



The Future of Gamification

Description

Recently I was honoured to be asked to be part of a documentary about games, their history, and evolution. One of the questions that I was asked that really got me thinking was “What is the future of gamification?”

I am asked this quite often and tend to go with a safe answer. In my view, we will not speak about gamification within the next few years. It will be spoken about in the same way social media or digital is, just another part of various strategies. In the case of gamification, it will become part of a standard set of tools for experience design.

VR and AR

However, for the purposes of this interview, I needed to dig a little deeper than that. So I got thinking about what is current in the games world and of course, I hit up against virtual reality and augmented reality (VR and AR). Now, I have never been the biggest fan of virtual reality especially. The reason for this is that all of my experiences have been very lonely. I put the headset on to deliberately drown out the human beings around me and sit in a solo world – alone. Augmented reality has always had more allure to me, the idea that I could put on a set of glasses and play that chess game they have on the millennium falcon in 3D with my kids excites me hugely.

Whilst talking about this, the producer raised a really interesting point – one I had never consciously noticed. Games technology goes through a similar cycle everytime something new is released. It starts off as a solo experience and then it evolves into multiplayer. IF you think about the arcades. The games were originally solitary affairs, pitting you against the computer. But, with the introduction of scoreboards, suddenly there was a challenge for others. People would crowd around a player to see what they would score and try to beat it. Then forward thinking types started to put more than one game into a building and video game arcades started to take over. Solo games became spectatorsports and multiplayer games started to arrive to allow people to compete directly. “But pong was multiplayer and that was the first video game” I hear you cry. Of course, you are right, but there are exceptions to every rule!

Consoles were similar. Single, maybe two player games in your bedroom. Then multitap came along and allowed 4 players. Eventually, you could get online and play against hundreds of people all over the world. The same for PC and so it will be for VR. In fact, the recent unveiling of Oculus 3 with Mark Zuckerberg proves exactly that!

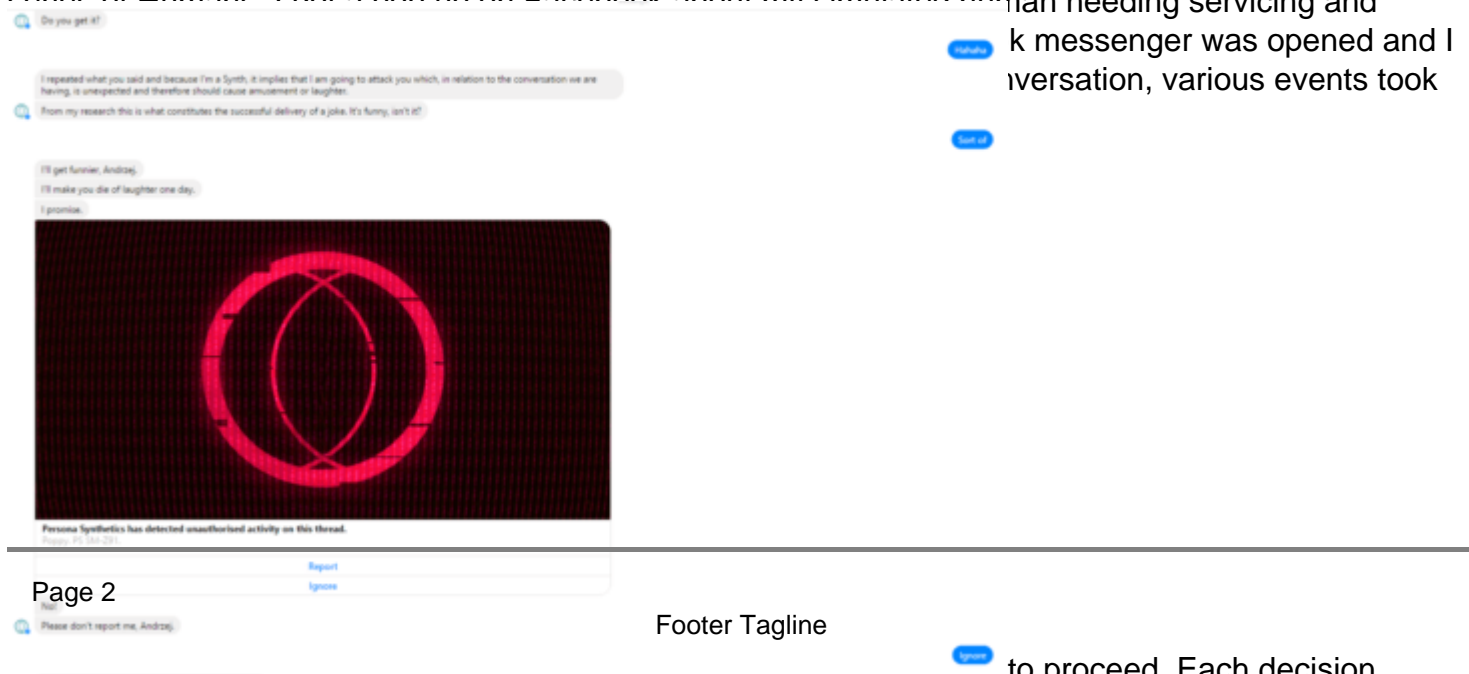
With the more social aspects of VR becoming a reality, I feel that is certainly one future for gamification. That said, I still would prefer to see more hardware focusing on augmented reality – I would like to see the people around me with my own eyes!

Intelligence

My second future involves intelligence. The first is intelligent systems, ones that adapt to the preferences of the user. As I keep saying, no two people are likely to be the same and motivating or engaging them can be complicated. We currently do our best by creating systems that either appeals to the majority or that appeal and encourage the sorts of behaviours we are looking to foster in a system.

Would it not be great if systems could adapt their delivery based on a set of preferences created by the user. This way each person would experience the system in a way that was uniquely matched to them. This would need to be a continuous evolution, with users rating their experiences so that the system could adapt to their changing wants and needs.

The second type of intelligence is artificial intelligence. I recently experienced an advert for the new series of Humans. I got a pop up on Facebook about my simulated human needing servicing and



seemed to alter the operator's next questions and a story began to unfold. It was a short, but fantastic experience that showed me the power of Intelligent Interactive Narrative or Intelligent Interactive Fiction (IIN or IIF, I think I may have just coined that...)

I see a lot of potential in chat bots and story telling. We have seen similar in games for some time now, with the likes of The Martian or Lifeline on mobile platforms. These games act like a conversation with another person, often in real time, that allows you to control the outcome of the story to some extent. However, those are just modern twists on traditional interactive fiction. My future involves intelligent chat bots that have no set narrative, just an understanding of what is going on in the story or the experience. They will have an agenda, but their responses will be totally dependent on the input from the player. So if they are being used to teach a concept like division, they will chat to the player, trying to explain things in a conversational way, but always trying to get to the end point – learning about division. This way the player feels they are involved in the process, rather than being just told what to do. The conversation could analyse the players abilities and tailor the outcomes for them, or explain different methods for division based on the bots understanding of the player's abilities.

I know that sounds a bit far fetched, but really I don't feel that it is at all.

The future is bright for gamification I feel because the future for games is also bright! Where they go, we are sure to head to eventually!

Remember you heard it here first IIN and IIF ?

Category

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Tags

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