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THE PLACE OF GAMIFICATION IN CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT THEORY

S. A. Muravskaia

Moscow School of Management "Skolkovo",
100, ul. Novaya, Skolkovo, Odintsovsky District, Moscow Region, 143026, Russian Federation

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Gamification captured the attention of both marketing researchers and practitioners about a decade ago. Despite the established conceptualization of gamification as a driver of intrinsic motivation and a range of empirical research on the topic, there is still uncertainty about its place as a marketing tool. Some researchers argue that gamification acts as a driver of customer engagement, others consider it as an outcome of the process. Such dual nature raises the question of the role which gamification plays in customer relationship management. This study aims to analyze gamification through the lenses of customer engagement theory in order to identify the features of the relationship between these concepts. To achieve that a bibliometric analysis was conducted and the existing knowledge on the topic of customer engagement was systematized. The findings were divided into four clusters and the content of those clusters was analyzed in details. Gamification was compared with the key customer engagement practices. Which allowed to identify four types of customers in terms of engagement in gamification: supporters, spectators, super fans, and fun seekers. The proposed classification may be used by both academics and practitioners for estimating potential outcomes of using gamification for engagement purposes among different types of customers.

Keywords: gamification, customer engagement, brand engagement, bibliometric analysis, literature review.

INTRODUCTION

Gamification in marketing is considered as a tool for increasing customers' motivation to engage in various promotional activities, loyalty programs or campaigns to raise a brand awareness [Kim, Ahn, 2017; Koivisto, Hamari, 2019; Leclercq et al., 2020]. Research aimed to identify overall effect of gamification on marketing activities usually brings contradicting results. Some researchers state that gamification helps to overcome certain participation barriers associated with long waiting for gratification [Kim, Ahn, 2017; Sailer

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et al., 2017]. Others argues that the effect gamification has on long-term relationship with the brand is more dependent on the previous experience of winning or losing [Leclercq, Hammedi, Poncin, 2018; Eisingerich et al., 2019]. The majority of researchers, however, have come to an agreement that gamification is a tool which significantly benefits to raising customer engagement (CE) [Högberg et al., 2019; Xi, Hamari, 2019].

At the same time, the existing research tests the effect from gamification on engagement either in brand communities [Leclercq, Hammedi, Poncin, 2018; Ding, 2019], or with the use of advergames [Yang, Asaad, Dwivedi, 2017]. In the first case it is difficult to firmly conclude that gamification itself led to the result and not the dedication that customers had to participate in the activities suggested by the favorite brand. In case of advergaming the effect might be indeed related to the use of it, but there are still no clear boundaries between different levels of gamification and, hence, understanding whether the effect from intense advergaming will serve as a positive association with the brand in the future, or it will attract customers for the sake of the game itself. In both situation there is a certain ambiguity about the place of gamification among customer engagement tools and the rationale to use it in different settings. This paper suggests that there are two potential goals which gamification would allow to reach effectively if it is used as an engagement tool: the value co-creation and continuous use of branded mobile apps. To understand the effect gamification can have on the outcome the paper suggests first to identify different levels of intensity in previous engagement of customers with the brand and then to match it with the intensity of gamification itself. In order to do that the paper presents a systematic literature analysis provided with the help of VOSviewer 1.6.16 software. The result of the analysis allows to outline the main areas of customer engagement studies and, subsequently, compare those with key papers dedicated to gamification research.

The paper is structured as following. Firstly, customer engagement literature is studied with the help of bibliometric analysis which allowed to define how main engagement tools are related to each other and expected managerial outcomes. Secondly, the role of gamification among various engagement tools is revealed. Finally, to showcase the close relationship between customer engagement and gamification, the classification has been proposed. This classification allows to assess the potential effect (or its absence) from introducing the gamification with a purpose of customer engagement increase. In the final section the paper presents conclusions and limitations of the study and also introduces directions for a further discussion. The paper offers insights for academic researchers interested in new ways of studying customer engagement or gamification in marketing, and for managers who is seeking the best way to maximize results from gamification.

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

Definition. Research dialog around the topic of customer engagement has intensified about a decade ago as a response to a growing necessity for customer relationship transformation in a changing environment [Van Doorn et al., 2010]. Even though

the ability to engage consumers in relationships with the company, create and correctly communicate value for them, has always been considered as one of the key indicators of success [Van Doorn et al., 2010], the updated dynamics of consumer behavior, including online, moved an importance of customer engagement to another level [Hollebeek, Glynn, Brodie, 2014]. It is important to highlight that customer engagement research provides different definitions for engagement itself, its behavioral manifestations (customer engagement behaviors) and customer engagement in social media (Table 1).

Table 1. Overview of customer engagement conceptualizations

| Type of channel | Customer engagement conceptualization | |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| | Customer engagement | Customer engagement behaviors |
| Both online and offline | Customer engagement is an end stage of a customer loyalty [Bowden, 2009] | Customer engagement behaviors go beyond transactions and may be specifically defined as a customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers [Van Doorn et al., 2010, p. 254] |
| | Customer engagement consists of four dimensions: absorption (cognitive), dedication (emotional), vigor and interaction (behavioral) [Brodie et al., 2011] | |
| | Customer-brand engagement a psychological state which encompass a proactive and interactive customer relationship [France, Merrilees, Miller, 2016] | |
| | Customer engagement is the mechanics of a customer's value addition to the firm, either through direct (purchase) or/and indirect (referrals, knowledge value, influence) contribution [Pansari, Kumar, 2017] | |
| Online or digital | Social media engagement as the state that reflects consumers' positive individual dispositions towards the community and the focal brand as expressed through varying levels of affective, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations that go beyond exchange situations [Dessart, 2017, p. 377] | Digital customer engagement practices — consumers' online behavioral manifestation of brand engagement that goes beyond purchase [Eigenraam et al., 2018] |

The table shows that researchers suggest considering the manifestation of customer engagement as either behavior or a psychological state. To highlight its dual nature, it has been proposed to operationalize customer engagement behavioral manifestation as

direct, such as buying [Pansari, Kumar, 2017; Roy et al., 2018], and indirect, such as Electronic word-of-mouth communication following brands on social media or act as a brand ambassador [Eigenraam et al., 2018; Roy et al., 2018].

The duality of the nature of customer engagement and various application contexts made certain results ambiguous and launched numerous reconceptualization attempts (e.g., [Van Doorn et al., 2010; Hollebeek, Glynn, Brodie, 2014; Gupta, Pansari, Kumar, 2018; Kumar et al., 2019; Ng, Sweeney, Plewa, 2020; Obilo, Chefor, Saleh, 2021]). To systematize existing knowledge about the subject and understand the relationship between outcomes of customer engagement and used engagement tools (e.g., gamification, personalization, etc.) a bibliometric analysis has been performed.

Bibliometric analysis: methodology and results. Publications were selected from the Scopus database which provides a compilation from a wider range of leading peer-reviewed journals in management compared to EBSCO, Google Scholar, or others [Ferreira, Fernandes, Ratten, 2016]. The search query at the first stage contained key words “customer” OR “consumer” AND “engagement”, the match could be in titles, abstracts, and keywords to ensure the most relevant sources. The search period was not defined on purpose. Only publications in English were included in the search queue. On the second stage the search has been limited to comprise only publications in journals included the Chartered Association of Business Schools list (ABS-list) (8 journals from A-level, 10 from B-level, 11 from C-level, 6 journals from D-level). A summary of the described methodology can be found in Figure 1. To perform the analysis VOSviewer 1.6.16 software has been chosen.

To identify main areas of customer engagement research among total amount of 959 articles left after all the limitations were introduced, co-word analysis of keywords using VOSviewer has been performed. A database derived from Scopus has been manually cleared for further research: duplicates and meaningless co-words (e.g., country names, methods names, standard statistics description words) were eliminated to obtain meaningful keywords clustering. The clustering shows the existing relationships between co-words and the whole network. Then clusters obtained as a result of co-wording analysis were examined manually to establish a necessary foundation for uniqueness of each cluster to avoid replication of determined study areas. As a result, five clusters have been identified, themes of which are: brand communities, brand engagement, customer relationship management, marketing strategy and consumer innovation on.

Cluster 1: Brand communities. Research in this cluster is dedicated to studying brand communities as a tool for customer engagement, leaving other important topics, such as social factors and its influence on consumer behavior, beyond the scope. Customer engagement in brand communities attracted attention of researchers in early 2000s since it became clear that satisfaction with the brand is distinctly influenced by engagement in community (e.g., [Cova, Cova, 2002; McAlexander, Koenig, Schouten, 2006; Fournier, Lee, 2009]). Brand community engagement became especially relevant and captivating subject since rapid raising of importance of social media activities [Kumar, Kumar, 2020].

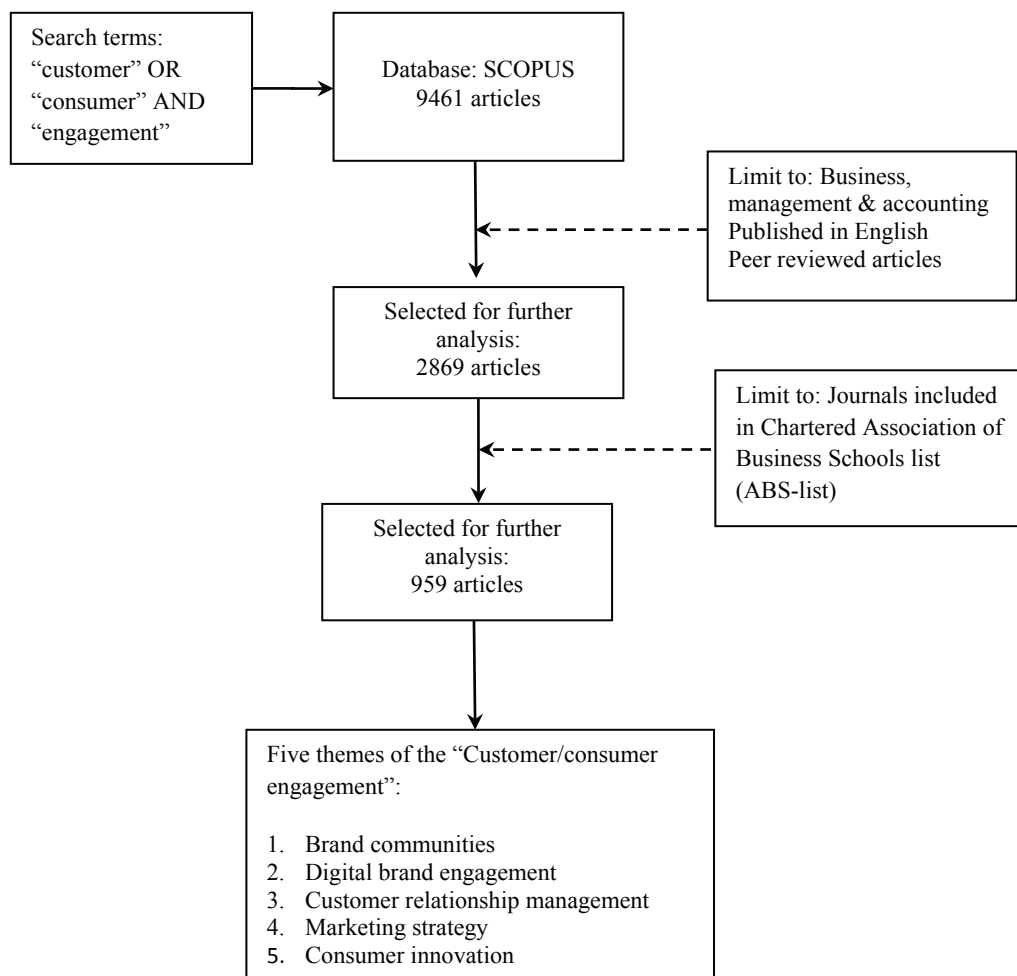


Figure 1. Design of the methodology for bibliometric study

Note: arrows with a solid line show the flow of the main process; arrows with a dotted line show the points where limitations were manually implemented.

Among antecedents, researchers consider perceived community benefits, an important role is assigned to brand community experiences [Bazi, Filieri, Gorton, 2020; Kumar, Kumar, 2020], which are normally created or managed by brand itself. Enhancement of community members' experiential value is usually done by recognizing their status with badges or rankings [Hanson, Jiang, Dahl, 2019], provide unique information [Zaglia, 2013] or engage in co-creation activities [Hollebeek, Juric, Tang, 2017]. Most actions are directed towards supporting customers' initial motivation or to drive its further development. Here we can see the link between gamification and brand communities as an instrument for increasing customer engagement through motivation.

If we look further into gamification research [Koivisto, Hamari, 2019], it would be easy to notice that the second most popular setup for testing various mechanics and its efficiency were brand communities. At the same time results of testing either contradicted conclusions of the main research stream or added another perspective [Leclercq, Hammedi, Poncin, 2018]. It is also important that research about gamification in brand communities was for a long time the only research of gamification application for strictly marketing purposes.

Cluster 2: Digital brand engagement. Research represented in this cluster is mostly dedicated to investigation of the variety of brand engagement tools and its outcomes. The focus of research is specifics of various tools and features aiming to build or develop customer engagement in digital environment, leaving such things as multichannel relationship development strategies beyond the scope. Authors who studied digital brand engagement focused on identifying antecedents and uncovering its relationship with different digital platforms [Eigenraam et al., 2018; Hollebeek, Macky, 2019; Marino, Presti, 2019]. It has been found that to engage customers with the brand on digital platforms it's important to have strong brand orientation from strategic point of view [Wong, Merrilees, 2015], interactivity and self-congruity of the brand itself [France, Merrilees, Miller, 2016], online interaction propensity from customers [Tsai, Men, 2013; Dessart, 2017], general product involvement [Vivek, Beatty, Morgan, 2012; France, Merrilees, Miller, 2016; Dessart, 2017], different types of context targeting both emotional and rational needs [Dolan et al., 2016]. The study of specific tools did not show any meaningful differences from existing notion about importance of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness when it comes to mobile technology adoption [Bazi, Filieri, Gorton, 2020; Gu, Kannan, 2021; Qing, Haiying, 2021] and ability to deliver the value in need [Braun et al., 2016].

An importance of understanding the specifics of digital tools which are used for customer engagement is because those tools are normally created with a built-in thoughts of customer experience management. If ignored, it may overlap with design elements dedicated to enforcing engagement and causing inconsistent results. In gamification the understanding of digital platform used for brand engagement is crucial because most promotional activities are made with various digital apps or similar instruments. In that case it would be necessary to carefully evaluate the possible outcome of introducing gamification if, for example, it wasn't the part of initial design and be able to track the performance of each design element: platform features, itself, engagement tools and gamification tools.

Cluster 3: Customer relationship management. Customer engagement research is largely related to investigating its relationship with fundamental constructs from relationship marketing theory such as loyalty, trust, satisfaction, and value (e.g., [Bruneau, Swaen, Zidda, 2018; Roy et al., 2018]). There is a continuous discourse about the ambiguity of customer engagement concept [Maslowska, Malthouse, Collinger, 2016] which encourages a lot of conceptual studies on the topic (e.g., [Grewal et al., 2017; Pansari, Kumar, 2017; Alvarez-Milan et al., 2018; Ng, Sweeney, Plewa, 2020; Obilo, Chefor, Saleh,

2021])). At some point researchers even considered customer engagement as one the manifestations of loyalty [Bowden, 2009; Roberts, Alpert, 2010]. Nevertheless, current research normally considers customer engagement as a necessary point of customer-company relationship development stage and positions it as mediator between certain customer intentions and formation of loyalty, trust, or satisfaction [Vivek, Beatty, Morgan, 2012; De Oliveira Santini et al., 2020; Hepola, Leppaniemi, Karjalutu, 2020].

Gamification in marketing has been introduced as a tool to change behavior for better, more sustainable relationship between company (brand) and customer. Engagement in this scenario was either outcome of gamification implementation and a foundation for developing relationship further or the reason of smoother acceptance of gamification by customers.

Cluster 4: Marketing strategy. While some researchers consider customer engagement as an instrument to reach goals in building long-term relationships [Bowden, Mirzaei, 2021; Sashi, 2021], others believe that focus on customer engagement as a part of a strategic framework [Roberts, Alpert, 2010; Maslowska, Malthouse, Collinger, 2016]. The first approach suggests that customer engagement can be presented at any format which brings necessary results [Ashley et al., 2011] and the main research challenge is to uncover and manage those antecedents of customer engagement that maximize outcomes [Kujur, Singh, 2019; Alvarez-Milan et al., 2018]. The second approach implies that customer engagement is a desirable state to keep customer in [Beckers, Van Doorn, Verhoef, 2018], but the difference in efficiency of engagement practices is defined by its match with the value customers get [Grewal et al., 2017; Kaltcheva et al., 2014]. Despite the seeming similarity between research presented in this cluster and those in clusters above, there is a key difference for each. If research on brand communities and digital brand engagement focuses on particular tools or mechanics, customer relationship research investigates the most effective ways of using engagement to foster value creation. Marketing strategy research considers the variety of implication of customer engagement tools, strategies, or related activities. Basically, this research answers the question about the role customer engagement plays in different outcomes of marketing activities, compares the efficiency of approaches, etc. In research on marketing strategy customer engagement and gamification is often used in conjunction, which makes an understanding of findings even more important.

Cluster 5: Consumer innovation. Customer engagement research is closely connected with a notion of value co-creation [Jaakkola, Alexander, 2014; Zhang et al., 2018]. Modern consumers appreciate an opportunity to contribute to a product or service development, and if companies utilize that readiness for co-creation activities, it leads to satisfaction, loyalty, long-term relationship building [Ranjan, Read, 2016; Cossio-Silva et al., 2016]. An appeal for value co-creation can be the part of an initial value proposition design and be reached through customer engagement process [Pansari, Kumar, 2017]. Researchers distinguish two types of customer engagement behavior which are based on co-creation: involvement in a new product development [Hoyer et al., 2010; Jaakkola, Alexander, 2014; Hidayanti, Herman, Farida, 2018] and communication about

the brand among other customers, the phenomenon better known as word-of-mouth (WoM) or user-generated content (e.g., [Meire et al., 2019; De Oliveira Santini et al., 2020]). The more active customers are online, creating content that involves brand or evaluate brand's performance, the more innovation comes from them, either they are consciously participating in its creation or communicating about that to brand managers.

Current studies show that regardless the research approach to customer engagement, the focus should be on the value enhancement through any engagement tool in use. The more tailored the tool to both value of a customer and company's aim, the more significant outcome might be received.

THE ROLE OF GAMIFICATION IN CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Gamification in customer engagement. Many companies struggle to choose between variety of interactive tools which can solve the issue of consumers attraction and, more, importantly, retention. Loyalty remains even more desirable outcome of relationship with consumers [Cheng, Wu, Chen, 2020]. Value companies are trying to create must be easily adaptable and offer the consumer what is the most pressing need. A growing number of researchers agree that utilitarian values are inferior to hedonic ones [Koivisto, Hamari, 2019] and companies need to adopt those marketing instruments that will provide hedonic pleasure of experience to consumer. Gamification is exactly that kind of instrument [Mullins, Subherwal, 2020; Rapp et al., 2018; Eisingerich et al., 2019].

Link between gamification in marketing and customer engagement has been established in studies dedicated to brand communities [Leclercq, Hammedi, Poncin, 2018; Xi, Hamari, 2019; Leclercq et al., 2020], mobile apps usage [Bitrián, Buil, Catalán, 2021], loyalty programs [Yang, Asaad, Dwivedi, 2017; Eisingerich et al., 2019; Hollebeek, Das, Shukla, 2021], and other. However, in most studies the type of demonstrated customer engagement behaviors had not been considered, the same as chosen gamification mechanic or the approach to define gamification. The reason behind that is most likely lies in continuing focus on gamification as a universal tool to boost motivation [Kim, Ahn, 2017; Koivisto, Hamari, 2019] while ignoring that total obtained effect on motivation might be influenced by the perception of gamification by the consumer [Ding, 2019; Van Roy, Zaman, 2019] or the previous level of engagement with the brand, service, or platform. To understand how different types of gamification relate to engagement behaviors and further behavioral outcomes, comparison of studies has been made (Table 2).

Analysis showed that there are two main applications of gamification for customer engagement purposes — value co-creation [Hammedi, Leclercq, Van Riel, 2017; Leclercq, Hammedi, Poncin, 2018; Syrjäla et al., 2020] and continuous active usage of mobile apps [Eisingerich et al., 2019; Högberg et al., 2019]. So, if compared to the clusters identified in the previous chapters, we will see that the direct match is with clusters 2 and 5. Interestingly, both effects can be achieved by the means of other instruments.

Table 2. Analysis of research on gamification and customer engagement

| Source | Antecedent | Gamification mechanic | Engagement behavior | Outcome | Targeted value | Context |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| [Hammedi, Leclercq, Van Riel, 2017] | Previous experience | Challenge, win/lose decision | Repeat usage/exercising | Compliance, less anxiety, better attention focus | Expected utilitarian, experiential | Healthcare services |
| [Nobre, Ferreira, 2017] | Brand involvement | Challenge | Consumers interaction with each other | Brand loyalty | Experiential | Brand communities |
| [Yang, Assad, Dwivedi, 2017] | Perceived usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, social influence | Branded game/Advergaming | Repeat usage | Brand attitude | n/a | FMCG-brand online game |
| [Leclercq, Hammedi, Poncin, 2018] | Previous experience, prior level of engagement | Win/lose | Participation in a contest | Customer experience in brand community | Experiential | Start up (fictive) |
| [Jang, Kitchen, Kim, 2018] | Motivation to use the app | Pledge to peers | Active communicating, repeat usage | Purchase | Epistemic, social integrative, personal integrative | Fitness apps |

End of table 2

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|--|------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| 1 | [Eisingerich et al., 2019] | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | Hope, compulsion | Rules, social interaction, rewards, progress bar, prompts | Repeat usage/ exercising, commenting | Purchase | Hedonic | Fitness apps | |
| | Gamification itself | Quiz, time reward, progress bar, chance, rules, feedback | Repeat usage | Intention to engage with brand | Hedonic value | Sports retailer | |
| [Xi, Hamari, 2019] | Gamification itself | Achievement, social interaction, immersion | Commenting, advocating behavior | Brand loyalty, awareness | n/a | Brand communities | |
| [Leclercq et al., 2020] | Perceived justice, quality of experience | Contest, chance | Participation in contest | Intention to contribute further | Hedonic, utilitarian | Brand communities | |
| [Syrjäjä et al., 2020] | n/a | Involvement | Co-creation behavior | Consumer experience | Hedonic, social, utilitarian | Food packaging | |
| [Hollebeek, Das, Shukla, 2021] | Gamification itself | Challenge, reward, cooperation | Purchase, collaboration, selfless contribution | Customer lifetime value, customer learning | n/a | Loyalty programs | |

Note: n/a — not applicable.

It is widely known that the efficiency of mobile apps usage can be evaluated with the help of technology acceptance model [Kim, Yoon, Han, 2016; Mehra, Paul, Kaurav, 2020] and achieved through various methods such as optimizing user experience [Malik, Suresh, Sharma, 2017].

An improvement of customer experience leads to a stronger customer engagement behavior [Roy, Gruner, Guo, 2020]. At the same time, research on gamification in mobile apps showed that indicators of technology acceptance models (e.g., perceived usefulness, ease of use) increase consumers' intention to participate in gamified activities [Yang, Asaad, Dwivedi, 2017]. Therefore, it might be concluded that an implementation of gamification has the same effect on customer engagement behavior that an efficient app design does. However, it is not completely true. Gamification has the power to overcome certain specific barriers that can be found even in a properly designed system. For example, a lot of loyalty programs are becoming digital, especially with the continuing change all retailers and restaurants are going through due to COVID-19 pandemic. Almost every program has such limitations as an expiration date, minimum purchase amount or product types involved [Henderson, Beck, Palmatier, 2011]. On the other hand, some loyalty programs have salient rewards, i.e., various grand prizes which normally attract consumers' attention significantly [Kim, Ahn, 2017]. In both cases consumers may feel disappointment if they either miss deadlines or lose the grand prize, which will negatively influence their intention to participate in loyalty programs or hurt consumer-brand relationships [Cardozo, 1965; Eisingerich et al., 2019]. Gamification influences intrinsic motivation and helps to shift an extensive engagement into the prize or the focus on restriction towards engagement into process itself [Kim, Ahn, 2017]. That leads to higher customer referral value and customer lifetime value [Kim, Ahn, 2017; Hollebeek, Das, Shukla, 2021].

Value co-creation behavior is considered a manifestation of high-level customer engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty [Ranjan, Read, 2016; Syrjäla et al., 2020]. Some brands to get to value co-creation stage of relationship faster are using intensive gamification [Leclercq, Hammadi, Poncin, 2018]. Discussion of gamification intensity is very fragmented despite the issue with the definition of concept boundaries [Werbach, 2014; Muravskaia, Smirnova, 2019]. In early studies researchers suggested to adopt the same approach to gamification classification as it used in game research: hard fun, easy fun, people fun, serious fun [Lazarro, 2009], which has been used to develop a typology of behavior in game-like environment, known as Hexad model [Tondello et al., 2019].

The closest attempt to classify various gamification mechanics by the intensity has been proposed in the studies about online surveys creation, where researchers suggest dividing it as soft gamification and hard gamification [Adamou, 2011; Puleston, 2011].

Soft gamification supposed to allow respondents to make certain small actions (e.g., picking an answer by dragging the option into the appropriate window) or to make the survey personalized [Puleston, 2011].

Hard gamification was presented as a full immersion into game-like activity, where a respondent might not understand that he/she is participating in a survey [Adamou,

2011]. Comparing to gamification in marketing, soft gamification can be an option for consumer to choose the product which will have better discount later (e.g., Vkusvill's favorite product¹), hard gamification is an advergame (e.g., M&M's beach party²). Though the proposed division into soft and hard gamification might be a suitable classification for online survey, in marketing activities it most likely won't work.

The reason is that gamification is closely connected with customer engagement practices, personalization, and customer loyalty management. For example, if the brand invites customers to participate in a contest, there might be two main groups of participants: those, who were previously engaged with the brand and want to show support; and those, who like contests and might have no meaningful connection with the brand. However, the idea of differentiating types of gamification by its intensity is valuable for evaluating the perception of gamification by customers and choosing the most suitable option for implementation. As we work with gaming context, it would be more correct to divide gamification as easy (to play, to understand rules) and hard. Considering this, it is safe to assume that outcomes from any gamified activity will differ in the same way as should methods for attracting customers to participate. In order to take into account main possible scenarios of customer engagement with gamification, the classification is proposed (Figure 2).

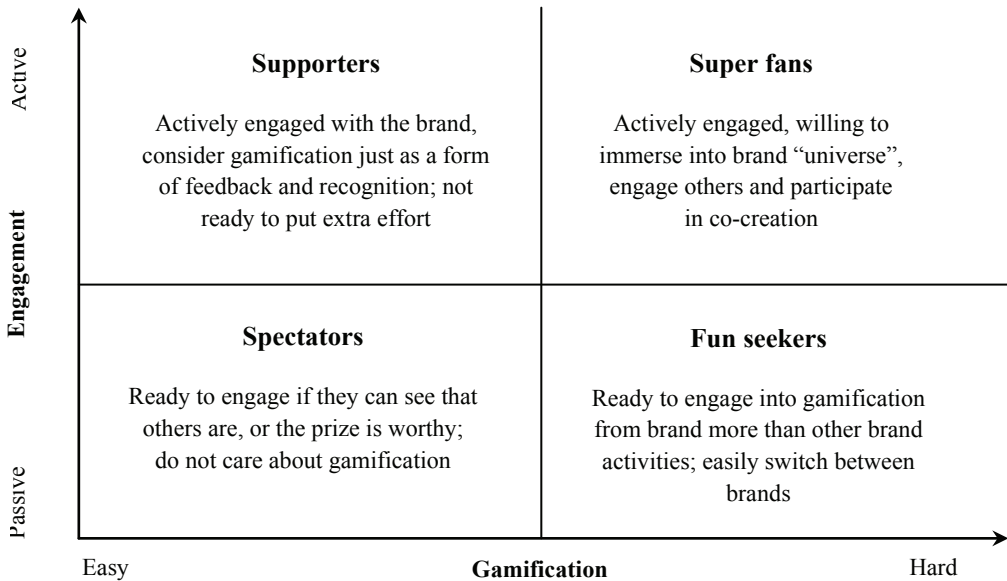


Figure 2. Customers' readiness to engage in gamification with the brand

¹ Vkusvill store website. URL: <https://vkusvill.ru/bonuses/lyubimyy-produkt.html> (accessed: 15.12.2021).

² “M&M's Beach Party” game website. URL: https://mms.fandom.com/wiki/M%26M%27s_Beach_Party (accessed: 15.12.2021).

This classification has been developed by using two criteria: intensity of gamification (easy/hard) and intensity of engagement (passive, active). The intensity of gamification is defined by its similarity to an actual game — the more gamification resembles an experience and immersion customer gains from a game, the more intensive it is. This approach to define intensity helps to differentiate customers by the value they are seeking from an experience, drivers, and barriers they will have to engage in a relationship with the brand further, and potential issues they might have with the design of gamification. The definition of the intensity of engagement already exists in several papers, where it is referred as types of customer engagement behaviors [Jaakkola, Alexander, 2014; Roy et al., 2018] or digital customer engagement practices [Eigenraam et al., 2018]. Basically, the intensity of engagement means the type of effort consumer is willing to put into actions towards the brand.

The use of two proposed criteria allowed to define four types of customers in terms of their readiness to engage into gamification: spectators, supporters, fun seekers, and super fans.

Spectators have inconsistent relationship with the brand, they switch easily and ready to engage in gamification only if the prize is worthy and participation does not require a lot of effort. They might recognize gamification or not, it does not significantly influence their decision-making process.

Supporters are more interested in developing relationships with the brand, they are actively engaged and if the brand suggests participating in gamification they probably would, but they are less likely to recognize gamification or consider it as a special form of interaction. An actual game (advergame) or high level of gamification intensity might shift their attention from the brand to the gamification itself which subsequently might lead to withdraw from participation.

Fun seekers are ready to engage in gamification the brand offers if gamification is intensive and resembles the actual game experience, they normally want to win but the prize might be irrelevant. They switch easily and tend to evaluate the gamification more than the brand itself. They will probably be ready to recommend participation if they find the experience fulfilling regardless the brand but less likely to recommend the brand itself or its new offerings.

Super fans are truly loyal customers who are engaged with the brand and ready to put out an extra effort and participate in an intensive gamification, because they consider it as an immersion into a brand universe. They would recommend both the brand and participation in gamification, try gamification among the first and probably be active in the process.

Each type would demonstrate different reaction to engagement attempts and would require separate strategies for presenting gamification as a part of it. For example, types with high level of engagement, or active (supporters, super fans) would require minimum reasoning from the brand in order to join new loyalty program or campaign which includes gamification. At the same time supporters would require more appeal from the brand whilst super fans would be equally responsive either from brand or gamification

appeal. However, engagement to the point of the value co-creation might be expected from supporters, superfans and fun seekers if the brand will put it as a goal.

The proposed classification is based on conclusions derived from literature analysis and comparison of main research questions which are posed in articles dedicated to gamification [Muravskaia, Smirnova, 2019] with a clear focus on customer engagement and its analysis with the help of bibliometric tools. At this stage classification is more conceptual, however, it can be already used for introducing additional segmentation criteria.

CONCLUSION

The last decade is characterized by the rapid changes in customer behavior, decision-making process, and their attitudes to an experience from relationship with the brand [Bleier, Harmeling, Palmatier, 2021; Kim, Steinhoff, Palmatier, 2021; Morewedge et al., 2021]. During that period researchers dedicated a lot of attention to customer engagement research [Grewal et al., 2017; Beckers, Van Doorn, Verhoef, 2018; Roy et al., 2018; Bailey, Bonifield, Elhai, 2021], personalization [Smith, 2019; Tong, Luo, Xu, 2020], and gamification [Koivisto, Hamari, 2019; Xi, Hamari, 2019; Wolf, Weiger, Hamerschmidt, 2020; Hollebeek, Das, Shukla, 2021].

Gamification has become one of the most popular tools to manage the motivation [Koivisto, Hamari, 2019], but despite its proven efficiency in information systems [Groening, Binnewies, 2019; Friedrich et al., 2020] an application of gamification in marketing raised questions about its place among other customer management practices and its overall ethics [Thorpe, Roper, 2019]. In particular, the question concerned the relevance of applying any gamification to any type of marketing activity with an expectation of similar results [Leclercq, Hammedi, Poncin, 2018; Eisingerich et al., 2019; Van Roy, Zaman, 2019]. The ethical issue the gamification has is closely connected with its use as for customer engagement purposes. Gamification is used to change consumer behavior; therefore, research should consider the ethical aspects of possible manipulation [Thorpe, Roper, 2019]. The rationale for ethical problems in place lies in the not fully realized mechanism for the change of motivation which underlines the behavioral shift.

To fully investigate this issue, it was important to distinguish different scenarios of engagement, because the more engaged customer with the brand the easier it would be to shift the behavior, hence, the more damage carelessly designed gamification could bring. The contribution of the paper to answer concerning described issue is the proposition of the classification which allows to point out an existence of various state of customer engagement before the contact with gamification. According to classification certain types might not even recognize gamification which makes them vulnerable to its influence arguably even more than those who has proneness to overenthusiastic perception of a campaign or a brand if its gamified. An issue with the latter type of customers — they would easily engage into gamification, but they might ignore the brand which will result in confusing long-term outcomes for marketers.

The research suggests considering gamification from different perspectives depending on the purpose that marketers have, more precisely the relation between customer engagement and outcomes which are supposed to be brought by gamification. First, it is necessary to establish boundaries between the variety of instruments which can be attributed as gamification, hence, expected to change motivation and behavior. For example, a classic mechanic of a loyalty program — the change of status after gathering certain number of points looks like reaching new levels in a game.

An introduction of a discussion section on a website might be considered as a game mechanic for satisfying need to relate. Despite its similarity the purpose which made gamification popular is to help overcoming barriers which are related to an extrinsic nature of rewards or barriers [Kim, Ahn, 2017; Mitchell, Schuster, Jin, 2020]. That means that some ambiguous results about gamification from studies in online communities might be related to the fact that customers were already engaged with the brand and an introduced type of gamification was designed without considering actual barriers but with the only purpose to increase an engagement even more. In an online community it might be expected to find either supporters or super fans who were already engaged, so they might either functionalize certain gamification elements in a way that wasn't initially conceived by a designer [Ding, 2019; Van Roy, Deterding, Zaman, 2019] or pay more attention to effect of winning/loosing [Eisingerich et al., 2019].

To adopt the purpose focused use of gamification marketers might differentiate types of gamification they use for customers of various stage of the journey. Also, to simultaneously avoid the sense of an unnecessary intensive engagement form the brand and lessen the inference of manipulation intent, marketers would benefit from educating their customers about gamification in marketing, its purpose, and benefits for customers themselves.

The main limitation of suggested typology is the fact that it is a conceptual framework. To develop it further a certain methodology is under development and it would be a great interest to test various scenarios in future research. However, an existing version is useful not only for academics who might use this perspective to look at gamification as a part of customer experience creation and not as standing separately mechanic, but for practitioners as well. Business can adopt the classification or more precisely use the criteria or principle for customer segmentation. Why is it possible to use criteria without previous proper testing? The foundation for the proposed classification is based on extensive literature review proposed both in this article and by authors cited. Bibliometric analysis helped to show that there both strategic and instrumental directions in the field of customer engagement research and the further comparison with literature on gamification has helped to demonstrate interactions between two fields.

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Contact information

Snezhana A. Muravskaia — Research Fellow; Snezhana_Muravskaya@skolkovo.ru

МЕСТО ГЕЙМИФИКАЦИИ В ТЕОРИИ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ С КЛИЕНТАМИ

С. А. Муравская

Московская школа управления «Сколково»,
Российская Федерация, 143026, Московская обл., г. Одинцово, д. Сколково, ул. Новая, 100

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Геймификация привлекла внимание как академического сообщества, так и практиков маркетинга около десяти лет назад. Несмотря на устоявшуюся концепцию геймификации как движущей силы внутренней мотивации и достаточное количество эмпирических исследований, посвященных этой теме, по-прежнему существует неопределенность в отношении ее места среди маркетинговых инструментов. Одни исследователи утверждают, что геймификация действует как драйвер вовлечения клиентов, другие считают ее результатом этого процесса. Такой двойственный характер поднимает вопрос о роли геймификации в управлении взаимоотношениями с клиентами. Цель работы — оценить геймификацию через призму теории взаимодействия с клиентами для выявления особенностей взаимосвязи между вовлеченностью клиентов и геймификацией. Для ее достижения проведен библиометрический анализ и систематизированы имеющиеся знания по теме взаимодействия с клиентами. Полученные результаты были разделены на четыре кластера, и содержание исследований в рамках каждого из них проанализировано более подробно. Далее проведено сравнение геймификации с другими ключевыми методами

взаимодействия с клиентами. Такой подход позволил выявить разные типы клиентов с учетом особенностей их вовлеченности в геймификацию и взаимодействия с брендом. В итоге были определены четыре типа клиентов: сторонники, зрители, суперфанаты и искатели развлечений. Предлагаемая классификация может использоваться как представителями академического сообщества, так и практиками для оценки возможных реакций различных типов клиентов при внедрении геймификации с целью их вовлечения.

Ключевые слова: геймификация, взаимодействие с клиентом, взаимодействие с брендом, библиометрический анализ, обзор литературы.

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Контактная информация

Муравская Снежана Александровна — науч. сотр.; Snezhana_Muravskaya@skolkovo.ru