

Gamification in Marketing Strategy: A New Way to Build Customer Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the application of gamification as an innovative marketing strategy to build customer engagement. With increasing market competition and changes in consumer behavior that are more interactive and digitally savvy, companies are required to create engaging marketing experiences that enhance customer loyalty. Gamification, which is the use of game elements in non-game contexts, offers a new and effective approach to increasing customer interaction, motivation, and participation. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive-analytical approach, examining various case studies and related literature on the implementation of gamification in the marketing world. The results show that gamification is an effective marketing strategy to increase customer engagement and loyalty. By incorporating game elements such as points, challenges, rewards, and leaderboards into apps, websites, or social media platforms, companies can create enjoyable and motivating experiences. This makes customers more interested, more likely to interact frequently with the brand, and more loyal in the long run. Gamification also helps companies voluntarily collect user behavior data to develop more targeted marketing strategies. Amidst intense market competition, this approach becomes a creative solution to build strong consumer relationships and drive sustainable business growth.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has transformed the way companies conduct marketing activities. In today's digital era, consumers are no longer merely the target of marketing efforts, but active participants who seek interactive and personalized experiences (Farah et al., 2024). This shift demands that companies adopt marketing strategies that are not only informative but also capable of creating deep engagement with customers. One approach that is increasingly being implemented is gamification, which refers to the use of game elements in non-game contexts to enhance motivation and participation (Astuti et al., 2023).

Today, gamification has become one of the most popular trends in modern marketing. Since 2014, more than 70% of large global companies have launched at least one application that integrates gamification elements into their marketing strategies. This number continues to grow each year in line with increasing consumer demand for more interactive and enjoyable experiences (Deana, 2023). The main reason behind this trend is gamification's effectiveness in increasing customer engagement, which has reportedly improved by up to 150%. By incorporating points, badges, challenges, and reward systems, gamification creates motivating experiences that drive active participation—ultimately resulting in increased customer loyalty and the overall success of marketing campaigns (Febrian & Ahluwalia, 2020).



By applying gamification strategies, companies can add various interactive and enjoyable elements to their websites or applications, such as challenges, points, leaderboards, and digital rewards (Taruli et al., 2021). These elements not only enhance the user experience but also encourage active user participation. Through competition or reward systems, users are driven to repeatedly return and interact with the platform, thereby fostering a closer relationship between consumers and the brand. This approach indirectly transforms passive marketing activities into immersive and motivating experiences (Felita & Hardjono, 2022).

Gamification has proven effective in enhancing key aspects of digital marketing, particularly engagement value and brand loyalty. When users feel appreciated and entertained through gamified experiences, they tend to develop a more positive perception of the company (Harwood & Garry, 2015). This strengthens brand image and increases the likelihood of repeat purchases or brand recommendations. Thus, gamification not only serves as a form of entertainment but also as a marketing strategy that creates added value and long-term benefits for companies (Hammedi et al., 2019).

Customer engagement has become a key indicator for evaluating the effectiveness of marketing strategies in the digital era. Modern consumers are not just looking for products or services, but also for meaningful and interactive experiences at every point of interaction with a brand (Ginting & Haloho, 2021). Customers who feel emotionally and functionally engaged with a brand tend to be more loyal, provide constructive feedback, and voluntarily share positive brand information with their social networks. This produces a chain effect that benefits companies by organically expanding promotional reach without substantial additional costs (Ridanasti, 2021).

In this context, gamification emerges as a strategy capable of enhancing the quality and intensity of customer interactions in a fun and engaging way. Through elements such as point systems, levels, challenges, and rewards, gamification encourages customers to stay involved, explore, and even compete in activities related to products or services (Streukens et al., 2019). This strategy fosters not just transactional, but also emotional experiences—ultimately strengthening the bond between customers and the brand. Therefore, companies aiming to remain relevant and competitive amid dynamic market competition need to carefully integrate gamification into efforts to build and maintain sustainable customer engagement (Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021).

Previous studies have shown that gamification has a positive impact on increasing customer engagement and brand loyalty. A study by Huotari and Hamari (2017) revealed that gamification can create customer experience value through game mechanics that foster emotional and cognitive engagement. Meanwhile, research by Wirapraja et al. (2021) found that integrating gamification elements in digital marketing applications can enhance user participation motivation and strengthen long-term relationships with consumers. Another study by Zaid (2017) also confirmed that gamification elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards significantly improve user retention and promote positive behaviors toward the brand.

This study aims to examine the application of gamification in marketing strategies as a new way to build customer engagement. The focus of the research is to understand how gamification can enhance customer interaction and loyalty, as well as the factors that support its successful implementation. In addition, this study will explore the challenges and opportunities faced by companies in adopting gamification. Therefore, the findings of this research are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions for companies looking to optimize their marketing strategies through gamification. It will also serve as a reference for academics and marketing practitioners in developing more innovative and relevant approaches aligned with current digital trends.

Literature Review

Gamification

Gamification is the use of game elements such as points, rewards, challenges, and badges in non-game contexts, such as marketing or business. The goal is to make the user experience more engaging and enjoyable, thereby encouraging them to participate more actively (Hamari et al.,

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2023). Through gamification, companies can transform ordinary activities into a motivating game-like experience that keeps customers involved and interacting with the brand.

These gamification elements not only make users feel entertained, but also provide incentives to achieve certain goals—such as completing challenges or collecting points to earn rewards (Noorbehbahani et al., 2019). This approach has proven effective in increasing customer interest and motivation, making marketing strategies more dynamic and attention-grabbing.

Customer Engagement

Customer engagement refers to the active emotional and interactive involvement of customers with a brand or product. When customers are well engaged, they don't just purchase a product—they also feel a sense of closeness and trust toward the brand. This engagement is important because active customers are typically more loyal, more satisfied, and even willing to recommend the product to others (de Oliveira et al., 2020).

According to Bowden (2009), a high level of engagement also helps companies build long-term relationships with customers. This makes customers less likely to switch to competitors and more inclined to continue interacting, whether through repeat purchases, providing feedback, or participating in brand-related activities organized by the company.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to explore in depth the implementation of gamification in marketing strategies and its impact on customer engagement. Data is collected through literature reviews, in-depth interviews with marketing practitioners who have implemented gamification, as well as case study analyses of companies that have successfully used gamification as a marketing tool. This approach was chosen to thoroughly understand the context, mechanisms, and factors that influence the effectiveness of gamification in building customer engagement (Sugiyono, 2016). The collected data is then analyzed using content analysis techniques, including coding, categorization, and interpretation of findings based on relevant theoretical frameworks. The aim of this analysis is to identify patterns, strategies, and challenges in the application of gamification, thereby providing a clear picture of the benefits and best practices of gamification in marketing. The results of the analysis are expected to provide practical recommendations for companies to develop more innovative and effective marketing strategies through gamification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Gamification, which refers to the application of game elements in non-game contexts, has proven to be an effective strategy for enhancing customer engagement, especially in today's competitive digital marketing landscape. By integrating features such as points, badges, challenges, and leaderboards, companies can transform passive customer interactions into more engaging, interactive, and motivating experiences. This strategy allows customers to feel valued for their participation and encourages deeper engagement with the brand, as the activities involved provide a sense of achievement, fun, and pleasant challenges. Moreover, this approach can be tailored to consumers' behavior and preferences, creating a more personalized and relevant experience.

Furthermore, gamification does not only serve as a form of entertainment but also as a strategic tool for shaping consumer behavior in ways that benefit the company. For example, by rewarding specific activities such as content sharing, writing reviews, or making repeat purchases, customers are more motivated to interact consistently with a platform or product. The long-term impact of this strategy includes increased customer loyalty, the growth of an active user community, and the organic spread of word-of-mouth promotion. Therefore, gamification stands as a relevant innovation for building strong and lasting relationships between companies and their customers in the digital age.

So, how does gamification help improve customer engagement? Here is an explanation based on the author's interview development and observations:

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a. Enhancing Engagement and Motivation

Gamification is an effective strategy for increasing customer engagement because it can stimulate motivation through fun and competitive elements. Features like challenges provide incentives for customers to actively participate in activities offered by the company—whether through apps, social media, or websites. These challenges can be daily tasks, quizzes, or specific missions that, once completed, offer rewards like points or digital gifts. Challenges spark a sense of accomplishment, curiosity, and drive to complete tasks, which in turn strengthens the interaction between customers and the brand.

In addition to challenges, leaderboards play a crucial role in boosting customer motivation, especially for those with a competitive spirit. Leaderboards visualize a customer's rank compared to other users, creating a sense of healthy competition. Seeing their position rise gives customers a feeling of recognition, driving them to participate more in order to maintain or improve their rank. This creates a sustainable cycle where customers keep returning to the platform and routinely interact, increasing both the frequency and duration of their engagement with the offered product or service.

b. Creating a Pleasant Experience

Gamification makes interactions between customers and brands more enjoyable by incorporating entertaining game elements such as daily missions, interactive quizzes, or reward systems. In a marketing world that is increasingly competitive, an enjoyable experience becomes key to capturing consumer attention. When customers feel entertained during brand interaction, they tend to form a positive, lasting impression and are more willing to continue participating in various marketing activities. The joy arising from gamified elements builds a strong emotional connection between customer and brand.

Beyond mere entertainment, gamification elements provide a memorable and distinctive experience compared to conventional marketing strategies. For instance, loyalty apps that award points for purchases or challenge completions can create a sense of achievement and involvement. The satisfaction of completing a challenge or leveling up within a gamified system encourages customers to return and stay engaged. This kind of interaction is far more powerful than simply receiving passive promotional messages or advertisements.

By fostering entertaining and meaningful engagement, gamification greatly contributes to building long-term customer loyalty. Engaged and happy customers are not only more likely to make repeat purchases but also to become brand advocates who voluntarily recommend the product to others. This opens the door to organic, wide-reaching word-of-mouth promotion. Therefore, gamification is not just a supplemental marketing tool—it is a strategic approach that can create engaging customer experiences and nurture long-term growth in brand-customer relationships.

c. Driving Loyalty

By offering incentives such as points, badges, and rewards, gamification helps shape consistent and loyal customer behavior toward a brand. These incentives act as a form of recognition for customer participation, making them feel appreciated every time they interact—whether it's by completing challenges, making purchases, or sharing content. This sense of appreciation fosters emotional satisfaction, which plays a key role in building brand attachment. When customers know that every action brings tangible value, they are more motivated to continue engaging and remain users of the product or service.

Additionally, a well-structured incentive system can promote the formation of long-term habits that bind customers to a brand. For example, by introducing loyalty levels based on accumulated points, companies can create a sense of exclusivity and a desire to reach higher status. This encourages customers to stay involved to avoid losing out on the benefits or status they've already achieved. Over time, this strategy fosters strong customer retention, as users are not only enjoying the product but are also engaged in a "game" that cultivates a sense of achievement, involvement, and brand loyalty.

d. Collecting Data

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Gamification not only plays a role in increasing customer engagement but also serves as an effective tool for collecting data voluntarily and ethically. Through participation in challenges, quizzes, or activities that require users to fill in information or choose certain preferences, companies can obtain valuable data regarding customer habits, interests, and behaviors. Because the data is collected as part of a fun and interactive experience, customers tend to be more open and willing to share information without feeling coerced or that their privacy is being invaded. This differs from traditional survey methods, which are often considered boring or too invasive.

The data collected from gamified activities can be used to optimize marketing strategies in a more personalized and targeted way. For instance, by identifying the products or activities most frequently engaged with by customers, companies can design more relevant promotional campaigns, arrange suitable product recommendations, and improve retention through personalized offers. Moreover, a better understanding of customer behavior patterns also helps companies make more effective and efficient strategic decisions. Thus, gamification not only enhances interaction but also serves as a valuable source of consumer-based marketing strategy development.

e. Increasing Conversion Rates

By creating a fun and interactive experience, gamification effectively guides users through each stage of the customer journey. Game elements such as challenges, missions, or rewards provide motivation for customers to stay engaged from the awareness stage all the way through to making a purchase. This approach transforms processes that are usually considered dull or complex into more engaging and easy-to-follow experiences, thereby reducing the risk of customers losing interest or abandoning the process before completion.

Additionally, gamification helps reinforce marketing messages at each stage of the customer journey in a more personalized and motivating way. For example, customers who successfully complete certain challenges can be given incentives that encourage them to move on to the next stage, such as trying a new product or making a first purchase. These repeated and sustained interactions not only increase engagement but also improve the chances of conversion, as customers feel appreciated and actively motivated.

The application of gamification in marketing has become one of the most effective innovations for increasing customer engagement and strengthening brand loyalty. One of the most common examples is loyalty programs designed with game elements such as points and badges. In these programs, customers who frequently shop or interact with the brand earn points that can be collected and exchanged for various rewards, discounts, or other exclusive benefits. Besides providing direct incentives, awarding badges as a form of recognition also gives customers a sense of achievement and acknowledgment, which motivates them to continue participating and increasing the frequency of their interactions with the brand.

Beyond loyalty programs, social media challenges are also a highly effective form of gamification in building customer communities while increasing brand awareness. Companies can host contests, challenges, or missions that invite customers to actively participate, such as sharing photos with the product, taking quizzes, or creating brand-related creative content. With leaderboards or prizes for winners, customers feel more motivated to take part and engage in healthy competition. These activities not only boost engagement but also encourage customers to become brand ambassadors who spread their positive experiences within their social circles.

Furthermore, integrating games or mini-games directly into a company's website or application can provide users with a more interactive and enjoyable experience. For example, an e-commerce app could include a simple game that allows customers to earn discounts or vouchers after completing certain levels. This not only extends the time users spend interacting with the platform but also makes the shopping experience more entertaining and different from competitors. As a result, customers feel closer and form a stronger emotional bond with the brand.

Besides entertainment, gamification can also be used as an effective educational tool. Through game elements, companies can convey important information about products or

services in an engaging and easy-to-understand way. For instance, a cosmetics brand could create an interactive quiz or game-based tutorial to teach proper product usage. This approach not only enhances customer knowledge but also makes them feel more confident and comfortable using the product, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase. Therefore, gamification in marketing not only boosts engagement but also strengthens customer relationships through enjoyable and meaningful education.

Gamification is a marketing strategy that is increasingly being adopted due to its ability to significantly enhance customer engagement. By understanding game psychology, such as the need for challenges, achievement, and recognition, businesses can integrate relevant game elements like points, badges, challenges, and rewards into their marketing activities. This approach not only makes interacting with the brand more engaging and enjoyable but also motivates customers to remain active and loyal. In addition to boosting customer engagement, gamification plays a key role in increasing conversion rates, as engaged customers are more likely to make purchases and return in the future. Therefore, gamification becomes a new, effective, and innovative way for companies to build stronger and more sustainable relationships with their customers.

CONCLUSION

Gamification has proven to be an effective marketing strategy in enhancing customer engagement. By integrating game elements such as points, badges, challenges, leaderboards, and rewards into non-game contexts like apps, websites, and social media, companies can create more interactive, enjoyable, and motivating experiences for customers. This approach not only captures consumer attention but also provides a psychological incentive to stay engaged with the brand. In addition to boosting engagement, gamification also drives customer loyalty and increases conversion rates. Customers who feel appreciated and challenged through reward systems tend to be more loyal and are more likely to make repeat purchases. Through gamified loyalty programs, interactive social media content, and mini-games in apps, companies can strengthen long-term relationships with their customers. Furthermore, gamification enables businesses to collect user behavior data voluntarily and without intruding on privacy—information that is highly valuable for crafting more targeted marketing strategies. With all these advantages, gamification is not merely a trend, but a necessity in modern marketing. In the face of increasingly intense market competition, companies must adopt creative and relevant approaches that align with the needs and habits of today's consumers. Therefore, by implementing gamification appropriately and strategically, businesses can create more meaningful customer experiences, build long-term loyalty, and drive sustainable business growth.

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