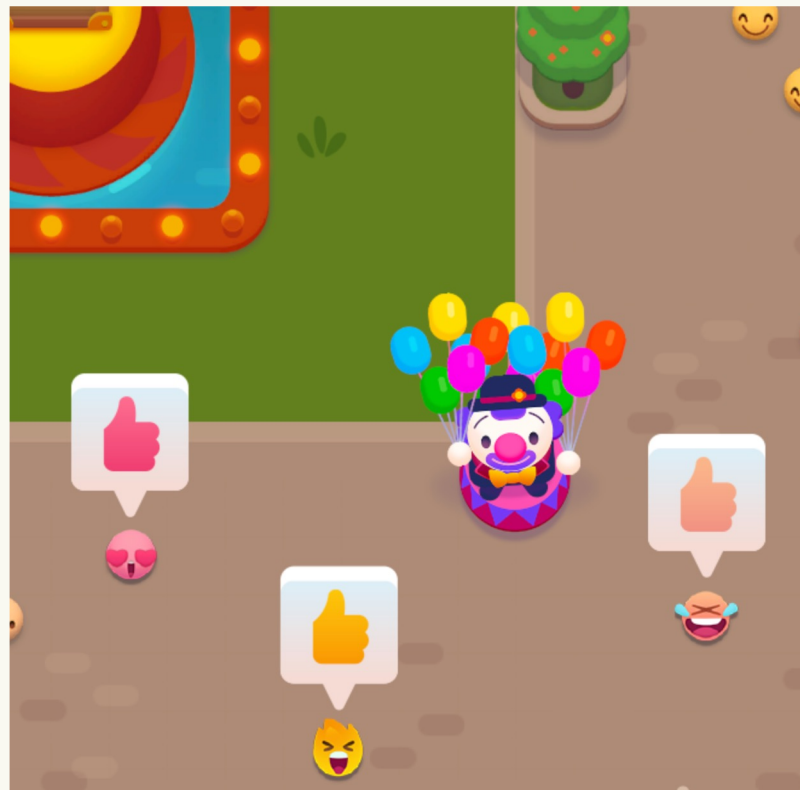
Friend Referrals boosted our organic installs (free new players!!!)



A visual reminder inside the park with an exclusive ride

# Successful features that help growth

Collect **LIKES** from super excited visitors. Players like to TAP things!!!



Appealing side activity to engage while waiting for unlocks

# Successful features that help growth

Piggy Bank boost our ARPPU (payers pay more) So cute!!!



Great value offers. Physically integrated in the park



# Takeaways

- Feed the idea machine
- Validate concepts before greenlight
- Optimize development to minimize costs
- Don't hesitate to **stop** a project and learn from failures
- Identify positive signs and keep faith on a strong vision
- Double down on what makes you unique
- Cross your fingers, and wish for the Best! 😊

# THANKS!

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