How Shifting Your Mindset Can Make Quantitative Research Games Effective

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Effectively gamifying quantitative research increases research participant's engagement. This allows us to access more accurate consumer truths on which clients can base their decisions. Gamification also increases client engagement and empowers them to be more involved with, and excited by, the research process.

This is all well and good, but there's a problem.

The problem lies within the mindset needed to develop an effective research-based game. As quantitative researchers, we have a mindset based around rigour, inquisitiveness and analysis. This is far different from the mindset of game designers:

- **Anthony Pratt** – inventor of Cluedo – was a musician
- **Shigeru Miyamoto** – creator of Mario and Zelda – was an industrial designer by trade
- **Steven Knight** – co-creator of Who Wants to Be a Millionaire – is a screenwriter and film director

Admittedly, we don't need every research game we design to be the next coming of Mario. However, we need to better engage research participants. Moving our mindsets to be less about research rigour and more about the key elements of gaming can make this possible.

But what shifts in mindset do we need to make?

From Function to Fashion

The classic survey is designed with the mindset of getting a participant through a survey efficiently. To turn a survey into an effective game we need to change this approach. We need to better consider how we impress participants with our aesthetics and build an online environment that empowers people to invest

time and thought. When we try to turn a survey into a game, the benchmarks of what we need to deliver shift dramatically. Aesthetic benchmarks for games are set by Call of Duty and Clash of Clans. Therefore, we need to rise to this substantial challenge in how visually appealing our surveys are.

From Incentivisation to Motivation

Incentivising participation in surveys is typically done on a one-off, monetary basis. Unsurprisingly, this often generates low engagement. If we move from a survey environment to that of a game, we are asking more of people. This means we need to motivate them on a continuous basis. This means we need to be more encouraging in our copy, offer rewards throughout – not simply at the end, reiterate the competitive nature of the game and remind participants why they are taking part. By doing so, we get a more invested participant, more likely to provide us with accurate information.

From Routes to Rules

The traditional survey mindset is orientated around routing a participant through an unknown ordering of questions based on prior responses. However, games are based on communicating rules clearly <u>not</u> hidden routing paths. Resultantly, we need to change our mindset to that of rule communicators. This new way of thinking means we need to set expectations around how our game will work. Furthermore, we need to do so in the most concise, simplistic way possible. Then we need to deliver on it via the game's contents.

From Isolation to Cooperation

We design traditional surveys to allow participants to conduct them on a self-completion basis. Games are different due to their increased cognitive sophistication. This means we need to move to a model where we help participants complete the exercise at hand. Obviously, the researcher cannot be present during online surveys, so we need to create digital characters to support participation in our game. These characters represent the researcher and should be active in delivering rules and motivation to participants. Their presence will demonstrate that the survey sponsor cares for the participant and increase engagement accordingly.

Building research games is a challenge. We can only meet this challenge effectively if we adapt our mindset to do so. The results – access to a better consumer truth on which to advise clients – is worth the adaption, so let's keep research thinking at our core, but take note of the fields gaming greats like Shigeru Miyamoto use to inspire their game designs.

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