Newsgames against hate speech in the refugee crisis

Newsgames frente a los discursos del odio en la crisis de los refugiados

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ABSTRACT

The refugee crisis has been a fertile ground for hate speech that has portrayed migrants as a dangerous threat and has been spread through social networks. While the media have unconsciously contributed to the proliferation of these racist messages, some have reacted by extending their traditional journalistic activity to the creation of newsgames to find new ways of addressing the situation. This study examines the use of five newsgames developed by leading media outlets using a methodology based on a multimodal qualitative analysis (informative and ludonarrative). The results showed that newsgames players have access to truthful information, as is the case for other journalistic genres, and draw on other types of personal and emotional information (circumstances, feelings, family ties). These data did not appear in isolation but integrated into the gaming experience. The study concludes by identifying the interaction between the levels of information and immersion of the newsgames that make up the sample, as well as their different gradation: giving the player the opportunity to make more significant decisions within the story allows for the introduction of nuances that promote empathy towards refugees; however, greater freedom in the gaming experience in newsgames distances them from the classic informational model and may involve a greater risk of distortion of the ideas that they seek to promote.

RESUMEN

La crisis de los refugiados ha sido el caldo de cultivo para unos discursos del odio, extendidos a través de las redes sociales, que presentan a los inmigrantes como un peligro y una amenaza. Los medios de comunicación han contribuido inconscientemente a su difusión, aunque algunos han reaccionado ampliando su actividad periodística tradicional a la creación de newsgames para buscar nuevas formas de contrarrestar el efecto de estos discursos. Esta investigación analiza cinco newsgames desarrollados por medios de comunicación de referencia a partir de una metodología basada en un análisis multimodal de carácter cualitativo (informativo y ludo-narrativo). Los resultados muestran que el jugador de newsgames tiene acceso a información veraz, como en otros formatos periodísticos, pero también dispone de otro tipo de información más próxima y emocional (circunstancias, sentimientos, vínculos familiares). Estos datos no aparecen de forma aislada, sino que se integran en la experiencia del juego. La investigación concluye identificando la interacción entre información e inmersión de los newsgames que componen la muestra, así como su diferente gradación: un mayor control del jugador dentro de la historia permite introducir matices que favorecen la empatía con los refugiados. Sin embargo, la mayor libertad en la experiencia de juego en los newsgames los aleja del modelo informativo clásico y puede implicar un mayor riesgo de distorsión de las ideas que intentan defender.

KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Newsgames, hate speech, refugees, multimodal analysis, gamification, inmigration.
Newsgames, discursos del odio, refugiados, análisis multimodal, ludificación, inmigración.

1. Introduction

The refugee crisis in Europe, which has been exacerbated since 2015, has posed a number of challenges that have revealed frictions, inconsistencies and ambiguities among European Union countries on how to address the situation. This has resulted in a "collective response […] [that] has been ad hoc and, critics charge, more focused on securing the bloc's borders than on protecting the rights of migrants and refugees" (Park, 2015). Within this political context, hate speech has emerged with the intention of constructing the Other as a dangerous threat to national identity (Alberdi, 2019). Racist and xenophobic claims have been increasingly amplified through social media in the last decade (Nortio et al., 2020), but they have often managed to circumvent potential regulations on the grounds of freedom of expression (Kuna, 2020).

Hate speech is the public expression of derogatory, humiliating and offensive content towards a person for being part of a vulnerable group, characterised by race, religion, gender, or ethnicity, among other aspects (Paz et al., 2020). Fear of Others, usually driven by emotional resources (Ekman, 2019), has been used as a catalyst for the cultural approaches and logic of the so-called new racism (Cisneros & Nakayama, 2015). Thus, growing social and political concern has arisen about the serious consequences of these messages on vulnerable minorities and groups (Gómez-Quintero et al., 2021). National social stereotypes are also part of this situation or at least help to build a broader geopolitical macro-discourse (O'Donnell, 1994), which is present in the statements of the so-called "tolerant majority" (Gotsbachner, 2001). Thus, some European nationalist groups have used Twitter to display a socially accepted racist discourse (Kreis, 2017). This type of discourse dehumanises and depersonalises migrants and refugees while also desensitising the general public. Coupled with the repetitive use of hate speech, these practices reinforce racist attitudes.

In view of this situation, the media is expected to be involved in dismantling racist content and keep citizens informed to avoid false news and the dissemination of xenophobic propaganda (Ibrahim, 2019). However, their reaction has not been very effective so far. Quite the opposite. Sometimes the media have contributed to unconsciously reproducing these messages (Martínez, 2018), and even to amplifying them (Niñoles & Ortega-Giménez, 2020). In addition, certain treatment of information has fostered the characterisation of refugees as "anonymous passive victims" (Wright, 2014). Therefore, unsurprisingly, some authors consider that journalists are not prepared to face the global challenge posed by the presence of these discourses in the media (George, 2014).

Some media outlets have attempted to reverse this perception of refugees through individual accounts of their experiences. Their goal was to "unveil their truth and suffering in an honest way" (Navarro-Remesal & Zapata, 2019: 5). The media's ability to regain this social function has been reassessed through new narratives (De-Aguilera & Casero-Ripollés, 2018) that have concerned themselves with the integration of informational content into game-oriented, interactive and immersive genres such as newsgames and informational gaming (Romero-Rodríguez & Torres-Toukomidis, 2018). Newsgames are developed with the intention of participating in the public debate, while informational gaming involves incorporating game mechanics into news services. The main appeal of these genres is not only the loyalty of digital media users (Ferrer-Conill & Karlsonn, 2016), but also, above all, the incorporation of a different way of presenting information that stimulates participation and collective awareness (Plewe & Fürsich, 2018). However, newsgames transcend the boundaries of both traditional journalistic informational genres, but also opinionated ones. Although their narrative peculiarities may have a different influence on how people construct information about a particular topic (Mañas-Viniegra et al., 2020), game-based interactive offerings trigger a friction between the dominant theses on the distinctive character and the seriousness of journalism, in its search to provide a truthful portrayal of reality to its audiences (Ferrer-Conill et al., 2020).

1.1. Research objectives and questions

The objective of this study lies in the tension between the two elements that constitute the nature of newsgames (the design of a game system and the development of an informational product). It seeks to analyse the message of the game-based interactive offerings developed by the media to complement their

information strategy on the situation of refugees in Europe. It also examines and assesses their potential effectiveness in combating racist and xenophobic hate speech. The research questions are:

- RQ$_1$: What are the features of the news and editorial lines of newsgames developed by the media that have been involved in the coverage of refugee crises?
- RQ$_2$: How have narrative and game-based resources been used in newsgames to combat hate speech?

2. Materials and methods

The heterogeneous and controversial nature of newsgames as journalistic products set the boundaries of the analysis of a format whose traits are "in constant flux and where the borders between such categories are still being actively negotiated" (Grace, 2020: 103). This complexity has led to different methodologies, including the analysis of qualitative content based on specific models of game design (Herrero-Curiel & Planells-de-la-Maza, 2020), its conceptualisation as a "playable text" (Plewe & Fürsich, 2018), the gamification of contents (Arafat, 2020), case studies and virtual ethnography (Tejedor & Tusa, 2020), and integrated proposals (García-Ortega & García-Avilés, 2020). However, these approaches do not fit the purpose of this research, namely, the study of the involvement of digital games and their incorporation in the informational context of the media when faced with hate speech.

2.1. Methodology

This proposal is situated within the analysis of newsgames as multimodal discourse based on a theoretical substrate that locates them within digital journalism (Salaverría, 2019) and serious games (Romero-Rodríguez & Torres-Toukomidis, 2018). Both approaches provide complementary perspectives that lead to a model (Table 1) that, while not intending to be exhaustive in its configuration and construction, seeks to bring together two layers of analysis that constitute the uniqueness of newsgames: the fact that they are both informational and game-based/interactive. Therefore, only a limited number of elements come into play within the model to ensure the operability of the analysis by limiting the number of variables.

Table 1. Multimodal analysis model for newsgame discourse			
Theoretical perspective	**Conceptualisation of newsgames**	**Levels of analysis**	**Analysis categories**
Media Studies	Informational product	Formal parameters	Journalistic genre Journalism methodology Multimedia elements Journalistic quality Sources
		News discourse analysis	Informative description Topics Frames
Narratology	Audiovisual narrative	Dramatic construction	Narrative architecture Characters. Point of view. Emotional design/Empathy Narrative Universe
Ludonarrative	Procedural rhetoric	Interactivity analysis	Game Mechanics Level of interaction Taxonomy of choices
Game Studies	Ludic nature	Immersion Agency Transformation	Types of immersion Interaction models Scope of action

This model served as the initial roadmap for the codification of the informational and ludonarrative dimensions. The "informational" dimension identifies journalistic features in newsgames based on the "tumbled pyramid" model of digital media (Canavilhas, 2007) and immersive journalism (Paíno & Rodríguez, 2019). It also incorporates the identification and analysis of the formal parameters of the news message as a journalistic genre, featuring its own treatment and resources. Compliance of newsgames with journalistic quality criteria (García-Ortega & García-Avilés, 2020), and their capacity to participate in public opinion through news frames (Semetko & Volkenburg, 2000) are also taken into account.

The analysis of ludonarrative dimension draws on socio-semiotic models (Pérez-Latorre et al., 2017) which, on the one hand, take into account the narrative elements that drive the dramatic construction

through the representation of characters, narrative architecture, emotional design and empathy (Isbister, 2017; Kwong, 2019; Cuadrado & Planells, 2020) and, on the other hand, the conception of the discursive elements of digital games: immersion, agency and transformation (Murray, 1999). The confluence of both dimensions has been interpreted from the perspective of procedural rhetoric (Bogost, 2007), which identifies how arguments are inserted in the rules of the game and how rules are expressed, communicated and understood by the player (De-la-Hera, 2019). The mechanics have been understood as a "palette of actions available to the player" (Fernández-Vara, 2015: 97-99), and the type of interaction and agency that each game proposes has been evaluated and understood as "the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices" (Murray, 1999: 139).

2.2. Sample and analytical procedure

The sample comprised newsgames that have addressed the refugee crisis in recent years, and which had also been published in the digital editions of news media outlets. Specialised databases (Serious Games Classification or Games 4 Change) and academic references (García-Ortega & García-Avilés, 2020) were used for the sample selection. Of the 16 newsgames that were found to address this topic, only five had been developed by the media. They make up the sample analysed: "The Refugee Challenge" (The Guardian, 2014), "Two Billion Miles" (Channel 4, 2015), "Syrian Journey: Choose your own adventure" (BBC, 2015), "Bury Me, My Love" (ARTE, 2017) and "The Waiting Game" (ProPublica, 2017). The analysis was developed by the researchers, both individually and collectively, in different sessions. Every session was recorded. The game screen was saved, and a research diary was kept for each session.

These data were subsequently coded using Atlas.ti to systematise a double coding process. Specifically, both an inductive coding scheme based on the categories of the multimodal analysis model and a deductive coding scheme linked to a "theoretical sensitivity" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 46) were used to detect recurrent codes and patterns emerging outside the initial planning. In this way, concurrences were detected in the discourse of these newsgames (gender, family, etc.) that were included in the results.

3. Results

3.1. Results of the news discourse analysis

The journalistic content of newsgames appeals to a reader who is already well informed about the situation of refugees in Europe and the reasons for the exodus of the civilian population. The news narrative presents the personal experiences of the characters through a significant number of sub-themes. Most of these newsgames focus on providing information about why and how these journeys take place and what dangers they involve: being deceived by traffickers, the need to resort to forged documents, the situation in refugee camps, police arrests and return to their countries of origin, bureaucratic obstacles, language difficulties and the lack of basic necessities (water, food). All these aspects are presented from the point of view of refugees, mainly Syrian refugees, although "The Waiting Game" provides five types of stories that cover a wider range of migrants and the causes of their migration (racial, religious, nationality-based, membership of vulnerable groups and ideological dissent).

Some of the newsgames analysed ("Syrian Journey", "The Waiting Game", "The Refugee Challenge") are based on the news report genre and have been adapted to the patterns of journalistic production (news briefing, use of sources). During the game, documentary references are used with testimonies of refugees and visual montages of their living conditions during the journey, in detention centres or in refugee camps. They also use journalistic texts with contextual data; "The Waiting Game" even emphasises that this is not fiction and warns the player that their stories "are not composites".

In contrast to those newsgames that are closer to a traditional conception of journalism, "Bury Me, My Love" and "Two Billion Miles" transcend the field of journalism, as they are also dramatic constructions, but based on reality. "Bury Me, My Love" is defined as an interactive fiction where its developers based their main characters, Majda and Nour, on the story of Dana Nour, a Syrian woman who was featured in an article published by Lucie Soullier in Le Monde in 2015, which was intended to make the public perceive them as "real people" (Navarro-Remesal & Zapata, 2019: 9). These two types of newsgames are also distinguished by a different display of information. Those closest to journalism present the information

at the beginning of the game, and it remains easily accessible on the screen. In contrast, those which are more inclined to dramatisation ("Two Billion Miles" and "Bury Me, My Love") opt for a brief initial introduction and the rest of the information is doled out (or hidden) in each one of the options presented to the player to provide a greater sense of immersion without detracting from the veracity of the game. This factual introduction connects with the encyclopaedic character of digital games (Murray, 1999: 94), but also with their need to convey a complex message without overwhelming the player and always based on the decisions made by the player.

What both models have in common is the desire to simplify information and the interest in bringing the situation of refugees closer to the public through simple arguments and comparisons: "Channel 4 News estimates that they have travelled over 2 billion miles. The same as 80,000 times around the planet or 8,000 trips to the moon… It has become the world´s most dangerous journey "(Two Million Miles); or "Turkey alone has received 10 times the number of Syrian refugees as all EU member states together" ("The Refugee Challenge"). In addition, these newsgames take advantage of the multimedia potential that is found in this genre. The exception is "Bury Me, My Love", which only includes maps or photographs (in animated format) that are sent by the characters via WhatsApp. "Syrian Journey" involves the player through two hashtags #whatwouldyoutake and #Syrianjourney, which offer images and videos.

All these newsgames more or less explicitly refer to the sources used. The predominant sources are official (institutions, national and supranational public administrations, such as the UN Commissioner for Refugees), other media ("The New York Times", "The Washington Post", "Le Monde", etc.), NGOs (UNHCR and First Friends), and self-references (especially in those by "Channel 4" and "The Guardian"). In addition to these sources, they include interviews with those directly involved in the cases being addressed (psychiatrists, lawyers, judges, etc.) and refugees. This breadth and variety of sources, as well as the abundant presence of links that expanded the informative contents, bestowed the information with a quality and a strong sense of authority. It also allowed for different points of view to be included: "The Waiting Game", for example, recognises that there is fraud in asylum applications.

The editorial line and the attribution of responsibility for these journalistic products come from two approaches. Some newsgames criticise the government policies of the host countries ("The Waiting Game" and "The Refugee Challenge"). Others ("Syrian Journey" and "Two Billion Miles") emphasise the poverty, war, repression and government corruption in the countries of origin. The latter, along with "Bury Me, My Love", show images of television news that focus on the lives of refugees documenting their stories. They seek empathy and understanding, and position themselves by denouncing a social and human tragedy. This editorial line is present in the rest of the newsgames. There is also a clear intention to denounce this situation: it is not just a question of providing a documented opinion, but of emphasising injustice through very simple data such as what refugees want, why and what circumstances they have to endure to achieve it. The construction of human pain indirectly points to those responsible for these situations and, above all, seeks to generate a level of social awareness that forces states and institutions to take action.

3.2. Results of the ludonarrative structure

Newsgames rely on narrative and gaming resources to build empathy and immersion. In this way, they encourage the player to stay in connection with the plight of refugees longer than they would if they simply read a news story; and they do so in a different way, which can enhance the impact of the information. This immersion is shaped by the type of choices that each newsgame offers, which are presented through different narrative structures: linear ("The Waiting Game"); tree structure; along parallel paths with different endings ("Syrian Journey" and "Bury Me, My Love"); or as a network ("The Refugee Challenge" and "Two Billion Miles").

The interest of this narrative architecture lies in how it invites the player to explore the maps of the story and what types of experience it offers. While the linear structure of the story in "The Waiting Game" moves the narrative construction to the limited arc of choices that the game proposes, for the other two structures -tree and network- interest resides in their ability to affect the player's experience.

Figure 1. Narrative structure of "Syrian Journey"
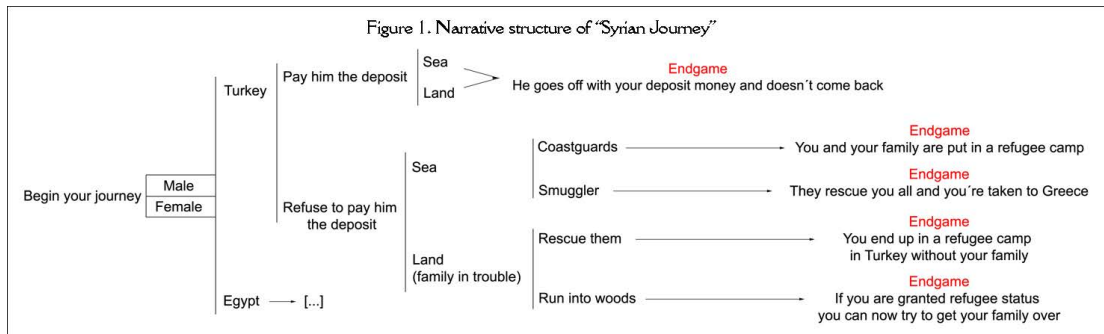
The structure of "Syrian Journey" (Figure 1) presents a restrictive narrative approach, since the player cannot turn back or jump to other lines of choice. As the user's decisions cannot generate contradictions, this enhances the story's structure control and narrative coherence. In addition, it allows information content to be revisited and highlights the decisions and experiences of refugees who are present in these news pieces. However, the rigidity of this narrative construction limits the player's perception of freedom because the exploration of other possibilities involves starting from the beginning.

Figure 2. Narrative structure of "The Refugee Challenge"
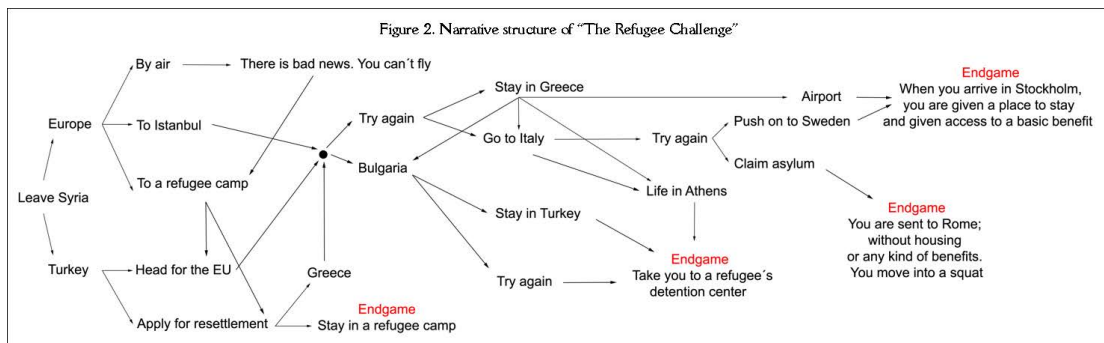
Unlike the previous model, the structure in "The Refugee Challenge" consists of 25 interconnected narrative nodes. This "maze" design suggests a greater sense of freedom for the user to explore the map of the news story. The brevity of the gaming experience leads to a simplification of the information provided in exchange for enhancing the emotional experience brought about by the degree of immersion (the player makes an average of 6-7 choices in each course, the equivalent of approximately 10 minutes).

3.2.1. Dramatic construction through viewpoint

The interest in stressing the refugee perspective has been a part of newsgames since their inception. All the games start from a first-person narrative that presents the story and its protagonist, with the purpose of encouraging the player to identify with the life path of refugees. For example, "The Refugee Challenge" begins by stating: "Your name is Karima. You are a 28-year-old Sunni woman from Aleppo, and you have two children, a girl aged eight, and a 10-year-old boy. Your husband was killed in a mortar attack three months ago. The air strikes have continued - a recent bomb, you hear, killed 87 children - and you now feel you must try to leave Syria". Some newsgames use a broader setting. Thus, "The Waiting Game" has five different scenarios to choose from. For example, the experience of a Tibetan who suffers discrimination in Nepal or that of a mother in El Salvador who escapes from the abuse of her alcoholic husband taking her son with her. The use of biographical data to enhance the introduction encourages compassion, while focusing on the causes of the journey and the precarious conditions in which it is made. The only exception to this direct introduction of the characters is "Bury Me, My Love", which uses a dramatic presentation in which these data are replaced by a Whatsapp message dialogue on the attacks in Syria between the protagonists, Nour and Majd.

Some of the games have significant features in this kind of viewpoint construction. In "Syrian Journey", the player may decide to be male or female; whereas that choice does not affect travel, it does have an

impact on some situations. Most options do not take into account the needs, physical characteristics or threats of the male or female status of the characters. If the trip is made through Turkey, there is no difference. However, if the immigrant travels through Egypt, four differences arise; while in two of the situations, being a woman is beneficial, in two others it is better to be a man. Therefore, the character's gender has little effect on their fate, except when the player travels through Benghazi and the means of transport used is assaulted by the Libyan militia demanding money. If the player is a man who decides to negotiate with militia members, he is beaten and abandoned in the desert. If the player is a woman, "more men suddenly appear. You try to tell them that you must return to the truck, but they force you to get in a car and take you away from there to be sold from one militia to another". The game does not use the term rape, but the concept is tacitly present.

"The Waiting Game" involves a choice between two female characters: a mother in El Salvador or a young woman studying engineering at the University of Kinshasa. Nothing that happens to the young Nigerian is related to her gender: prison hardship, living in distress at the home of some relatives in the Congo... Everything could happen to a male character. As for the Salvadoran mother, the game does look at the aspect of being a mother. There is a strong presence of the child in terms of small daily actions (he greets, plays, cries, asks awkward questions) and she takes care of him. In contrast, in "The Refugee Challenge", Karima's children have no name and there are hardly any references to them. Only when they are returned from Bulgaria to Turkey is it said that "the children were crying all the way back". Meanwhile, the videos that can be accessed during the game do provide an emotional connection with the children that is not in the story itself that the player constructs.

3.2.2. Building discourse through actions

The analysis of interactivity in newsgames has identified three core groups of actions for decision making: movement, ethics, and cause/effect. The interest of these actions comes from their quantative and qualitative influence on the player's activity and, consequently, on the message they receive. The most numerous are those of movement, whether directional, adventurous or exploratory. This importance of travel as player action reflects the interest in building empathy for refugees fleeing a hostile environment and establishes a model of journey as an escape in adverse circumstances. This trend is slowed down in "The Waiting Game", where part of the essence of the game is the player's inability to move forward, and is reinforced in Refugee Challenge, where most choices (Figure 2) involve moving and culminate in either "apply for asylum" or "return to…". These are two options that entail that the game has come to an end, having been more or less fortunate.

Figure 3. Decisions and actions in a) "Syrian Journey" and b) "The Waiting Game"

"Syrian Journey" and Two Million Miles present a set of decisions that challenge the player's moral principles. When crossing Greece's border with Turkey, the "Syrian Journey" player must decide whether to help a mother and her daughter who are at risk of drowning (Figure 3a). Making this humane choice

means that the player will not be able to reach the Greek coast and will lose contact with their family who have already crossed the border. However, the more selfish option results in the player taking advantage of the commotion to flee and then travelling to Manchester, where they seek asylum and have a good outcome in the game. This contrast between a form of ethical behaviour and a decision associated with pure survival is one of the main sources of moral debate that is proposed.

Finally, cause/effect choices are offered in three ways. The first is the central mechanics in "The Waiting Game", since the only two choices available throughout the game are "Keep Going" or "Give up" (Figure 3b). There are no crossroads or dilemmas that lead the player to one place or another. The player is involved in the difficult existence of a migrant in their waiting process. The game makes narrative time pass slowly, although the beginning of the story is intended to encourage the player not to give up. However, the narrative construction is designed for the opposite to happen: to push the player into giving up. Therefore, the full story of each character involves pressing the continue button (each click is the equivalent of a day of waiting) between 700 and 1200 times, which drives the game's goal of trying to make the player give up in order to obtain a simplified journey story. This 2-choice dynamic encourages the critical reflection that this game seeks to convey by limiting the player's actions. In this way, it is a metaphor for the lives of refugees seeking asylum from the Trump administration.

The choices of the second model are "invisible" to the player. At some points in the process, "Syrian Journey" gives the player the choice of either venturing around the city to buy food and water, or to stay hidden. If the player opts to go out, they can acquire food supplies and floats that will later make the difference between life and death if the player is in a boat that sinks into the sea. Thus, in the journey travelled in "The Refugee Challenge", the player is forced to make decisions or act in ways that force them to reflect on the injustice of the situation, even though they are narratively random. The game that takes this uncertainty to the extreme is "Bury Me, My Love", since the decisions made as Majd affect Nour's journey and, therefore, one of its 30 possible endings. These decisions are related to four variables quantified by the game, but invisible to the player: the couple's emotional situation, determination, money, and Nour's inventory. However, the value of the player's decision is never known in advance; this contains the element of surprise, but also a certain disconnection between the player and the game because of how arbitrary or random decisions influence the story.

The third type of cause/effect decisions are "unfair" to the player: they allow progress to be made, but without knowing their true significance for the evolution of the game. In "Two Billion Miles" there are several routes that lead to the option of taking a train to Germany. At this moment, the game limits the information: "the destinations at the train station mean little to you". The game disregards the fact that real migrants can access information through the media, their mobile phones or rumours they hear (Alencar, 2020), but the game pushes them to make blind choices to reinforce the construction of uncertainty. The options are "Go to Munich", "Take train to Stuttgart", "Head to Dortmund" or "Travel to Rosenheim". If the player chooses Munich or Dortmund they are greeted with welcome banners and given accommodation; the goal of being well received is therefore achieved. If the player chooses Rosenheim or Stuttgart, they will find a hostile climate: anti-immigration demonstrations by the Pegida movement, burnt hostels, sleeping on the street... And it is raining while the player is asked the question: "Do you feel welcome?".

4. Discussion and conclusions

Racist and xenophobic discourses currently have become less virulent but more sophisticated, through the use of sources, context, and emotions (Meddaugh and Kay, 2009). Dealing with the effects of these discourses on the social and educational environment is not an easy challenge (McNamee et al., 2010) and requires the support of responsible and vigilant governments and media that report appropriately. Paradoxically, these media can be a solution but also a problem, and their ability to deal with hate speech has been questioned (George, 2014). The reaction of the media has been, in part, to adapt their news coverage to the new narrative and interactive genres proposed by digital media.

The informational experiences proposed by these five newsgames seek to recode the construction of the Other in the face of the influences of hate speech. This is done by promoting reactive empathy, which makes the player responsible for the fate of refugees and their families. To achieve this, an immersive

experience is used that is unlike the one provided by other media, which engages the player in an emotional discourse that is full of details about who the refugees are and the circumstances that compel them to start their journey. The image of the family is featured as the protagonist in this construction. Parents (regardless of gender) fight for the well-being of their children. Newsgames stimulate this kind of involvement in family destiny to arouse the player's sympathy. This approach is reinforced by an analysis of the context that does not entail remaining on one side, but is integrated into the experience: sounds, statements and images of their places and their faces are included in the game. Thus, the disaggregated images seen in other media find a better communicative expression in these newsgames, while the newsgames gain credibility thanks to their use. In doing so, the use of narrative or ludic resources, such as the construction of characters or the creation of dilemmas that always favour a benevolent interpretation of the motivations of refugees, makes it difficult to characterise them as subjects who deserve to be hated or rejected.

The integration of news coverage into a gaming experience is heterogeneous. This study has identified three different ways in which news discourse and gaming elements come together: newsgames in the strict sense, the gamifying of journalistic content and interactive stories presented as a game. The complete integration of the components that define the game as "a rule-based system with a variable and quantifiable outcome" (Juul, 2005: 36) only occurs in "Bury Me, My Love". The narrative universe is driven by the player's decisions (albeit covertly for the player), so their power to transform the story is greater than in "Syrian Journey", "The Refugee Challenge" or "Two Billion Miles", games that are linked to the gamifying of journalistic content. Here the user is more restricted and the results of their decisions are more predictable: the player has greater control over what is transmitted, but their feeling of involvement is reduced. Finally, "The Waiting Game" is more of an interactive story due to the limited capacity for action and transformation of the reader. In this case, the player's actions are limited to either waiting or giving up: there is nothing else to do. The player's decisions can only affect the narrative pace. This is a rather suggestive metaphor: the player must give up in order to have access to the classic news format in which only the essential is highlighted.

It can be concluded that offering more control to the player results in a greater branching of the narrative that increases the number of possible choices. These choices require complex and realistic approaches to the refugee's story that provide a better and more in-depth understanding of their situation. However, the freer the player's experience is, the less their interpretation of the gaming experience can be conditioned. This brings into question the educational function of the media as transmitters of a type of meaning chosen as appropriate. Moreover, there arises the fear of distortion, or even of trivialisation. "Syrian Journey" received criticism for transforming "the human suffering of literally millions into a children's game" (Sales & Paynes, 2015). The BBC responded that the newsgame was simply another source for those who wanted to understand the real dilemmas the refugees face (Gander, 2015). The way in which this knowledge is acquired is a transgression of the limits of the current news construction, but it has the ability to be truthful and perhaps more profound if the player is enabled to interact, which could lead to greater resistance to being influenced by hate speech.

Further research will be needed to specify the influence and reception process of newsgames, as well as the development of interventions with different types of players and speeches to assess whether there can be genuine changes in attitudes. It would also be beneficial to study if the greater use of newsgames as a journalistic format drives a more audacious narrative and interactive approaches and, therefore, a greater transfer in the control of information by the media.

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