5.1 A DOUBLE-EDGED GAME

Game elements and principles are steadily spreading to a multiverse of non-game domains (Deterding, Sicart, Nacke, O’Hara & Dixon, 2011). Gamification has been endorsed as a booster of user engagement (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled & Nacke, 2011; Hamari, Koivisto & Sarsa, 2014) and has become a trend in the business world (Bogost, 2014), popular discourse (Selinger, Sadowski & Seager, 2015) and scientific literature* (Hamari et al., 2014). Though its efficiency is highly dependent on the context and the users † addressed (Hamari et al., 2014), it is celebrated for its potential to evoke motivation and joyful involvement. Parallel to its rise to a global trend, gamification has also been criticized as a consulting gimmick and a tool for the exploitation of employees, customers and users (Bogost, 2013, 2014). Critics of gamification regard it as an attention economy‡ tool that is used to seduce people into “willing self-surveillance” (Whitson, 2014), generating data (Lampe, 2014), devoting attention and time for the profit of businesses (Bogost, 2014).

On a psychological level, gamification evokes further concerns due to its reliance on principles similar to the addictive design of gambling. Gamification’s focus on flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) as the main virtue of uninterrupted online involvement resembles the machine zone

---

* Google scholar search for “gamification” returns over 46,000 results as of August 2019.
† By “users” we mean active prosumers (Toffler & Alvin, 1980) that appropriate, shape and re-invent online tools. We consciously chose the term “users” since it is commonly used in tech and online discourse.
‡ The term “attention economy” refers to an approach in which human attention is understood as a limited resource that serves as a “new currency of business” (Davenport & Beck, 2001).
that Natascha Schuell (Schuell, 2014) reveals as the core of slot machines’ psychological mechanisms. Machine zone refers to a design strategy that “uses obfuscation in user interface to entice non-reflexive and prolonged engagement with a digital device” (Gekker, 2016). This principle is best exemplified by the statement of one of Schuell’s informants: “I don’t want to win, I want to continue” (Schuell, 2014). Similarly, gamification is not per se about winning but about perpetuating the flow of joyful involvement. This very flow is what designers of online environments aim at. In particular, designers of social media attempt to harness the power of computer games to involve and entertain people. If the dominant narrative of the time is “fun is good” (Selinger et al., 2015), app designers can hardly ignore it.

This chapter acknowledges the complexity of gamification beyond a mere hopeful utopia of motivation on the one hand, or a dystopic weapon of control on the other. In our opinion, gameful applications hold a great potential to enhance users’ experience, in particular with regard to involvement and fun. Nevertheless, we also acknowledge that gamification can turn into exploitationware (Bogost, 2013) for the purposes of manipulation and surveillance. Hence, we encourage transparent applications that comply with ethical guidelines. These principles are also a part of our interdisciplinary research on gamification and social media use among adolescents, specifically with regard to privacy and the transparency of applied psychological models (Goebl et al., 2018; Goebl et al., 2019; Jovicic, Goebl & Hristova, 2019). As part of our empirical research, we co-designed a serious game together with adolescents revealing issues of gamification and social media use. We subscribe to Waltz and Deterding’s mediating position that recognizes gamification’s problematic aspects but also its relevance (Walz & Deterding, 2015) in the ludic century (Zimmermann, 2014). With the coming-of-age of the digital natives (Prensky, 2001) in industrialized societies, gamification cannot simply be ignored as it starts to shape the new standards for mediated communication and work. Therefore, it is necessary that its issues are addressed in a more nuanced manner* and beyond a “good-evil” simplification.

5.2 GAMIFYING SOCIAL MEDIA

Being aware of this ambiguous potential is crucial since gameful approaches have become influential in various fields such as education (Davis & Singh, 2016). For an overview of critical approaches to gamification, see Oravec (2015).
2015; de Freitas et al., 2017), environmental issues (Froehlich, 2014; Dumit, 2017), rehabilitation (Mihelj et al., 2012) and, more notably, social media (Lampe, 2014). Social networking sites (SNS)* and their gamified features have become an integral part of the daily life of billions of people worldwide. Social media shapes the new standard for online social interaction through gamified elements (e.g. points, leaderboards and badges). Upon closer examination, the symbiosis between social media and gamification is not fortuitous. According to Lampe, “both genres of interaction combine social and technical architectures to shape and enable user practice” (Lampe, 2014). Indeed, the success of social media and gamification seems to heavily rely on channeling and altering social practices through new technological affordances.†

5.2.1 Interrelation between Gamification and Social Media

Hamari and Koivisto describe gamification as “a manifold socio-technological phenomenon with claimed potential to provide a multitude of benefits such as enjoyment as well as social benefits through communities and social interaction” (Hamari & Koivisto, 2015). Online community building is undoubtedly at the heart of SNS’ mission, yet the alleged social benefit has an equally powerful dark side, for instance, in the context of social comparison (Panger, 2014) enabled by quantification (Whitson, 2014). For example, Likes in various forms do not merely boost users’ confidence (Burrow & Rainone, 2017) but also provide a leeway for competition often resulting in power struggles and envy (Weinstein, 2017; Panger, 2014). Likes and followership become powerful tools for negotiating hierarchies and social status. Community building and social comparison are closely intertwined aspects of social interaction, especially in the context of gamified social media that quantifies social bonds and appreciation. The interplay of such aspects contributes to the ambiguous effects of SNS on users’ well-being (Weinstein, 2018).

Considering the pivotal relevance of social motivations for the functioning of gamification, it is not surprising that it resonates so profoundly with social media. Previous research indicates that social motivations are, indeed, strong predictors of whether gamification is perceived positively

---

* In this chapter, social media is used as an umbrella term including social networking sites (SNS) and instant messaging (IM) services that also include additional social features (e.g. WhatsApp, Snapchat).

† The term affordance (Gibson, 1966) originates from ecological psychology and refers to the action opportunities that the environment (may it be offline or online) offers to an agent.
or negatively (Hamari & Koivisto, 2013). Hamari and colleagues argue that gamification should, hence, "be imbued with mechanisms that afford for social interaction in order to enhance social influence and the perception of reciprocal benefits" (Hamari & Koivisto, 2013).

Gamification has become an integral part of designing SNS to such an extent that it would be difficult to imagine social media without it. Indeed, one could hardly picture platforms like Facebook without gamified tokens such as Likes and Views, that by quantifying social relations, enabling social comparison and high scoring* among other relational practices. Lampe argues that this incorporation of gamification in social media is not a coincidence since early social media designers were familiar with games’ principles and readily applied them to the emerging SNS domain (Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2006). Designers were aware of the power of gameful experiences and could successfully implement structural gamification (e.g. badges, leaderboards) and content gamification (e.g. making content more story-like) (Kapp, 2012) in the social media services they were working on. SNS platforms have been since relying on quantification and gamification tools that help them retain users’ attention for as long as possible.

5.2.2 Persuasive Design Application

As mentioned above, gamification’s main objective to maximize users’ involvement in an activity overlaps with one of the main concerns of social media: encouraging users to engage more actively with its platforms, to generate content and to interact with others (Lampe, 2014). Hence, technical affordances are created in order to incite desirable behaviors that signify active use.

The wish to spark such behaviors is where social media gets intertwined with persuasion. There is a salient parallel between social media and games with regard to persuasive techniques. Microsuasion describes persuasive elements that are applied in an otherwise non-persuasive context and are not to be confused with macrosuasion products (e.g. preventive serious games for health) that are created for the sole purpose of behavior change. According to Fogg, “video games are exceptionally rich in microsuasion elements. The overall goal of most games is to provide entertainment, not to persuade. But during the entertainment experience, players are bombarded

---

* High score refers to the practice of comparing one’s points to one’s own previous score. In SNS, for example, a user can compare the likes she got on her last post to her previous posts and try to maximize the likes she would get the next time.
with microsuasion elements, sometimes continuously, designed to persuade them to keep playing” (Fogg, 2003). In a similar vein, social networks’ primary purpose is not to persuade but to facilitate communication and community building online. However, SNS apply gamification elements to persuade users to spend more time with their platforms (Lampe, 2014) and, hence, to produce more data and meta-data. De facto, gamified elements serve as a microsuasion and a productivity tool (Whitson, 2014) for SNS nudging its users to generate more content. This is also in line with Bogost’s term *persuasive games* (Bogost, 2013) that he proposed as an alternative to the, in his opinion misleading, term “gamification.” Due to gamification’s potential behavioral, social and motivational impact on users, it is crucial to scrutinize gamified elements used by social media platforms in the light of motivational psychology and persuasive design. In the following section, we will present an overview and analysis of gamification elements used by three major social media platforms—Snapchat, Facebook (including the Messenger app) and Instagram as of August 2019.

5.3 ANALYTIC APPROACH

5.3.1 Selected Platforms

Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook were selected due to their strong impact on shaping the face of social media today.

- Facebook is the largest SNS with the highest number of active users worldwide: 2.41 billion monthly active users as of June 2019 (Zephoria, 2019). It is also the oldest of the three platforms: founded in 2004. It is safe to say that Facebook heavily shaped users’ understanding of social media platforms. It also popularized *Likes*—points awarded by other users as a sign of their appreciation for a piece of content.

- Instagram is a photo-sharing platform that has gained high popularity, especially among young people. In 2012, the platform was bought by Facebook, Inc. In the last few years, the platform progressively gained more attention also due to its successful implementation of online marketing strategies. For example, influencer marketing became a hype over the last few year due to its potential to reach and appeal to a vast number of users on Instagram (De Veirman et al., 2017). In this business model, influencers—people who have accumulated a large

* The capitalized element names refer to the gamification element type (e.g. Points), the names written in italics are the specific element names introduced by the platforms (e.g. Likes) and the normal font names – items from the element category.
followership in Instagram—are often approached by businesses with offers to advertise their products on the platform.

- Snapchat is the platform that popularized highly disruptive new rules and elements to the social media format in recent years. It capitalizes on ephemeral content that disappears upon being viewed and it also offers a variety of creativity tools (augmented reality filters, video and picture editors etc.). The platform has also shifted away from classical gamification elements that are based on the accumulation of items (e.g. Likes) and has brought forward elements that thrive in its ephemeral environment: Snap Streaks and Stories. Whereas Stories disappear after 24 hours along with their views metrics, Snap Streaks allow users to get points for their pictures exchange even when the sent content is long gone from their chats. In other words, this relational score—the Snap Streak—quantifies the number of days in a row that content (even after its disappearance) has been exchanged.

5.3.2 Selected Gamification Elements

To the present date, a universal gamification elements classification has not yet been agreed upon in scientific literature since ”it is unclear which affordances are unique to games as well as which psychological outcomes can be strictly considered to stem from games” (Hamari et al., 2014). As Sailer and colleagues point out, game elements classification attempts ”should help to grasp how diverse game elements could possibly look like, but they should be understood as non-exhaustive lists” (Sailer, Hense, & Klevers, 2014). Whereas multifaceted accounts of possible gamification elements (Marczewski, 2015; Robinson & Bellotti, 2013) are available, we adopted a more concise framework for our analysis: Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa’s categorization of ten motivational gamification affordances (Hamari et al., 2014). This categorization was selected since it is based on elements that are most commonly applied in existing gamification applications rather than on theoretical approaches to what elements could be conceived of. The selected ten types of elements (Hamari et al., 2014) are also commonly present in the body of literature on gamification elements:

- **Points** (Hamari et al., 2014; Marczewski, 2015; Sailer et al., 2014; Werbach & Hunter, 2012)
- **Leaderboards** (Hamari et al., 2014; Marczewski, 2015; Sailer et al., 2014; Werbach & Hunter, 2012)
The chapter does not offer an exhaustive account of all gamified mechanisms used by Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat but rather an analysis of their most prominent features. Table 5.1 consists of feature lists provided by official SNS resources (e.g. user support and blog entries), by systematic investigation of apps and by lists provided by the platforms or by external analysts. Some gamification features applied on the platforms fulfill multiple functions and will, therefore, be presented in several gamification categories that apply to them. Furthermore, we focus on the gamified affordances intended by designers rather than on those playfully invented and spread by the prosumers in practice*. Challenges that have not been introduced by the platforms’ developers have been excluded from this analysis.

5.4 GAMIFICATION ELEMENTS IN SNAPCHAT, INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK

This section introduces an overview of gamification elements used in Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook, as well as the motivational mechanisms that underpin their intended influence. The work of Sailer, Hense, Mandl and Klevers (Sailer et al., 2014), as well as of Zhang (Zhang, 2008), will be used to analyze the motivational appeal of these gamification elements. For each type of gamified elements, we will first outline its applications in the three platforms and then analyze its motivational pull with regard to different theories. According to Sailer and colleagues, there are six main perspectives in motivation research (Sailer et al., 2014): the trait perspective, the behaviourist learning perspective, the cognitive perspective, 

* One example is the ice bucket challenge that went viral on various social media platforms in 2014.
TABLE 5.1 Gamification Elements in Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook as of August 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Snapchat</th>
<th>Instagram</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>Views (Stories)</td>
<td>Views (Stories, Videos)</td>
<td>Views (Videos, Stories)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snap Streaks</td>
<td>Reactions (Stories)</td>
<td>Reactions (Posts, Stories)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snapchat Score</td>
<td>Posts</td>
<td>Shares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Following</td>
<td>Followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaderboards</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badges and Achievements</td>
<td>100 Streaks</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>Friendversaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Top Fan Badge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story or Theme</td>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stickers</td>
<td>Posts</td>
<td>Posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lenses</td>
<td>Memories</td>
<td>Memories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thematic Snaps</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My Year in Snaps</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotions and Actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Friends’ Birthdays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Goals</td>
<td>“Snapchat is for friends. Find them in your contacts”</td>
<td>Recommended or Recent Stories: “Watch all”</td>
<td>“Say hi to … with a wave”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Enable Location to explore Snap Map”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Say hi to your new FB friend”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Try with a friend” (lense)</td>
<td></td>
<td>“What’s on your mind?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Add a short bio/links”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Birthdays: “help your friend celebrate”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Snapchat</th>
<th>Instagram</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Views (Stories)</td>
<td>Views (Stories, Videos)</td>
<td>Views (Stories, Videos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chat Notifications</td>
<td>Chat Notifications</td>
<td>Chat Notifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hourglass</td>
<td>“You are all caught up”</td>
<td>Fundraising Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Icons for:</td>
<td>Icon for:</td>
<td>Icon for:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 100 Streaks</td>
<td>• “You are all caught up”</td>
<td>• Marriage Announcements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Friend Emojis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Videos for:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Videos for:</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Friendversary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• My Year in Snaps</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Year in Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pull-To-Refresh</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Birthday Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lenses for:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Birthdays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>“You are all caught up”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fundraising Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Streaks</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Profile Info (complete)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snap Games</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>“Did you know?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instant Games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the perspective of self-determination (Ryan, Rigby & Przybylski, 2006), the perspective of interest (Krapp, 1993) and the perspective of emotion (Astleitner, 2000). Following Sailer and colleagues’ example, we combine facets of those perspectives to characterize the variety of gamification elements used in social media. For each item, we will indicate the perspective with reference to which element is analyzed.

5.4.1 Points
Points are one of the most influential and widely applied gamification elements across multiple domains (Hamari et al., 2014; Sailer et al., 2014; Werbach & Hunter, 2012). All three platforms have some form of Points, i.e. numerical values that are used for quantifying activity. Facebook features few different manifestations: the number of Reactions (like, love, haha, wow, sad, angry), Views (of videos and stories*), Shares, Friends and Followers. Similarly, Instagram also applies many variations of Points: Likes, Video Views, Story Views and Reactions, number of Followers, Following and Posts. Most of these metrics are also visible to one’s friends and followers and hence also enable social comparison. Story Views and Reactions are an exception since they can only be viewed privately by the user for the 24 hours in which the content is displayed to other users. In contrast to the two platforms, Snapchat offers a less diverse scope of Points manifestations: Story Views, Snap Streaks and Snap Score. As with Facebook and Instagram, Story Views in Snapchat are not publicly displayed. The platform supports a further gamified feature called Snapchat Score. This overall score accounts for the number of snaps the user has sent altogether, in addition to the points the user has gained by playing Snap Games. Snapchat Score is visible for all of the user’s contacts thereby enabling social comparison among users. A further development has been the introduction of Snap Streaks: a numerical feature that has been highly influential among adolescents in shaping their socio-communicative culture and practices. In order to uphold a Streak, one needs to send and receive at least one picture or video per day with the same friend. Hence, this gamified element motivates users to actively use the platform on a daily basis and to generate content in order to maximize their Streak count. As already mentioned, the Streak score allows users to gather points despite the fact that the content of their snaps disappears. In other words,

* The Story feature originates from Snapchat and was subsequently adopted by Facebook and Instagram in 2016.
Snap Streaks provide a long-lasting quantification that thrives within the context of ephemeral communication.

In more general terms, ”points function as immediate positive reinforcements” (Sailer et al., 2014) that are valuable as immediate feedback (behavior learning perspective), and hence as an enabler of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) (perspective of interest) experiences (Sailer et al., 2014). Points are also virtual rewards (behaviorist learning perspective) for actions (Sailer et al., 2014): for example, Snap Streak score rewards users for composing and viewing at least one snap daily. However, there is a difference between points visible only privately to the user and points that are also publicly accessible to one’s network. Publicly visible points also serve social functions such as signifying social relatedness (Zhang, 2008) or enabling social comparison (Burrow & Rainone, 2017; Panger, 2014). Publicly available points of various types also enable the negotiation of social status and power relations (trait perspective) (Sailer et al., 2014) with individuals establishing leadership and followership (Zhang, 2008) relations. This is exemplified by the social practices unfolding around Likes, Views, Followers and Streaks. According to Burrow and Rainone ”with billions of likes conferred daily, the common Facebook user may be justified in worrying less about whether anyone will like what they post and instead wonder just how many likes they will receive” (2017).

Points also have a social and psychological impact since they can foster higher self-esteem (Burrow & Rainone, 2017) and social relatedness (Zhang, 2008). For example, in the case of Snap Streaks, users develop their streak as a quantified friendship project based on shared daily effort. Paradoxically, points can trigger exactly the opposite processes, too: questioning self-worth and developing a dependence on the number of likes received (Burrow & Rainone, 2017). As previously mentioned, these quantified social appreciation tokens also enable competition, unfavorable social comparison and envy (Panger, 2014; Vogel, Rose, Roberts & Eckles, 2014; Weinstein, 2017) among users. Furthermore, in our empirical research among Viennese adolescents, we observed that quantification leads to users keeping a personal high score (Hristova et al., in prep). For example, they are trying to match and excel their own like scores with each further posting. Commonly, users also develop strategies of how to maximize their score, for example, through adjusting the timing and frequency of their posts (Hristova et al., in prep.). All aforementioned experiences, be them positive or negative in valence, are powerful motivators that gamification, particularly in the field of social media, has been able to utilize.
5.4.2 Leaderboards

In contrast to other gamified online platforms,* Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat do not, to our knowledge, include Leaderboards. Until 2018, Snapchat used to feature a *Best Friends* list that propelled contacts with whom one communicated most often to a privileged section similar to the quick-dial list of mobile phones. Initially, this list was also visible to all users (SocialBuzz, 2016) and functioned as a leaderboard of social relatedness (*self-determination perspective*) (Ryan et al., 2006; Sailer et al., 2014). This motivated users with a strong affiliation motive (Sailer et al., 2014) since the *Best Friends* feature revealed who are the people with whom one communicates most frequently. Being on top of the leaderboard could also be connected to power motives (*trait perspective*) (Sailer et al., 2014) when the *Best Friend* title is viewed as a token of dominance over other competitors for the status. This applies especially in the case of love interests. The leaderboard of social relations, combined with the disappearance of chat messages and photos, has been reported to elicit jealousy among Snapchat users (Utz, Muscanell & Khalid, 2015; Social Buzz, 2016). In 2018, the platform removed this feature, however, the *Friend list* emojis are still available but are no longer visible to one’s entire network.

Despite the notable absence of Leaderboards as a gamification mechanism, prosumers often use the platforms to create leaderboards of a sort in their offline interaction. For example, in our empirical work with adolescents, we noticed that they often knew by heart who has the highest streak among them (Hristova et al., in prep.). This online achievement was perceived as important and also provided a ground for the negotiation of social status outside of the social media context. In Instagram, one could compare account or hashtag statistics and generate the list of the top Instagram accounts or hashtags. However, this is done externally by reviewers and is not an automatic feature of the app. Furthermore, the scores of top accounts are out of reach for the average users, who can primarily compare with peers from their own social network. To sum up, it occurs peculiar that the highly popular Leaderboards (Hamari et al., 2014; Marczewski, 2015; Sailer et al., 2014; Werbach & Hunter, 2012) have been largely absent from Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. The reasons for this need to be further scrutinized in depth in future research.

---

* For example, StackOverflow and Dict.cc among others.
5.4.3 Badges and Achievements

Snapchat has been intensively implementing badges and achievements. Up until April 2019, the platform also had a Trophies feature including 52 achievements one could unlock using the app. In 2019, the feature has been removed and replaced by Charms (Snapchat, 2019). Charms enable less competition and comparison than Trophies. For instance, badges are automatically generated for astrological compatibility and for a shared average Snap Score of two users. Charms are also different from Trophies in one more significant way: whereas Trophies were visible to all user's contacts, Charms are only displayed between two contacts. Visibility can affect the motivational pull of the gamification element. For example, this badge can bring satisfaction with one's personal achievement even if seen only by the particular user. When displayed to others it can, in addition, work as a token of power and social status. Another achievement that has been displayed only to the pair of directly involved users is the 100, 200 and so on days streak milestone. However, these icons are only visible to each of the two users and they can then decide if they would like to share with others.

While Instagram does not have an explicit Achievement feature, its users generally highly regard and strive for reaching a high likes or followers score. An example are shout-for-shout campaigns where a user can invite their network for participation, for example, by the outreach: “help my friend reach 10K followers.” In the last few years, Facebook has invested into signifying and celebrating achievements such as fundraising results and yearly Facebook friendship anniversaries (Friendversaries). In 2019, the platform also added a Top Fan badge that is awarded to users who have most often visited a certain Facebook fan page. The badge can also be displayed on one’s own Facebook wall where all of their friends can view it.

The drive to achieve something, or to master a competence, resonates with the way Badges and Achievements are used in the three social media platforms discussed here. For example, important achievements such as reaching the 100 days streak are shown only to the two people holding the streak. They may decide to then share this achievement in their story, but it would not be automatically displayed to others. Similarly, Friendversaries on Facebook need to be approved by one of the friends before being posted to their wall, and Charms on Snapchat are only associated and displayed to the two people involved.

According to Sailer et al., Badges “fulfill the players’ need for success and thereby address people with a strong power motive” especially since they
also work as "virtual status symbols" (Sailer et al., 2014). Furthermore, the author argues that they also appeal to fulfill the need for achievement (trait perspective) (Sailer et al., 2014) that creates a feeling of competence (self-determination perspective) (Sailer et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2006). In particular, one of the new Snapchat Charms calculates the average Snapchat Score of the pair of users. The score can be within the scope of five different tiers of achievement (from newbie to hero). This particular type of badge also facilitates group belonging and emphasizes membership (trait perspective, self-determination theory) (Sailer et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2006).

5.4.4 Levels
Levels, in the strict sense, have not been adopted by Instagram and Facebook. Only Snapchat includes a few elements that fulfill functions somewhat similar to those of Levels. Passing the threshold of 100 days Snap Streak is signified as a transition of importance. This is not to say that the task difficulty is increased after achieving the 100 count: the streak maintenance procedure remains the same. However, our research participants report (Hristova et al., in prep.) feeling that their streak score is even more at stake when it grows beyond significant milestones such as 100 or 200 streaks. The same applied to the already inactive feature of Trophies, where the account would receive a different icon depending on their Snap Score. This principle is now partially outsourced to the above-mentioned average score Charm where users are assigned one of five levels of Snapchat mastery depending on their average Snapchat Score. Despite the tiered structure of this charm, there is no increase of task difficulty with the label upgrade. There is one more mechanism on Snapchat that resembles levels: the Friend Emojis that are being upgraded when two users snap with each other most frequently for (1) two weeks and then (2) two months or to signify that they have become each other’s #1 best friend. Again, there is no clear increase of difficulty or leveling, however, users often apply strategic communication in order to improve their status with selected contacts (Hristova et al., in prep.).

The main motivations triggered by the outlined level-like elements in Snapchat can be subdivided in the following major categories: (1) achievement motive (trait perspective) (Sailer et al., 2014); (2) belonging (trait perspective) (Sailer et al., 2014); and (3) power motive (trait perspective) (Sailer et al., 2014) and leadership–followership (Zhang, 2008). The achievement motive applies to streaks and the average score Charm in particular where the “level” upgrade is triggered by a transition on a quantitative scale. The
belonging and power motives are intertwined in gamification elements such as Streaks and Friends Emojis. The desire to receive a token that signifies one’s relation may be provoked by the symbolic and sentimental value of the token or by the wish to display the relation to others, and hence, claim desired social status. For example, a person may desire to be their significant other’s best friend on Snapchat because it would signify a positive emotional experience of closeness. However, the same wish may be dictated by the need to confirm the social relationship (and its intensity) and protect it against potential competitors (Utz et al., 2015).

5.4.5 Stories and Theme
Stories are a storytelling practice based on content disappearing after 24 hours and are an integral part of all three social media platforms. Wargo (2015) explores how Snapchat stories are used for the purpose of creative storytelling and sharing phenomenological experiences and emotions from one’s embodied perspective. Apart from Stories, Snapchat allows users to save their pictures to Memories—the app gallery where snaps are stored that would otherwise disappear from users’ conversation. The platform also offers thematic and sponsored Lenses. The users need to switch on their selfie camera and can then play with the selected augmented reality lens that adds virtual features (e.g. animal features or marketing signs) to their image in real time. The sponsored lenses are developed for the purpose of online marketing campaigns.* A further vehicle for narratives and themes is Snapchat Stickers. Users can manually search for stickers with resonating narrative or emotional value. However, a selection of stickers is also automatically recommended to the user based on parameters such as local time (e.g. time stamp or a moon/sun image), weekday and weather (e.g. clouds and rain images). Finally, the platform sends thematic snaps to its users for special occasions, for example, Mother’s Day.

Facebook and Instagram primarily allow their users to share experiences through posts. Posts are their most fundamental broadcasting affordance and the main source of content for the two networks. However, Facebook attaches further story-sharing affordances to their posts, such as the Emotions and Activity labels. Users can label the feeling of their post, for example, feeling wonderful or can signify the activity that the post is related to traveling, attending, eating, listening to or supporting among others. Each activity and emotion has a particular emoji that is displayed

* An example is the success of the Taco Bell augmented reality lens in 2016.
along with the post’s content. Other thematic and storytelling features in Facebook are Friendversaries, friends’ birthdays and fundraising for a particular cause. Facebook and Instagram also have a Memories function that retrieves older photo content and periodically presents these reminiscences to users.

The goal of all these particular features is to encourage emotional sharing and experiencing (Zhang, 2008). While joyful stories may foster positive feelings (perspective of emotion [Astleitner, 2000]) they also may invoke negative emotions such as jealousy (Weinstein, 2017, 2018). They are also important from the perspective of interest: “gamification meets players’ interests and sparks interest for the situational context” (Sailer et al., 2014). This is exemplified by Snapchat stickers or sponsored (often commercial) lenses that are supposed to entice users to devote their attention to certain themes and stories.

5.4.6 Clear Goals

In this subsection, we focus on explicit Clear Goals that the platforms provide to their users. Basic goals defined by the platforms, such as “message,” “search” and “edit profile” are excluded from this analysis because they are interfaces for the most basic platform functions. Instagram generally abstains from setting many explicit goals for their users with one exception. In addition to the basic action affordances mentioned above, Instagram recommends recent stories to its users by displaying them at multiple occasions in the feed and blending in the button “watch all.”

In contrast, Facebook is full of verbally formulated goals. The focus of these commands is to nudge users to communication or to content creation: birthday wishes—“help your friend celebrate their birthday”; saluting new friends—“say hi to your new Facebook friend”; posting content—“What’s on your mind, . . . ?” Whereas these goals are purely verbally formulated, actions such as waving at friends as a simple conversation starter are introduced both via an icon (a waving hand) and a corresponding verbal phrase: “Say hi to . . . with a wave.” Similarly, Snapchat relies mostly on blends of verbal commands and symbols to set clear goals for its users. For instance, the message “enable location to explore Snap Map” is pictured on a world map and “try with a friend” is displayed next to filters and lenses (Snapchat, as of August 2019). However, Snapchat also uses purely verbally phrased calls for action as in the case of the message “Snapchat is for friends. Find them in your contacts.” In design terms, involving the user with verbally phrased goals is a very common way to
lend social characteristics to an online platform and to stimulate the user to act upon the digital product (Fogg, 2003). In other words, "whether asking questions, offering congratulations for completed tasks, or reminding the user to update software, dialog boxes can lead people to infer that the computing product is animate in some way" (Fogg, 2003). According to Sailer, these explicit formulations can be motivating as they set clear and achievable goals that motivate the users to complete them (Sailer et al., 2014). Furthermore, according to perspective of interest: “Players are likely to be motivated if gamification enhances the feeling of flow by providing a clear goal” (Sailer et al., 2014). Last but not least, when completed, the tasks may create the sense of competence and achievement (Zhang, 2008). To sum up, clear goals are important from the cognitive perspective and from the perspective of interest (Sailer et al., 2014).

5.4.7 Feedback
Feedback is a well-known psychological and interface design mechanism (Bogost, 2014), however, feedback is also deemed absolutely essential for providing gameful experiences (Hamari et al., 2014; Kapp, 2012; Marczewski, 2015). For instance, the immediacy of feedback is regarded as one of the keys to enabling flow for gamers or users (Sailer et al., 2014). In this subsection, we exclude platform-enabled feedback from users, for example, likes because users need to actively do something (click the like button) to generate them. Instead, we will focus on the feedback provided by the SNS themselves. Furthermore, we will not go into presenting Achievements and Rewards, although they can be seen as subsets of the more general category of Feedback.

The three platforms provide somewhat similar feedback, for instance, using chat notifications and the views (story or video). In the case of Views, all three platforms automatically give numerical feedback when content has been seen. No additional actions are required by the user apart from viewing the content. The view count of stories across all platforms is visible only to the user who posted the story. In contrast, the video views of Facebook and Instagram can be seen by all users who have access to the video. The second type of Feedback common among all platforms at hand are the chat notifications. Whereas Instagram simply informs that the chat message has been seen, Facebook (and Messenger) also displays the exact time at which the message was viewed. Snapchat’s Friends Screen goes one step further as it utilizes more nuanced notifications to inform users whether their snap has been sent, opened or screenshoted in
addition to informing about the type of message (audio/chat). Snapchat’s screenshot notification has been steadily used by adolescents to protect their privacy. Our young informants mostly keep their peers accountable for screenshoting shared content (Hristova et al., in prep.). Overall, these notifications offer control to the users: to monitor the interaction of peers with their content. However, our informants disclose that these notifications can also trigger frustration, for example, when they reveal that the sent message or snap has been ignored (Hristova et al., in prep.).

Each platform also includes further Feedback elements. For instance, Facebook displays fundraising bars showing what amount of money has already been raised with respect to the preset goal. Instagram recently started notifying its users when they have viewed all the new posts from the last 48 hours. The message “you’re all caught up” is displayed in the feed and aims to provide users with a sense of control and an overview of their activity on the platform. Snapchat has one further prominent feedback feature that is relevant for Snap Streak holders. An Hourglass is displayed if only four hours are left until the streak is lost. The function induces a sense of urgency and danger as it signals to users that their streak is going to perish if they and/or their streak partner do not snap. Hourglass nudges users to continue using the platform in order to retain the reward of their gamified communication. The phenomenological experience of Instagram’s “You’re all caught up” and of Snapchat’s Hourglass differs significantly. This indicates the variety of behavioral and emotional responses that can be prompted by feedback mechanisms. However, on a deeper level, both share common traits since they provide immediate, relevant feedback that motivates users and supports their behavioral learning process and habit formation (Sailer et al., 2014). Sailer also adds that feedback is crucial for users (perspective of interest) as it provides a sense of control and, hence, they “are likely to be motivated if gamification enhances the feeling of flow by providing a direct feedback” (Sailer et al., 2014).

5.4.8 Rewards
In this categorization of gamified elements, rewards and achievements go hand in hand: rewards signify particular achievements through digital tokens. For example, Snapchat features reward icons for Friends List emojis and Charms. The platform also awarded users a special icon when they reach 100 streaks and, hence, symbolically celebrates their success. Furthermore, Snapchat creates videos, for example, for the app’s pull-to-refresh-feed action and for My Year in Snaps. Lastly, the platform offers a
birthday lens that celebrates the user’s personal occasion on the platform. To our knowledge, Instagram generates only one reward of this type: the icon presented together with the “you’re all caught up” feedback. Facebook offers a wider range of reward types. The platform endows its users with icons, for example, for marriage announcements and animated videos for Friendversaries (including shared content, number of shared likes etc.), Year in Review and in 2019 has announced Birthday Stories that users can upload to celebrate their friend’s birthday. In this case, the reward is the colorful frame that celebrates the personal occasion. Marcewski describes this game element as “fixed rewards schedule” since the rewards come on a regular yearly basis (Marczewski, 2015).

Fogg states that “one of the most powerful persuasive uses of language is to offer praise” (Fogg, 2003). According to his research, upon receiving praise, research participants ”felt better about themselves, were in a better mood, felt more powerful and felt they had performed well, found the interaction engaging, were willing to work with the computer again, liked the computer more [and] thought the computer had performed better” (Fogg, 2003). Further research also confirms the efficiency of rewards in fostering user motivation based on the drive for achievement, competition, membership (trait perspective) and immediate feedback (behavioral learning perspective) (Sailer et al., 2014).

5.4.9 Progress
Few manifestations of the Progress feature are used by Facebook and Instagram. Facebook uses closed scales in their Fundraisers feature to display users’ progress on the objective of gathering a predefined amount of money. The progress bar indicates how much of the set money amount has already been donated. The fundraisers and their friends can, hence, monitor the progress of the campaign. Furthermore, this visibility enables social comparison. A less obvious manifestation of the progress feature in Facebook is the appeal to users to complete and update their profile information. In a different implementation of this element, since 2018, Instagram informs its users that they have scrolled through all the new posts in their feed by displaying the “You’re all caught up” message. Progress features satisfy the achievement motive that enables progress motivation (Sailer et al., 2014). Furthermore, such gamification elements aim to promote a sense of increased autonomy and control for the users (Zhang, 2008). As previously commented in the section “Feedback,” SNS has opposite effects, such as loss of control, which can occur should the
user fail to reach the progress report (in this case: the ”You’re all caught up” message). Finally, progress bars provide feedback and clear goals (perspective of interest and cognitive perspective) as well as foster mastery (cognitive perspective) (Sailer et al., 2014).

5.4.10 Challenge
All in all, Challenge is not that widely adopted by Instagram, but was featured to a different extent in Facebook and Snapchat. Both platforms offer challenges for individuals as well as more social challenges where at least two people can be involved (be it in a competitive or cooperative manner). Facebook incites a mild social challenge in their “Did you know?” section where users are invited to answer questions asked by their friends. Furthermore, worth mentioning are Facebook’s instant games and Snapchat’s Snap Games. Both Snapchat and Facebook include games on their platforms, Snapchat produced their own games, available next to the filters, while Facebook mostly hosted externally produced games such as Farmville. Both platforms currently offer various single-player and multiplayer games.

There are also differences in the way Facebook and Snapchat offer challenges to their users. Whereas Facebook features a simple “play” button to start interacting with the game, Snap Games proactively challenge users. For example, “Can you topple the tree?” is the challenge that aims at motivating Snapchat users to play a Beaver Snap Game. Furthermore, game participation in Snapchat also contributes to raising the user’s Snapchat Score. In other words, the in-game challenges also translate into out-of-game benefits for the purposes of gamification. In a broader conceptualization of the term “Challenge,” Snap Streaks can also be seen as an open challenge to reach a high streak number with a friend. In the past, Snapchat also featured the Trophies function that was entirely comprised of challenges. As already mentioned, this function was replaced by the less challenge-oriented Charms that aims to celebrate friendship (Snapchat, 2019).

Instagram generally abstains from platform-driven challenges. Nonetheless, users create their own challenges such as like-for-like campaigns or follower shout-outs “Let my friend … get 10 000 followers.” This is provoked by an achievement motive that thrives on success and progress-related motivation (Sailer et al., 2014). Lastly, when the challenge is accomplished, the enjoyable feeling of being competent is evoked (Sailer et al., 2014; Zhang, 2008).
5.5 DISCUSSION

Upon outlining and analyzing the main gamification affordances used by Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook as of August 2019, we move on to discussing the major findings of this analysis.

5.5.1 Gamification Elements Discussion

A general comparison between the three platforms reveals that Facebook and Snapchat both use a large variety of gamification elements. Based on the categorization of gamified elements introduced in this chapter, both Snapchat and Facebook feature eight out of ten types of gamification elements. In comparison with those two platforms, Instagram seems to apply a more limited number of gamification mechanisms covering six out of ten types of elements. Half of the gamification elements types (five out of ten) were used by all of the examined platforms: Story, Points, Feedback, Clear Goals and Rewards. The following points summarize the use and motivational mechanisms of gamification elements as discussed above.

- Facebook and Instagram use a larger variety of quantifying gamification elements such as Points. Instagram and Facebook mostly use Points that are publicly displayed with the exception of their story views. Snapchat, on the other hand, sets a new standard for the use of Points through their Snap Streaks. Streaks pioneered metrics that also work in the context of ephemeral communication. As mentioned above, this type of elements motivates by offering immediate feedback and reward for actions thereby enabling flow. They can also boon self-esteem as well as social comparison and the feeling of social relatedness.

- Story: All three platforms seem to share strong affinity to Story or Themes, such as stories and Memories, present in all of these platforms. Stories motivate by enabling emotional sharing and experience that is aimed at boosting the user’s interest for the situational context beside the specific communicational goals.

- Feedback: All platforms feature views (of stories and/or videos) and a more or less detailed version of chat notifications. Immediate Feedback provides a sense of control and, hence, the feeling of flow.

- Clear Goals: Whereas Facebook and Snapchat heavily rely on verbally formulated or multimodal (verbal command and a sign) Clear Goals, Instagram barely uses them. Clear Goals are integrated into the platforms due to the sense of control, competence and
achievement they evoke, which, allegedly, can also induce a feeling of flow.

- **Rewards** have been more heavily adopted by Snapchat and Facebook than by Instagram. Frequently, Rewards are videos and appealing graphic tokens visualizing and celebrating various achievements. User motivation is increased by pleasure as well as by the drive for achievement, competition and membership.

Approximately a third of the element types (three out of ten) were used by two of the platforms: Badges, Challenges and Progress. The **Badges** and **Challenges** types were both present only in Snapchat and Facebook. In the case of Badges, Snapchat and Facebook apply elements, which are displayed to the users in private and can be shared with others, if desired. The only exception is the **Snapchat Score** that is displayed in the user profile for their contacts to view. With regard to Challenges, both platforms offer individual and more social options for involvement. Badges and Challenges motivate by inciting alleged feeling of competence (upon achieving a goal) but also a sense of membership and power. **Progress** is used both by Instagram and Facebook to account for user activity on the platforms. Instagram applies it in order to inform users that they have viewed all recent posts. Facebook uses Progress elements for fundraising and profile completion statistics. Progress is yet another mechanism that motivates through inducing the sense of control and power.

A fifth of all element types (two out of ten) were not explicitly present in any of the three platforms. Surprisingly, the otherwise popular gamification elements **Levels** and **Leaderboards** have not been applied by the examined SNS. However, **Level**-like elements have been applied by Snapchat. The used elements resemble levels but do not include a progressive task difficulty increase. Their motivational pull is based on providing a sense of achievement, belonging and power. Features similar to **Leaderboards**, for example, Snapchat’s **Best Friends**, have been removed from the apps, possibly due to their potential of inspiring negative social comparison and power relations.

As it became apparent from the detailed analysis section, prosumers’ agency plays a significant role in understanding gamification. Some gamification elements may not be present as digital items, but their principles can still be recognized in the prosumers’ practices revolving around the platform. This is exemplified by the case of leaderboards in the Gamification elements section of this chapter.
5.5.2 Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook Discussion

We will now briefly sum up the gamification tendencies of each platform. In the course of its existence, Facebook has integrated an increasing variety of gamification elements. After Snapchat successfully implemented Stories, Facebook and Instagram also adopted the feature in 2016. The main types of elements that the platform used are Clear Goals, Points, Story and Reward. Instagram follows Facebook’s model in some regards, most notably in its application of Points and Feedback. It has also adopted memories from Facebook and the story features from Snapchat, focusing on visual storytelling. However, it also experiments with new types of features that are not yet used in other platforms, such as the “you’re all caught up” feedback which notifies users that they have seen all new posts. Snapchat is a highly gamified platform that has introduced many gamification innovations: such as Snap Score, Snap Streaks and Hourglass nudge, Charms (previously Trophies) and Snap Games. It operates mainly with Rewards, Stories and Badges.

5.5.3 Is Social Media Turning Into a “Social Media Game”?

The abundance of gamification elements deployed in social media brings up a question: is social media turning into a game? The answer is less obvious than a simple “yes” or “no.” First, we need to clarify that some gamification features are inherent to social media. Existing gamification applications commonly use elements such as social network, social status and social discovery (Marczewski, 2015) to gamify various tasks and services. These features are so essential for social media that they can barely be regarded as an extra layer “added” by gamification.

Social media sites are primarily online platforms “that allow people to communicate and share information” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). SNS offer platforms filled with interactional affordances and spaces for hosting user-generated content while trying to increase involvement and commitment (e.g. in terms of time spent). They are also best practice examples of user experience (UX) principles. SNS, similar to games, also need to integrate two opposing principles: being challenging and enabling. According to Koster, “UX design is about removing problems from the user. Game design is about giving problems to the user” (Koster, 2015). Whereas social media may add gamified challenges in order to involve its users more intensely, its primary function is to enable online social communication, or in Koster’s terms, to “remove problems from the user.”
In SNS, competitive elements are used but they do not define the architecture of the site in its entirety: everyone can use the platforms and those who would like to compete can do so. Hence, social media is less explicitly focused on challenges than games. The affordances for challenges on SNS are often optional and not a necessary prerequisite for the use of the platform. For example, comparing the score of features quantifying social appreciation (likes, reactions, followers) has been simply afforded by the platform and is not built as a formally regulated competition that is clearly defined by social media designers. Anyone can use Snapchat, but some users also decide to attempt keeping Snap Streaks for as long as possible. Both types of users enjoy the benefits of enabled online creative communication with their peers, but some also opt for the gameful challenge offered by the platform. The users who take up the challenge may also be able to profit from the social capital associated with performing well with the goal of upholding streaks. When examined in the context of social media, Koster’s statement suggests a more hybrid nature of SNS (Koster, 2015). Gamification elements are both an intrinsic part of SNS and add an extra layer to them. While competition may be a core mechanic in some games, SNS carry a different culture and competitive elements are possible but not a prerequisite for participation. Hence, social media can not be categorized as a full-fledged game but rather as a widely gamified system.

5.6 ETHICS

Although multiple gamified mechanisms have been continuously applied by SNS, their ethical implications for the users remain open for discussion. We will now briefly examine some of the main ethical concerns of gamification within the context of social media.

As laid out in the previous sections, gamification can be criticized as an exploitationware (Bogost, 2013)—a set of tools that are designed with the intention to harness the engagement power of games for the purposes of attention economy (Davenport & Beck, 2001) and data production. To paraphrase Whitson (Whitson, 2014), the goal of gamification is to make social media corporate dystopias (intransparent business models and privacy violations) appear as if they were heterotopias—rich spaces that “mirror, reflect, represent, designate, and speak about other sites, while at the same time suspending, neutralizing, inverting, contesting, and contradicting these self-same sites” (Foucault, 1986; Whitson, 2014). We now focus further on specific controversies surrounding gamification in social
media: social comparison, intransparent psychological models, surveillance and the moral obligations of fun.

5.6.1 Social Comparison
Social comparison and its use for power negotiation is selected due to its relevance for multiple gamification elements, for example, Points, Leaderboards, Badges and Achievements, Progress and Rewards. As visible from our social media analysis, SNS provide multiple affordances for the social comparison game between users (Vogel et al., 2014; Panger, 2014). For example, Likes are not only a token of social appreciation and reciprocity, they are also often used in a gamified manner when users try to accumulate more likes on their next post than the previous one or to receive more likes than their peers. In other words, Likes are used in a multifaceted manner for the goal of competition against oneself or against others—which is one of the main motivational affordances according to Zhang (Zhang, 2008).

Recently, some social network sites tried to adapt their use of Likes due to their impact as vehicles for social comparison. Competition per se must not be seen as negative but has implications that may not be desirable, for example, focusing primarily on the number of likes than on the content of the post. Instagram stated this as the main reason to commence tests in 2019, in which they removed the like score on their platform in Canada. The tests were an attempt to reduce the sense of competition among users (Forbes, 2019). However, Hamari and Koivisto warn that removing a gamified feature that users are involved with may lead to frustration (Hamari et al., 2014). In other words, removing features, such as Likes, that enable social comparison may frustrate users whose social media use heavily relies on accumulating, displaying or comparing the number of likes. It is hence an open question whether removing features that afford social comparison would solve related problematic aspects of SNS.

5.6.2 Intransparent Psychological Models
The psychological models behind persuasive design are not always transparent for the users. The aforementioned gamification elements exploit some of the users’ core motivation mechanisms such as their need for competence, achievement and power. Gamified mechanisms also aim at inducing positive emotions (Astleitner, 2000) and a sense of social relatedness and flow (Sailer et al., 2014). Such mechanisms are not explained to
users, although prosumers may have an intuitive understanding of them. The persuasive power of elements that are based on psychological research and are designed to alter behavior (Fogg, 2003) incites spending more time with apps and producing more data behind the "digital curtain" (Zuboff, 2019), which data can then be commercially used. Effectively, users are facing teams of scientists, managers and designers that have access to big data gathered in server farms. Navigating online environments becomes a matter of protecting one's own attention from the digital tools that are designed to captivate and to "hook" (Eyal, 2014). Still, some of our informants describe feeling like social media apps are neutral but it is them, the users, who have a weak will, cannot focus and, hence, spend too much time on SNS (Hristova et al., in prep.). We argue that more transparency regarding the use of psychological models behind gamified social media apps is needed (Goebl et al., 2019; Goebl et al., 2018; Jovicic et al., 2019). Instagram provides an example of such initiatives with its alleged attempt to protect users from spending too much time on SNS through the “You’re all caught up” feedback. This feedback was speculated by some analysts to be a response to the Time Well Spent initiative (TechCrunch, 2016). Instagram is also said to be currently developing further tools that could help users protect themselves from excessive use of the platform. However, it is important to evaluate the efficiency of applied measures in order to prevent the use of features which just seemingly enhance ethical design, but instead serve as a distraction from other attention economy practices applied by social media platforms.

5.6.3 Surveillance

What happens with data generated during gamified activities? This question has become a major concern with regard to the gamification trend. Whitson points out that gamification entices users to involve in a “willing self-surveillance” (Whitson, 2014), producing online content and data (Lampe, 2014). She also warns against the so called “functional creep”: a term describing “how data collected for one purpose is then applied to new ones” (Whitson, 2014). In her words, free play provides fewer reasons for users to resist gamification. Meanwhile, their behavior is closely surveilled (Zuboff, 2019) and this surveillance is framed as fun (Albrechtslund & Dubbeld, 2005). According to Whitson’s approach, gamification is a highly instrumental tool of governance. Its proponents try to justify it by arguing that “surveillance is not about discipline and control, but is geared toward
The Digital Gaming Handbook

providing meaningful feedback and rewards” (Whitson, 2014). However, it is important to keep in mind that with advancing data harvesting, storage and mining capacities, it progressively becomes easier for tech and social media corporations to uphold global surveillance campaigns.

5.6.4 Morally Obliged to Have Fun?

Finally, it is important to point out that there is an ongoing interplay between affordances shaped by designers and user preferences. On the one hand, designers are contracted by SNS companies to create more appealing and involving digital products that invite users to spend more time on their online platforms. On the other hand, users are motivated by various gratifications to engage with a platform and they hence desire an adequate and satisfying product. Selinger and colleagues formulate this dilemma in the following way: “If fun is so good for us, are we then obliged to let/make people have fun?” (Selinger et al., 2015). In our opinion, steps towards establishing and applying standards for ethical design worldwide should be undertaken. This also includes more transparency concerning issues such as priming through hidden persuasion techniques and their underlying psychological models (Goebler et al., 2018; Goebler et al., 2019; Hristova et al, in prep; Jovicic et al., 2019).

5.7 OUTLOOK

The abundance of gamification elements deployed in social media turns it into a highly influential, captivating medium somewhere in between a game and an open platform for social interaction. A wide variety of motivational mechanisms are addressed through gamified elements, nudging the user to experience a sense of achievement, competence and social relatedness. Appreciation and sharing, but also social comparison enabled by aptly designed user interfaces contribute to flow and active engagement. However, the issues of surveillance and lack of transparency contextualize the utopian visions of gamification within a neoliberal attention economy harnessing user involvement for profit. Through social media, gamification sets foot in the life of billions of people around the world. Therefore, its issues need to be addressed not only in scientific research but also in the business world and popular discourse. Since play needs a safe space to unfold, ethical guidelines for the use of gamification in social media should be developed. This would enable prosumers to communicate and to grow through gameful involvement.
REFERENCES


Hristova, D., Jovicic, S., Goebl, B, & Slunecko, T. (in prep.). *Changing the social media game: The practices of Viennese adolescents surrounding snapchat gamification*.


The Social Media Game?


