



Mission Statement:

At Polifax, our mission is to develop innovative software that creates a meaningful social impact. We aim to inspire active engagement in political forums, provide educational opportunities for users of all levels, and facilitate thoughtful discourse that allows for the sharing and exploration of diverse messages and ideas. Through our technology, we strive to empower individuals and communities to connect, learn, and grow in an environment that values open and authentic communication.

What is the Problem:

Modern society is experiencing a shortage of critical discourse and social technology is playing a role in breeding echo chambers and escalating polarization. Our current technological and economic drivers disincentivize crucial civil debate. Proper debates seldom take place since most discussions do not have that needed depth or subtlety, which gives a large room for shallow stories and sound bites to fill public discussion, hence reducing the chances for a better understanding of nuanced issues. In many ways, the relative decline of public debate has been created by the coincidental devolvement of what is popularly referred to as the public sphere—the local papers and face-to-face community debates that, until recently, served to equalize significantly opportunities for a wide range of different groups to access very different sets of facts and narratives.

Significantly, personalized news feeds and search results reduce the diversity of perspectives, leading to a situation whereby only convergent opinions come to the view of an individual. In this echo-chamber filter bubble scenario, the result is a radical rise in radical partisanship, as individuals are much more likely to discount opposing views as illegitimate and often extreme. This further increases polarization and division in society, where people find it harder to agree on issues of relevance; this, in the long run, breaks down civil discussions, and backing. False information may also slip by having very few stoppages before it becomes acceptable in these echo chambers.

A multifaceted approach is needed to address these challenges. More media literacy, can guide the public in making critical appraisals of sources and even where information could be biased. New and engaging platforms and digital spaces that create and sustain dialogue with one another can be ideologically placed to bridge divides and encourage mutual understanding. **Crucially, in order to capture and retain the interest of intended users, these new platforms must contend with the established technological offerings of social media giants.**

Why Gamification:

Gamification is the use of game-based mechanics, aesthetics, and game thinking to engage users in solving problems or creating media. It uses both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations through game-based mechanics, such as competition, accomplishment, and collaboration, to increase participation within the intended activity.

Gamification works best in those frameworks where the eventual output is to engage, motivate, and change behavior. In both civic dialogue and meme creation, gamification can enhance engagement by making the process more enjoyable and interactive. This leads to the user developing understanding and empathy regarding differing perspectives in a fun and non-threatening manner. In addition, gamification can promote constructive dialogue with a laser focus on a single topic, which deepens related discussion and decreases any chance of an off-topic argument.

Introducing competition and rewards adds a dynamic edge to the experience. In Meme Wars, users earn points for creating and sharing memes that effectively represent different perspectives on a given topic. This immediate feedback and recognition motivate participants to strive for excellence and stay engaged. Research shows that competitive elements like leaderboards can increase user participation by tapping into the natural human desire for achievement and status.

Gamification also fosters social interaction and community building, which are essential for sustained engagement. Meme Wars includes features like comments and votes to enable users to interact, provide feedback, and engage in discussions about the memes. This sense of community and belonging is crucial for long-term participation. Research indicates that social interaction in gamified environments can lead to higher levels of participation and a greater sense of connection among users.

Why Memes:

Public sense-making refers to how people collectively perceive and make sense of events and information in society. **Mememes are an important part of this process since they are cultural artifacts that propagate quickly via digital platforms.** They simplify difficult concepts into digestible portions or servings, frequently including humor or satire and making observations about current affairs, social mores, and cultural occurrences.

Mememes also provide a forum for social criticism and dissent in addition to strengthening shared identities and values among online communities, which strengthens community. Additionally, they frequently become viral and reach large audiences; the speed at which mememes can affect public sentiment is unrivaled. By framing topics and influencing public opinion, they impact public conversation at immense scales.

Fostering Civil Discourse through Game Design:

Meme Wars gamifies meme creation through the application design. This innovation emphasizes different perspectives by encouraging users to create content from the point of view of another person with whom they may disagree. Herein is where several gamification elements are brought in to help achieve this.

1. Points and Scoring Systems
2. Challenges and Quests
3. Badges and Achievements

4. Leaderboards and Social Interaction
5. Perspective-Taking Mechanisms*

One of the most innovative aspects of Meme Wars is its development of the perspective-taking mechanism. Users are encouraged to create memes from viewpoints they might not typically agree with, facilitated by prompts and guides that help them understand different perspectives. This feature aims to broaden one's perspective and promote empathy and understanding among users. Gamified platforms that encourage perspective-taking can lead to more nuanced and empathetic civic discourse.

Conclusion

Gamification in Meme Wars not only transforms meme creation into a fun and engaging activity but also maintains civil discourse. Meme Wars is designed so that its elements—points, challenges, badges, leaderboards, and perspective-taking mechanisms—can make the users active in different perspectives and effectively hold meaningful conversations. This groundbreaking approach heightens user engagement, promotes sensitivity, and empathy. Meme Wars is the flagship example that illustrates how the potential of gamification can yield significant social change.

Polifax intends to expand on this researched approach to a suite of games and applications all curated to create a well-informed and engaged civic participant.

References

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