Zenoterra — Interactive Narrative & Analytics Case Study

1. Project Overview

Zenoterra.io is a web-based, choose-your-own-adventure experience that blends interactive fiction, tarot symbolism, and environmental storytelling. The project was built as both a creative experiment and an analytics portfolio piece, designed to show how narrative design and behavioral data can inform each other.

Core goals

- Build a compelling, replayable narrative experience
- Instrument *meaningful* user behavior beyond pageviews
- Use analytics to validate narrative assumptions and identify friction points

2. Narrative & Game Design (Context for the Data)

Core mechanic: Dissonance

- Players accumulate or reduce a **dissonance score** based on choices
- Dissonance reflects whether the player is "listening" to the planet's signals
- Endings depend on accumulated dissonance, not just a single choice

3. Analytics Strategy (Core of the Case Study)

Guiding principles

- Track **decisions**, not just screens
- Preserve narrative context in every event
- Avoid vanity metrics (raw pageviews are insufficient)

4. Analytics Stack

Event orchestration

- **Google Tag Manager**
  - Centralized event dispatch
  - Decouples analytics from game logic
  - Enables rapid iteration without redeploying core code

Platforms

- **Google Analytics 4**
  - Structured event schema
  - Funnel and path exploration
- **PostHog**
  - Behavioral analysis of narrative paths
  - Debugging player drop-off and confusion
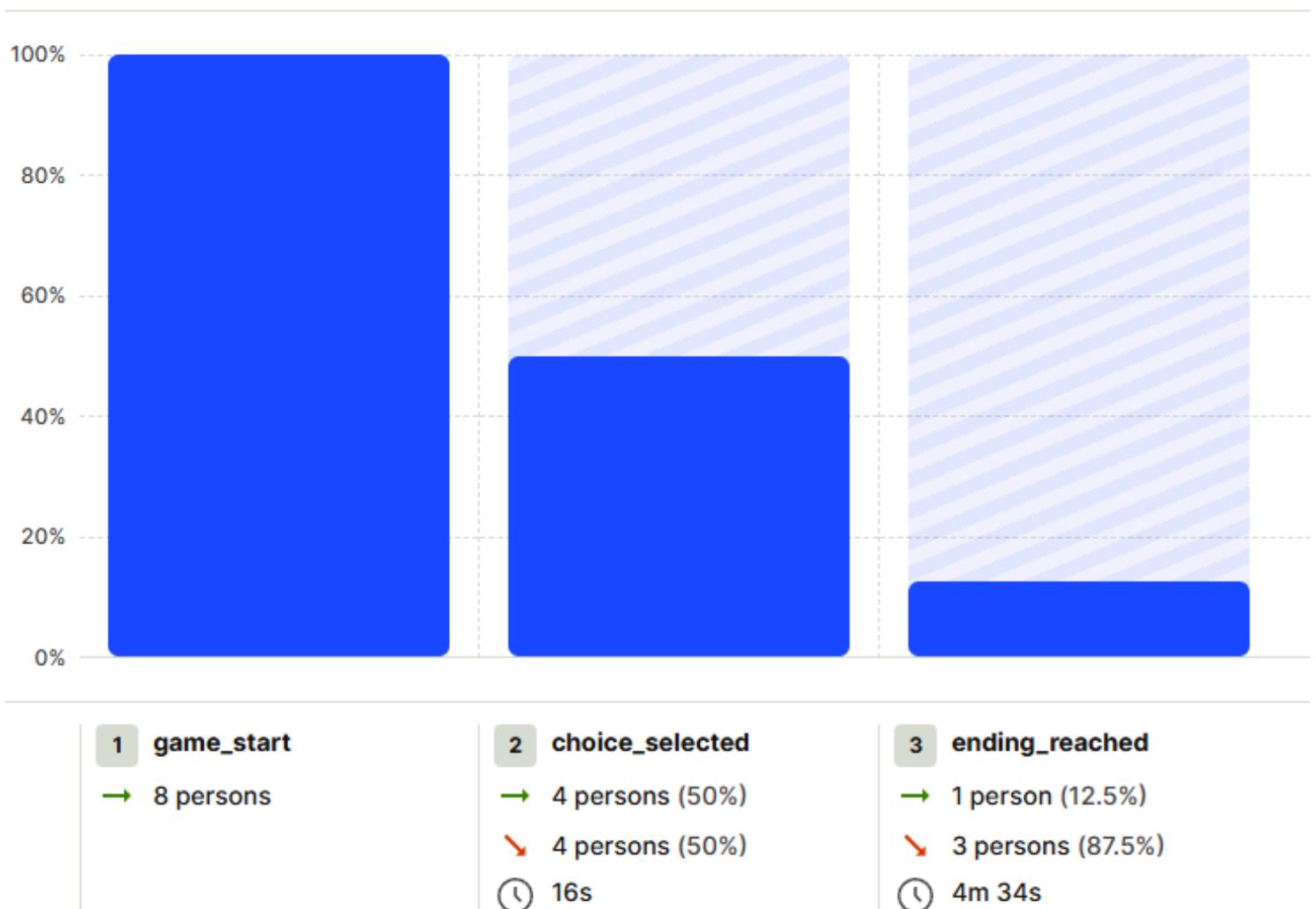- **Cookiebot**
  - Consent management

Outcomes

The volume of data that I received was, on the whole, low. However, I was still able to track user journeys through the story. Below are some examples of PostHog dashboards that tell the story of Zenoterra interactions.
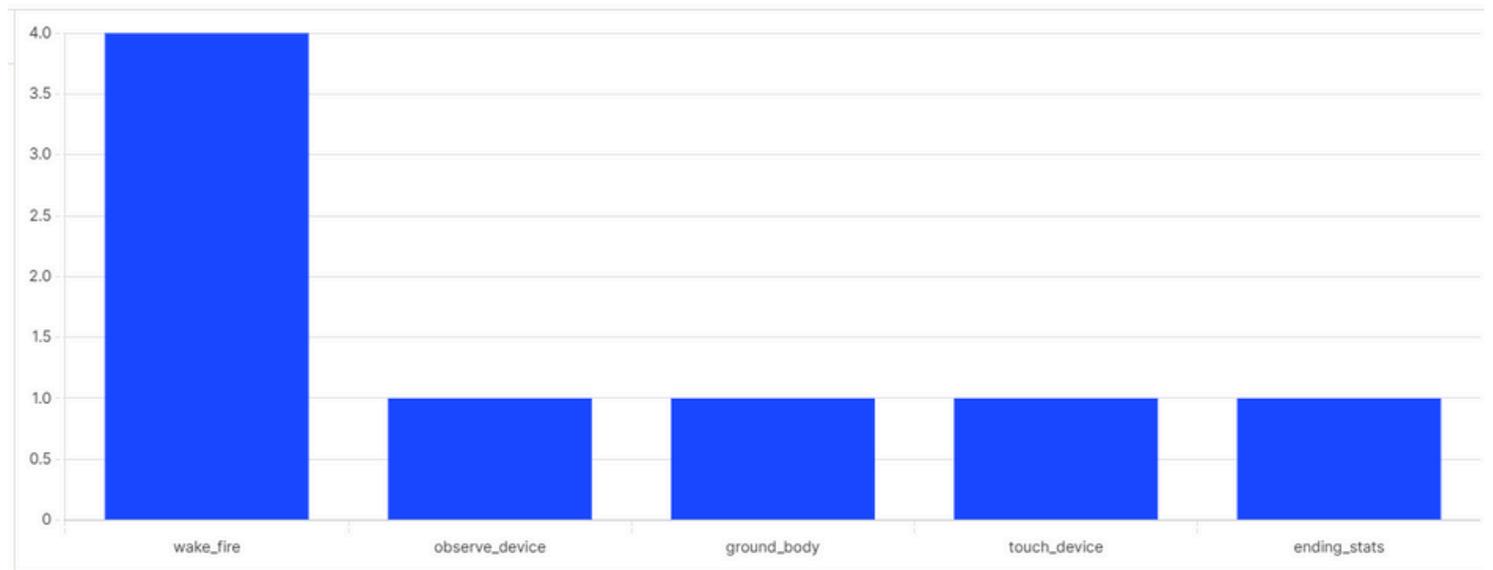
View Ending Scene per Ending Reached

Detailed results

	SERIES ⇅	ENDING_SCENE 📌 ⇅	COLOR	TOTAL SUM ⌄ ⇅
☑	ending_reached	city_from_library_exit	⬤	1

Began game, made choices, finished the game

1 game_start	2 choice_selected	3 ending_reached
→ 8 persons	→ 4 persons (50%)	→ 1 person (12.5%)
	↘ 4 persons (50%)	↘ 3 persons (87.5%)
	🕐 16s	🕐 4m 34s

Drop-off by Scene Name

What I'd Do With More Traffic

- Experiment with choice wording
    - Iterate and perform incremental analysis on changes to the completion rate, or number of scenes encountered
- Cohort analysis by dissonance level
- A/B test game mechanics
- Show a public "you vs everyone" ending comparison