Chapter 8
Mapping Gamified Servicescapes for Physical Activity

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ABSTRACT

Gamified systems designed to facilitate people’s efforts to monitor their daily physical activity have expanded and grown in popularity. This chapter explores the servicescapes of such systems, and attempts to build a map of their possible components in which value is being created and co-created. The chapter encourages scholars to consider value creation or co-creation processes as engagement processes, and to adopt the term ‘value-in-engagement’ to describe their outcome. Secondly, based on a netnographic study on a gamified servicescape for physical activity, the chapter develops a map of the system and analyses its components. Implications and potential for future implementation of this mapping approach are presented.

INTRODUCTION

A growing number of gamified systems for physical activity have emerged, appealing to broad target audiences (Walz & Deterding, 2014; Munson, Poole, Perry, & Peyton, 2014), promising to turn challenging behavior change and maintenance endeavors into fun and social experiences. Studies on the capabilities of such systems, comprise a large part of the literature on gamification for health and well-being (Johnson et al., 2016), which is currently among the three most prevalent applications of gamification (Koivisto & Hamari, 2019). Viewing them as services (Huotari &
Hamari, 2012, 2017), implies that the customer plays a protagonist role in the co-creation of value, following the Service-Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008), and the Service Logic (Grönroos, 2006, 2011).

While the implementation of the servicescapes paradigm in services which involve online environments has become increasingly complex (Ballantyne & Nilsson, 2017), gamified servicescapes present new challenges for scholars, for two main reasons. Firstly, in comparison to other types of e-servicescapes (Hopkins, Grove, Raymond, & LaForge, 2009), repeated engagement is required for longer periods of time. A customer of a gamified service for physical activity normally registers and creates a profile, in which physical activity can be logged and monitored regularly. Secondly, the customer creates and co-creates value by engaging in processes and interactions in online as well as real life environments. The online gamified system serves as a platform of interaction with the gamified activity tracking system, or communication with other customers. In real life, the customer engages in physical activity, tracked through the online system, while the latter may be linked to other platforms and social media.

Drawing from early conceptions of servicescapes as physical environments (Bitner, 1992), to e-servicescapes (Hopkins et al., 2009) and cyberscapes (Williams & Dargel, 2004), scholars are now challenged to develop an understanding of contexts in which real world and online environments are merged into gamified servicescapes. Considering the prevalence of physical activity in the extant literature of gamification (Johnson et al., 2016; Koivisto & Hamari, 2019), this chapter seeks to describe this type of servicescape, as an environment consisted of different areas of engagement and interaction. Identifying those areas is intended to serve as a foundation for the exploration of the gamified servicescape as it is perceived by customers (Bitner, 1992; Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011).

BACKGROUND

According to recent reviews (Johnson et al., 2016; Alalahivälä & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2016; Sardi, Idrí, & Fernández-Alemán, 2017), gamification for physical activity has brought promising results in building and maintaining positive health behaviour, as well as improving well-being among diverse target audiences. Popular examples include Nike+ and Zombies Run. The former is a walking and running activity tracking system, accessible from mobile devices and online browsers; it involves wearable equipment, such as the ‘Fuel band’ that measure speed, distance and keep track of the routes covered. The system involves game affordances such as badges and challenges, as well as an online platform which facilitates social interactions between users. Zombies Run is a gamified fitness tracking Android application,
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