

CAN ANY MARKETING INSTRUCTOR TURN CASE STUDIES INTO A GAMIFIED EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS?

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Abstract

Marketing educators often use case studies as it is a form of experiential learning (Alexander et al, 1986; Gray et al, 2012). However, successful case-study teaching requires students to be prepared (Crittenden et al, 1999). Yet, research shows that students are becoming more and more reluctant to reading assigned class material and their motivation is lower when teaching is done with traditional media (Hunter-Jones, 2012). Students have become the virtual generation who plays games every day and games can keep them motivated several hours at a time (Proserpio and Gioia, 2007; Squire & Jenkins, 2004; Squire, 2003 and Gee, 2003). But the development of teaching games is costly (Zyda, 2005; Burgos & al., 2007).and instructors are reluctant to use games that have been developed by others as they rarely completely match their expectations and teaching styles (Bain and Mc Naught; 2006, Proserpio and Gioia 2007).

A method was developed to gamify case studies in the virtual world of Second Life (SL) (Emad, 2011; Halvorson and Emad, 2012; Emad et al, 2013) using two simple scripts and a drag and drop technique, to turn static virtual objects into interactive objects able to give a piece of information, when students clicked on them. This method was tested on Australian and Swiss students, showing that the engagement and learning of students was enhanced compared to the paper-based case method (Emad, 2011; Halvorson and Emad, 2012; Emad et al, 2013).

In order to verify if marketing instructors, not familiar with SL and not particularly tech savvy, were capable of implementing this method on their own and if they felt that this approach was easy-to-use, a test was performed with a Marketing teaching assistant and with a Marketing Professor. This was measured through the 3 following indicators: 1) It will not take more than 60 minutes training, for them to be able to understand how to, and to implement, on their own, the case-study gamification method in the virtual world of SL. 2) They will perceive the workload related to adapting and implementing the case-study gamification method as acceptable. 3) They will perceive the cost related to adapting and implementing the case-study gamification method as low. This paper describes these two tests.

Conclusion

In this research, we wanted to test whether marketing instructors that are not familiar with SL would be able to go from a paper-based case study and build and implement it themselves in SL, to prepare, on their own, a gamified case study of their choice.

The first aim of this research was to check if it would not take more than 60 minutes training for educators to be able to understand how to build and implement, on their own, a gamified version of a case study in the sandbox virtual world of SL. A first test with a teaching assistant showed that a 40 minutes training was sufficient for the teaching assistant to complete the gamified case-study. Apart from that, there were a few check and validation sessions, which correspond to what any professor normally does with a teaching assistant. A second test with a full marketing professor showed that it took overall 33 minutes to train the professor to perform the key tasks needed to build a gamified case study. Consequently, both case studies proved that indeed, with less than 60 minutes training, 2 separate marketing instructors, otherwise not familiar with SL, were able to understand how to build and implement on their own, a gamified case study.

The second goal of this research was to verify if the workload related to adapting and implementing the paper-based case study into a gamified case study would be perceived by the educators as acceptable. This question was not directly addressed with the teaching assistant because he had a lot of fun working on this project and therefore appeared to not only consider this workload as acceptable but even as enjoyable and certainly worth the effort. Regarding the Marketing professor, this question was specifically discussed with her and led to the conclusion that indeed, the workload to build and implement a gamified case study was perceived as acceptable, as it was anyway an investment, since a same case study could be run several times. And eventually, it would be possible for a marketing professor to require the help of their teaching assistant to work on such a project.

Lastly, the third aim of this research was to assess if the cost related to adapting, building and implementing the paper-based case into a gamified case would be perceived by the educators as low. The marketing professor clearly stated that she found that adapting and implementing the gamified case study in SL appeared to her as inexpensive. Man-hour costs were not taken into account since, as according to what was explained by the marketing professor, the time spent on the implementation should be considered as an investment, because the same case study could be re-used several times.

Hence, these two tests hint that any marketing instructor could be capable of gamifying a case study in the sandbox virtual world of SL, even those well in their forties, not particularly technically savvy, with no prior gaming affinity and with no prior knowledge of virtual worlds.

Further Research

This research was limited to the field of marketing, however, the method itself is not specifically correlated to the marketing subject and as such, could be transposed to cases pertaining to other disciplines. Such off-the-shelf cases exist for other subjects and it would be interesting, in further research, to apply this method to other areas of business education. The first 2 areas that would come to mind would be on one hand strategy, as the case studies in that area are quite close to marketing cases. The other one would be anything related to organizational behavior and leadership. Attempts could also be done in fields less experienced with the use of cases for teaching, such as accounting, statistics or economics.

Recent development in the area of virtual worlds and virtual reality provide us with new, more immersive tools for gamifying case studies, which might enhance the feeling of presence experienced by students. Virtual reality headsets such as the Oculus Rift, which has been recently purchased by Facebook for 2 bn USD, are compatible with SL and it would definitely be worth trying to pursue this research by conducting it with the inclusion of the Oculus Rift.

Lastly, in this research, the marketing assistant and the professor both tried implementing this method only once. It would be interesting to ask other instructors to try implementing the method several times in a row to check if there is a learning curve making instructors more efficient and more effective at each run.

References Available upon Request