

Gamification in Marketing

Matthew N. O. Sadiku¹

Uwakwe C. Chukwu²

Janet O. Sadiku³

Abstract

Games have become favorite entertainment activity for many people worldwide. They are capable of engaging people by tapping into fan knowledge and offering some rewards. Gamification is a transformation of something into a game. It is a digital marketing term used to describe the action of applying techniques of game playing to non-gaming environments such as business, education, healthcare, marketing, etc. It is one of the most used strategies across the digital marketing industry. A main goal of gamification marketing is to increase customer interaction by offering rewards to participants. This paper provides an overview on gamification marketing with examples.

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¹Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering Prairie View A&M University Prairie View, TX USA

²Department of Engineering Technology South Carolina State University Orangeburg, SC, USA

³Juliana King University Houston , TX, USA

INTRODUCTION

Marketing is evolving with the world it inhabits. With the ever-changing technology, culture, and business world, marketing is significantly affected and marketers need to be willing to step into new territory.

Games are a way to capture your audience's attention. People love video games and video games have worldwide appeal. Online gaming is on fire at the moment. Games attract more attention to your website and to your products and services. Brands utilize games as an extra tool to advertise and promote their products and services. Different uses of games are shown in Figure 1.

Gamification, as the name suggests, is using elements of gaming for the purposes of education, healthcare, business, marketing, etc. It has been widely applied in marketing strategies over the years. It is a strategy that uses game mechanics in a non-gaming context. It is essentially using games on your website to encourage engagement. Gamification marketing is an enhanced marketing technique that borrows design elements from games to attract and retain customers. It could be as simple as offering rewards in a way that feels like a game. Although games and gamification have a lot in common, they are not exactly the same [1,2].

WHAT IS GAMIFICATION?

The word "gamification" was coined in 2002 by Nick Pelling, a British inventor, but it did not gain popularity until 2010. The idea of gamification came from the fact that the gaming industry was the first to master human-focused design and we are now learning from games. Gamification is not a new concept, but it is deeply rooted in marketing endeavors, such as points cards, grades, and degrees, and workplace productivity [4]. Researchers became interested in gamification because the concept could be implemented in different ways to motivate people. Gamification has become hugely popular in all walks of life, including education.

The gamification can be viewed in two ways: (1) adopting the act of playing a video game into everyday use, (2) the act of using game elements to make non-games more enjoyable. It is applied in education, business, sports, marketing, and finance. It is currently one of the largest trends in education. Traditional education has been found to be ineffective in motivating and engaging many students. Gamification is cutting-edge approach which is producing positive results in every region of the world.

Everyone loves games. Gamification just takes advantage of that innate desire. It can make practice fun. It can make the routine less dull. Online games have become bolder and more diverse. Gamification involves the introduction of gameplay to a traditionally non-game environment. Its goal is to encourage user engagement.

Here are the typical elements of gameplay [5].

- Points - representing progress and accomplishment – often used to obtain rewards
- Badges- similar representation to points, often also representing a status
- Leader-boards - participant ranking
- Performance graphs - to measure individual user's performance over time
- Meaningful stories - narrative/context the user exists within
- Avatars - a visual representation of a user
- Teammates - others engaging in the game

GAMIFICATION MARKETING

Since the average attention span is about 8 seconds, one marketing strategy that can be used to capture the attention of an audience is by leveraging gamification. Gamification marketing involves incorporating gaming elements into a non-gaming context to encourage users to take specific actions. It is great in getting consumer attention. One can offer an exciting reward in exchange for a customer's contact information, which can be added to the marketing emails list.

Gamification refers to the incorporation of game-style incentives into every day or non-game activities. Gamification in marketing is basically adding elements from games to attract and retain customers. It ignites people's sense of competition and urgency as they try to increase their chances of winning. It can be used in advertising as a way of combining your ad units with an interactive game. Figure 2 illustrates gamification marketing [6].

Whatever gamification strategy you choose to adopt, your priority should be making sure that your audience has fun. Rewards are good, but the fun that comes with playing a game is equally important. Your goal with gamification could be to [8]:

- Increase visitor time spent on page
- Increase order value by offering a discount
- Build brand loyalty with reward points
- Position your brand as the "fun" brand with frequent new games
- Educate customers about your brand and offers
- Collect more (& better) customer data

GAMIFICATION MARKETING EXAMPLES

The types of gamification ideas one come up with are only limited by imagination.

You can create games for holiday campaigns, product launches, discount offers, or even brand promotion. The uses of gamification in marketing are illustrated in Figure 3 [7]. There are several organizations that use gamification to engage users. These include US Army, KFC, Hilton Garden, McDonald, and Starbucks. For example, KFC has its own gaming Twitter profile called KFC Gaming where they engage over 269,000 followers with gaming-related tweets. Everyone can participate in the game as long as they make a purchase from their friendly neighborhood KFC. McDonald has succeeded in increasing their product sales by using gamification concepts derived from the classic game of Monopoly. It takes place entirely offline. McDonald's Monopoly game always attract many people, engaged in impulse buying just to get tickets.

To get customers to interact with one another, Samsung has a function that allows users to discuss current events and watch video clips. Dominos has incorporated gamification in to their mobile pizza ordering app. After creating their gaming app "Pizza Hero," which allows customers to create their own Pizza, Domino's sales revenue increased by 30%. Starbuck's philosophy is focused on personal service in favor of consumers. As shown in Figure 4, Starbucks incorporates your real-life purchases into a gamification method to enhance the Starbuck's experience and to boost sales [9]. There's a lot to learn from these companies. Gamification is not just for multinational corporations. Mint created a social media challenge that engages users by inviting them to share their goals with the possibility of winning a \$2,500 prize [10].

BENEFITS

Gamification has become popular with marketers because it can inspire users to share user-generated content. Gamification marketing is powerful, especially in e-commerce. It makes an emotional connection with the audience and leads to a longer relationship. It can help you improve your digital presence, increase engagement and interaction with your customers, enhance their employees' training, conduct surveys with their audience, and gather data that would be otherwise difficult for your business to acquire. Providing an immersive, engaging, and fun experience with your brand will help customers to remember your name and this is one the greatest benefits of a gamified campaign. Other benefits of gamification marketing include the following [11,12]:

- Games bring fun and enjoyment to users
- Games are multi-generational and appeal to young and old alike
- Games can be formatted and converted to fit each platform
- Games disarm users from their aversion to marketing in order to inform them of new products and services from a company
- Games are known to excite consumers and prompt them into returning via rewards for their play
- People enjoy interactive content and they enjoy playing games
- A branded mini-game has the ability to have measurable engagement.
- With users engaging with games and inadvertently interacting with businesses, there is an opportunity for businesses to display their messages
- The involvement of users in your campaign is higher
- Brand awareness and brand loyalty increase as visitors interact more with your content.
- Gamify's software helps create a one-stop-shop and is affordable
- Gamification marketing can influence buyer behavior
- It will help generate repeat customers and organic social shares
- It increases and improves user engagement
- It helps to grow brand awareness and loyalty
- It helps to gather useful customer data
- It educates the customer with your products or services
- It helps you collect data in a non-intrusive way
- It skyrockets the conversion rates as visitors become motivated to complete tasks for reward
- It increases customer engagement

CHALLENGES

In spite of its many benefits, gamification has some challenges too. Designing gamification is difficult. Gamification takes time and money to conceptualize and create. It is challenging because it involves not only designing a game that people want to play but also that achieves

your business objectives. Every step of the design process requires several hours from highly-skilled developers, graphics, and web designers [10]. Other challenges include the following:

- Making good games requires great creativity; so your brand should consider getting professional advice from
- Game development usually takes a lot of time and money
- The game-making process includes designing, creating, and testing the game
- There are potential ethical implications raised by gamification marketing techniques

In spite these challenges, there are plenty of reasons for gamification marketing to be part of the digital strategy of any brand within any industry.

CONCLUSION

Gamification occurs when you apply techniques and concepts from games to your marketing strategy. It incorporates fun and an element of competition to a digital marketing strategy. It is no longer considered an enigma to marketers. It is an interactive marketing strategy in which you use game-like elements as a means of promotion. It has the ultimate goal of engaging the audience. It is used to maximize user engagement, learning, organizational enhancement, the usefulness of systems, crowdsourcing, and productivity. It can provide the answer to the problems in traditional marketing. It has a major advantage over traditional marketing campaigns when it comes to influencing customer behavior.

More and more companies are throwing traditional marketing techniques out the window because they are uninviting, boring, and slow. Applying gamification in your marketing can help to improve user engagement, drive more conversions, win you more sales, build loyalty among customers, obtain data, entertain the audience, and create high-quality content. By incorporating gaming features into your marketing strategy, you are creating new paths for your audience to interact with your business. For more information about gamification in marketing, one should consult the books in [13-17].

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AUTHORS

Matthew N.O. Sadiku is a professor emeritus in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas. He is the author of several books and papers. His areas of research interest include computational electromagnetics and computer networks. He is a life fellow of IEEE.

Uwakwe C. Chukwu is an associate professor in the Department of Industrial & Electrical Engineering Technology of South Carolina State University. He has published several books and papers. His research interests are power systems, smart grid, V2G, energy scavenging, renewable energies, and microgrids.

Janet O. Sadiku holds bachelor degree in Nursing Science in 1980 at the University of Ife, now known as Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria and Master's degree from Juliana King University, Houston, TX in December 2022. She has worked as a nurse, educator, and church ministries in Nigeria, United Kingdom, Canada, and United States. She is a co-author of some papers and books.



Figure 1 Different uses of games.



Figure 2 Gamification marketing [6].



Figure 3 The uses of gamification in marketing [7].

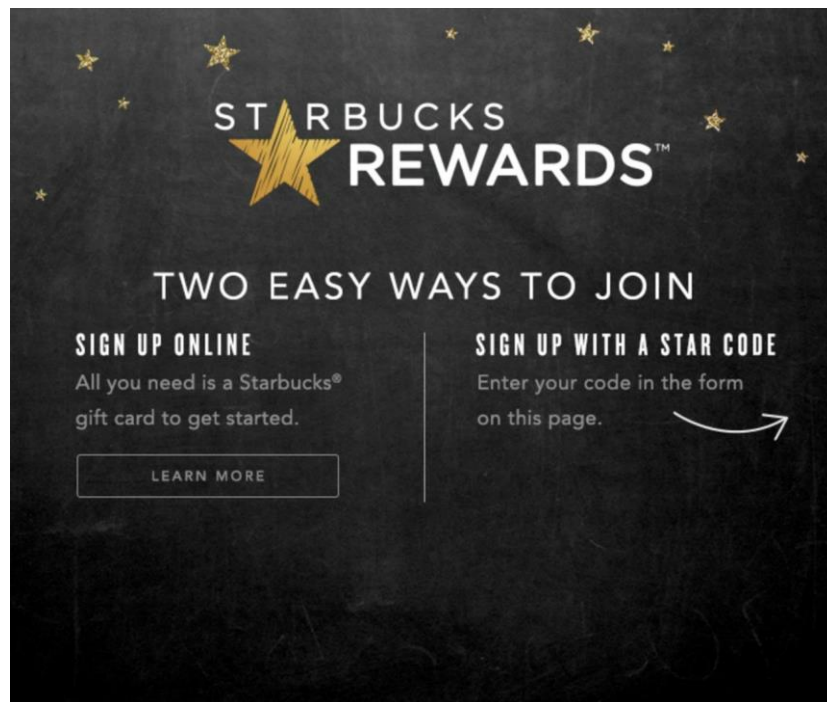


Figure 4 Starbucks incorporates real-life purchases into a gamification method [9].