

## Four Pillars of Gamification

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**Abstract:** Gamification is the main trend in modern media, business processes and public communications. The consulting company Gartner, the world leader in the study of the market of information technologies, for example, confirms this fact by its "Hype cycle-2012" graphic of representation the maturity, adoption and social application of specific technologies. Why exactly this technology has become the focus of the players in the digital age of communication? Is it fortuity or regularity? Is gamification only a marketing instrument to ipulate consumer behaviour, as it seems to its opponents? Maybe gamification is one of responses to the modern socio-cultural needs, according to its apologists? What are the prospects for further development of this phenomenon? These are the questions we tried to answer by means of system analysis. We considered gamification in the context of the general concept of "game", on the one hand. On the other hand, we entered gamification into the motivation system of main communication processes participants, to which gaming technology and mechanics were applied.

**Key words:** Gamification · Game · Interactivity · Screen-phenomenon · Virtuality

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### INTRODUCTION

The most complete and solid definition of gamification has been formulated by participants of the workshop Gamification: Using Game Design Elements in Non-Gaming Contexts who defined gamification as "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" [1]. Gamification rapidly overcame the stage of technology trigger (the beginning of publications on innovation) and appeared on the peak of excessive expectations. It is popular. It is widely discussed. Gartner mentioned gamification for the first time in the study "Hype Cycle-2009". This research forecast that more than 50% of organizations would use this technology by 2015. Experts predict new revolutionary developments in the field of game communications. The popularity of gamification can be proved by the quantity of scientific communities engaged in the study of the game. They are, for example, Game Research Laboratory (University of Tampere, Finland), Centre for Computer Games Research (University of Information technologies in Copenhagen, Denmark), Digital Games Research Centre (University of North Carolina, USA) and the Scientific-research laboratory "Game in Education and Culture" (Kursk State University, Russia) to name but a few.

The main textbook in this field is For the Win by Kevin Werbach and Dan Hunter [2]. Werbach is an associate professor of legal studies and business ethics at The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Hunter is a professor of law at New York Law School and the director of the school's Institute for Information Law and Policy. He is also an adjunct associate professor of legal studies at The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. In some universities of the world an experimental course on gamification is included in the curriculum and For the Win is the basic textbook there. Games are becoming increasingly prevalent in education, both in traditional school settings and beyond [3].

The international summit on gamification GSummit is held annually. Its leader is Gabe Zichermann, the author of books about application of games in marketing and the editor of a portal of Gamification.co.

**Brands as Pioneers:** In the digital age mass information processes engulf society. Also procedure of influence on public opinion is hampered by information overabundance. Nowadays it's rather difficult for the interested groups to message their offer, an appeal and motivation to potential consumers. Branding-creating an image for a product, service, idea, person, party and

media-has become one of the most reliable ways of tuning out total information noise. Brands adherents cling to familiar images as a safe haven, not quite realizing the way external forces filter information flows. Brand owners are constantly concerned about the recruitment of new fans and retaining of old ones. Recently their advertising policy consisted of massive attack, presence anywhere and everywhere, bet on a large number of messages and avalanche informing. Today the influence tactics are changing due to updating legislation in outdoor advertising, audience partial failure of the television viewing, the revaluation of the role of traditional media and consumers' migration in the Internet space. Brands have preoccupied looking for a new way of controlled bilateral functional model of audience targeting in an exponentially increasing amount of virtual information. In our opinion gamification is used as a model of this type. Pioneers of gamificative messaging and processing (especially in the IT-environment) can be considered as a kind of game operators.

**Game and Gamification:** Gamification is a secondary phenomenon based on a game as its origin. The game has been studied in details from the standpoint of the various sciences-psychology, sociology and cultural studies [4-8].

What kind of immanent characteristics of the game did give impetus for the modern development of the phenomenon? The process of the game has some special characteristics, which can be divided into several categories. The first one includes voluntary participation, freedom from pressure and utilitarian purposes, the ability to pass through experience of strong emotions and catharsis, to risk and win. Secondly, there is an existence in an illusory world, a temporary escape from the reality, building of a gaming space with its special rules and the repeatability of scenarios in a number of options. Finally, the last category of game characteristics includes lack of external motivation, value of the game process and self-sufficiency.

A game with its immanent features fits perfectly into the realities of the modern information society which, figuratively speaking, stands on three pillars: interactivity, screen-phenomenon, virtuality.

**Interactivity:** In the digital age a relationship between the author and the recipient has changed: they are constantly switching roles and engaging in co-authorship. A response to the information in the

context of the previous messages is a necessity while online interaction. We should emphasize that Internet interactivity means not only personal communication, but a process of system cooperation with objects and subjects of Network communicative space. Games fit perfectly in a situation of global interactivity because, in fact, they are bilateral communication themselves. Exactly the IT-industry gave interactive mechanisms that began to dominate with the development of Web2.0 and social media. The term "interactivity", applied to specific games (e.g., educational), is quite often used in the following meaning: there is a group leader's intervention in a situation of "here and now", which structures the group members' activity according to a definite purpose. This shows another facet of interactivity and it is online simultaneity. So, interactivity creates perfect conditions for the process controllability.

**Screen-Phenomenon:** Now let's focus on the screen as the dominant space for observation. Contemporary methods of storing and transmitting information are connected with the process of digitalization. There is only one way of "reading" the text after its translation into a digital format-from the screen. It may be personal computer, TV set, phone, laptop, cinema or smartphone screen. If the signal in real time decodes the home computer block, it transforms any texts into a new multimedia product which interactively combines sound, image, digits and text. An ability of the TV screen to achieve the audience' involvement in process of observation became evident back in the 1960s. Thus the viewer has a special sense of belonging. The game blends naturally with the screen generating the spectacle as if specially invented for the screen broadcast [9].

**Virtuality:** Virtual reality which has become available with the development of computer and network technologies allows our contemporaries to avoid real experiences and construct their own lives in another way than it was at the reality. Virtual existence can be described as voluntary behavior or activity that occurs on terms of voluntary acceptance of obligatory rules within the established boundaries of time and place when the purpose is virtual existence itself accompanied by tension and joy and the feeling of "of other being."

It is interesting that Dutch historian, cultural theorist and Professor Johan Huizinga described a game, not a modern virtual reality, like this in the study «Homo ludens» about three quarters of a century ago. A game

and present-day virtual universe of the Internet with its infographics have found each other! Against the background of social transformations a game became an audiovisual hideout where one may test behavior options without any risk and live different roles. An originally inherent virtuality of the game is now fueled by powerful technical means.

So, a game and modernity are perfectly compatible. Brands-Game operators-recognized this fact and have adapted elements of the game (game mechanics) for solving their own problems.

**Game Mechanics:** Gamification would not have been so demanded if it was beneficial only to game operators. The players as the participants of the process are interested in this technology themselves. What attracts them? It is obvious that gamification converts boring processes to entertaining, friendly ones. But this is not enough. There are a number of tested game mechanics in gamification. Some researchers define game mechanics as “methods invoked by agents for interacting with the game world. This definition allows the study of the systemic structure of games in terms of actions afforded to agents to overcome challenges, but also the analysis of how actions are mapped onto input devices and how mechanics can be used to create specific emotional experiences in players” [10]. Let's review some of game mechanics. For example, the mechanics of badges provides receiving rewards (status, level, virtual badge, etc.) for some competitive actions. It is possible to stimulate participants in a different way: not with rewarding, but punishment avoiding. The mechanics Cascading Information Theory works effectively. Its essence consists of stage-by-stage disclosure of information at each point during a game. Viral effect is a distinctive property of mechanics named Community Collaboration when the players unite to solve puzzles in order to combat artificially created problems. By means of cross media it is possible to move from one interactive platform to another without a change in the gameplay and it is also one of the game mechanics. And of course, lottery where winning is random are popular at all times. Game mechanics satisfy some special needs of the modern individual, even outside of gameplay.

Brands (Game operators) are actively building IT- gamificative communication in the Internet space. Now they are slow to cooperate with the traditional media, which entered the web by establishing information portals. Brands aspire to become media themselves and

through cross media supervise social networks, new media and other virtual platforms, which bring together potential consumers. And thus it is important to understand the motivation of users.

**Striving for Media-Recognition:** We believe a man of the Information Age meets the need for personal media-recognition. What does this mean? Every web user who is able to create and publish his own content is the same participant of the mass information processes as old and new media, organizations with their websites and brands. An ordinary person is now not only the recipient, but also the addresser and, therefore he needs feedback. Game mechanics help the Internet user to create media content on the iconic platforms under the umbrella of global brands. The modern person goes on-line not only for information, but also for the public response, he is interested in information about himself. This need was perfectly converted into profit by owners of social networks, which now are brands themselves. They actively use gamification and provide their power for gamificative co-branding with mega-brands like McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Toyota, etc. A man of the digital age may implement his need for personal media-recognition as well through crowdsourcing, which also contains the game mechanics. The rapid development of infographics is associated with gamification and media-recognition, too.

The traditional media overthrown from a pedestal could survive becoming a brand. Brands strengthen the influence by increasing their own media-recognition. Both brands and traditional media would get the audience's attention providing their resources to the audience that is looking for network response, popularity and moreover striving to create their own brands. In a context of a brand gamification gives the mechanism for the implementation of a personal media-recognition.

So, the secret of gamification' explosive popularity is in the intersection of the interests of all participants in the communicative space! That is why media-recognition can be considered the fourth pillar of gamification!

## CONCLUSIONS

In a few years a new generation with gamificative mentality will enter adult life. They grow up within the space of computer games and communications via social networks. Moreover they develop social networks and thematic Wikipedia and use game

mechanics enthusiastically in the blogs and on their personal sites for drawing attention to their own resources.

Games become more and more realistic and the reality reminds a game more and more. It's time to raise a question of social orientation of gamification. There are attempts to demonize this phenomenon in a society nowadays. We have to realize that gamification is only the tool which can be used both for evil and for good. Brands use game potential for initiation of their respondents' consumer behaviour and game mechanics are studied and tested in marketing best of all. I would like to say that in my opinion it's time to use gamification more actively for solving social problems, isn't it? How exactly can we use game elements to motivate people in serious vital spheres like public policy and social endeavour? This is the subject for another article.

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