

**Title:** Gamified social media User engagement and the individualization of online communities

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### **Abstract**

A decade after the launch of Facebook, social media has expanded and established itself as one of the everyday life arenas for communication for millions of users. However, the standardized services such as communities without thematic approaches (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) have started to see a dip in user engagement.

This paper examines the introduction of gamification techniques within new theme-oriented social media. Gamification, defined here as the use of game thinking and game mechanics in non-gaming environments, adds a layer of game elements primarily in order to improve user engagement. Methodologically, this paper uses three gamified social media communities as case studies to analyze some of their functionalities and how they are implemented in order to promote user engagement. This paper deconstructs gamification into elements that can be implemented into an online community system. These elements are placed in three different categories: dynamics, which relate to the narrative and purpose of the gamified layer, providing the system with a sense of direction; mechanics, which relate to the processes aimed to create engagement and the strategies aimed to provide the system with momentum; and components, which relate to the visible game elements embedded in the system aimed to create flows of interaction with the users. These elements are then evaluated in terms of level of playfulness and the underlying intention of implementation, whether it is to motivate engagement, participation, or to promote social change.

Gamification has shown to be an effective method to attract the attention and engagement of users in various domains, and it has been widely implemented in digital communities as an attempt to increase user engagement, by individualizing social media and placing the user at the center of the service and providing tools for self-reflection and interactions with users that share similar interests. Theoretically, this paper focuses on the motivational aspects of games and discusses the approaches on which they can be incorporated in social media systems.

With the aim of contributing to a fairly under researched topic in academia, but with large implications for the industry, this paper ends with a discussion on the potentialities of

this new approach of social media in terms of positive ideals and dangerous abuses, as well as the shift of focus from the social aspect of communities to an individualized user-centric view, and what it represents for the digital public sphere.

**Title:** What's a like worth? A multi-level analysis of collective mediated civic participation on Facebook

**Bio:** Cédric Courtois is a postdoc research and teaching assistant at Ghent University's department of Communication Studies, Belgium ([Cedric.Courtois@UGent.be](mailto:Cedric.Courtois@UGent.be)).

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### **Abstract**

While formal civic engagement is declining, e.g. by taking part in civic organizations or public manifestations, there is a seeming increase in using various online media to have one's voice heard. In the current debate on the supposed decline of formal civic participation, the role of social media constitutes an important element. In theory, social media potentially afford opportunities to access and to fuel various domains of associational interaction (i.e. public spheres), which are considered a precondition to actively develop the necessary literacies to exercise civic agency (Dahlgren, 2006). Still, despite scholarly attention for the topic, means of participation have been empirically under-researched (Couldry, Livingstone & Markham, 2009, p. 28).

In our presentation, we present the results of a multi-level study on collective mediated civic participation on Facebook, collecting 774 valid survey responses through 72 invited Dutch-language groups of pages. It centres on civic goals in the fields of equality, civil rights, animal protection, environmental care, mobility, and urban development. The individual survey data were further supplemented by collecting group and page sizes, next to harvesting their interactions (i.e. posts, comments, rates, likes, shares).

We found that increased levels of mediated civic participation through Facebook initiatives are explained by the experience of social support, next to appropriating it as a means to communicate involvement to the social network, rather than the belief of making an actual difference. As such, it affirms its use as a tool to raise local awareness. In second instance, both individual and collective factors explain the effectiveness attributed to a collective Facebook initiative. The results suggest perception of individual efforts as fundamental building blocks of effectiveness, although this does not immediately translate into actual individual behaviour. At the same time, it shows that the individual sense of social embeddedness and actual collective interaction support the idea of collective efficacy.

**Title:** The Impact of Technologies on Generative Activities on Social Media

**Bio:** Corinne Tan is a Teaching Fellow and a PhD candidate at the Melbourne Law School, Australia (h.tan1@student.unimelb.edu.au).

### **Abstract**

Technological advances have resulted in the vulnerability of user-generated content to exploitation, and the blurring of the rights and obligations of the producers of such output, who are more often than not, users of the creative efforts of others. This problem is exacerbated against the contemporary backdrop of that which may be termed the social media phenomena. As such, it is pertinent to examine how the generative activities undertaken by users of such sites resulting in creative content, are regulated. One factor of regulation, amongst others, will be the architecture of existing technologies imposed on users of social media sites. I note that widely adopted technologies have the potential of prematurely solidifying positions in ongoing debates and further that, there is a dearth of existing literature addressing this issue particularly in relation to social media sites. On this basis, my paper intends to examine how the technological designs of four dominant social media sites (being Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Wikipedia) impact upon the generative activities of their users.

Drawing on prior scholarly reflections on the regulatory functions of technologies and taking an empirical approach, my paper will interrogate the impact of technologies on generative activities undertaken by users, in relation to the creation, modification and dissemination of content. More particularly, these technologies will refer to the contact points established by the technological designs of these sites with their users, which are interacted with, when users engage in generative activities. I will identify and discuss features of these social media sites that encourage particular generative activities, as well as those which reduce the impact of generative activities undertaken. Additionally, features of such sites preventing or constraining users from engaging in generative activities will also be surveyed.

The empirical work undertaken for the purpose of this paper will inform its conclusion evaluating the impact technological designs have on the generative activities of users on social media sites. This work will have wider implications on the regulation of user behaviour on social media sites, by other modalities of regulation, including copyright.

**Title:** “A “hint” of public space? Teenagers’ news sharing activities on Facebook”

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### **Abstract**

For younger generations, traditional media such as newspapers and television are not the agenda builders anymore. It is Facebook that plays that role. Facebook is a place where teenagers share information about themselves and build their privacy (Madden et al., 2013). Online activities carry on social and urban activities: news and public space’s concerns can take place on Facebook if friendship is reproduced (Oppenchain, 2011). At the same time, online media offer extended forms of activities about news (Boczkowski, 2012) and social networks spread information by special paths of attention (Bakshy, 2012).

I’m interested here in the co-construction of younger identities and friendship through online use of news: does Facebook initiate teenagers into public space? The fieldwork was realized in four high schools, from different social and cultural settings. It was based on a survey (N=500) that presented a sample of news topics, from sport to culture or economy, and asked respondents their possible Facebook activities about those topics. I also conducted 20 collective interviews and 10 individual interviews.

This paper will explore three questions: - What are the activities concerning news on a teenager’s Facebook wall? - What are the topics interviewees are concerned with? - What are the types of profiles’ activity about news? The research shows that 1) young people don’t care about news on Facebook, but they pay underhanded attention to information as it can help them in their exploration of themselves and of their friends; 2) that they extend their centers of interests as sport or music from off line to on line, and that collective construction through pages and groups are places of discover; 3) that the kind of expression (status, like, comment, etc.) is more determinant than the topics. Facebook is a place where teenagers experiment their interactions with oblique concern, and this experimentation can invite them to an individual and selected position in public space.