

Social Features in Hybrid Board Game Marketing Material

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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies 7 key social features which appear in the marketing and promotional material of hybrid board games. The features are identified by exploring sources such as game websites and game boxes of 13 hybrid board game products. The material is analyzed in order to determine how social features related to hybrid game features are presented. As a result of the analysis, it became apparent that there are certain key social features which are presented as being important to players. The knowledge generated in this work acts as a view to how the industry sees hybridity in games as a tool for supporting social interaction, and how the industry wants to message it to consumers when they explore promotional material. The identified key social features can also be used as design knowledge for developing new games, as they give insight into popular social features in hybrid board games.

CCS CONCEPTS

• Applied computing → Computer games • Human-centered computing → Collaborative and social computing.

KEYWORDS

Hybrid games; marketing; board games; design.

1 Introduction

Social features are an important part of many games. For certain games, playing with others and socializing during play is one of the most important features the game may have. Thus, for many, the decision to purchase a certain game may depend on the social features that the game is promised to have. Hybrid games are games which blend together experiences from two domains, a popular example being digital computer games blended with non-digital board games [10].

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In order to understand how the industry sees hybrid board games regarding the social features, we analyze a set of games in terms of how they are marketed to the consumer. In some cases, this means text on a website, an advertisement video, or text on the back of the game box. This information also reveals what features are seen by the publisher to be the selling points of the game, what they think about the expectations and wishes of players.

There is the possibility of certain assumptions about how different features enhance sociability in games. For example, online digital games may be regarded as providing players with the possibility to socialize with others around the world at any time. Material board games may be believed to provide players with a platform to socialize in an intimate way within a fixed location.

Through this analysis, we intend to find out:

1. How do game publishers see hybridity to affect sociability in their games?
2. What do game publishers see as interesting from the perspective of the consumer?

These findings will give important insight into sociability in hybrid board games which can be used in various ways. The information can be used as design knowledge for designing social features in new hybrid board games or in designing add-ons to existing games. The findings can also act as a starting point for other studies in which the real play experience of the games can be compared to what is present in the marketing material. The findings can also be used when designing how to market one's game.

This work was conducted in Hybrid Social Play research project (2016-2017) [14], which was a collaboration between three universities in Finland with five industry partners. The project was applied science oriented, as the aim was to produce direct value for industry partners through, and in addition to, scientific research.

2 Related Research

Sociability in board games and digital games have been studied in several occasions, but few studies exist that analyse the ways how games are marketed to the public, and the few out there (e.g. [17], [25]) are mostly concentrated on video game marketing.

The social element of gaming, and especially of board gaming, is important for the overall enjoyment of the game. Stewart Woods [27] noted that one of the main sources of enjoyment in non-digital board games is sociability, and as such it can be counted as a crucial

element for the non-digital gaming experience. The social aspect of non-digital games is also seen in the way people play them, for example the rules can be more flexible, and tuned according to players' own taste. Eriksson et al. [6] have coined the term *social adaptability* in the context of pervasive games, and argue that pervasive game need to adapt to the changing social situation to be successful. Their definition of pervasive games includes also hybrid board games.

According to Xu et al. [30] much of the social interaction in non-digital games is initiated through seemingly irrelevant bookkeeping activities, such as keeping track of the score. Further, Carter et al. [2] point out that rolling large amounts of dice in Warhammer 40K was an important part of the game experience although it is a task which could be easily automated. On the same note Krzywinski et al. [11] found out that affordances of peripheral activities (that is reviewing game assets, shuffling cards etc.) have a positive effect on user experience of passive players waiting their turns. According to Wallace et al. [24] too much automation on such tasks can have negative impact on player awareness and enjoyment of the game, although it can have positive impact on gameplay.

Many studies of hybrid games have in common what Carter et al. [3] call digital augmentation fallacy. The term points to an observation that studies concentrating on augmenting non-digital games may have overlooked unaugmented appeal of these games. Carter, Harrop and Gibbs [3] continue to reason that although the studies has nothing wrong per se, this might lead overlooking some features which affect the game play experience of physical-digital hybrid games.

In their interview study of board game hobbyists Rogersson et al. [16] argue that to their participants: “the game is the medium, and it is the material interaction with that medium that allows and enables the game’s overt sociality.” In the study they also show that digitization of board games is more of a process of interpretation than translation: the designer must find out which elements can be changed in the process, and which should stay loyal to the original game.

The social interaction has an important role in digital games as well. All games are social, and even single player games have social dimension, as playing them for example gathers social capital [20]. In online games the social interaction has even more important role, and in these it is also not limited only on in-game sociality - for many players the communities around online gaming act an important role in their overall enjoyment [21].

3 Analysis of Representative Cases: Social Features in Marketing Material

In this section, we discuss several examples of how sociability is represented in board game promotional material. The sources used include text on the game’s website, advertisement videos, and text on the back of the game box. The selection of 13 games (see Table

1) has been guided by previous research in the Hybridex project [23], but contains many games also not mentioned in that research.

The requirements for games to be analyzed here were that they contained digital elements which affect gameplay and board game like mechanics. It was also required that information regarding sociability and the combination of physical and digital elements was present in marketing material that could be found. This is in no way an exhaustive list, but contains various types of games, some more recent and some somewhat older.

The analysis method is a form of a qualitative content analysis [26]. The analysis process involved reading through the collected data and extracting pieces that fit the requirements of the study. These excerpts were then further analyzed, focusing on the way they represented the role of social interaction.

Table 1. List of games

Name	Publisher	Year
Code Name: Sector	Parker Brothers	1977
Dark Tower	Milton Bradley	1981
Electronic Mall Madness	Milton Bradley	1991
Monopoly: Electronic Banking	Hasbro	2006
The Eye of Judgement	Sony	2008
Space Alert	Czech Games Edition	2008
The Game Changer	Identity Games	2012
Spellshot	Hasbro	2012
Leaders: A Combined Game	Rudy Games	2013
Golem Arcana	Harebrained Schemes	2014
King Arthur	Ravensburger	2014 (2003)
XCOM: The Board Game	Fantasy Flight Games	2015
World of Yo-Ho	Iello	2015

3.1 Code Name: Sector

Code Name: Sector is a board game that the publisher describes on the game box as “The computer game of submarine pursuit”. The game support 1-4 players, their task being to hunt down and destroy a submarine. As a part of the game board, the game contains a microprocessor, an LED display, and control buttons. Players also use crayons to draw on the board.

In an advertisement that appeared in the *Popular Science* magazine in the late 1970s [8], the importance of the small computer included with the game was highlighted. The advertisement describes the computer to be the main challenge in the game, whether or not the game is being played alone or in a group: “Whether you’re playing alone or against others, your toughest opponent is the computer”.

The wording in the advertisement does not directly convey the idea that the embedded computer would change how social play is seen in the context of the game. The advertisement does however send a message to customers that a computer can provide a challenge beyond that which human players can. In a sense, the computer also provides a common enemy for all of the players to battle against, which changes the social dynamics of gameplay.

3.2 Dark Tower

Dark Tower is a fantasy board game featuring a rotating tower in the center which controls the game’s progression. The tower includes a control keyboard, small LED display, a mechanical display, and a beeper speaker. Players progress in the game through multiple kingdoms on their way towards a final battle.

In a television advertisement of *Dark Tower*¹, the computer is described to keep track and give secret information, pictures, sounds and surprises. The narrator of the advertisement describes making his move ahead of his opponent, while the screen depicts a player inputting commands into the computer integrated into the tower.

The advertisement presents the addition of the electronic device in the game board as something where players input their actions separately. The tower rotates, so the display of the device is pointed at the player who is interacting with the device. This points to the prospect of supporting play actions which are hidden from other players, creating a situation where the game progresses in a way that less of the game actions are common knowledge all players.

3.3 Electronic Mall Madness

Electronic Mall Madness is a shopping themed board game with a talking electronic computer, designed for teenaged girls. The computer guides the play, and dictates new sales around the board. Players need to use their plastic cards to get more cash and to buy items.

The television advertisement for the game² alternates between showing a group of girls shopping in a real shopping mall and playing the game. In addition to having your own bank account and credit card, the focus on the advertisement is on the talking computer: “The mall madness really talks!”. Further it strongly compares the enjoyment of playing the game to the enjoyment of hanging out with friends at the real shopping mall.

The talking computer is shown to be a common attention grabber for the players and personifies a mall announcer. In real life malls, the announcer provides one directional information to shoppers, much like the game is depicted to do. The advertisement shows that players are being commanded by that one directional information and have to react to it.

3.4 Monopoly: Electronic Banking

A version of the *Monopoly* game, *Monopoly: Electronic Banking* follows the traditional rules of *Monopoly* but uses an electronic device that acts as a credit card reader. The device allows the transfer of funds between players directly from one card to another, removing the need to use paper money.

According to an official marketing video, the game is described to stay fast as the usage of credit cards “keeps play fast”, and it allows players to collect “gifts from your opponents with the swipe of a card”³. On the official website of the game, the usage of the credit cards is mentioned in the following way: “In this modern spin on the classic *Monopoly* game, you can collect rent instantly using the cool electronic banking unit and 4 color-coded bank cards.” and “You’ll love using your personal *Monopoly* game bank card! It transfers your winnings just like a real credit card for fast fun!” [13].

The promotional material focuses on the speed of the electronic banking unit, and how it keeps the game fast. Another aspect that is mentioned is that each player has their own card they use during the game which they use for money transfers. In the original *Monopoly* a lot of interaction between players happened by transferring paper money, but here that interaction has been replaced by the use of a credit card machine, bringing it to the center of many game actions that happen between players.

3.5 The Eye of Judgement

The Eye of Judgement is an augmented reality collectible card game played with physical cards on a mat, with augmented content shown on a screen by a *Playstation 3* console. The cards and the field mat is captured by a camera connected to the *Playstation 3*. Players battle against each other online or offline, and it is also possible to play against an AI opponent.

The *Playstation* website describes the following about the game: “Players have four ways to play THE EYE OF JUDGMENT, single player against their PS3, against an opponent in two-player mode, against an opponent online, or letting the PS3 play out a round with the cards the player owns.”, and “THE EYE OF JUDGMENT is a socially engaging title that will appeal to gamers of all ages and abilities.”[22]. The game box also places emphasis on multiplayer gaming: “Play against friends on your own TV or take the challenge online against the world.” and “Take the battle online against international opponents - and watch monstrous creatures come alive right before your eyes!

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxY7MWEkwE>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCy3hHCGpjA>

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocf1m48Y_Ok

This information focuses on the wide variety of options players have for opponents. Unlike with traditional collectible card games, players can play with cards against an AI opponent, it is also possible to play against an opponent in the same physical space, or against players around the world. This unique feature compared to other physical collectible card games is clearly one of the main selling points of the game.

3.6 Space Alert

The description of *Space Alert* on the publisher's website [5] describes it as a team survival game where players do not compete against each other, but the challenge presented by the game. The challenge comes in the form of a CD with a number of 10 minute soundtracks. These tracks control the game flow while also acting as a timer. They announce various threats, and players need to coordinate their play in real time so that each of them takes care of different tasks in order to survive and to win the game.

The game website states: "The pace of the game is set by 10-minute soundtracks on included CDs (or by scenario cards, if you don't have a CD player). During these 10 minutes, the crew must defend the ship while it scans the enemy sector. If they succeed, the ship brings back valuable data. If they fail... it is time to train a new crew." Additionally, the website says that "Players do not compete against each other. Instead, they work together against the challenge presented by the game. The difficulty of this challenge can be chosen by the players themselves. Completing the most difficult missions requires close teamwork."

As the players work co-operatively against the challenges presented by the game, the information from the CD can in a sense be seen as a common enemy for the players. The game supports play without the using the included CDs, but the game experience is different if scenario cards are used.

3.7 The Game Changer

The Game Changer is an electronic game board that works together with an iPad. An iPad is put in the middle of the foldable game board, and with an accompanying app you can play multiple board games with it. The physical part of the game board can be modified with game-specific "skins".

On the publisher's website [7] the Game Changer is advertised being "truly social" and for offering completely new way to play board games on your iPad with friends and family. It is also noted that the product is easy to use and as such works well for family fun. There are also quotations from various customers from a 6 years old child to a toy industry spokesperson describing how using the Game Changer families can play together. This is also emphasized in the advertisement video on the site depicting a family around a table using the Game Changer. The press fact sheet on the site advertise: "The Game Changer brings the whole family together for a fun, educational, social activity".

The product is interestingly marketed as bringing a physical element to iPad gaming, and not the other way around for example. The wording on the website pushes the idea that the added device brings sociability not normally seen in iPad games and creates increased possibilities for family play.

3.8 Spellshot

Spellshot is a game that is played with physical game pieces on top of an iPad with a digital game board that comes with the free app. The iPad will recognize the game pieces with the use of capacitive technology.

The marketing video of the game on the game website [19] presents the physical game pieces used in the game, while also giving a simple tutorial on the gameplay showing how to play the game and how to move the pieces on top of the iPad. Only the players' hands are visible in the video while they move the game pieces or interact with the digital app. Other videos on the site show specific features of 4 different wizards playable in the game. On the site [19] and in the packaging, the game is promoted with the line: "Cast spells head-to-head on your iPad with SPELLSHOT zAPPed edition!". The website further mentions the social nature of the game with the phrase: "Who will win the iPad battle of spells? There's only one way to find out!" The connection with the iPad is also mentioned on the website: "Your iPad will recognize your Wizard and put incredibly cool battle spells at your fingertips!"

Interacting through physical objects in a head to head scenario is one of the key things shown in the promotional video and is executed through manipulation of physical elements. The How to play video also focuses on head to head play through the manipulation of the physical wizard objects and head to head play is also mentioned in the website text. The combination of head to head play using a digital device by a physical object is a clearly the key point brought forward in the material.

3.9 Leaders: A Combined Game

In this *Risk* resembling war game players take the roles of historical leaders, such as John F. Kennedy or Mao Tse Tung, and control their respective nations in order to dominate the world. The game is played on a physical game board with plastic miniatures while physical dice are used in conflict resolution. In addition to these, the game uses a digital app which is tightly connected to the core game play. The app represents the player's headquarters where she can launch various missions to competing nations. These missions include sabotage, espionage and diplomacy. Players also develop new technology and historical events influence the course of the game. The game is won by filling scenario specific winning conditions, such as when military production points reach predefined limit, or all the research branches are completed.

The main role for the digital app in the Leaders is to convey hidden information. It allows players to conduct actions that are hidden from the other players, similar to digital games (E.g. Civilization series, Hearts of Iron series). This feature is also highlighted on the

publisher's website [12] with following headlines: "Experience the unique combination of board game and app", and "Engage in clandestine interaction with other players". It is also further elaborated in the text with such phrases as: "Use your spies to launch devious secret attacks on other players", "Spy on your opponents behind the scenes", or "Forge secret alliances". The possibility to execute game actions in such a way that it is hidden from other players creates the promise of a certain type of social interaction within the game, often seen only in digital games.

3.10 Golem Arcana

Golem Arcana is a miniatures wargaming board game, which features a stylus device which connects a smart device app to the action on the game board. In the game, players battle by commanding an army of miniature figures representing different types of characters. The game ships with multiple pre-painted miniatures, and the game app can download new scenarios for players to play.

The game box describes the game as follows: "Powered by the Tabletop Digital Interface (TDI) Stylus, Golem Arcana combines the social and tactile joys of tabletop with the ever-evolving dynamics of online gaming to deliver an experience that is rich, yet fast-playing and accessible." The overview of the game on the game website [9] describes that "Secrets and surprises unknown to any of the players might be sprung during play.", "The rise and fall of Eretsu's various factions are dictated by the thousands of games of GA played all over the world. Each time you sit down to play, there's a chance that your game will be a pivotal battle that will forever alter the world." and "The app makes finding and participating in Organized Play events a breeze. Players are automatically alerted to OP events in their area."

The information presented about the game points clearly to the notion of extended sociability through online gaming and also describes that the online capabilities of the game can promote building a community through connecting people in real life. The game world is also described to change through player actions in separate games, creating a feeling of importance for each game and also a sense of an overall community.

3.11 King Arthur (SmartPlay)

Ravesburger's SmartPlay hybrid board game line [18] uses smart devices in conjunction with physical board games. Games come with a stand for the smart device, so it can be placed to overlook the game board. Using the device's camera, it can thus for example recognize the result of the dice rolled, or follow where the game pieces reside on the board.

King Arthur (2014) is one example of SmartPlay board games. The game is a new version of Reiner Knizia's hybrid board game of the same name released in 2003. In the original game capacitive ink was used to recognize the position of game pieces, and the digital

device was hidden inside a plastic fist-sized rock integrated in the game board, and in which the Excalibur rests. The player who first accomplishes enough quests and draws the sword from the stone wins the game.

The game remembers all the actions players conduct and will reward good deeds while punishing for bad ones. What's more, the characters the player encounter in the game speak with them through the stone. In the new version the digital element has been updated to use the SmartPlay mechanic. The app can be downloaded from the GooglePlay⁴, where the SmartPlay is advertised for bringing the whole family to the gaming table. The slogan for the SmartPlay line: "spielen gemeinsam erleben", which translates roughly to "experience playing together", strongly insinuates, that playing SmartPlay games is an exceptionally social experience. It is also said on the web page, that the SmartPlay explains the game to the players, acts as a game master and keeps score for the players. Further, it is suggested that as the app will have an individual recording for all the characters encountered in the game, players can better immerse themselves in the game. The app also adjusts the game difficulty and length according to the ability and age of the players.

King Arthur is yet a good example of a hybrid game where the app takes the role of the game master. The developers seem to consider this a good selling point, as it allows families to play together instead of playing against each other. Also, when considered together with other marketing material, the slogan "Experience playing together", hints that this kind of hybrid board game will bring families together, compared to, for example, video games. There something for everyone in SmartPlay. In the advertisement video for the game⁵, the game is shown to be good family fun. Looking at the slogan and other advertising material the guiding line seems to be, that SmartPlay games gather group of people together to play, and facilitate social fun in board gaming.

3.12 XCOM: The Board Game

In *XCOM: The Board Game*, players defend the world against an alien attack on multiple fronts at the same time. The game is a cooperative multiplayer game where four roles need to be played, regardless of the amount of players. The game features an app on a smart device that is in charge of game flow. It gives out turns to players and utilizes a counter to limit the time each turn can take.

The game website [29] describes the game as follows: "As the department heads of XCOM, you and your friends must succeed where the world's militaries have failed. You lead the elite members of an international military organization, which is funded by a secret coalition", "While you and your friends immerse yourselves into your roles as XCOM department heads, the alien invasion continues to escalate" and "With its distinctive player roles and free companion app, XCOM: The Board Game evokes all the fear, desperation, and heroism that lie at the heart of the popular

⁴ <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.Ravesburger.KingArthur>

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2vcx3_en8E

and acclaimed XCOM computer games.” Additionally, the dynamic turn structure is mentioned: “However, the app does far more than track time. Its design is integrated deep into gameplay, and it permits both a mutable alien invasion plan and a dynamic turn structure.”

The game is set to create a feeling of impending doom and urgency through the pairing with the app. The players work together and need to be vigilant due to the dynamic turn structure. These features mean players are expected to be continuously on their toes, resulting in a different type of atmosphere and exciting social situations compared to many other games. The app also strives to provide an active common enemy which is not a human player, so all of the players can actively work together against the threat.

3.13 World of Yo-Ho

World of Yo-Ho is a pirate themed fantasy board game where mobile devices act as game pawns on a physical game board. The application on the mobile device facilitates the game’s progression, and no other pawns or physical objects are needed on the board if not playing with the single phone mode included in the game. The game mainly a multiplayer game, but also features a single player narrative mode.

On the website of World of Yoho [28], the game is described as: “It’s a new type of gaming experience that combines the tangible and social pleasure of a board game with the interactive and adaptable mechanics of a video game.” In this example, it is clear that the social features of board games are lifted on a pedestal, and the marketing material uses the connotation to provide the consumer with a feeling that the game provides enhanced sociability.

4 Discussion and Future Work

By grouping together the important findings from the analysis above, the seven following key social features can be identified to appear in the above marketing material:

1. A game master and/or common enemy
2. Replacing player managed parts with more efficient versions
3. Expanded possibilities for playing socially
4. Social features and interactions not normally seen outside of hybrid products
5. Personal physical element as a game interface
6. The possibility for hidden information
7. Family play

The first key feature mentioned in the list, the prospect of a game master or common enemy, was mentioned in many of the above examples. It is in a way an obvious and easy aspect to bring forward, but one which is not always straightforward to implement in a satisfying way. It does provide players with the possibility to play as a completely unified group without the need for an external game master, and allows players to avoid some tedious tasks. Still,

as noted by Xu et al. [30] these can actually initiate social interaction. This also relates to the second key feature of replacing player managed parts with more efficient versions. Speeding the games up through technology is brought forward as a benefit to players and can be seen to remove things which hinder socializing. Then again, for example a player acting as a bank and being in charge of in game cash does create social situations.

The third key feature, expanding social play through online play or player finding features is a feature which clearly can’t be done in physical only games. This can allow more and new forms of social play than would be possible without the game being a hybrid game. This is related to the fourth key feature of creating possibilities within the game for social interactions on a smaller scale. This happens often, or is at least often believed by the publisher to happen, by augmenting a physical game with digital features or a digital game with physical features, meaning that the game is inherently seen as being built out of separate parts which create these possibilities.

The fifth key feature is the use of a personal physical element to play or control the game. This personal element can be given to the player at the beginning of the game and acts as a method for the player to interact with the game, especially with the digital aspects of the game, game during a session. In a sense, the player is identified through these objects by the digital game device, and the objects act as an intermediary in interacting with other players.

The sixth key feature is the possibility to have hidden information within the game, to affect certain parts without other players knowing. These hidden play actions can be made in a way that is guaranteed to be fair to all players. The digital element also makes it easier to implement hidden information than using only physical elements. An app can, for example, allow one player to peek another player’s digital cards without the knowledge of target player.

Finally, the seventh key feature is family play, something which is often connected with playing board games. As such, features that enhance family play can be used as a selling point. Digital elements allow for example adjusting the game difficulty, making it more suitable for players of all ages. Further it can connect people who like digital gaming with people who prefer physical board games.

Not all hybrid board games promote themselves through the prospect of sociability. One example of such a game is *Alchemists*, a 2-4 player board game where players need to find right combinations of ingredients for alchemic formulas. The challenge is to find the right combinations of ingredients and players use a smartphone app to test the results. The app also randomizes the needed ingredients. The publisher describes the game on their website [4] accordingly: “Welcome to the world of *Alchemists*! Perform experiments to discover the magical properties of your ingredients. Demonstrate your knowledge by selling potions. Use the money to buy artifacts that further your research. Publish,

publish, publish! Earn grants. And expose the fallacies published by those fools who think they can be your rivals”.

The game website [1] also does not particularly point to any social aspects in the game outside the player amount: “In Alchemists, 2-4 players compete to discover the secrets of their mystical art.” The app itself is only mentioned in passing: “Knowledge is gained by mixing ingredients and testing the results using a smartphone app (iOS, Android, and also Windows) which randomizes the rules of alchemy for each new game.”

Another example is *Race to the North Pole*, where the goal of the players is to make an expedition to the North Pole. The board game is enhanced with an optional smart device app, which provides players with new content and game mechanics. Another feature of note is a rotating game board designed to simulate unexpected Arctic weather.

The game website [15] describes the hybrid functionality as follows: “We’re taking this board game into a whole new level with an optional free-of-charge app. It gives players loads of new content and mechanics to use with the game through their smart devices. These upgrades guarantee endless replayability value.” The description on the game website places focus on challenge, strategy, and the features of the game, but not on features that create social interaction.

These two examples show how publishers view the digital element as a way to introduce new game mechanics, or to ease game play through automating complex mechanics. They do not necessarily see the audience valuing how the digital element affects the social dynamics of the games. Similar elements are found in the advertisement examples in the previous chapter, in addition to bringing forward the social dimension of hybrid board games.

In some advertised games, there are clear social dimensions, which are not included in the advertising material. For example, in *Space Alert*, in addition to supporting close team play, the audio mechanic adds a new catalyst for social interaction, as there often ensues chaos as players fail to coordinate their actions in strict time limits. This can be seen as an example of how some social features are not very obvious to the publisher or might not be considered important for the game play experience of the audience. Looking deeper into the forms of social interaction in board games could be valuable for game developers in order to find new selling points while advertising their games.

Comparison of these findings to actual experiences playing the games, or a subset of them is left as future work. This can alternatively be executed through an interview or questionnaire study, or by doing in depth analysis on the gameplay of the games. This kind of analysis could also be conducted on a larger scale to other hybrid playful products out on the market.

5 Conclusions

In this paper we analysed the marketing material of 13 hybrid board games and identified seven key social features: (1) A game master and/or common enemy (2) Replacing player managed parts with more efficient versions (3) Expanded possibilities for playing socially (4) Social features and interactions not normally seen outside of hybrid products (5) Personal physical element as a game interface (6) The possibility for hidden information (7) Family play. These seven key features answer to questions of (1) how game publishers see hybridity to affect sociability in their games and (2) what game publishers see as interesting from the perspective of the consumer.

These results can be used as design knowledge for new hybrid board games or in designing add-ons to existing games, especially in terms of social features. These results can also act as a starting point for other studies. One such study could be to compare real play experiences to the analysis in this paper. The information in this paper can also be used to inform analysis on the success of marketing certain features.

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