



Design Deconstruction Document

Overview

Ludo STAR is a digitized adaptation of the board game Ludo, published by Gameberry Labs. It allows players to enjoy the game online with friends, family, or random opponents from around the world. The game maintains the traditional rules where players race their four tokens from start to finish based on dice rolls. Ludo Star features various game modes, chat functionality, and options for in-game purchases to enhance gameplay. Its engaging interface and social features have made it popular among users seeking a blend of nostalgia and modern gaming experience.

Genre: Board Game/ Casual/ Abstract strategy

Target Audience: Age rated 3+

Platforms: Mobile (IOS and Android)

Gross Downloads: 50 M+

Worldwide Release Date: 2017/03/09

Core Gameplay Mechanics

- **Objective:** Move all four tokens from the start to the home position. Rewards are distributed on the basis of ranking and order of finishes.
- **Dice Roll:** Random number generation (1-6) on a cube die determines movement and game progression.
- **Token Movement:** The tokens are used for strategic positioning, objective clearing and risk/ reward management. The game enforces abstract strategy to modulate probabilities of survival of player tokens.
- **Knocking:** Capturing opponent's tokens sends them back to the start. Ensure optimised token movement strategies to maximize probability of success.
- **Safe Zones:** Specific spots on the board where tokens are protected from being knocked.

Market analysis

Ludo STAR gained 250,000 daily active users within three months of its launch. It found its primary user base and comfortably penetrated markets in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The primary user-base today comes from three countries: ISaudi Arabia, Pakistan and India. This landed it in an unique spot, where it could safely explore this playerbase without excessive competition unlike the Indian market which already saw competitor products from Gametion, BlackLight Games and MoonFrog Studios. The game really blew up during the pandemic, hitting almost 22 million daily active users along with its horizontal, Parchisi Star by Gameberry themselves. After a period of player decline at the end of the Pandemic, the game has now solidified its core audience base, but struggles to retain newer players.

In the following section, I studied comparative user metrics on data.ai between the top Ludo products that have market penetration in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan & India. This will surely help paint a clearer picture regarding the gameplay, art and design of Ludo STAR.

#	Unified App	Relative Active Users Rank	Relative Avg Time / User Rank
1	Ludo Clash: Play Ludo Online Vivinite	8	8
2	Ludo King Gametion	1	7
3	Board Kings Playtika	6	6
4	Ludo Club Moonfrog	2	5
5	Ludo SuperStar Game BlackLight Games	5	4
6	Yalla Ludo Yalla	3	3
7	Ludo STAR Gameberry	4	2
8	Ludo Party Miniclip	7	1

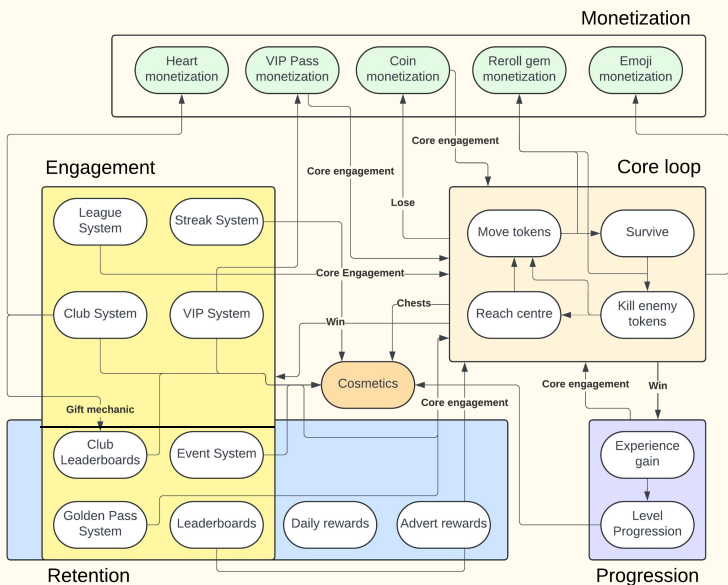
Above: Ludo STAR ranks high (2nd) in relative average time/ user despite its relative active user rank being low (4th). The game retains a select part of the player base but clearly struggles relatively to keep up with engaging a larger part of it.

- Ludo STAR has a large user base and should focus on increasing purchase conversions.
- Ludo STAR stands to gain from deeper user engagement tactics, having seen a flatlining of average time/ user from 6:25 mins (May- Oct 2023) to 5:30 mins (Nov- Apr 2024).
- As compared to Ludo Club (9.3 login days per month), Ludo STAR only has a 6.27 login rate. Ludo Club should serve as a case study for deeper user engagement. Ludo STAR's average session length runs much higher than the former, however. Ludo King's average session runs the highest at 9 mins/ user.
- Observation: Board Kings should also be studied further for its extremely high user login anomaly (891 logins per user on average between Nov- Apr 2024) despite being ranked the lowest at just over 3 mins of playtime session on average.

Source: data.ai, Sensor Tower

Core & Meta Loops

The following diagrams represent all the overlapping systems that balance out the user experience and evidently, allow for a variety of experiences for players. There is a huge focus on socially driven cosmetics monetization; namely, aspirational content. Exclusive & glitzy cosmetics make up the desirability of the content.



Meta Loop (Ludo STAR)

Note: This meta loop primarily represents FTUE observations as a Lvl 4 player, as of v 1.218.0 (May 25, 2024)

Game Modes



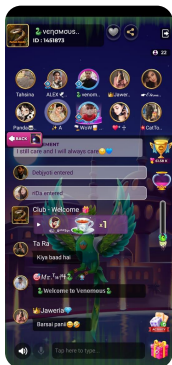
The different game modes, some restricted to particular play modes play a crucial role in diversifying the core gameplay loop and keeping it fresh over repeated play sessions. Having a multitude of game modes is an important part of increasing replayability.

Observation: The Master game type is limited to only the 'Private Table' and 'Offline' game modes.

Assumption: This game type, due to more restricted classic movement tends to be a slow burn. That could be the potential reason why it is only allowed for offline & friendly matches.

Social Features

- **Friend Lists:** Add and invite up to 25 friends friends to play anytime, against each other or together as a team.
- **Chat:** In-game chat functionality.
- **Emotes:** Quick communication through emojis, that can be rented for upto a month per content cycle. Monetizing this feature has not been explored to its fullest potential, I believe.
- **Facebook/ Whatsapp Integration:** Connect and compete with friends from other platforms.



The Club is the master feature for facilitating social features in this game. Leaderboards of participation & gifting peers and voice chatting within these clubs allows for emergent gameplay and narrative for players. Perks leading to better rankings within social events and leaderboards allows top performers to be cyclically featured. All of these experiences come together to artificially create a rush for aspirational content.

Progression & Rewards

- **XP and Levels:** Earn experience points and level up. New retention based reward systems are introduced as the player levels up.
- **Rewards:** The game contains daily login bonuses and ad rewards that cycle monthly. Streak rewards are also available as gameplay benefits. A unique reward amongst mostly cosmetic ones is the XP Multiplier which can be received as part of gameplay/ daily reward systems.
- **Achievements:** Unlockable achievements and badges, mostly cosmetic are available for whales and high level players.
- **In-game Currency:** A variety of resources have been implemented for purchasing items and features. They are documented below:
 1. **Gold:** Resource used to bet for all games. Bet money is multiplied if player wins and lost entirely if player loses. This serves as a secondary monetization feature as it is relatively abundant in the economy as it can be obtained through gameplay.
 2. **Gems:** Resource used to re-roll dice and serves a core monetization feature. It can also be similarly found through the core gameplay, but has scarcity implemented.
 3. **Hearts:** Resource used to gift cosmetic enhancements to other players. This is directly monetized as it cannot be obtained through gameplay.
 4. **Royal Pass/ Event resource:** This is a resource obtained through certain gameplay conditions serving as mini quests, ranging between freemium and free to play. E.g. Unique resources earned on the game board are used to unlock the free tiers of the Royal Pass and in turn increases chances of Royal Pass being bought. As documented on May 25, 2024, 'stones' are collected to complete another small mini quest of defeating a villain which unlocks tiers of free rewards. The Royal Pass event is called 'Defeat the Villian'.

Monetization

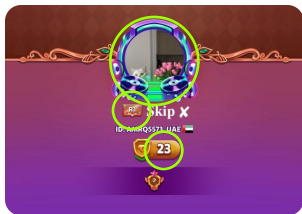
- **In-app Purchases:** Buy coins, gems, emojis and a variety of cosmetics.
- **Ads:** Optional video ads for extra rewards.
- **Subscription Model:** VIP access with exclusive benefits, mostly but not limited to cosmetics. Three primary subscription systems exist in the game.
 1. **VIP Pass:** Daily resource drops, added private game features/ slots and cosmetic upgrades.
 2. **Golden Pass:** Essentially functionally similar to a season pass system, a classic monetization method that drives engagement and provides rewards in tiers of progression. It is the classic representation of a freemium model.
 3. **Royal Tier System:** This is a dynamic subscription method within the Club system that primarily rewards active spenders with cosmetics.
 4. **Royal Pass:** A very engaging version of the former Golden Pass system, where the player engages with a minigame to climb the reward tiers. There is often a back and forth between core gameplay and the minigame to complete all required levels. It is of much smaller duration, often between 12 hours to 2 days.

As mentioned in the previous section, some of the resource types feed into direction monetization. The biggest monetization benefits presumably come from these direct monetization methods as there is a huge emphasis on cosmetic enhancements, better than the ones levelling up through core gameplay. The comparison underneath shows how **monetized aspirational content creates primary engagement** in this game, rather than actively relying on grinding through progression tiers to be socially aspirational for the player community.



On the left: Top player profile from Clash of Clans. It is visible how much the game rewards grinding for leader-board ranks as you not only have your global rank showcased in the forefront, but also all the ranks in all leaderboards.

On the left: Top player profile from LudoSTAR. It is visible how the game effectively rewards engagement in grinding for monetized aspirational content.



Events

- Events consist of Royal Pass events as well as free to play events, primarily contributing to longer engagement periods. The rewards range from gems and coins to rare cosmetics.
- Extremely rare custom themed cosmetic packs also appear as timed events.
- Older event cosmetic packs appear in Vintage shops along with current events at times.
- Club Events are reserved for players who partake in the Club system and gift feature. Performing well in such events automatically lead to club leader-board positions, hence doubly increasing retention and engagement.

Overall, the events are a well balanced system of monetized content functioning presumably being recycled over a period of time.

UI/UX



Observations:

- The daily/ conditional reward sections should be brought together to streamline retentive behaviour.
- Level progression section should include a level progression pop-up with the progression explained further rather than just the mention of xp required to next level up. It could, in fact, be combined with the profile section and show profile details with progression details upon clicking that section.

- The game modes should be brought into a single scrollable format. The remaining space should be used to remove the chests section and integrate it into the home screen.

The remaining screens of the game are very unified and visually effective.



Image above: Gameplay screen (4 player classic)

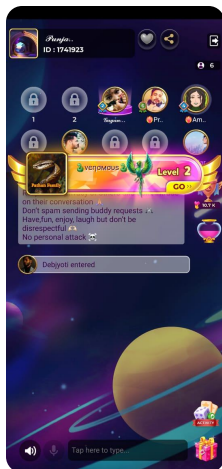


Image above: In-club lounge space

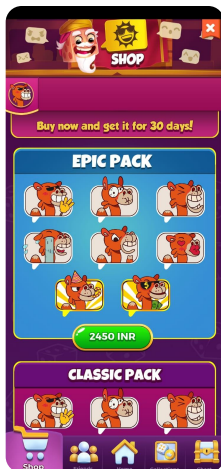


Image above: Shop (emote section)

Visual & Sound Design

Ludo Star boasts a vibrant and appealing visual design that captures the essence of the classic board game while incorporating modern digital aesthetics. The game board is rendered with bright, eye-catching colors that make it easy to distinguish between different players' tokens and paths. The interface is clean and user-friendly, with intuitive icons and menus that enhance navigation. Although the art stylization is a bit too reminiscent of current art standards and does not boast any visual innovations, the animations are smooth and fluid, adding a dynamic feel to the gameplay, such as when rolling dice or moving tokens. Overall, the visual design of Ludo Star successfully balances simplicity and vibrancy, making it accessible and enjoyable for players of all ages.

Keeping in mind the strong visuals and effective visual design work, it as a bit of a surprise to me that **the game lacks a recognisable and differentiating 'audio jingle'**. I would strongly suggest an effective, short and pleasant audio at the start of the game and during match wins to effectively penetrate audience psyches. An amazing reference point would be the audio jingles adopted by Supercell games. They have gone so far as to create a sense of distant familiarity among their games set in the same universe, hereby creating connecting associations amongst multiple games through the implementation of these audio jingles.



Observation: The game shows effective adaptability to the evolution of the player base and has successfully a colour palette and visual aesthetic that caters to the greater Gulf region.

Conclusion

Ludo STAR is clearly doing a lot of things right. The market penetration that the game has achieved helped retained its core user base for an effective revenue stream. But there are signs of minute declines in play time, average sessions per user and revenue. This shows a larger need to engage the audience more deeply and find ways to retain free to play users. Small adjustments in the game's live service vision should help the game lengthen its product cycle.

Fin.
