

A General Review of *The Amazing Spider Man 2*

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The Amazing Spider Man 2 is a Marvel's comic *Spider-Man* based video game, it is published by Activision at 2014. The game is the sequel of the 2012 video game *The Amazing Spider Man*.

The Amazing Spider Man 2 is a single-player, action-adventure game. The main story is based on the open world New York, where the character Spider-Man fights against various enemies and maintains the safety of the city.

The target player type of the game should be core to hardcore gamers, since it requires a good amount of time to finish the game, and some level of operating skills.

Narrative Structure and Tension Arc

This game combined fold-back and unordered fold-back narrative structure. The main story is pretty straight forward, and there is only one ending. In order to enrich player's experience and give player some sense of control, game designers designed multiple types of mission. Except the main story line, there are five types of side missions in the game. They are photo investigation, task force, police deadlock, hostage rescue, Russian hideouts. All missions contains different types of enemies and activities. For example, photo investigation requires player to visit a place in the city, and take photo of certain objects. Russian hideout is where the new suits are. Instead of fighting enemies, this mission requires player to find the suit without aware lots of enemies. Since there is not any specific order of these mission, so side missions should be consider as the unordered part within the overall fold-back structure. Certainly, there are loops during game play. Players are allowed to replay missions, and once they failed, they needs to start over from the beginning of that mission. All branches provide only micro scale changes, since doing side missions only gives player extra information and power-ups. It does not change how the main story line goes, this means player still needs to fight all bosses to go though the story. Figure 1 shows some of the major oppositions of the game.



Figure 1. Some major enemies of the game, from left to right there are: Kraven the Hunter, Black Cat (Felicia Hardy), Electro (Max Dillion), Kingpin (Wilson Fisk), the Green Goblin (Harry Osborn)

Mechanics

Two core mechanics are employed in the game, web-swing and combat. Since it is a real-time game, it is frequent that these two mechanics are applied simultaneously during game play. This screenshot of The Amazing Spider Man 2 (see Figure 2) shows how player combines them together.



Figure 2. Screenshot of Spider-Man combats with Electro

Web-swing is the major way of movement in the game. In order to achieve a better player experience and visual effects, the dual web-swing mechanic is introduced in this game. Instead of attaching strings to invisible spots above, player can now attach strings to either left or right

buildings. This means if there is no building on both sides, player falls. Figure 2 shows how the right web-swing is introduced in the game.



Figure 3. *Screenshot of Spider-Man right swing instruction*

The combat system has two parts, the regular attacks and five upgradable skills. The regular attacks include punch and kick. The five special skills are web shoot, web rush, web pull, seismic blast, and ionic webbing. Web shoot allows Spider-Man to shoot webs at enemies to lock their movement, and higher level makes enemies harder to get rid of it. Web rush helps to target enemies' heads easier. Web pull is a major defense skill, it allows Spider-Man to take away enemies' weapons, as well as pull an enemy closer. Seismic blast adds a concussive blast to the web, but a charge time is required. Ionic webbing gives Spider-Man's web the ability to break enemies' armors. While combating, there are hints and instruction that suggests when skills can be used.



Figure 4. *Screenshot of skill hint while combating*

This game contains multiple satellite mechanics. Enhancement is presented by collecting collectables. For example, a better suit. Player can unlock new special skills through mission competition, and upgrade the skills using skill points which can be earned through collecting points from the map and completing both side and main missions. These two features build up the modification enhancement of the game. Alternative options are demonstrated by catch instead of defeat enemies, run instead of web-swing, etc.

Uncertainty

This game contains mainly two types of uncertainty, which are people uncertainty and input uncertainty. People uncertainty mostly comes from different choices player makes during game play. Specifically, the ways player chooses to combat, and the mission player chooses to do. Combat results could be effected by player control, which is learned through out the whole game. Besides, there are always instructions that tells player which key should be pressed. So player control should be eliminated from people uncertainty. Contrarily, different decision makings

during combating could make a significant difference. For instance, it is possible that player chooses not to follow the instructions, but to battle in player's own way. This could heavily influence the combat result, since those instruction most of time is the best way to eliminate enemies. Additionally, player is allow to choose the order when combating with number of crowds. It will be easier to win when player chooses to defeat the crowd with less enemies. However, player might not realize it until the very late stage of the game. Another important factor that involves decision making is when player decides the order of mission completion. The reason being some side missions provide power-ups, such as suits and extra skill points. Suits and skill points directly affect input uncertainty of the game. Better suits gives player extra HP. Skill points are used to upgrade player's both attack and defence skills. More skill points means stronger attacks and better defence. Here is where input uncertainty comes into the play. During fighting, stronger attacks means quicker and easier winning. Improved defence and extra HP give player greater chance of success during boss battles. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that mission structure in *The Amazing Spider Man 2* is relatively open, which means player can freely arrange the sequence of missions, including both side and main missions. There is also the option of replaying main missions, which future widen player's options. To sum up, people uncertainty and input uncertainty are the two major factors that influence the game play. But they are all under some level of control.

Reward System

The Amazing Spider Man 2 offers player various categories of rewards, such as intrinsic, extrinsic, and emotional. Intrinsic rewards are reflected on skill unlocking and upgrading, suit acquiring and upgrading, collectables obtaining. Player unlocks new spider skills through completing missions, upgrades it using skill points. Suits are earned from doing a side mission

called *Russian Hideout*. There are six suits in total, and all of them are based on the vintage *Spider-Man* comics, which are one kind of collectables as well. The game introduced a hero or menace system, it can be treated as an extrinsic reward. Though accomplishing side missions, player can decrease Spider-Man menace level or increase his hero level. It produces an emotional reward of satisfaction of being a hero or a menace depending on player's choice. Furthermore, player should easily feel exciting, tense and pressure releasing while playing the game, due to the nature of an action-adventure game.

Economic System and Feedback Loops

The economic system in the game is fairly simple. The main resource is the skill points, which is intangible, and drained by upgrading skills. Upgrades then converts to HP and damage. HP is consumed during combats, but player can regain it easily though healing. There is obvious a positive feedback loop, which is demonstrated by figure 5.



Figure 5. *Positive feedback loop of The Amazing Spider Man 2*

Conclusion

I think The Amazing Spider Man 2 did a great job on innovating the web-swing system and the combat system. However, undeniable, there still few fields that could be improved. First of all, the graphic quality of all characters is not high. Most of the characters's faces are extremely awkward. Second, the conversation system feels redundant, because it provides no help to completing missions. Third, the hero and menace level system has absolutely no effects on how the game ends. A interesting touch would be making the hero and menace level affects the ending. Overall, I would suggest player has strong interests on superheros or the original comic to play this game. Otherwise, for players who seek challenges, this will not be the best choice.

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