Emerging Research and Trends in Gamification

Harsha Gangadharbatla
University of Colorado Boulder, USA

Donna Z. Davis
University of Oregon, USA
Chapter 15

The Gamification of Journalism

Raul Ferrer Conill
Karlstad University, Sweden

Michael Karlsson
Karlstad University, Sweden

ABSTRACT

Traditional news outlets are on the decline and journalism has embraced digital media in its struggle to survive. New models of delivering news to the public are being explored in order to increase the levels of readership and user engagement. The narrative of this chapter focuses on the future of journalism and media, and the potential benefits and dangers of gamifying journalism. Since gamification is a new trend, a thorough look at the intersection between the enhancements of public mobility, the digitalization of news services, and the engagement of gamified systems can bring better understanding of future channels of reading news to the users, to researchers, and to the industry. This chapter aims to bridge the gap between gamification as an emerging practice in news distribution and yet a vastly uncharted area or research.

INTRODUCTION

No group of young people has ever had more choices to make regarding — or more control over — its own information, amusement and politics. Rock spawned one culture; TV, another; movies, hip-hop, computers, video games, still more. (Katz, 1993)

The previous quote is as relevant now as it was more than two decades ago. What Katz probably did not foresee is the converging use of media that has led to an entanglement of information, amusement, and politics. In the current media landscape the processes of mediatization, commercialization, and individualization (Lundby, 2009), spurred by the ubiquity of mobile technologies and pervasive connectivity (Dimmick, Feaster, & Hoplamazian, 2010; Van Dijck, 2013), have derived in a myriad of news services competing for the audience’s attention.

As newspapers’ sales plunge and traditional news outlets decline, new models of delivering news to the public are being explored in order to increase levels of readership and user engagement. Gamification...
The Gamification of Journalism

Gamification is one of these new models news outlets have adopted to engage young audiences, sparking the need for a new strand of research on the intersection of journalism and gamification (Ferrer Conill, 2014).

The narrative of this chapter focuses on the future of journalism and media, and the potential benefits and dangers of gamifying journalism. Since gamification is a new trend, a thorough look at the intersection between the enhancements of public mobility, the digitalization of news services, and the engagement of gamified systems can bring better understanding of future channels of reading news to the users, to researchers, and to the industry. This text aims to bridge the gap between gamification as an emerging practice in news distribution and yet a vastly uncharted area or research.

This chapter departs by discussing two of the conflicting logics of the journalistic field: the professional logic, which regards audiences as citizens; and the commercial logic, which regards audiences as consumers. Based on these tensions, it continues addressing the aims of applying gamification to news services, offering an account of potential benefits and pitfalls of using game-mechanics in order to engage young audiences. We aim to provide a nuanced view of the gamification of news beyond the commercial determinism and the democratic functionalism of journalism (Schudson, 1997). Next, we discuss how these new configurations of game-like news fit within the current context of media convergence, new journalism formats, audience reconfigurations, setting the context on which digital game elements can be formally applied to news. For this reason we analyze how game elements are currently implemented in journalism, to then discuss other ways to create gamified interfaces that have the potential of enhancing the democratic and civic purposes of journalism while engaging younger users, or center the news experience about the games, and not the news. The chapter concludes providing a set of challenges and needs for research, intending to propose an agenda for future research on gamification’s place within journalism.

THE CONFLICTING LOGICS OF THE JOURNALISTIC FIELD

Journalism and the production of news is not any odd work, in fact it is not even any odd information or media work. To properly understand and relate to how and why journalism is produced in a meaningful theoretical and practical way, one must consider its place within society and democracy. Journalism’s raison d’être is, in short, to serve the public with qualified information so that people can make informed decisions in their capacity as citizens holding those in power accountable (Cushion, 2012; McNair, 2000). This is the ideal and the high ground journalists and their protagonists claim when news media and journalism are under attack. But it is also, more importantly, an established empirical fact that the media environment and the contents of news have effect on how informed and engaged people are in society (Aalberg & Curran, 2011; Scheufele, Shanahan, & Kim, 2002; Shaker, 2014). In short, media matters and contributes to the quality of democracy. Journalism’s status in society is also recognized formally as countries such as United States and Sweden regulate it, as the only commercial operation, in their constitutions.

Another equally important and conflicting dimension in the discourse about journalism, news media, and their function in society, is that they regularly fall short of their own standards and deliver false, irrelevant or inaccurate information. This is due to a number of different factors and obstacles such as influence from consumer demands, advertisers, owners, sources, trade and industry, as well as technological developments and the overall ideology of any given society (McManus, 1994; Schudson, 2003; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).
This part of the chapter sets up and describes two, often conflicting, logics or regimes – one being a professional logic and the other a commercial logic – that saturate journalism practice and, subsequently, journalism studies (Croteau & Hoyes, 2001; McManus, 2009; Schudson, 2003). Any introduction of new ideas, practices or technologies, such as gamification, will be appropriated within the framework of these logics. Although there are other ways to describe and deal with tensions and different forces in journalism, these logics are adequate for the purpose of this chapter as they pinpoint the relationship between journalism and users. The tensions between these two actors, journalists and users, and the two logics, professional and commercial, sets the context for gamified news articles and systems.

**Professional Logic**

Earlier incarnations of journalism were far from the objective enterprise we take for granted today. Instead, journalism was expected to be strongly partial and sensationalistic (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2009; Hartley, 2009; Schudson, 1978). However, since then, standards and protocols have been developed to promote journalism as a, broadly speaking, merchant of truth seeking. That is – journalists must seek and have much higher standards than other information workers (Kovach & Rosenstiehl, 2001; Zelizer, 2004). This must also be communicated to the audience, making journalism a, to paraphrase Tuchman (1972), strategic ritual, which the public can discern and evaluate. In practice, this is manifested by journalists when they are employing techniques such as verifying information before publishing, relying on more than one source, and being able to answer questions of when, who, what, where, why and how an event unfolded (Kovach & Rosenstiehl, 2001; Singer, 2008). In addition to being true, it is of immense importance that the information is relevant to the audience in the role of citizens. Thus, true but irrelevant information about celebrities, sports and entertainment is less useful to people in their capacity as citizens, than true but relevant information about politics, society and economics (Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr, & Legnante, 2011).

Overall, journalism is to a large extent understood as process of verifying, refining, and upgrading mere ‘information’ to useful and unbiased facts and analysis. This process contains several steps where first raw information of various origins and shifting quality is gathered by journalists, then selected/disregarded by editors and transformed to ‘facts and truth’ through journalistic scrutiny, standardized routines and procedures. As a final step the finished product is distributed to the willing and able audience (Karlsson, 2011; Kovach & Rosenstiehl, 2001; Seib, 2001). Should journalists produce misleading, inaccurate or irrelevant news, it does not only have results for peoples’ capacity to keep themselves informed, but also pose a serious threat to the existence of journalism as it undermines its very foundations.

In short, the professional logic addresses audiences and readers primarily as citizens. True and relevant news have constituted the backbone of journalism for close to a century, but journalism has also been embedded in a commercial logic for an even longer time period.

**Commercial Logic**

Not only is news and journalism important for democracy but they also represent a billion dollar industry (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; McManus, 1994). Journalism, and especially its printed incarnations, has operated within a mass-market framework since at least the mid nineteenth century due to, for instance, increased printing capacity, urbanization, and literacy. Thus, as Hartley (2009) has pointed out, modern journalism has always had, in one way or another, to relate and adjust to popular taste. The professional
logic above is in essence an ideal construct on how journalism should operate, while journalism in practice is urged to follow or influence market demand to be able to support its operations. This information market is driven within other parameters than the idealistic notion of journalism, and there is evidence that this, implicitly and explicitly, shapes news content (Hamilton, 2004; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Since news is a commodity, not a mirror of reality (Hamilton, 2004, p.7) it is essential to point out how consumer preferences, among other things, drive news coverage. Hamilton (2004) has, inspired by the ‘why, where, who, what, when’ dimensions of the professional logic, put together a particularly useful set of corresponding questions viable in the market context: Who cares about a particular piece of information? What are they willing to pay to find it, or what are others willing to pay to reach them? Where can media outlets or advertisers reach these people? When is it profitable to provide the information? Why is it profitable? As evident, only the first two questions relate explicitly to the taste of the audience while the rest regard the audience as a commodity, logistics, pricing structure and production costs that needs to be taken into consideration. Accordingly, the relationship between these questions is intrinsically complex, demonstrated, for instance, by the fact that advertisers traditionally have provided the lion’s share of media corporations income while not being too interested in reaching every citizen since their products are niched to target audiences (Schudson, 2003). Additionally, it becomes lucrative for media corporations to provide content that enables the tailoring of audiences to advertisers (Hamilton, 2004; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Further, in contrast to the professional logic, the five questions posed by Hamilton have, in themselves, absolutely nothing to do with what kind of information will be produced or the quality of that information. Yet, these parameters set up the boundaries of the competitive marketplace in which journalism and the media industry have to work. Of course, it is still plausible that people will request information that makes it easier for them to participate in society, but there are other information demands as well – information that makes it easier to work, or consume for pure entertainment reasons (Hamilton, 2004). Thus, if professional logic regards audiences and readers as citizens, the commercial logic addresses them primarily as consumers.

Conflicting Logics and the Future of Journalism

Ideally, these logics, professional and commercial, would work in tandem: readers would prefer qualified information over other types of information available, journalists would only produce true and relevant news, advertisers would not care about ratings or which audiences they reach, media corporations would not prioritize profit, and different actors would not try to spin the news. However, this is not and has never been the case. On the contrary, it is widely understood that the commercial logic is gaining ground at the expense of the professional logic, as journalism and news media are increasingly anchored in the digital environment. For instance, digital publishing allows live readings of ratings that shape what news are being published and how those news are being framed (Anderson, 2011; Karlsson & Clerwall, 2013; MacGregor, 2007). Previous research convincingly shows a slow, and sometimes faster, shift from harder to softer news, indicating that journalists are being forced to digress from the professional logic in favor of the commercial logic (Bird, 2009; Connell, 1998; Currah, 2009; Cushion, 2012; Sparks & Tulloch, 2000; Uribe & Gunter, 2004). Karlsson, (in press), took stock on how news have developed in the digital environment, finding that the process is even more accelerated there.

Furthermore, faced with this abundance of choices in the information environment more people are decreasing their news consumption or are checking out from journalism completely (De Waal & Schoenbach, 2010; Prior, 2007; Stromback, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2012). This is due to the fact that
the digital era presents consumers with more opportunities to choose what they want, no longer being restrained to what a few media outlets chose to publish. In the digital world, journalism has to work within these premises instead of the near monopoly situation in the analogue media system, adjusting even more to audience demands, or find ways to increase motivation for news consumption. Something that can prove very difficult as a telling study by Boczkowski and Mitchelstein (2013) illustrates, where journalists and users have diverging priorities as the former promotes public affair stories but the latter, to a larger extent, opt for useful, bizarre or controversial bits of information.

It is against this background and in this setting and framework that the gamification of journalism needs to be analyzed. On the one hand as a tool to increase interest in and engagement with news, on the other hand as a tool to further transform and adjust journalism to the demands of the audience.

THE AIMS OF GAMIFYING JOURNALISM

The future of journalism seems to be attached to popular demands. However, as Martin Conboy (2010) suggests, it needs to maintain certain distance from the mainstream discourses of general entertainment while reclaiming the attention of audiences and readers, and their drive to learn about what happens in the world. Literature about youth and news consumption usually points to the issue of engagement (Tufte & Enghel, 2009). The narratives that aim to explain the lack of engagement take various departing points: a reconfiguration of social structures and generational change on media habits (Bimber, 2012; Bennet et al., 2012; Van Dijck, 2013); a disconnect between current content and formats of news distribution (Reese & Lee, 2012); lack of entertainment or even entertainment media becoming a source of distraction (Delli Carpini, 2012). Particularly incisive is Robert Putman’s (2000) suggestion that the amount of time used consuming popular and entertainment media is using up the limited time from citizens and users, time they could be using engaging in public and civic activities or quality media. Admittedly, Putman’s argument has underlying speculative tones, as the logics of causality do not lead to believe that stopping consuming entertainment would necessarily lead to civic activities. However, in the age of multipurpose devices, it is worth considering that media services must strive for the users’ attention, competing with several other affordances such devices have to offer, and depending on the amount of hours the device is being used.

While gamification is already being used in real life journalism context, the ideal implementation with the applied system does not always match. As it has been mentioned earlier, the notion of journalism is rather unspecific in digital settings. There are several flavors of journalism, and so, we feel compelled to constrain our narrative to the transition of legacy news media (specifically newspapers) to their digital counterparts, in the most idealist type of journalism, watchdog, investigative, and informative journalism. This section tackles the potential usefulness and dangers of introducing gamification techniques to journalism. If there are surely proponents of gamifying the news, there are for sure reasons to not gamify the news.

Engaging with Games

Historically, the use of games in traditional newspapers had been relegated to the use of simple game-like pastimes such as quizzes, crosswords, or even sudokus, in order to attract certain demographics (Shortz, 2006). Other approaches used by legacy media to engage and create habit are programs like
The Washington Post’s Points, which is an analogue loyalty program tied to annual subscriptions with the possibility of redeeming accumulated points for physical presents.

However, adapting to the rise of new media, news organizations have tried to generate internal structures that aim to approach and engage with the public in their own terms, through the new channels established by social media and games (Kwak et al., 2010; Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012). Newsrooms started introducing editors and employees with new skills and competencies. At the same time, interfaces have provided room for users to interact with.

While those traditional game-like pastime features such as quizzes have been successfully translated into the digital arena (Schultz, 1999), it is videogames to their full extent the type of new media that is reported to be majorly engaging younger audiences, and on its turn, as Putman would suggest, distracting teens from civic media use. A Pew (2008) study reports that 97% of American teens play videogames on a regular basis and do so in a variety of devices. Gaming has become a pervasive form of media consumption that transcends all layers of the socioeconomic fabric of Western societies. Furthermore, 72% of players use their mobile phones to play, which adds the option of mobility and communication through the same medium for play. Beyond the basic outcome of entertainment, gaming, especially multiplayer gaming, provides sources for participatory action, social interaction, and often simulates civic action.

New behaviors are embedded within the interactions of the social and the technical, but also depend on the media and news environment available. This taps into the reasoning of engagement or lack of it. According to the OMA Framework (Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2012), any behavior such as media choice or civic engagement is contingent upon a combination of opportunity, motivation, and ability. Motivation and ability are individual-level factors, but opportunity, in news consumption, refers to the availability and accessibility to different types of news and non-news media. Coincidentally, this behavioral framework is strikingly similar to Fogg’s (2009) behavioral model for persuasive design, which is composed of motivation, ability, and triggers. Thus, these two frameworks are equal with the exception that one takes the reference from the media system (opportunity), and the other one takes the focus from what the technology itself interacts with the user (triggers). It is not that surprising that, games themselves use a similar triadic model to engage users by fostering autonomy, mastery, and relatedness.

There is an ambivalent set of results on the effects of playing video games and the level of engagement of youth with news media and civic activities (Williams, 2006). Studies show that hard core gamers have lower social capital, however, it is difficult to discern whether those who turn to games are disengaged, or the other way around. What it is clear is that gaming is in part a media-centric activity embedded in the daily habits of young citizens’ everyday life, and that the media literacy achieved during early years is carried throughout later stages in life. As we mentioned before, the habits and traditions of media consumption are fundamentally linked to a generational context. If new generations do not read news, but are extremely engaged in playing games, the trend is only going to increase as one generation replaces the other.

Hence, if Coleman and Blumber (2012) are right, and one of the basic norms of democracy requires informed, balanced, and consequential citizens, then media needs to find methods that engage users to be informed. So why not games? To the question of ‘why gamify the news?’ the basic response is to engage users to be informed, to be balanced, and to be consequential. In other words, to use the nature of games to empower users, and to cement one of the pillars of democracy. At least this is why we think news could expand the already ongoing experimentation with game elements, and why researchers need to investigate the feasibility of news and games. This is, we argue, the ideal scenario. Of course, as we will see later in this section, the reasons and consequences of gamifying the news might be different for those who have the power to implement these strategies.
The Potential Benefits of Gamifying the News

As it tends to happen with new approaches to old problems, there are proponents and opponents. Gamification is no exception and sustains a large group of enthusiasts and equally large group of skeptics. The champions of gamification (McGonigal, 2011; Zichermann & Linder, 2013; Herger, 2014) are convinced that gamification is the cure to many ailments, especially if they are customer engagement ailments. But McGonigal in particular makes a rather compelling argument that by using game elements into everyday environments, we can turn those environments into an equally fun and engaging environment as games themselves. Reality is too slow, too boring to keep individuals who grew up playing videogames engaged. And in a way, we have seen that this is true, at least in the realm of journalism. If McGonigal’s assertion is right, youth have adopted games as their means of entertainment and have left news behind because it is not an engaging environment.

So how does the application of game elements in non-engaging environments work? In its most basic form, the introduction of gamified applications to a wide range of users and audiences provides a new way to develop new heuristics, design patterns, and dynamics of games, with the aim of improving user experience and user engagement (Deterding et al. 2011:a; Deterding et al., 2011:b). And while there has been a considerable degree of hype in the industry, gamification has shown to be an effective method to attract the attention and engagement of users in various domains such as marketing and business oriented applicability (Zichermann & Linder, 2010; Huotari & Hamari, 2012; Paharia, 2013), technology (Fujikawa & Manki, 2013), education (Prensky, 2010; Sheldon, 2011; Muntean, 2011; Kapp, 2012), and health (McCallum, 2012).

Certainly, gamification is a by-product of other meta-process such as mediatization (Lundby, 2009), individualization, and commercialization, but the gamification of everything (Rolland & Eastman, 2011) responds to a generational shift into digital natives (Bennet, Maton, & Kervin, 2008) that not only have grown with the omnipresence of the Internet and networked technologies, but that are the first generation to have been born into a world filled with digital games within the context of home and everyday life.

Alas, the implementation rush during the first years of gamification seemed to follow the old method of throwing badges to everything and see where they stuck. And while old (analogue) loyalty programs are still used in several industries, the digitalization of services, such as newspapers, unveils new pathways for experimentation with gamified systems. The reasoning behind the application of gamification in web-based system, or a mobile app, is to enhance engagement, grant choices, reaffirm progression, and provoke social habit (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Applied to news consumption, there is a vast opportunity to introduce game elements in systems that aim to create experiences that foster a sense of autonomy, mastery, and relatedness, as users become more informed about the world. Coincidentally, these three concepts are what motivational theories, such as Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan 1985; Pink, 2009), propose as the igniters of intrinsic motivation. In addition, gamification gives the tools for users to participate and engage with other users, broadening the network of consumers to a particular service. The aim is to create a user experience that is more attractive and enticing to the new mobile lifestyle of today’s consumers, especially youth, who have slowly discarded news from the mix of their media consumption.

Thus, a gamified news service has the potential to engage users (and particularly youth) to read news, to inform themselves, and most importantly, to foster an intrinsic motivation to consume news while creating a habit out of it. Whether this leads to a more democratic and civic society willing to participate in public debate is a discussion that escapes the ambitions of this chapter, but that should be central to
The Gamification of Journalism

the gamification of news research. Additionally, introducing game mechanics to news websites could very well become a profitable business model. This assumption is done twofold: on the one hand, a more engaged community of users remains longer in the site, visits more often, and interacts more with the service, making it a service much more attractive to advertisers; on the other hand, games (and specifically mobile games) have achieved incredible profit figures with services that are free to play while offering virtual goods (Quah, 2003) that can be purchased by the player. Such a monetizing model allows for dynamic pricing that can be encompassed to carefully timed events. If games have achieved such successful business models by offering their main content for free, it should be also at the grasp of the news industry to do so. Another benefit of gamifying journalism is no other than avoiding the tabloidization effect (Bird, 2009; Reese & Lee, 2012). The shift towards entertainment content could very well be due to the fact that the format is not entertaining. If newspapers focus on crafting a packaging that is interesting and that offers a truly entertaining news experience in itself, then content could be delivered intact, thus reducing tabloidization. The final benefit to be discussed here is the one attempted by one of the examples briefly discussed in the following section, Bleacher Report, which introduced gamification in order to engage their news producers and contributors, instead of the audience. This last benefit is much harder to achieve but it could certainly make the production of news a more engaging experience.

The Potential Pitfalls of Gamifying the News

As we mentioned earlier, there are also critics and opponents that offer a less optimistic view of gamification. The critical voices usually come from the field of game studies, digital labor, and surveillance studies. The rationale for critique is different, with varying degrees of emotional involvement. Ian Bogost (2011), famed researcher in game design puts it this way:

“Gamification is bullshit. More specifically, gamification is marketing bullshit, invented by consultants as a means to capture the wild, coveted beast that is videogames and to domesticate it for use in the grey, hopeless wasteland of big business. It takes games – a mysterious, magical, powerful medium that has captured the attention of millions of people – and it makes them accessible in the context of contemporary business”

Bogost’s livid statement represents a line of thought that considers gamification a bastardization of gaming, instrumentalizing Game Design Theory for commercial purposes only. As a newsgames proponent, Bogost does not find value in the whole range of purposes of gamification, and only focuses in the commercialization perspective. However, this line of critique can easily apply to news if the gamified layer does not suit the experience that news wants to convey, being a completely gratuitous set of game elements poorly implemented. A corresponding caveat can emerge from the other end, and it is to generate a game so powerful that users forget that the goal of the experience is being informed about current events. There is a line of journalists that would see the use of games in journalism as a threat to creative journalism, selling the core values of journalism to entertainment media.

A similar strand of thought but oriented directly to the idea of digital labor or exploitation has been gaining traction. Gamification benefits from new technological advances to automatically generate content based on the users’ actions. On the one hand, this user-generated content is packaged and offered to the user (sometimes even at a price!) while being owned by the service provider. On the other hand, using the power of games, gamification can be used to manipulate and exploit people behind the veil of fun and leisure. This line of thought is best exemplified by PJ Rey’s (2012) statement:
“Gamification is a mechanism for de-coupling alienation from capitalist production. By masking work as play, capitalist production moves exploitation out of the work places and infiltrates our leisure time. Play loses its innocence. It is no longer an escape from the system, it is just another branch of it. Waste is no longer wasted. Playbour is part of capitalism’s effort to colonize every last moment in the waking day”

The pervasive and ubiquitous tracking and measuring techniques embedded in gamification systems, result in the third line of criticism of gamification, which has to do with the ethical questions of continuously being surveilled. In the majority of cases, the user is not only complacent with monitoring, but it is often the initiator. This notion of self-surveillance challenges the traditional ideas behind surveillance, but as Whitson (2013) points out, when the gamified systems are promoted in working environments, the quantification of everyday life could lead to ethical questions in the relations of power of those measured and those who have access to the data. Thus, news outlets could indeed use a gamified experience to exploit their users, either by manipulating their reading choices through game mechanics, or by only monetizing the content and data they generate while they interact with the system. This could become a serious privacy risk involved with tracking the users’ every move, while owning such data. It is at least ethically dubious (O'Donnell, 2014).

Furthermore, there is the implication that journalism, in the aim to compete with a wider range of digital services, gives in completely to the commercial logic by enticing users with game elements to engage users with news, but also catering news to the demand of popularized content, disregarding the professional logic. Even though gamification has the potential to abstract format from content, an excessive stress on the gratifications of the system offers an equally strong potential to forgetting or altering the reasons why such gamified format is there in the first place. If the goal of gamifying the news is to engage youth and creating the habit of consuming news by providing a service that taps into their format expectations, the effect can counter this goal and turning the game mechanics and the interface into the central aspect, relegating news to a secondary role. In a similar note, there could be serious conflicts of editorial choice when hard news of disturbing nature is channeled through a gamified format. The dissonance of news that aims to inform citizens about injustices and challenges of our times disseminated through a lighthearted gaming environment can diminish the gravitas of the issues being covered.

It is a matter of balance between the core of journalism and the engaging factors of games. With this in mind, Gamification can also be seen from a more neutral perspective. As Werbach (2014) redefines it, gamification could simply be the process of making activities game-like. This is in fact a much more useful standpoint for research, as gamification is not the tool that will either save or enslave journalism (or any other industry for that matter). Borrowing from behavioral economics scholar Dan Ariely (2011), gamification is a perfect example of reward substitution, which is doing the right thing for the wrong reasons. If by using game mechanics news outlets could trigger extrinsic and intrinsic motivators that engage youth to consume news, it is worth a try to implement, and subsequently researching on it.

The ever-present tensions between the professional and commercial logic is now played under new and different conditions. Before analyzing concrete examples of the application of gamification within journalism contexts we need to outline how journalism has been fundamentally changed by digitalization and how journalists, the media industry, and the audience relate to this change.
NEWS IN TRANSITION: DIGITALIZATION, SHIFTING AUDIENCES, NEWS PATHS, AND USER ENGAGEMENT

The introduction of the Internet and the process of digitalization of news did nothing but exacerbate the conflict of logics outlined above. It would be an oversimplification to assume that the complex phenomenon in which society adopted digital technologies to consume media is reduced to pure economic and technological reasons. The new wave of commercial and technological advances, based on computing, convergence, and digitalization, is merely an amplified account of similar historical instances based on printing culture, audiovisual culture, and broadcasting media, such as the telegraph, the radio, or the television (Schudson, 1978; Briggs & Burke, 2002; Bondebjerg, 2002; Ekström & Djerf-Pierre, 2013).

However, while the decline of journalism in terms of quality is a matter of debate, the decline of the news industry in commercial terms is undeniable. The transition to digital journalism was majorly done following a free-for-all strategy, hoping that newspapers’ subscriptions and online advertising would provide a sustainable business model (Meyer, 2009). After several years, newspaper sales keep dropping and advertising revenues have shifted to other digital services that attract more users (Picard, 2008; Gallaugher, Auger, & BarNir, 2001).

This part of the chapter aims to map the adoption and evolution of digital news both by its producers and its consumers. The idea is to provide a clear image of where the news industry is now: what are the formats provided by the producers? what are the media habits of consumers?, and finally how does the introduction of gamification fit within the industry?

New Channels, New Formats, and News Consumption

Journalism, as many other forms of audiovisual communication, is in the midst of a process of convergence. Technologically, various types of media are mixed and integrated in unified digital distribution points that can be accessed and consumed via a single medium, such as smartphones, tablets, or computers (Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Christian, 2012). Culturally, news conglomerates that used to operate in departmentalized structures face arduous challenges as the increasing importance of multimedia and technical aspects to the craft of journalism (Deuze, 2004, Deuze, 2005; Thurman & Lupton, 2008). The new media landscape amalgamates several content providers, expanding competition in all shapes of entertainment and communication sources, spurring a change of habits in media consumption. New efforts have been introduced in order to capture the emerging individual structures of the self, through engagement with technological systems that turn life towards short-term, fragmented information, on the go life styles (Elliott & Urry, 2010; Urry, 2002), transforming media interaction into a prominently social experience (Jenkins, 2006). It is not technology per se that matters, but the way technology is used.

The concept of traditional news is a blurred. What constitutes news is contested. The integration of digital network technologies enable and encourage social participation (Lewis, 2012), shaking the barriers between producers and consumers. The public has the ability to be everywhere, all the time, thus having the advantage on immediacy to organized journalism (Peters, 2012). This results in users decreasing their attention to mainstream media and increasing interaction within social networks, collecting atomized information from source to destination in different forms, forging a reconfigured model of news medium (Baresch, Hsu, & Reese, 2010)
The need to adapt to the new milieu and embrace technology (Singer, 2004; Deuze, 2009; Westlund, 2012) has opened doors to a myriad of new channels and formats. New forms of storytelling that depart from print formats including audio, video, slide shows, and interactive features have steadily been incorporated in the digital editions of news outlets (Kleis Nielsen, 2012; Karlsson & Clerwall, 2012; Thurman & Walters, 2013). Traditional game-like pastimes like knowledge quizzes as well as unconventional formats like newsgames (Bogost, Ferrari, & Schweizer, 2010; Gómez García & Navarro Sierra, 2013) and gamification (Jacobson, 2012) have found a place in digital journalism. The interface becomes a proxy for automated interaction, by introducing technology as a persuasive actor (Fogg, 2002). The triggers and experiences that digital games have embedded in our new digital culture, help explain why media choice is much more prone towards games than news in younger generations. Games provide specific gratifications, but most importantly feed back to the users experiences that fulfill psychological needs that intrinsically motivates them to seek more interactions with the medium (Przybylski, Ryan, and Rigby, 2010; Tamborini et al., 2010). However, it is widely accepted that the new forms of expression multimedia has to offer have been massively underused by mainstream news organizations (Lillie, 2011).

Thus, the extremely varied type of news media use poses a threat to major legacy news outlets. News consumption fluctuates according to the users’ everyday life (Jansson & Lindell, 2014), and it becomes a less immersive form of news acquisition, embedded in brief exchanges of media content afforded by the multimodality of the medium (Schroder, 2014). News aggregators, social media, and services like Summly or BuzzFeed offer an innovative model of news consumption, allowing personalization, and adapting to new users’ personal contexts. Audiences evolve, and traditional news must evolve with them or eventually they will be replaced by a newer breed of news services (Carey & Elton, 2010).

Transforming Audiences, User Agency, and Crisis of Engagement

The effects of convergence seem to have a tighter grip on audiences. Media consumers used to be regarded as publics, audiences, or even readers. The common connotative aspect of these terms is an apparent passivity (Humphreys & Grayson, 2008). But new media and the multiple services available to media consumers have ignited a debate on the role of consumers, from a passive approach to a much more active role as media users (Rosen, 2006). We adopt the word user as our unit of study, particularly because it keeps us from dwelling in the bipolar notion of producer and consumer (Van Dijck, 2009), and most importantly, it provides a much wider potentiality of media interaction. Personal, contextual, and experiential factors are combined to define the interaction between the user, the choice of media, and the news service (Hartmann, 2009). And while activities within the spectrum of consumption and production are always developed to a certain degree, one of the important additions to the users’ roles is that of the data provider. Metadata and digital behaviors are automatically logged and become, regardless of the content, a main feature of the digital cultural practice (Murray, 2012). In an increasingly mechanized and automated news production process (Clerwall, 2014), user-generated content (Örnebring & Jönsson, 2011, Holt & Karlsson, 2011), and most importantly, user-generated data have introduced new drives for economic development. The conceptual debate around the commodification of audience labor, playbor (Kücklich, 2005), and the subdued exploitation has sparked ambivalent reactions within the scientific community.

The addition of digital news sites has derived into a change of habits that are connected to a generational bias. Older generations have adopted digital media as a complementary source of news. In younger generations, the trend has been of displacement, as digital news has replaced traditional newspapers.
The Gamification of Journalism

(Westlund & Färdigh, 2011). However, it is the younger users, the DotNet generation, the so called millennials who show a growing disregard for news both in paper and digital. This generation of users is the only one that significantly consumes less news both in paper and online (Wadbring & Bergström, 2014). While actual figures and definitions tend to shift from source to source, we name “young news users” to those under 30-35 years of age.

The current trend in online news distributors is to offer paywall models that combine subscription models with only certain amount of content for free (Myllylahti, 2014). This move is not particularly well received among a generation of internet users who are used to access a service for free, and in most cases, receive and consume their news through entertainment media instead of the traditional news media.

The shift from traditional news consumption to more “soft news” is often viewed as an indicator of a decline in democratic and civic engagement of media users (Macedo, 2005; Bennet, 2008). However, younger generations are engaged in media in different ways than what traditional media regard as valid (Westlund & Bjur, 2014). Thus, if being informed is a serious indicative of human and social capital that enhances democratic values (and we believe it is so), traditional news might need to expand their methods to engage younger audiences with even bolder and faster approaches that grasp the millennial ideals of what is worth their time.

GAMIFIED INTERFACES IN DIGITAL JOURNALISM

The first mention on the use of gamification and the news industry in a scholarly publication is 2012 Susan Jacobson’s analysis of multimedia journalism published on nytimes.com. While discussing new storytelling techniques in news websites, Jacobson addresses the rising research interest on the impact of digital games on digital news. The stress is placed on serious games as a storytelling technique and their ability to provide the audience with a medium to explore news stories on their own terms. Currently there are various projects that are studying the intersection of journalism and gamification, such as The Impact of Gamification on Journalism at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, and the Going Mobile project at Karlstad University, Sweden (Ferrer Conill, 2014). Admittedly, research on serious games (Stapleton, 2004) and the so-called newsgames (Burton, 2005; Bogost et al., 2010; Siitonen & Varsaluoma, 2013) has gained more traction than the gamification of news, and that might be because game studies scholars feel more at home with the study of newsgames than with gamification, which has received a more controversial attention from the game design community. The difference, as Sicart (2008) explains, is that newsgames are computer games used to participate in the public sphere with the intention of explaining or commenting on current news, while, as we mentioned, gamification does not attempt to create a full-fledged game, but simply apply game elements to a digital service.

To simplify this, it could be argued that newsgames bring news to games, and the gamification of journalism brings games to news. However, newsgames and gamification of news share a similar mission, which is majorly considered to convey current events in an engaging manner to an audience that responds and is engaged by the language of video games (Ruffino, 2014). What differs both approaches is the procedural rhetoric (Treanor & Mateas, 2009), as newsgames carry along a self-contained narrative that is to be explored by the users. Gamification on the other hand intends to maintain the original news piece narrative and offer a game-like experience that can relate to that particular piece, or extend to the overall interaction with the news service as a whole. Interestingly, while newsgames sparked a great scholarly debate, it is gamification the one that has managed to contribute with more varied applica-
tions in real life journalism settings, which in no doubt is responsible for the current rise for interest in the gamification of news, both in the bloggosphere, but also in media studies. The reason for this could be explained by the higher resource demands of newsgames against a limited impact. On the one hand newsgames require a game design and implementation process for each story while making a serious impact only on that particular story. The results, attention span, and most important of all, information acquisition might be powerful, but as a change of habit and general news consumption impact is still limited. On the other hand, gamification still requires the game design and implementation process, but it is normally on a website or service level, which reduces resources per piece, and at the same time attempts to have an effect on the overall news consumption habits of readers in the long term, creating long-standing adherence to news services.

This section aims to reroute the previous section by detailing some of the game elements that are more recurrent in gamified news services. As a trend in the industry and for the sake of brevity, we take a look at the triforce of gamification, the omnipresent PBLs (points, badges, and leaderboards), and discuss the way they have been introduced in news websites and how they intend to engage with the users.

### Points, Badges, and Leaderboards

As it has been pointed out, PBLs are the main game components that gamification initiatives include in their systems. Journalism and news services are not an exception.

Points aim to provide a sense of progress. Earning points for performing actions or achieving milestones becomes an automatic feedback mechanism that prompts the user to keep using the system. Journalism is no stranger to the points craze. As mentioned above, there are existing analogue approaches, like the PostPoints loyalty program from The Washington Post. This program offers a seemingly crude approximation of a game system where points are exchanged for gifts and discounts. The points are earned in a rather unclear way by reading the paper but also by shopping at third party establishments. The instant feedback loop is lost as a reward here. A completely different type of interaction occurs in a gamified digital system like the one over at Bleacher Report, a sports news website. B/R turns journalists into users by awarding them with points according to their writing career statistics regarding their contribution to the site. Number of reads, number of comments, number of lead stories, and other metrics keep adding points defining each author's reputation level. Almost immediately, journalists can evaluate the impact of their work in the organization and compel them to keep contributing to the site.

Badges function as a graphical representation of a one-time achievement or a cumulative achievement of other metrics (Antin & Churchill, 2011). One of the infamous use of badges in news gamified systems is that of Google News Badges. Google News, launched in September 2002, is a news aggregator gathering news from 25,000 publishers and offering a country-specific version for international users in 27 languages. As most news aggregators, they provide a personalized news experience, allowing the user to select the type of news they want to appear in their news feed, as well as which news publishers they want the content to be pulled from (Galbraith, 2008). In 2011 Google introduced Google News Badges with a set of 500 theme badges that could be leveled up. The new gamified layer intended to allow the user to track reading habits, create a more personalized news experience, and find articles on favorite topics. One year later, the system was phased out due to lack of impact. What Google missed here is that the system relied on providing vague feedback on what users already did. There was no real outcome for advancing in the game other than leveling up the badges. On top of that, there was very limited focus on persuading users to expand their content types, which would lead to broaden the variety
The Gamification of Journalism

of badges earned. Instead, Google News Badges resulted in users narrowing the number of chosen topics and providers, reinforcing users’ selective exposure. A much more elegant use of badges was crafted by the football news-oriented NFL.com network in their system NFL Fan Rewards, rolled out in 2012. The badges in this gamified layer resembled patches on a football jersey and represented the user’s rank in a team, from Rookie to Hall of Fame. Each patch was awarded by cumulative points and by completing drives of news and videos the user would have to read or view. The NFL Fan Rewards system excelled in its design because it managed to mimic American Football culture. The digital patches, just like the real ones in the game, served to show the status of each user within the community.

Leaderboards are a more ambivalent and complex game component. Leaderboards include the social aspect to the gamified system, as they represent the user’s performance when compared to other users. On the one hand, they are great motivators as they show how much more progress is needed to increase a position in the ranking. On the other hand, assessing a very large gap between the higher-ranked users can demotivate a user and provoked leaving the system. To enhance the motivating effects and alleviate the demotivating ones, the Times Points program by media conglomerate Times Internet Limited, India’s largest internet network, integrated two different leaderboards. This gamified system is integrated across 12 different media sites that offer a wide and eclectic range of content, including traditional news, real state, music streaming, feminine entertainment, masculine entertainment, and car deals. Thus, each website participant in the program offers both a site specific leaderboard and a global leaderboard that combines all users across websites. Finally, one of the most publicized gamified initiatives was a very simple system implemented by The Guardian, which implemented an investigative journalism crowdsourcing campaign to sieve through a large set of leaked documents that would trigger a major political scandal anchored in the UK’s parliamentary expenses and the misuse of allowances by Members of Parliament. The Guardian created a specific page where all the documents could be openly accessed by their readers. Each user had the possibility to flag documents as “Not interesting”, “Interesting but known”, “Interesting”, and “Investigate this!” Additionally, a progress bar showing the amount of data covered was implemented, as well as a leaderboard that displayed the top users and the number of items reviewed. The gamified crowdsourcing campaign had 20,000 readers review 170,000 in the first 80 hours harnessing the willpower of users to do a joint investigative journalism initiative. The engagement of users was driven by a combination of a shared goal by the community, a clear sensation of progress, and a sense of status as they mentioned in the leaderboards. In further iterations of the system, they allowed users to focus on the documents that tackled their own MPs in order to make the experience more relevant to their personal context (Daniel & Flew, 2010). Interestingly, The Guardian managed to create an article-level gamified news which does not extend to the whole website, which opens horizons for small scale approaches to gamifying the news.

Another great example of a gamified news article that incorporates PBLs is Al Jazeera’s Pirate Fishing: An Interactive Investigation. This particular piece transforms viewers into players, aiming to “come up with an original, interactive, investigative story that would transform viewers into players and capture their attention” (Ruhfus, 2014). Juliana Ruhfus and her team created a storytelling interface including videos, maps, photos, and other documents to submerge the reader into the process of reporting, with the reference of illegal fishing in Sierra Leone. Here the user is prompted to view videos and read documents to collect Investigation Points, which in turn take the view from a Junior Researcher position up to Senior Reporter. As the user advances stages, by accessing to different notebooks, identifying evidence, and exploring maps, it is possible to acquire badges such as Activist, City Explorer, or Corruption Investigation. This is a particularly insightful approach as how to expand the boundaries of digital news storytelling, attempting to engage users with game mechanics and other elements.
**CRAFTING THE EXPERIENCE: BEYOND THE PBLs**

The examples discussed above have different ways to approach users, but it is important to note the game mechanics they use do not affect the actual news pieces’ content. This is probably the main reason to experiment with the gamification of news as a way to engage users to consume news. The strategies and tools to use in a gamified layer need to enrich the news experience by adapting the interface and user interaction to the users’ needs while keeping the content a matter of editorial choice. If journalism is to continue to uphold certain democratic and civic function, then on the one hand, the gap between news and entertainment must remain open when it comes to content, and on the other hand, it should slowly disappear when it comes to format. The aim is to keep content and format as independent as possible.

We have discussed the possible reasons for gamifying the news. This section aims to connect the dots in the attempt to motivate for news consumption. For that reason we try to conceptualize young news readers as game players to understand what they crave. Consequently, we analyze the strategies and game mechanics that could be persuasive and engaging while remaining as little intrusive to the news experience as possible.

**Expanding Gamification to News Consumption**

According to Diddi and LaRose (2006) habit strength is the most powerful predictor of news consumption. That is a great place to start analyzing the gamification of news. The narrative of a gamified system should lead to the creation of new habits for the users. Accordingly, there needs to be a clear description of what the target behaviors that would derive into new habits are. Tracking behaviors during the interaction with the interface and setting success metrics is key to the system. Metrics can range in terms of engagement (news accessed, unique visits, time on the site), loyalty (users return, engaging other users), virality (sharing, social media, and social connections), and monetization (conversion rates and virtual goods) (Meloni & Gruener, 2012).

At this point the users/gamers need to be defined. Who are the players that will interact with the interface? There is a tradition in the gamification literature to use Bartle’s (1996) player type model, however, the model was developed for Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) and Bartle himself has mentioned his concerns about using the model for other type of “games”. Bartle’s original taxonomy divided players into four categories: killers, achievers, socializers, and explorers. For the purposes of a journalism gamified system, players can be typified differently by looking at what is behind the user’s motives for each choice (Krcmar & Strizhakova, 2009). Most of gamified programs tend to reward killers, as those are the ones who respond to leaderboards and ranks, but killers are probably not the target of those who seek civic engagement. Thus, the key here is to find what are the type of players that want to read news. Explorers and socializers seem good news player types. The first could be engaged by finding new content and unveiling stories. The latter could be engaged by interacting with other users. Additional player types for journalism could be contributors, those who are engaged by providing content, and watchdogs, those who could be engaged by pointing out misleading information that has been published.

In the next step, the activity loops as well as the progression loops have to be defined. What is to be considered an activity, whether it is reading an entire article, watching a video, writing a comment in the forum, exploring new news sections, providing with content for news or even reporting wrong information. Each activity loop is composed of an action conducted by the user, upon which the system offers feedback, creating engagement and motivation to keep performing the action. Progression loops
aim to make visible the improvement of each user, from the onboarding stage to an eventual mastering of the system.

Finally, the actual elements that will be placed in the interface to produce the feedback need to be chosen. Points, badges, and leaderboards are only the tip of the iceberg, but certainly they could be viable in a news website for different purposes. Leaderboards for general readers seem to be problematic, but certainly for investigative crowdsourcing (as previously mentioned in The Guardian example) could be particularly enticing. Achievements for different reads, content unlocking, social graphs, collections, and virtual goods are other game components that could easily fit the needs of the users. As it has been discussed, there are a wide range of game elements that can be included in the interface to enhance user experience (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011; Witt, Scheiner, & Robra-Bissantz, 2011), and they need to be applied on a case to case basis, both for desktop and mobile devices (Crowley et al., 2012) with adaptable and personalized experiences.

In sum, there are four main areas that need to be closely planned from a multidiscipline perspective with game designers, journalists, and business strategists. The first one is the progress paths. The notion of progress is a very powerful motivator (see Amabile & Kramer, 2011). The journey from novice to mastery needs to be something acknowledged. Challenges and current affairs knowledge tests presented as in system games can be a way to go. Secondly, timely feedback and rewards are necessary to keep the users informed of their progress. Once again, the rewards need to be appealing to the users and have to be related to the activities. A comment is an activity a socializer is most plausible to do. Similarly, explorers would appreciate rewards for curiosity, but not reading more than others. Hence being rewarded with status for such a feat is a reward that does not motivate a socializer. Status might resonate more with a watchdog user type, for example. Getting such reward for uncovering wrong doing publicly might be a better match. Third, the social connection. The transition to digital news have turned the news experience a social one, especially with the new role of social media when disseminating the news (Hermida, 2010; Moe, 2013). Harnessing social networks, both internally and externally in order to control the path of news, but also to create competition, camaraderie, and support is hugely important. The social aspect is usually what provides the notion of relatedness. Finally, the interface and user experience. Gamification is a persuasive technology (Llagostera, 2012), thus the aesthetics, design, and sophistication of the system has to entice the user to keep using it. These four areas must be taken into consideration as a whole, blending them into one functioning news experience, while keeping the balance that would appeal to all user types. It is not an easy feat, but failing to get each part right or deal with them as isolated components of a system might lead to failure (Palmer, Lunceford & Patton, 2012).

Ultimately, the goal is to generate a feeling of competence, autonomy, and relatedness to generate the intrinsic motivation of consuming news in the user (Przybylski, Rigby & Ryan, 2010). Simultaneously, it is vital to keep news content out of the equation. Maintaining the news untouched is key to this process if the notion of democratic values is to be upheld. The gamification process is meant to provide new value to the user, personalizing the news experience with relevant, targeted news, embedded in a social environment, while keeping the quality of the news intact, and always aiming for a broadening of views, avoiding selective exposure, and emphasizing improvement of the users’ knowledge.
CHALLENGES AND NEEDS FOR RESEARCH

In media studies, every ground breaking technological innovation and every new medium have been accepted with the widespread fear that scientific paradigms as we know them might be shattered. The idea that the effects of new technology might be detrimental to society, and might aid those in power to control and exploit users has been a recurrent one since the dawn of this discipline (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990; Scannell, 2007). Interestingly, when the dust settles, research and life moves on, waiting for the next ground-shaking innovation.

Journalism is a long and well-established research tradition and paradoxically, as the actual news industry is immersed in a world-wide crisis, the academic field of journalism is thriving. Gamification, on the other hand, is a rather new field of study, and while Hamari, Koivisto and Pakkanen (2014) demonstrate that research on gamification has been extremely prolific since 2011, much still needs to be done. Furthermore, gamification is a profoundly multidisciplinary field, which allows for comparative research, but also for research projects that combine different approaches and traditions that could lead to a better understanding of such a complex phenomenon. However, the focus so far has been on the practice and implementation of gamification, and particularly on the technologies used to apply game mechanics in user interfaces. This means that focus on media research on gamification has only started. There is a an apparent disregard for an inclusive approach that attempts to introduce a multiplicity of factors, such as the medium, the effects game elements have on users, but also on the perspective of how non-game media is affected by those game elements. Similarly, a look into the effects that pervasive, continuous, and ubiquitous games have on media consumption and creation is still merely on its infancy. The issues of time and space have been not been optimally researched.

It is exciting to think that at this stage, research on the gamification of journalism has a lot to conquer. We need more studies that cover how to effectively apply games to journalism without breaking the essence of what journalism should be. Newsgames cover parts of this, but there are a lot of new formats that do not require creating a full-fledged game to convey a message. We need to understand how new rituals and habits of youth and their new mobile lifestyles affect their perception of the role of news (Bolin & Westlund, 2009). We should certainly look into what are the main motivators that could lead to change those rituals in order to create a habit of news consumption. Additionally, we need to know how gamifying the interface of a news website could affect news producers and journalism practice. Equally important is to study if the premise of leaving the content of news untouched is true or if, as some suspect, gamifying the news would necessarily change the content of news, trivializing the news experience.

Some of the challenges linked to the research of gamified news carry methodological challenges that should be confronted. Longitudinal studies, multidisciplinary approaches, and mix-methods designs are hard to conduct, normally requiring more than one team of researchers. However, it is essential to conduct multifaceted research including as many factors as possible to fully understand the effects of game elements in news environments.

Finally, other challenges must be bridged. Disentangling studies from time and space is a particularly difficult thing to do, especially when it is connected use of media that happens everywhere, all the time. There is a need looking into the context of news consumption as a whole, and not only as an interface to exploit. We need to understand what are the contextual factors that require a unique set of affordances of fun, motivation, and learning that journalism could offer to its users (Deterding, 2014).
Thus, we call for experimental design including aspects of mobility and habits, looking for ecological validity, thinking on the setting and context first in order to grasp much more nuanced results from empirical research. Surveys, focus groups, and ethnographic and participatory observation are methods that can help complement studies that deepen in all aspects of each study conducted.

We encourage researchers to cross boundaries and engage colleagues from other disciplines to join them conduct their studies. Mixing perspectives and theoretical frameworks from journalism studies with different traditions, expanding both the current body of knowledge in journalism research and gamification. If adding game elements to news is crossing certain boundaries, studying this particular phenomenon should invite to cross boundaries of conventional research too.

**CONCLUSIONS: GAMIFICATION’S FUTURE PLACE WITHIN JOURNALISM AND JOURNALISM RESEARCH**

The current tensions of the journalistic field, from a professional logic to a commercial logic, combined with the expansion of the internet and mobile technologies have led to a decline of news industry. Similarly, the apparition of new channels of media, the reconfiguration of audiences, and decreasing engagement of youth with news consumption has derived in the experimentation with new formats and models designed to make the consumption of news a much more engaging experience.

At the same time, gamification, by applying game mechanics to non-gaming environments, has proven to be capable of engaging users and leading to the creation of habits and social change in several disciplines.

There is an undeniable theoretical benefit from applying gamification into digital news outlets. Motivating younger generations to adopt new media rituals while providing them with agency (van Dijck, 2009), could lead to enhancing the democratic aims of journalism (Schudson, 1997). It offers the potential to generate the stimuli to amplify small wins generating engagement, user habit, and finally feeding a progress loop that leads to social change. However, there is risk of centering the news experience on the game rather than the content or even worse, perverting the gamified system for sole purpose of commercialization. There is also skepticism and resistance from the news industry. Surely, there is a whole lot to learn.

Concerning gamification’s place within journalism research one is tempted to ask, “What place?” since there is so little written about it. Much more theoretical and empirical research is needed in the intersection between journalism and gamification. From this chapter we can see that much is at stake and that gamification is already in practice in some news outlets, but that there is a serious lack of research in the area. Future research projects could include, but not be limited to, explorations on how journalists view and appropriate gamification elements in the production of news; how gamification is being implemented on various platforms – computer, tablet, smartphone – and in different publishing contexts – countries, traditions; how users view and relate to gamification features; how does mobility and gamification shape news consumption; if and how gamification affects what news is being published and how users are affected by it. Obviously, answering these research questions is a gigantic task that would need collaborations and many different methodological approaches. But it is a task that is needed since only systematic, comparative and empirical research can shed a light on what gamification, for better or for worse, will do with journalism.
REFERENCES


Deterding, S. (2014). Eudaimonic design, or: Six invitations to rethink gamification. In M. Fuchs et al. (Eds.), Rethinking gamification (pp. 305–333).


The Gamification of Journalism


The Gamification of Journalism


The Gamification of Journalism


Ruffino, P. (2014). From engagement to life, or: How to do things with gamification? In M. Fuchs et al. (Eds.), *Rethinking gamification* (pp. 47–60).


The Gamification of Journalism


Teens, video games, and civics - Teens’ gaming experiences are diverse and include significant social interaction and civic engagement. (2008). *Pew Internet & American Life Project*.


KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Gamification: The use of game mechanics and game elements within environments that are normally not considered games themselves.

Journalism: The activity of surveying and interpreting matters of public interest and then delivering such information through a wide variety of channels and formats to a community or society at large.

Media Convergence: The process of integration and amalgamation of different types of media content and media technologies affecting the creating, dissemination, and consumption of media.

News: The principal output of journalism, based on information derived from recent or previously unknown events, often embedded with opinion and editorial content.

Newsgames: A broad genre of digital games that incorporate journalistic principles, content and narratives to full-fledged games.

User Agency: The activities, capacities, status, and motivations of users exerted while interacting with a system and that are embedded in the multifaceted nature of their role as facilitators, producers, consumers, and data providers.

User Engagement: A psychological state where users are either cognitively or emotionally involved with the system they are interacting with.