

MDA Framework Analysis on Reigns

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Abstract: This report will analyse the communication design in the game "*Reigns*" using the MDA framework. It will however be on the main screen that a player sees and does not include the dungeons. The game has simple but effective communication design and shows the player everything they need to know. The mechanic, dynamic and aesthetic goals will be discussed. The mechanics and dynamics change the data and then how those changes are communicated through communication design will be discussed.

1 Introduction

This report will cover the MDA analysis on the game "*Reigns*". The basic idea of the game is that a player is the ruler of a land and they have to make choices that then affect the four different attributes to their land. If they do not manage to keep a balance between all the four attributes, the player then fails as that leader and begins with a new one. Simple concepts however it is challenging.

2 MDA Analysis

2.1 The Basic Communication Design

The game has simple design for the communication however it does show the player everything they need to know at that moment in the game. The main ones are the "*x years in power*", then the number that seems to be the year that the player is in, the four attributes and then the objectives that are given to the player. The last one is the name of the ruler that the player is using.

2.2 MDA Framework

Starting with the mechanics. There is one simple mechanic which is that you either choose to "swipe left" or "swipe right". An example from is that someone might say they need more people for the army. The player can then choose to either try and recruit people or choose to not.

"Swiping left or right" might change some of the attributes. The four attributes are faith, people, your army and money.[3] The attributes of the players land will either increase or decrease. These are the dynamics. Whether you swipe right or left something may or may not affect your attributes. It also may complete an objective. So how the player makes their choice might affect their attributes and possibly their objectives.[1] The four attributes are the most important thing to communicate to the players as without this the player would never know if they are going to last long as that specific ruler or if they are going to fail.

The way they have implemented this feedback for the changing attributes is to have 4 symbols and then almost like a slider in them that changes depending on the choice. They may also not change. If the attribute value increases then the slider increases and the symbol appears more full. If the attributes value decreases then the slider decreases and the symbol appears less full. This will

obviously indicate how the attribute was affected in terms of how much the value of it increased or decreased (They do not show values though).

The second thing they do for this is that when the player is choosing to either "swipes right or left" there will be a little dot above the attributes that shows what gets affected, however it does not tell the player how the attribute is affected.

This brings an aesthetic goal. That is challenge. The game does not directly tell the players how the attributes are going to be affected (*there is a way though). The player has to try and think of how the situation that has been given to them will affect the attributes when "swiping left or right". This is challenging as it takes time to get used to what the choice will do and it is not always obvious. This is also where the narrative comes in. Every person that approaches the ruler in the game has a story to tell, without the story the player will not actually know what the people want. There is also more than one ruler in the game and throughout the ruling little stories are told about the decision that was made and when the players ruler dies. When the player dies as one ruler they start a new chapter as another ruler. New people can also be added to the story and then they add another layer of story telling which might actually lead to the player achieving an objective.[1] This will be spoken about next.

The next important part of the communication design is to show that the player is progressing. When a player wants to rule they most likely want to rule for a certain period of time and they would want to know if they are achieving that. This is done by showing how many years the player has been ruling, showing the year they are ruling in and completing the objectives. Each time a decision is made, where it is not telling a story about a choice you made or a story about you as a ruler, the number of years in power increases and the year also increases. As a ruler, the player wants to rule as long as possible and so every time they see the number of years in power increase, it gives the player a sense of progression. The objectives are not done quickly. The player needs to take note of the hints that people use when they tell their story. If the player does not catch the hints the time to complete a certain objective may increase.[1]

These add to the aesthetic goal of challenge, as it is a challenge to rule for as long as possible and to notice the hints for the objectives to be completed.

The last thing is the UI at the bottom of the middle of the screen. These are called "*lasting effects*".[2] They will either remain there until a new lasting effect is obtained and will replace one or it will expire over time. It might be difficult for a player to remember every lasting effect so having a picture at the bottom allows a player to hover over it and see what the effect does.[2] *This is where you might have an effect that allows you to see how the attributes are affected and makes it easier to make your decision*.

3 Conclusion

"*Reigns*" uses simple communication design however it effectively shows the player what they need to know - how long they have been in power, how high or low the attributes are and how they might be affected by a choice the player is making. This also only uses the MDA framework on the main screen that a player will be seeing when playing the game. A player can also explore the dungeons which has different communication design.

References

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[3] O. Dayus, "Pocket Gamer," 11' August 2016. [Online]. Available: <https://www.pocketgamer.com/articles/071039/how-to-live-the-longest-in-reigns/#:~:text=You%20also%20have%20to%20balance,%2C%20the%20Army%2C%20and%20Money.&text=Each%20decision%20affects%20these%20traits,zero%20and%20you're%20dead..> [Accessed 2 April 2021].