

Gamification misunderstood

 By [Joey Khuvutlu](#)

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I read an article on 'gamifying your brand' recently where the author describes gamification as a 'digital term' and a concept that is relevant for some brands and not others.

The author uses medical treatments and panel beating as examples where gamification would not be relevant. He also provides a very limited perspective of the concept of gamification by describing gamification as a process of building a game for your brand.

Objectives of gamification

I disagree. The term represents a much broader concept. Gamification is not about designing 'games' for your brand, it's about using game thinking and game mechanics to encourage and reward engagement of any kind by a consumer/end user.

The notion that some brands cannot apply game thinking is fallacious - it depends entirely on your objectives. The primary objective of game mechanics is to reward or at least give the feeling of reward or accomplishment to the user/consumer for spending time on a particular task.

This is a particularly useful strategy in an environment where brands are constantly fighting for attention.

Wikipedia gives a very clear definition of this concept, "Gamification techniques leverage people's natural desires for competition, achievement, status, self-expression, altruism, and closure."

Gamification mechanics can be as simple as having a progress bar on an online registration form. The user knows how far they are and how far they still have to go to finish. This encourages users to complete the form, task or process.

The right game plan

The idea that gamification principles are not relevant for some industries such as medical treatment, as stated in the article, is simply incorrect.

On the contrary, healthcare is a space that could greatly do with gamification as it is a space that requires communication to encourage or affect some form of action that leads to behaviour change. What better tactic to use than gamification?

Let's look at one of the most successful gamification strategies employed by a local brand - Discovery Vitality. Vitality is a system where you get points for living a healthier life - to be more specific, you get points for completing specific tasks, shopping at specific places, buying specific foods and participating in specific extramural activities.

These points are then redeemable as rewards in the form of travel, entertainment and shopping. If this concept is viewed within the context of a game, then the points could be explained as experience points which a player would redeem on skills in order to progress further in the game.

In this example we see that Discovery Vitality has not designed a game in the traditional sense, they have used game thinking to engage, educate and to activate.

Getting to the next level

Remember when Groupon first launched? A certain number of people had to sign up for a "deal-of-the-day" special to unlock and make the deal available to all, encouraging a potential buyer to forward the deal to as many of their contacts as possible. Remember that? Classic gamification.

The Groupon business was built on game thinking. Here we see an example where gamification is more than just a digital term, it is central to their business strategy.

Users in Groupon's gamified experience are relying on a number of psychological responses which are inherently central to gamification, such as achieving a status as an early adopter of the "deal," and working together with others to achieve an objective, which in this case is to unlock the deal and make it available to all.

Gamification is rooted in psychology and can be used in marketing, human resources, productivity enhancement, sustainability, training, health and wellness, innovation, and customer engagement.

When game thinking is applied appropriately and successfully it motivates action.

ABOUT JOEY KHUVUTLU

Joey Khuvutlu is the managing director at Hellocomputer.
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