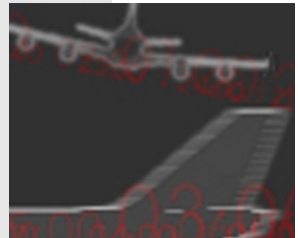


# Connecting Flights

10.99, 3 weeks



This project involves the design of a system for interaction with inflight entertainment. It proposes a new social game format for young people using imminent internet connectivity on transatlantic flights.

## brief

Starting with the desire to create opportunities for playful interaction and exchange among diverse people, Connecting Flights took the inflight context to situate a new social game format. Taking a pragmatic view of technological feasibility, brand strategy, and a target user group, the outcome was a proposed system for interaction with the game that closely matched the inflight routine and travel experience.

Project Partner: Monica Bueno

## process

Initially, we started with a wide range of contexts in which to explore the concept of 'exchange'. Inspired by the potentials of technological advances projected for airplane travel and by our own experience of an entertainment gap for our age group, we chose the inflight context to focus on. Research included interviews with industry experts on hardware and bandwidth capabilities and with Virgin designers to identify opportunities in relation to an existing market gap.



Determining that an episodic structure supported both the inflight routine and supported modes of interaction appropriate to the inflight context, we interspersed 'lean-forward' game play with the 'lean-back' mode of film-watching. Taking the inflight film as content, we explored the structure of a variety of possible formats to introduce elements of social interaction. We looked at board and video games, online communities and MUDs, and focussed on something in between murder mystery and game show. We determined a game format that was social and adventure-based, using exchange of clues and bribes as an opportunity for competition and flirtation.

Leveraging off the holiday context and a young user group, we developed the role of an identity card to introduce 'cult' values, such as belonging, loyalty, and escape, as well as to ensure privacy and anonymity for the inflight context. The card acts as a key to the system, guiding you through an initial identity play and personalization process, and storing identity characteristics, unique tools, and points to be exchanged, used as credit, or for game play on the return journey. In addition, the swipe card acts to mediate communication and navigation in a non-keyboard hardware system.

outcome

system proposal:



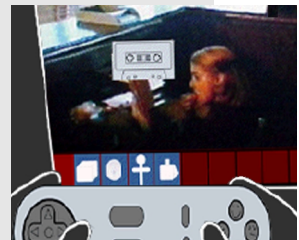
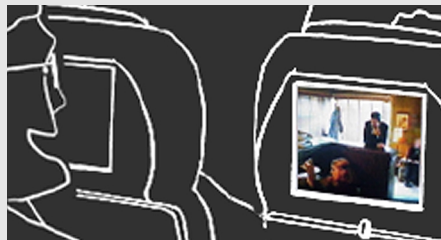
The system involves a format for social gaming based on the content of the inflight film. Taking classic narrative structure (such that any film could be slotted in), the format involves sections for collection and exchange, allowing the player to navigate through scenes in the movie and then to swap information with other passengers simultaneously inflight. An episodic structure supports the inflight routine and intersperses suspense, entertainment, and reward throughout the flight. This is represented through a series of diagrams and a scenario.

scenario:

The scenario outlines key moments in the user experience. From check-in to collecting winnings, it shows how identity play and the ID card support belonging and privacy, allow both one-off and repeat play, and facilitate flirtation and social interaction. The story demonstrates modes of interaction in relation to inflight routine, and shows how overlaps with other flights allow opportunities for social interaction and competitive advantages within the game.

# project |

implications:



Rather than a complete game design or a simulated experience, this is a proposal for a new experience format. We chose to design the entire system in order to explore a conceptual territory involved in designing new types of interactive experiences and social communities. Considering aspects of entertainment content, software interfaces, and hardware interaction, we attempted to integrate these from a system point of view, considering user's values, cultural desirability, holiday travel, inflight routine, technology, and brand placement. Examining a particular situation, we wanted to consider both pragmatic interests and interaction principles for new experience formats, which we see as an emerging area of design.

The project considers a variety of issues central to the future of online communities and interactive television. The spread of connectivity and communities outside of shared physical contexts or the personal computer means rethinking interaction appropriate for particular situations. Taking the airplane context, we carefully considered inflight routine and appropriate public interactions, building in privacy considerations, non-verbal communications, and using the swipe card as input and navigation device. Grounded in technical and market reality, the project proposes a playful, original, and appropriate experience, designing for identity play and personalization to support escape, flirtation, and belonging.

# project | context:



Increasingly, our home appliances, leisure activities, and social relationships have virtual components: experience formats structure the temporal, social, and spatial qualities of these new, hybrid experiences. As an experience format, the project can be seen in relation to the area of location-based entertainment, participatory theatre, and current work in interactive television and cinema. The project involved research in the social sciences concerning community building, cult formation, privacy and personalization, and online communities. This project ties together disparate aspects of game and social formats, matching user experience with modes of interaction within a highly specific and constrained context.

References on the relationship between real and virtual spaces include Brenda Laurel, M. Christine Boyer, and Ien Ang. Research in interactive structure, social organization, and online presence considered work at the MIT Media Lab, the Art Technology Group, VR environments and online communities. Aspects of the design concerning personalization and socialization involved research in the social sciences concerning community building, cult formation, and personalization. Of particular interest were projects within Philips Research and the Vision of the Future project, and writings by Paul Rankin, Thomas Erikson, and Judith Donath. Narrative structure and the architecture of experience were inspired by Nick Durrant.

# project | reflections:

This project challenged notions of our role in a design project. Initially we tried to fill too many roles, including that of game and interface designers. We ended up by spreading ourselves too thinly and with a demo emphasizing the wrong aspects of the system. Instead, we realize that the strength of the project lies in our ability to work within technical and business constraints while defining overall interaction principles to enhance the experience of the end user. In rethinking the project, I have tried to bring out the role of system designer and the ability to think in pragmatic and original ways in regards to a particular context and a complex system.



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