

Analysing gamification marketing strategies from consumer perspective: A Systematic Literature Review.

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Abstract: Gamification has become a significant area of interest in marketing due to its potential to boost consumer engagement and influence purchasing behavior. Defined as the application of game mechanics in non-game contexts, gamification is used by marketers to enhance brand loyalty and encourage consumer co-creation. This systematic review aims to explore the impact of gamification on consumer behavior from a marketing perspective. Using a PRISMA-guided methodology, a comprehensive search of peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2005 and 2024 yielded 91 relevant papers. The analysis reveals a growing trend in gamification research, with 78.61% of the studies published in the last five years. Key thematic areas identified include gamification's role in social marketing, brand loyalty, mobile app engagement, and customer experience. The review highlights that gamified strategies are particularly effective among younger consumers, such as Generation Z, who value interactive experiences. This review offers a foundation for further studies into the evolving relationship between gamification and consumer behavior in marketing.

Keywords: *Gamification, Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Systematic literature review.*

1. Introduction

The rise of gamification in marketing has garnered significant attention in recent years, driven by its potential to enhance consumer engagement and shape purchasing behavior (Hamari et al., 2014; Robson et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2022). Gamification, defined as the application of game mechanics in non-game contexts, has been widely employed in marketing strategies to motivate consumer actions, enhance brand loyalty, and foster co-creation (Huotari & Hamari, 2017; Hofacker et al., 2022). Marketers increasingly recognize the potential of gamified experiences in encouraging consumers to participate in brand-related activities, which may lead to stronger emotional connections with products and services (Bittner & Schipper, 2014; Eppmann et al., 2018).

From a consumer perspective, gamification serves as a tool for engagement, blending entertainment with marketing objectives. Studies suggest that consumers are more likely to engage with brands that incorporate game-like features, such as points, badges, leaderboards, and rewards (Harwood & Garry, 2015; Hsu & Chen, 2018). These elements not only create a sense of accomplishment and competition but also stimulate intrinsic motivation, driving consumers to repeatedly interact with the brand (Blohm & Leimeister, 2013; Xi & Hamari, 2019). In doing so, gamification aligns with broader trends in experiential marketing, which emphasizes delivering memorable and engaging consumer experiences (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011).

Given the increasing interest in the intersection of gamification and marketing, this paper aims to provide a systematic review of the literature on gamification from a

consumer perspective. Specifically, we seek to understand the impact of gamification on consumer behavior, brand engagement, and purchase intentions. To achieve this, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: What are the key themes and trends in the literature on gamification and marketing from a consumer perspective?

RQ2: What are the primary consumer outcomes associated with gamified marketing strategies?

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 explains the methodology used. Section 3 presents the main findings, while Section 4 discusses implications for further research in the field.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a systematic review methodology to examine the literature on gamification and marketing from a consumer perspective. A systematic literature review provides a structured and replicable approach, as emphasized by Chaudhary et al. (2021), allowing for the identification of studies that align with the research questions, enriching the literature with theoretical insights, and uncovering new perspectives that either confirm or challenge established views. To ensure consistency and rigor, this study followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol (Moher et al., 2015), which facilitated the clear identification and selection of relevant studies. The review process began by defining specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Conference papers, books, book chapters, and PhD dissertations were excluded from the sample to focus on peer-reviewed journal articles, which have a more significant impact on academic research. The search was conducted using Scopus, a widely recognized research engine known for its comprehensive coverage of scientific journals. The search focused on papers published between 2005 and 2024, as these years mark the most significant developments in gamification research.

This search initially generated 462 records. In the first phase of screening, the sample was narrowed down by applying several exclusion criteria: Ex1, document types that are not journal articles; Ex2, documents not published in the business, management, or accounting subject areas; Ex3, documents not in English; Ex4, non-peer-reviewed sources. This process resulted in a preliminary sample of 130 papers.

The following search string was used to filter the relevant literature: (TITLE-ABS-KEY ((gamification OR gamified OR gamifying OR "game mechanics" OR "game elements" OR "game design") AND marketing) AND (behaviour OR behavior OR "consumer behavior" OR "consumer behaviour") AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "busi")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "english"))).

In the second phase, full-text screening and evaluation were carried out, where 39 articles were further excluded based on their relevance to the research focus on gamification and consumer behavior in marketing. Ultimately, 91 papers were included in the final sample. The bibliographic information of these papers—such as title, abstract, keywords, authors, publication year, citation counts, and journal names—was

extracted from Scopus and exported to Microsoft Excel for further analysis. Additionally, VOSviewer software was employed to conduct a co-occurrence analysis of keywords, allowing us to identify recurring thematic areas and research trends in the field. This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of research on gamification and marketing from a consumer perspective.

3. Findings

The analysis conducted reveals a growing trend in research examining the role of gamification in marketing, particularly from a consumer behavior perspective. The distribution of studies across the years demonstrates a noticeable upward trajectory, with 78.61% of the papers published in the last five years, highlighting the increasing interest in gamification as a marketing tool. In terms of research focus, 79.8% of the studies are empirical. Of these, 57 studies utilize quantitative methodologies, 19 employ qualitative approaches, and 15 use a mixed-methods design.

The leading academic outlets for gamification research in marketing are the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Marketing Intelligence and Planning, Journal of Business Research, and Journal of Social Marketing, each featuring 5 publications from the final sample of 91 papers. This reflects the journal's significant role in promoting gamification studies in marketing. Other prominent journals include Journal of Marketing Education and Journal of Interactive Marketing, each accounting for 4 studies, underlining their contribution to the intersection of gamification and consumer behavior. Additionally, the European Journal of Marketing published 3 papers, as did Technological Forecasting and Social Change with 3 studies. Using VOSviewer software (Van Eck et al., 2010), a co-occurrence analysis of keywords was performed to map the intellectual structure of gamification research in marketing. This analysis identified keyword clusters that indicate thematic areas where research is concentrated. The co-occurrence analysis results in five distinct clusters comprising 22 key items. Each cluster represents a significant thematic area within the gamification and marketing literature, with keywords linked by frequency and relevance. The clusters are color-coded in the visual representation, with larger bubbles indicating higher keyword frequency.

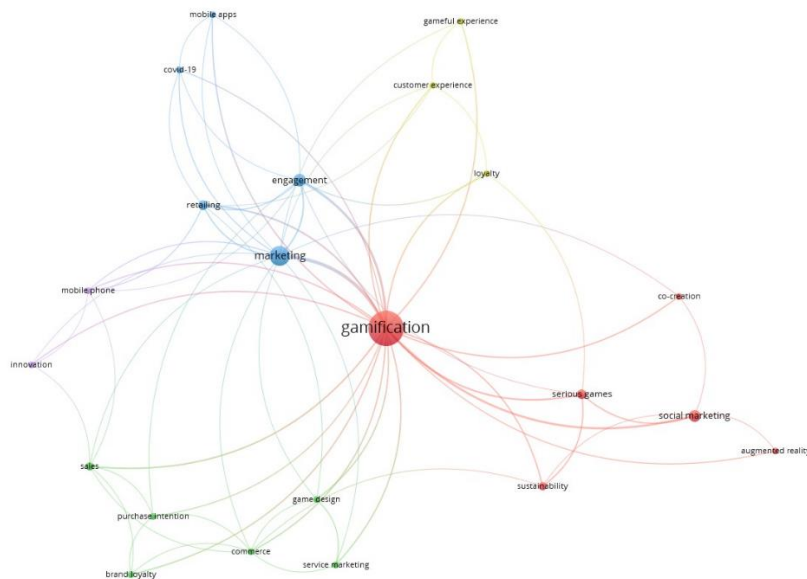
The identified clusters are as follows:

- Cluster 1 (gamification in social marketing and sustainability): This cluster includes key terms such as augmented reality, co-creation, gamification, serious game, social marketing, and sustainability. This cluster highlights the integration of gamified elements in promoting sustainable behaviors and social marketing campaigns.
- Cluster 2 (gamification and its impact on brand loyalty and service marketing): This group contains terms like brand loyalty, commerce, game design, purchase intention, sales, and service marketing, emphasizing the effect of gamification on consumer loyalty and purchase behaviors.
- Cluster 3 (mobile apps, retailing, and engagement): Terms in this cluster, such as covid-19, engagement, marketing, mobile apps, and retailing, illustrate the role of

gamification in mobile platforms and its importance in customer engagement during the pandemic.

- Cluster 4 (customer experience and loyalty through gamified interactions): This cluster focuses on terms such as customer experience, game experience, and loyalty, highlighting how gamification enhances customer experiences and fosters long-term loyalty.
- Cluster 5 (innovation in mobile technologies and marketing): This final cluster includes keywords such as innovation and mobile phone, pointing to the relationship between gamification and technological advancements in mobile marketing strategies.

Figure 1. Co-occurrence analysis (VOSviewer)



4. Discussion and research proposition

The analysis of the literature highlights the multifaceted impact of gamification on consumer behavior within marketing contexts. Gamification has been proven to influence a wide range of consumer-related outcomes, from increasing engagement to fostering loyalty and enhancing purchase intentions (Huotari & Hamari, 2017; Xi & Hamari, 2019). This complex influence requires consideration of various stakeholders, including consumers, marketers, and technology providers, each playing a crucial role in the gamification ecosystem (Robson et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2022). Additionally, the diversity in gamified marketing objectives must be recognized, as businesses utilize these strategies to achieve multiple outcomes, such as improving customer experiences, driving brand loyalty, or generating sales (Eppmann et al., 2018; Hofacker et al., 2022).

A key theme emerging from the literature is the ability of gamification to enhance consumer engagement through interactive and experiential marketing techniques. Gamified marketing strategies have shown particular efficacy among younger consumers, such as Generation Z, who value entertainment and interactivity in their brand interactions (Hsu & Chen, 2018; Bittner & Schipper, 2014). Furthermore, mobile technologies and apps have played a significant role in delivering gamified experiences, especially during periods like the COVID-19 pandemic, where digital touchpoints became the primary mode of brand-consumer interaction (Xi & Hamari, 2019; Xu et al., 2022).

This review also highlights opportunities for future research. Firstly, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the long-term effects of gamification on consumer behavior. While short-term impacts such as increased engagement and loyalty have been well-documented, more longitudinal studies are needed to understand whether these effects are sustained over time (Eppmann et al., 2018; Hamari et al., 2014). Additionally, most of the reviewed studies predominantly used quantitative methods. Future research could benefit from incorporating more qualitative approaches to explore deeper consumer motivations and emotional responses to gamified marketing experiences. This could provide richer insights into why certain gamification elements resonate more with consumers and how they contribute to long-term brand relationships (Blohm & Leimeister, 2013; Hsu & Chen, 2018).

Furthermore, there is limited exploration of the ethical implications of gamification in marketing. While gamification is primarily designed to enhance engagement, its potential to manipulate consumer behavior raises ethical questions that future research should address. Studies focusing on the balance between consumer enjoyment and ethical concerns related to data privacy, addiction, and consumer manipulation could offer valuable contributions to this growing field (Robson et al., 2015).

In conclusion, while significant strides have been made in understanding the role of gamification in marketing, there remain ample opportunities for future research. Investigating the long-term effects of gamified experiences, exploring qualitative dimensions of consumer behavior, and addressing ethical concerns could further enrich this dynamic research area.

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