

## Leading Gamification Experience in the New Media Education

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**Abstract** Nowadays, new media space constitutes a huge communication platform. As a result of annual unprecedented growth of its users` new methods and patterns of interaction with audience are formed. The traditional journalism education system cannot satisfy the rapidly changing current trends in media consumption of the modern internet audience. The authors of this research that constitutes the main body of this paper explore the usage of gaming experience in order to find new ways to teach digital journalists. This paper is dealing with gamification as the main key, playing a vital role in the restructuring of the professional journalism competencies. Game approach is used as an instrumental embodiment of the subject-subject model of network communication.

**Keywords:** *gamification, experience, new media education, leadership*

### 1 Introduction

The digital environment is an integrated communication space which transmits encoded information by electronic means. As a result of this phenomenon media production and consumption has evolved. The journalism educational system is faced with the requirement to transform professional competencies in order to produce highly skilled journalists. The new type of journalist combines traditional journalism with a fundamentally new approach of content production.

In order to find practical solutions to improve the educational system we should focus on the definition of the new media consumer. In contrast to the first generation of Web 1.0 – era, where user of media content was just a reader, listener or viewer, nowadays the era of converged media activated a new type of complex sociological process – media consumption. In the 1960s and 1970s the first researches of media consumption defined it only as a process of watching TV, reading newspapers or listening radio. A new pattern of media consumption suggests the interaction with consumer more individually using the subject-subject model of network communication.

The mechanism of media consumption is based on a person`s psychology. The media strategy often uses the cognitive style as a market segmentation variable. The cognitive style represents a set of predispositions influencing an individual`s information gathering and processing behaviour. Its characteristics are presumed to represent relatively stable strategies which regulate how an individual processes his or her everyday experiences (Gunter and Furnham 2014). As cognitive style is linked to mass media consumption, we need to find out effective instruments for understanding the specificity of `cognitive engagement`. One of such instruments is gamification which combines knowledge from game design, behavioural economics, neurobiology, behaviourist and cognitive psychology.

According to this the traditional journalism the educational system is faced with the necessity to restructure professional journalism competencies. The purpose of this paper is to explore gamification as an effective instrument for modern journalists' education which can improve interrelations between future professionals and their audience. We review the literature of gamification in an advanced served context and use its key principles in practical work with students. Through this research, we hope to create a foundation that future research can use to expand the understanding of how gamification can be applied learning education.

## **2. Background**

Hundreds of millions of people are spending time playing games on social platforms. They manage virtual farms by ploughing virtual land, planting, growing and harvesting virtual crops, tending the virtual trees and bushes, and raising virtual livestock. People want to play games and they want to play with each other. The content of these games may be trivial, but the social interactions are not. These games (and the companies that develop them) are successful because they learned how to design games that use those social interactions to create greater engagement (Shelton 2013).

Currently the popularity of video games and cybersport is growing like wildfire. It's not a secret that the global e-sports market is going to reach new heights and is expected to hit \$1.1 billion by the end 2019. According to New Zoo, the lion's share of the proceeds - \$456.7 million – will come by way of sponsorships that see companies paying players and venues to promote their brands. Media rights also expected to hit \$251.3 million the end of the year.

Why is the e-sports media space so attractive not only for sponsors but also for consumers? The main reason behind this attraction is that the social media game companies use the gaming experience to motivate and understand their players. They analyse every aspect of the consumer's interactions while using their games (Shelton 2013).

For traditional journalism it has become necessary to employ the use of gaming experience as a means of providing content. The educational system is has become outdated and requires the use of new approaches and instruments to improve learning experience. Gamification is that instrument of learning. It not only resolves the problem of good material representation but also help students grasp the understanding of social interactions mechanics.

Despite the obvious educational benefits of gaming activity; it has long been disregarded by higher educational institutions as an additional means of improving the efficiency of the educational process. One obvious reason for this is the underestimation of the emotional aspect of gaming and its role in professional education (Volkova et al. 2017).

Gamification requires a fusion of art and science. On one hand, it involves emotional concepts such, as fun, play and user experiences. On the other hand, it's about engineering measurable and sustainable systems to serve concrete business objects (Werbach and Hunter 2012).

Gamification positively influences human psychology. Its components can drive students' intrinsic motivation and with the added benefit of helping them to find interesting solutions through communication with their future consumers.

## **3. Methods**

Our research is based on new data from several primary sources. The theoretical framework consists of literary analysis and identifying effective learning strategies. The main idea of the study is to show the usefulness of gamification as learning instrument. The authors have also decided to make a special professional course for journalists 'Gamification in social media and Public Relations'. Lectures were held in Peoples' Friendship University of Russia for one semester (February 2019 - June 2019). As a focus group, second-year students of Education with a major in Television Journalism were selected. As a practical instrument researcher used game elements to motivate and engage students. A game element may be a beautiful campus in a virtual world or a giant explosion or it may be an award, a situation without pressure, a chase or a treasure hunt. Game elements also include compelling contexts, cool graphics, and futuristic designs as well as the ability to adjust the difficulty level, so that participants can play for even high scores, and the option to choose the on screen character's appearance (Aldrich 2009).

The feature of this research lies in using gamification, not only as instrument for learning but also as professional instrument for digital journalists. That's why we divided the experiment into two stages. The first stage should show how gamification influences the studying process and the second one how the students understand and master the main principles of gamification in building their content strategy. For the first stage we chose the following as key points for analysis:

- Lecture attendance
- Learning engagement
- Motivation
- Discipline
- Marks rate

For the second stage, at the end of the semester students should be able to create and execute their own media project using gaming elements. The media project should include:

- Strategic planning
- Analysis
- Realization
- The example of usage of game elements for providing or representing content

The results of the media project should show:

- How students understand the creation of content strategy
- How students can represent the content in the new media space
- What they prefer to use for understanding and interaction with their audience
- How game experience helped them to achieve their goals

## 4. Results

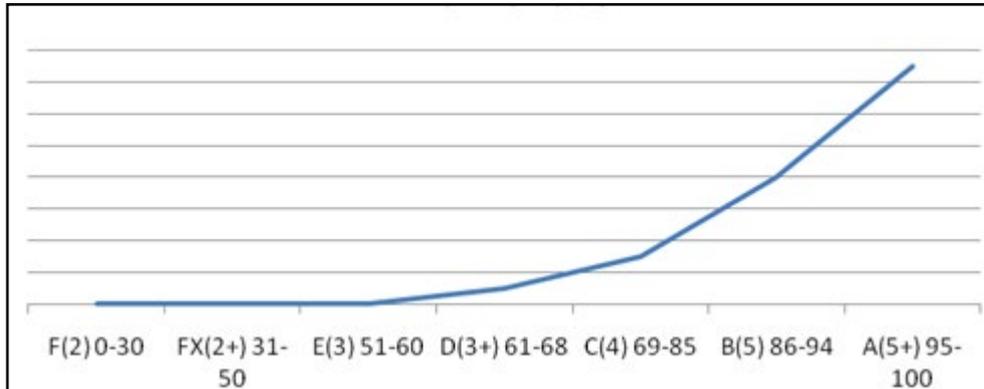
### *Gamification as an instrument for learning*

The experimental group consisted of 28 students. According to data collected the percentage of students who consistently attended the lectures was greater 80%. We can consider that as an indication of that students were highly motivated and disciplined to visit lectures. Students were specially awarded on the merit of perfect attendance.

Teachers can use game mechanics in non-game contexts to engage students in solving problems and increase their motivation and academic performance (Peixoto de Queirós and Teixeira Pinto 2016). For our experiment we used the basic game elements such as *leader boards*, *badges*, *levels* and *points*.

- **Leader boards (Competitive ranking which displays each participation`s position)**  
At the beginning of course the names of all students were placed on the competition table. They had common start conditions. The reward for placing first to third was an exemption form final exams and an automatic distinction for the course. As a result, the group was highly motivated and first-hand how leader boards can influence consumer behaviour.
- **Badges (A taken of recognition used a status symbols)**  
Symbols of famous superheroes with different superpowers were used as badges. Badges granted “powers” which were gave exclusive privileges granted to the student. For example, students could earn the opportunity to ask the teacher to tell funny story, if they had this badge. This method attracted huge interest from the group. This demonstrated the importance of unusual details in the engagement of consumers.
- **Points (A basic numeric performance measurement. It needs to be tied to course evaluation (pass/fall))**  
A fraction of the points was awarded for the completion of home tasks and for finding unique and interesting solutions to problems. Points were also awarded to students for attendance, a special coefficient was introduced. As a result, students understood the influence of consumer`s behaviour on themselves.
- **Levels (Indicator of overall skill mastery, attained by accumulating points)**  
The learning process was divided into four main levels. Every level related to a special superhero`s world. Upon reaching a new level student fell into a new world and had new adventures. This presented the opportunity for members of the group to realize the significance of being a part of something fantastic and relate this experience to that of the consumers. The final grade for the subject depended on lecture attendance, participation during lectures, homework, exam results and the final

project. Most of students acquired a final grade between B (5) 89-94 and A (5+) 95-100. This data suggests that students tried to be placed at the top of leader board and which gained them an exemption from writing the final exam paper (Fig. 1).



**Fig.1.** Marks rate  
Source: Own results

### *Gamification as an instrument for engaging audience*

Nowadays journalists are directly engaging their readers, viewers, listeners, and – especially – digital users like never before to be effectively engaged journalism must actively consider the needs of an audience and wholeheartedly embrace constant interaction with that audience. When executed well, engagement can improve a newsroom’s journalism, deepen the audience’s loyalty, and generate revenue (Matejic 2015). Therefore, the main idea of the course for journalists ‘Gamification in social media’ was to give students fresh material and modern approaches in making media content. Caillois’ (1913-1978) theory, which is grounded on psychological and sociological background, offers a full array of drivers to engage players based on behaviour evidence. Its approach is similar for gamification because it is focused on engagement (Reiners and Wood 2015).

As result the materials of lectures develop the student’s creativity and improved critical thinking. The group discovered how to use a game experience as well as its role in developing content strategy. What are the differences between the creative project and the game? The first difference is that the project takes place, while the game takes place virtually. It is structured, but not limited by playing space, and is devoid of spontaneity. It is focused on a specific result, which has its benefits inside the educational process (Lazutova and Volkova 2013). In the creative project there are some elements of gaming. However, in the gamified practices there is a developer who does not participate in the game, but under whose control game elements are conducted (Savery 2006). At the end of the semester students should be able to present their own media project based on lecture materials and their practical understanding of the gaming approach. The results of the task showed that students gained valuable experience and acquired skills to increase an audience’s engagement. Specifically, their aim was to focus on each consumer individually. According to Western theories of media engagement the focus should be on construction of individual subjectivity/or identity (Kim 2008).

## **5. Conclusions**

Modern media space transforms every day. It is quite difficult to provide unique content where there is already an information avalanche. The study of new ways of media consumption has become an integral part of journalism education. Unfortunately, traditional systems of education do not meet the requirements for modern professional competencies. The research highlighted the efficiency of the usage new approaches not only as a new instrument of learning, but also in the preparation of lecture materials. The gaming approach is the necessary key for grooming of future digital journalists.

In the era of information and communications technologies, gamification can be used for journalists not only as an instrument of education, but also as a professional instrument. The journalist who understands how to use game elements in non-game systems can create special media content for his consumers and providing them with ultimate fulfilment, joy and fun.

## Acknowledgments

All authors contributed equally to the writing of this paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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