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Ashish Juggpall

WSOA3003A

Game Design IIIA

An MDA Analysis on the Digital Game “Threes”

Introduction

This is a formal analysis of the digital game “Threes” (PC - Online Browser Version) utilising the MDA (Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics) Framework created by R. Hunicke, M. LeBlanc, R. Zubek. This analysis solely focuses on the Communication Design within the online game. The digital game was published in 2014 by Sirvo LLC. and was developed by Asher Vollmer and Greg Wohlwend. The game is an online single player that requires players to use the directional keys to move number tiles of the same numerical value, attempting to get the highest values as possible.

Mechanics

Players move all tiles currently active on the grid using the directional keys of the keyboard. After each move, another tile is added into the game. Each Tile has a numerical value. Blue tiles have a numerical value of 1, while pink tiles have a value of 2. White tiles have a numerical value of three (3) or higher. Only blue tiles and pink tiles can merge into another to form a numerical value of three (3) while other values can only merge only if the same numerical value, resulting in a tile of the double value, known as twins. If there is no space available and/or no available tiles, the game ends. The score is the sum of all the remaining numerical values on the grid. Special tiles allow players to move their existing tile through it to merge with each other.

Dynamics

Players can plan their moves strategically according to the incoming tile prompt featured at the top of the User Interface. If special tiles are present and active on the grid, players can move adjacent tiles through the special tile, creating more space and/or shifting tiles into inaccessible areas to merge with others. Players may also place upcoming tiles of choice by locating open spaces and using the directional key of choice to input the next tile into that position. Players may also preview the upcoming tile by sliding slowly to get a quick glimpse of what the next tile may be.

Aesthetics

The user interface consists of a white grid. The top consists of the Menu and Options tabs as well as the Next Tile indicator situated in the middle. Each tile has a numerical value located in the middle of its tile. The use of colours for pink and blue representing the values of two (2) and one (1) respectively help players to easily identify the value of the tile when playing, without the need to look at the number of the tile. This is mainly effective when appearing on the “Next Tile” indicator, helping players strategically play according to which tile is added next. Special Tiles are indicated by a gold outline and special emote and helps players to identify which tile is special and/or the highest value currently situated on the grid. Players may use his aesthetic to their advantage as it provides players with a current goal to work towards and merge with.

References

- [1] A. Vollmer, G. Wohlwend. (2014) *Threes*. Sirvo LLC.
- [2] R. Hunicke, M. LeBlanc, R. Zubek. MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research.