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MDA Analysis

This paper will focus on the analysis of the game *Yu-gi-oh*, a turn-based strategy card game based off an animated series. Players each start with 8000 life points or LP, have a deck of cards consisting of multiple different types of cards ’carrying’ different kinds of data, and to win a player must reduce their opponent’s life points to zero. There are three types of cards in Yu-gi-oh that this paper will focus on, spell cards, trap cards and monster cards. This analysis will make use of the MDA model, keeping data interaction and data manipulation as a key subject.

During each turn players draw a card, and play a card by choosing to either summon a monster, use a spell card, or use a trap card, this is done by setting cards in their specific zones in a mat that functions like a gameboard. One would say that these mechanics, as defined by the MDA framework to be actions that the player performs() , push or initialise the data interaction between players, each card carries a different set of data in both numerical and text form and these two mechanics force the player to make use of this data. Each monster card has an attack (ATK) and a defence (DEF) amount, when a player attacks an opposing monster with a card with higher ATK, another mechanic, the opposing monster dies and goes to the graveyard, the calculated difference is subtracted from player’s LP and if a player does not have a monster between them and an opposing player, their LP are affected directly instead.

When player plays a card they offer up data to exchange with the opponent, thus the cycle of data interaction occurs until either the player or opponent has 0 LP. Spell cards are cards players use on their turn and can affect various amounts of data such as player’s and opponent’s LP, the mat, monster, spell and trap cards, the deck and even player’s or opponent’s hand. Trap cards are similar in that they offer various effects as well, but the difference is that they can be activated during your opponent’s turn and can disrupt how they want their data to flow, for example you can set a trap card on your turn and when your opponent summons a monster on their turn with ATK higher than 1500 your trap activates and lowers their ATK by 1000 .

During each turn a player has a multitude of data to manipulate, their life points¸ opponent life points, their monster’s ATK and DEF and their opponent’s. These mechanics pit player against player to see who will win and drive the game’s dynamic of player against player, a behaviours that result when the mechanics are applied( ). The data interaction between ATK and DEF of monster cards, and player life points also brings about the dynamic of achievement, defined as any virtual and physical representation of being victorious at something( ). This is because when a player summons a monster card with higher ATK than their opponent’s ATK or DEF, then attacks and damages the opponent, a sense of victory over the opponent and their monsters is felt within that one turn.

As per the MDA framework, dynamics in a game system lead to aesthetics, the intended emotional responses the player experiences when they interact with a game( ). The dynamic of player against player gives rise to the aesthetic of challenge, another aesthetic that this game dawns is the aesthetic of fantasy where the game functions as make believe. This is supported by data the game uses in the form of characters, their traits, and types of cards they use, found in the fantasy world of the animated series *Yu-gi-oh* that the game is based off.