

Chapter 8

Dark Gamification: A Tale of Consumer Exploitation and Unfair Competition

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ABSTRACT

Gamification has captivated the interest of consumers from all spheres of life, and marketing holds a dominant position. It enhances customer engagement and loyalty through non-gaming context like social media marketing, e-mail marketing, and customer relationship management. Gamification's growing use in the service environment has caught the attention of practitioners and marketers alike. However, everything has a positive and negative aspect, and gamification is no exception. Although there are many studies on gamification in the marketing arena, there are very few primary and secondary studies that focus on the negative side of gamification. In this chapter, the authors explore this lesser attended side of gamification with focus on addiction, exploitation, manipulation, and unfair competition. To address these issues, gamification designers must employ game design aspects that limit overuse and remove focus solely on extrinsic incentives. The authors feel that this study can help gamification specialists and marketers prevent harmful consequences by minimizing certain game design aspects.

INTRODUCTION

Gamification has grown in popularity and pervasiveness in a variety of areas, including healthcare, education, marketing and staff management. Firms are increasingly relying on gamification to keep people engaged with their offers, which is roughly defined as seeking to create motivational experiences by augmenting non-game services

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with game-like affordances such as badges or leaderboards (Huotari and Hamari, 2017). Using game mechanics in a non-gaming context is an innovative approach in retail. While various studies have focused on the good results of technology, its uses, and possible benefits, we would like to take a different approach and investigate its potential negative repercussions on people and society, with focus on ethical problems also (Rapp, A et al., 2019). Designers should be aware that the technology they devised to have one specific influence on people's behaviour may have unintended consequences that must be considered, and users should be conscious of the technology they are investing in. The game element is very significant in the eventual outcome of gamification on customer behaviour. The negative aspects of gamification come when insufficient game features are used to engage the user in the gamified situation (Toda et al., 2017). Harry Brignull coined the term "dark patterns" when he identified several forms of interfaces that manipulate users into doing things that are not in their best interests (Brignull. H, 2018). As a result, dark pattern design might be defined as the craft of purposely developing patterns that harm the users' well-being. Negative player experiences are likely to occur without their consent and against their best interests. There is a need for investigation into dark gamification because it has the potential to be unethical. Our goal with this study is to reinforce the need of investigating any negative consequences of gamification. This study will also add to the body of existing literature by revealing the dark side of gamification.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gamification

Gamification is a marketing and business strategy applied to increase customer engagement and loyalty, influence customer engagement and encourage behaviours, supporting and motivating users to the task (Hsu et al., 2018). When merchants want to include gamified mechanisms into their mobile retailing applications, they should do it through challenge levels, just as in video games (Aydınlıyurt et al., 2021). The app like WeChat, is gradually expanding its functions, thus enabling the app to become China's first multipurpose app, with users spending more than 360 minutes each day on it. Gamification is a marketing and business strategy applied to increase customer engagement and loyalty while influencing customer engagement thus supporting and motivating them to the task (Hollabeak et al., 2021). Gamification enhances consumers' knowledge, has an impact on their attitudes, and behaviour. Organisations can use serious game elements to promote desirable and sustainable behaviour as reward-based game elements enhance the same. There is also a need

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