

Analysis of Gwent relating to Data Design using MDA framework.

Gwent is a card game that focuses on skill and strategy rather than luck. The game has multiple ways of being played due to the vast number of cards/factions available, Furthermore, each faction allows for a unique experience between players depending on how their deck is built and ensures no match would be the same.

Games are played on a three-round basis and to win the game, a player must win two of the three rounds. To win a round, a player must have the most points on their side of the board by the end.

Deck building in Gwent

To create a deck, players must first choose a faction who each have unique abilities and sets of cards specific to that faction. When building the deck, players are given limitations and specifications that their deck must follow for it to be valid. This is where the systems put in place shine even before playing an actual match. Players must ensure that the cards they choose do not go over the specified limit, as each card has its own provision cost with rarer or better cards costing more. Not only this, but each deck must have a specified minimum amount of unit cards (minimum of thirteen) and a specified minimum number of cards overall (minimum of 25 cards in the whole deck). Players however have no maximum deck limit provided they have the available provision cost. This allows players to create a deck that revolves around the playstyle they want while keeping them within the limits of the systems.

Each faction in Gwent allows for different styles of play whether it be swarming the board with as many units as possible or playing cards that get stronger the longer a round lasts. This allows for players to use and exploit the systems to the best of their ability to create a deck that may come out victorious. This Dynamic that comes from exploiting the deck building mechanics also leads to a sense of discovery as to what could be possible for the player, but also an aspect into how the player may perceive the fantasy and narrative of the game. Each faction seems to have its own playstyle that matches the narrative given but can easily be tweaked to provide players their own point of view.

An example of this is a deck I personally created and enjoy using. By using the 'Syndicate' faction, which uses a currency unique to it (a coin system where you may pay coins for certain actions or different effects may happen depending on how many coins you have stored), I created a deck that generates coins easily but is weak in terms of unit strength. Rather than creating a deck where units get stronger as I get more coins, I made a deck that uses all the coins I generate to damage the enemy units or destroy them completely. This also fed into a narrative that my deck was like that of an assassin's guild that would get the job done provided that the price was right even though most of the cards within were made of businessmen and shady operators.

A match of Gwent

Gwent matches begin with the player drawing ten cards from their decks and can redraw, or mulligan as it is called in-game, up to three cards in the first round and two at the beginning of subsequent rounds. This allows players partial control of their initial starting hand and gives the player a better opportunity to play out the systems they created in their decks.

During a round, a player may use their special ability or available card abilities and play one single card per turn (unless stated differently through card effect or ability). Each unit has its own point value and most have special effects that happen depending on the game's state (i.e.. Some cards effects are done immediately as they are summoned while others can only happen if x amount of enemy units are damaged). The Gwent playing field is separated into two zones per player, melee and ranged, and cards can potentially have different effects depending on the zone and where they are played.

A round ends when both players decide to pass their turn. Players pass when they willingly decide to skip their turn or when they have run out of cards in their hand. Skipping can be used tactfully as every new round the players draw three more cards to what is currently in their hand.

Each round, a player uses what is available to them to try and outwit their opponent and have the most points by the end. Some players even willingly lose the initial round so that they can take advantage in the latter ones, this is due to how the game handles the data present as in the later rounds, card advantage can be extremely useful, and some decks even need you to lose powerful cards early on to showcase their true strength.

Conclusion

Gwent allows for this dynamic style of play that differs from player to player. It lets the player have fun with the game however they want while remaining within the bounds of the system. The multiple factions and the systems that come along are well designed and work well with each other maintaining their uniqueness among each other. With all this in mind, Gwent provides a good experience as a card game for all to enjoy.

References

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