MDA Analysis Framework on Gwent: The Witcher Card Game

Dylan Baker - 2093671

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Abstract: This report will cover the MDA framework analysis for the game "*Gwent: The Witcher Card Game*". it will discuss the aesthetic goals and how that forms the dynamics of having different factions because of the fantasy world of having many types of creatures and characters. That will then lead into the mechanics within the factions. Lastly it will discuss how all of these come together to give the main mechanic of the game.

1 Introduction

In this report the MDA Framework analysis will be used to analyse the game "*Gwent: The Witcher Card Game*". In this game the players take turns in trying to gain as many points as they can so that they have more strength than their opponent. Using this framework will allow an analysis on the games data design by using terminology from the aesthetics component to explain the use of both the dynamics and mechanics component.[5]

2 Analysis

2.1 Aesthetics and how they form the Dynamics

Gwent has the aesthetic goals of fantasy, challenge and competition.[5]

Beginning with fantasy as Gwent is set in the witcher world which is fantasy. Witchers are beast slayers however they have abilities that make them more powerful than if a normal human was to be a beast slayer. This can be considered magical compared to the normal world, and they use this magic to kill beasts and monsters. There are also other creatures such as elves, dwarves or necrophages. These are all fantasy based characters.

This is why Gwent has an aesthetic goal fantasy as it follows the world of the witcher. This forms the dynamics for being able to choose the different factions that exist. Since there are 5 factions lets just focus on one called "Monsters" for this analysis [3].

When a player makes a deck in Gwent they have to choose a faction. So for the monster faction it will obviously include things like mythical beasts and monsters but it is not only beasts and monsters. There is also neutral cards that can be used in any faction the player chooses. These neutral cards also consist of many types such as beast, organic or mage.

How do the dynamics arise from the factions? As said before there are many cards to choose from in the faction. How you choose these cards affect the strategy the player wants to implement. However when the player chooses their cards for their deck, they cannot just simply choose all the cards that give them more points and higher strength. The cards cost 'money' which is called provision, and you only have a set amount. in general the higher the amount of power the card gives the more provisions it will use. But it also comes down to whether or not the card can also attack and what the mechanics of the card are. In terms of data design the cards cost provisions to get but how you use those provisions to build a deck forms the dynamics. This comes from the challenge aesthetic goals. Finding the right balance between all the cards the player choses can be difficult.

Another dynamic that arises from the challenge is that the player may want a certain amount of the same card for their strategy, this is done by using scraps to craft more of a card. The more rare a card is the more scraps you get from milling it. If a player wants to craft a card it also applies, the more rare a card is the more scrap needed to craft it. This can be challenging to figure out what card would be best for the deck you want. However you get scraps from completing in game challenges and another way which will be spoken about in the mechanics of the game.[4]

2.2 The Mechanics of the Monster Faction

The main mechanic of Gwent is to get the most power in a round so that you can win, there are different mechanics within the factions that make that process more interesting rather than just playing cards with high power ratings. These mechanics make playing the cards with the lower power more interesting.

The mechanics that are unique to the "Monster" faction are "*Thrive*", "*Deathwish*" and "*Consume*".[2] "*Thrive*" allows a card to gain +1 power when cards with a higher power than them are used.[2] "*Deathwish*" allows cards to activate certain abilities when they have been killed. These abilities could be attacking the opponent or adding power to other cards that the player has. "*Consume*" allows a card to activate an ability when the player has killed an opponents card with one of their cards that has "*Consume*".[2] These abilities are the same as mentioned above. These abilities obviously affect the data design for the opponent or the player as they either add to the players power or take away from the opponents power.

How do they make the cards with low power more interesting? Well most of the cards with low power have at least one or two of these mechanics. So if a card has a low power rating and you use it with "*Thrive*" for example then the player can increase the power rating so that the card could last longer and so they can do more with the card. Going to the dynamics of how a player pairs their cards with each other in the monster faction, the player would need to take these mechanics into account according to how they want to play. If the player wants to make the most of their deck they need to figure out what cards work best with each other when using these mechanics. There are other mechanics like "*Deploy*" but they are mechanics that are used in all factions and are not unique to a certain faction.

This then leads to the main mechanic of having the most power at the end of the round so that you win the round. Do this twice and you beat your opponent. This achieves the aesthetic goal of competition. A player needs to use these mechanics within a faction to make decks that are going to work for their play style to defeat an opponent.

The last mechanic to be addressed was mentioned earlier with the scraps to craft more cards. The mechanic is not only done by completing in game challenges but you are also able to mill extra cards that you may have. This allows the player to craft other cards that they may want for their deck. This then adds to the dynamic of choosing which cards to choose for your deck.[4]

3 Conclusion

This report only covers the "Monster" faction, but the analysis applies to all the factions as they all have the same concept behind them in terms of having unique mechanics to them so that the main mechanic can be achieved. This also only covers the MDA framework analysis for the data design.

Appendices

References:

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