

Factors Driving Consumer Engagement and Intentions with Gamification of Mobile Apps

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ABSTRACT

The advent of smartphones revolutionized and took the market to a new level. Now a days, majority of internet users spend their maximum time on smartphones, specifically on mobile apps. The emergence of numerous apps in smartphones with games features has brought about a different trend, mobile app gamification. The emerging popularity of smartphone technologies and their mobile apps have led various companies to engage their consumers with mobile apps, specifically through gamification. Therefore, companies gain consumers attention integrate their mobile marketing into their overall marketing strategy. This study explores the domain of consumer engagement and their intentions through the gamification of mobile apps. The research focuses on how mobile app gamification drives consumer engagement and their intentions drawing upon SDT and TAM. Using survey method data collected from 270 respondents, data analysis was done with structure equation modeling (SEM). The findings assert that various features of gamification of mobile apps (perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and enjoyment) have a significant influence on consumer engagement. However, convenience was unexpectedly found not to be significantly associated with consumer engagement. Additionally, consumer engagement was found to be associated to smartphone user's intentions to use gamification of mobile apps. The results of present study have theoretical and practical implications.

KEYWORDS

Consumer Engagement, Gamification, Intention, Mobile Apps, SEM, Smartphone

INTRODUCTION

Smart phone has changed the way we connect to customers. It has altered the market dynamics completely. In addition, the use of modern wireless gadgets for instance smart phones is pervasive and make possible to access important information and e-transactions ubiquitously (Alfahl et al., 2012, Sarmah et al., 2017a). Faster connectivity, affordable smartphones and services has led to an exponential growth of mobile internet users across the world. A study shows that 89% of the time is spent on mobile apps by a consumer. This is due to affordability of time, convenience and compatibility (Kim & Baek, 2018). Smart phone apps are also interactive and create an instant connect with the consumer (Roy et al., 2017). This leads to increased downloads of mobile apps by consumer. However, it has seen that though the mobile apps are downloaded frequently 25% of them get shunned immediately. Also, 26% of them are used only once. This shows that mobile app retention is a challenge to the companies. As today's consumer is socially and locally connected (Marsden & Chaney, 2013) and the connection of consumers mobility, sociability and locality gives

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a different perspective towards their behavior (Jain et al., 2018). It requires a thorough knowledge of their behavior and designing of an effective mobile app engagement strategy. We need to look at a relational view rather than a transactional view to make the consumer engagement more sustainable (Kamboj & Sarmah, 2018b).

The models such as TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) and SDT (Self Determination Theory) gives us a perspective on how technology drives consumer engagement. TAM deals with adoption and acceptance of technology by consumer, which leads to ease of use and effort enhancement. SDT on the other hand talks about the motivation behind consumer choices without external influence. Both of these theories show us the path to mobile engagement intention of consumers. Consumer engagement is a very intricate and challenging issue for companies. This is due to the fact that retention, involvement, commitment and purpose are very difficult things to be inculcated in a consumer where the choices and options are very high. Consumer engagement is a psychological process, which involves dynamism, devotion, interaction and purpose (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Thus, the mobile technologies offer vast opportunities for users' interaction (Alhammad & Gulliver, 2014). For the present study, consumer engagement is defined as the intensity with which a consumer participates in an organisation's offerings and activities, which either parties initiate (Vivek et al., 2012). We further our research by suggesting that digital innovation has led to an exponential rise in consumer engagement by adding a fun or game part to it.

With the emergence of mobile commerce and new digital technologies such as smartphones the term "gamification" and its use has become popular practice. The techniques of gamification are easily transferable from software origins to the world of business. Gamification is at a nascent stage but is growing rapidly day by day. The challenge of consumer engagement makes companies integrate gamification in business processes. This makes the consumer experience more fun, enjoyable and interactive. It also generates interest in the product, and enhances the behavior of consumer positively, which facilitates better customer relationship (Kamboj et al., 2018b). Due to this, an increasingly relevant question comes into the existence that how to optimize the m-commerce to make the successful launch of business activities (Chang et al., 2017).

From an academic research perspective although numerous companies are considering gaming in consumer engagement (Gartner Research, 2016) but still there is a retention deficit. There is less work done on motivation engagement intention of consumers. In addition, consumer's relational processing of app engagement through gamification should work upon. There is a lot of work to be done in the design of game thinking for consumer engagement (Harwood & Garry, 2015). The belief needs to be created.

The paper focuses on gamification in mobile apps leading to consumer engagement and the variables associated to it. The theory of TAM and SDT are two main schools of thought in the study of consumer behavior intention of information technologies. They explain consumer' behavior intention and their usage behavior correspondingly, but requires empirical examination (Xue et al., 2017). A number of driving factors of consumer engagement were identified based on TAM (perceive ease of use, perceive usefulness) and SDT (convenience and enjoyment) theories, and a conceptual framework is developed for present research. The study further conceptualizes how consumer engagement through gamification facilitates customer's intention to use gamification of mobile apps.

The remaining part of this article is presented as follows. Initially, the concept of consumer engagement is discussed with relevant literature. After that technology acceptance model and self-deterministic theory are explained in context of this study, Next methodology is discussed followed by data analysis and discussion on relevant findings. Lastly, implications are discussed along with limitation and future research work.

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