



Emergent Gamification?

Description

The wonderful Pete Baikins recently reposted an article from [Mashable on LinkedIn](#) that got my hecacles up a little. It was all about how gamification was the spark of modern era of AI.

The article argued that early iterations of error filled AI chatbots had given rise to “accidental gamification” where it had become fun and playful to find ways to get Chat GPT to get it wrong. Just to lean in to this – I asked Gemini to summarise the article for you

This is an article about how gamification has influenced the development of artificial intelligence [AI]. It discusses the ways in which AI is being used in games and entertainment. People are creating games that challenge AI systems to perform tasks. These games can reveal both the strengths and weaknesses of AI. In turn, this helps researchers improve AI technology. The article also argues that the public’s playful engagement with AI is helping to shape its development.

- AI is having a major moment due in part to a game-like quality.
- People are having fun testing the limits of AI and in turn this is helping AI developers learn more about what their creations can and can’t do.
- This gamification of AI development started with researchers using video games as benchmarks for AI agents.

Anyway, I digress. The article went on to say the following

“The definition of gamification in AI should be expanded to include the tendency of technology to unintentionally become a game.”

The author event provided a sprawling “current” definition of gamification

ordering specific goals into a game structure, perhaps in order to make onerous activities

more attractive, or to make social media apps more addictive.

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Ignoring how horrible this is as a definition, nothing that is said in the rest of the article really supports the concept that the development of AI is related to gamification in any way. Play, yes. Gamefulness, yes. Gamification – **no**.

The reason is, we already have a word that describes what the author is discussing. “Emergence” or in this case, “Unintentional Emergence.” This refers to gameplay that arises from a system without being part of its original design.

We could consider using “Emergent Gamification,” but what is really being described is “Emergent Gameplay” or “Unintentional Emergent Gameplay.” Even by Mashable’s definition of gamification, what they describe does not fit. It is about emergent play or gameplay. Despite the headings in the article referring to gamification, the author never describes anything that fits any definition of gamification, even their own.

I’ll use my simplest definition of [gamification for this next bit](#) (as I have been in the industry for a while now, allow me that self indulgence). Basically I would say it is “The process of making something more game-like.”

Thus, we can define *Unintentional* Emergent Gamification

Gamification that arises in a system that was never designed to be gamified.

We could explain this for *Intentional* Emergent Gamification as

New forms of gamification that arise in a gamified system that has the tools to enable the creation of new gamified elements to increase engagement.

I suppose even these fall a little short, as gamification is a process!



image

So What is the Author Describing

The “game” aspect of AI described in the article is actually “Unintentional Emergent Gameplay,” as there was no deliberate attempt to provide tools for creating gameplay.

Humans are naturally inclined to find play wherever they can. It is one of the purest ways we learn and understand.

Gamification is amazing, but people really need to stop trying to say that it is the reason for everything. We did not invent the question mark!

Check out the article – beyond my rantiness, it does makes some excellent points!!
<https://mashable.com/article/ai-era-sparked-by-gamification>

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