

The Impact of Gamification Marketing Strategies on User Consumption Behavior

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Abstract. In digital transformation, gamification marketing has become a core strategy for companies to stand out in the fierce market competition. Gamification marketing strategies can not only attract users but also enhance brand loyalty. This paper focuses on the target audience of gamification marketing and its influencing factors, and through the SOR psychological model, it deeply explores how these factors affect user behavior. First, this paper deeply explores the characteristics of target users and reveals the differences in motivations and behavior patterns of different user groups in gamification marketing. Then, based on the SOR model, this paper explores the impact of psychological factors such as incentives, stimulation, opportunities, and responses on user engagement and loyalty. Finally, this paper uses Duolingo as an example to explore how its gamification elements, including the points system, level setting, and reward mechanism, cleverly enhance users' learning enthusiasm and encourage them to remain active for a long time. Research shows that by stimulating users' intrinsic motivation and enhancing interactive experience, gamification marketing strategies can deepen the emotional bond between users and brands, thereby promoting the brand's continued growth.

Keywords: Gamification marketing, e-commerce, SOR-Model, Duolingo user behavior.

1. Introduction

With the popularization of the Internet and mobile information technology, consumer needs and behaviors have become more diverse and complex. Traditional marketing models are facing unprecedented challenges in attracting consumer attention, improving brand loyalty, and enhancing user interaction. With the rise of the young consumer group of Generation Z, consumers are increasingly paying attention to participation, personalized experience, and emotional connection. It is difficult for brands to effectively reach this emerging group by relying solely on traditional advertising and promotional methods. Therefore, brands need to seek more innovative marketing methods to enhance user experience and build closer relationships with users. In this paper, gamification marketing came into being. It uses innovative strategies such as applying game elements to non-game environments, stimulating user interest through mechanisms such as points, levels, rewards, and rankings, providing a sense of participation and achievement, and thus prompting users to form brand preferences during interaction [1]. Gamification marketing strategies aim to increase user engagement, improve brand loyalty, and facilitate consumer decision-making. Gamification marketing is not limited to the entertainment industry but is widely used in retail, e-commerce, education, health, and other fields and has become a key means of brand marketing.

In recent years, with the rapid development of technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, and AR, the implementation methods and user experience of gamification marketing have been greatly improved. Users are paying more and more attention to interactive experiences and emotional connections. Nevertheless, the specific mechanism of gamification marketing on user consumption behavior, including how to effectively promote users' purchasing intention, enhance repurchase behavior, and improve brand loyalty, still needs further in-depth discussion and research. Therefore, systematic research on gamification marketing strategies and their impact on user behavior not only provides a solid theoretical foundation for enterprises to build a more innovative marketing strategy framework but also has important practical guiding significance.

This paper aims to provide theoretical support and a basis for enterprises to formulate new and effective marketing strategies by discussing the specific impact of gamification marketing strategies on user consumption behavior and systematically analyzing gamification marketing. By improving user experience, increasing interactivity, and enhancing user loyalty to the brand, gamification marketing can help brands better attract and retain users, thereby gaining long-term competitiveness in a rapidly changing market environment. This is not only of great practical significance to corporate marketing but also provides a new research direction for academia.

2. Overview of Gamification Marketing Strategies for Platform-based E-commerce

2.1. Definition of Gamification Marketing Strategy

The gamification marketing strategy was first proposed by Richard Bartle. It is a marketing strategy that integrates game elements (such as points, rewards, levels, etc.) into non-game environments to enable consumers to voluntarily participate in marketing projects. Its goal is to stimulate users' interest in participation and desire to win by simulating the mechanism of games, improving user stickiness and activity, thereby increasing brand influence, improving product conversion rates, increasing user participation and brand awareness, and ultimately achieving business goals [2].

This strategy usually takes advantage of people's psychological needs for achievement, competition, challenge, and social interaction and transforms users' interactive behaviors into gaming experiences. Common gamification marketing methods include point systems, reward mechanisms, virtual badges, task completion progress, etc. For example, the membership point plan of e-commerce platforms, the daily check-in challenge in fitness apps, and the lucky draw or competition in the brand's online activities all use gamification elements to attract users and enhance the user experience.

2.2. Target User Groups for Gamification Marketing Strategies

According to existing research, the target user groups of gamification marketing strategies can be divided into several different groups. First, young user groups, especially millennials and Generation Z, generally have a high acceptance of digital technology and interactive experiences. Compared with other age groups, these groups have a stronger demand for novel and creative experiences and pay more attention to personalized services and a high sense of participation. This demand makes them easily attracted by gamification elements and stimulates their interest in participating in brand activities.

In addition to young people, users who are active on social platforms are also an important target group for gamification marketing strategies. These users are very active on social networks and like to share their personal achievements and interactive experiences with others. Through gamification elements such as point systems, reward mechanisms, and leaderboards, these users can get instant feedback during the participation process, thereby motivating them to actively share their experiences. This move can not only enhance their interaction with the brand but also help the brand expand its influence and attract more potential users through the social communication effect.

At the same time, loyal user groups also occupy an important position in gamification marketing. These users are long-term supporters of the brand and have developed a high degree of loyalty to the brand. They are usually willing to participate in various activities of the brand and invest more time and energy in the promotion of gamification strategies. By designing a sophisticated reward system, brands can provide loyal users with unique rewards or exclusive experiences. This personalized incentive can not only enhance their brand stickiness but also deepen their emotional identification with the brand.

In addition, competition-driven users are also a key group in gamification marketing. Such users like to demonstrate their abilities and gain recognition through competition and challenges. In

gamification strategies, elements such as rankings and competition mechanisms can stimulate the competitive psychology of such users, causing them to constantly pursue higher rankings or more valuable rewards during interactions. In this way, brands can encourage competition-driven users to continue to participate and interact, thereby increasing overall engagement and user stickiness.

Gamification marketing can also attract users who are driven by curiosity. This type of user is usually full of interest in new experiences and new things and is especially willing to participate in innovative and interactive activities. Due to their desire to explore the unknown and novel, gamification design can effectively attract them to participate in brand marketing activities. In this process, they can not only satisfy their curiosity but also further deepen their knowledge and understanding of the brand. The target user groups of gamification marketing are diverse. Different groups have differences in age, interests, participation motivation, etc., which requires brands to fully consider these differences when designing gamification strategies to achieve maximum user participation and brand communication effects.

2.3. Factors Affecting Gamification Marketing

The effectiveness of gamification marketing is affected by many factors and is closely related to the target user group. First, the characteristics of target users significantly affect their acceptance of gamification strategies. Users of different age groups show different interests and preferences in gamification activities. For example, young users generally prefer interactive and challenging activities, while older users place more emphasis on practical rewards and returns [3]. In addition, the user's motivation for participation is also an important factor. For example, some users may participate in gamified activities for entertainment, while others may participate out of social needs or in the expectation of receiving some form of reward. Different motivations will directly affect the user's response and participation in gamified activities. Therefore, when designing a gamification marketing strategy, brands must fully understand the core needs of the target group and ensure that the activity content can arouse their interest and stimulate participation. The design of gamification elements is a key factor in determining user engagement and activity effectiveness. The type, value, and difficulty of obtaining rewards will directly affect users' willingness to participate. Appropriate reward design can not only motivate users to continue participating but also enhance their brand loyalty. To motivate users to participate, it is crucial to set up a reasonable task difficulty and an advanced system. The difficulty of the task should be adjusted according to the ability level of the target users. Too high a difficulty may lead to user loss, while too low a difficulty may not stimulate enough desire for challenge, thus affecting the attractiveness of the activity [4]. More importantly, through functions such as rankings and social sharing, it is possible to promote interaction between users, stimulate their social participation, and further enhance the word-of-mouth effect of gamification activities. These social elements can help brands expand the scope of influence of activities through user recommendations and sharing.

The degree of fit between gamification design, brand image, and product positioning is also an important factor affecting the effectiveness of gamification marketing [5]. The design style and content of gamification elements must be consistent with the core image of the brand. For example, for high-end brands, gamification design should focus more on professionalism and elegance to match their high-end positioning, while for brands targeting young and fashionable groups, the design can be more relaxed and creative and focus on entertainment and interactivity. By ensuring the unity of gamification elements and brand image, users' sense of identity and emotional connection with the brand can be effectively enhanced, thereby improving brand loyalty and promoting user participation. The success of gamification marketing depends not only on the characteristics of the target user group but also on the design of gamification elements, consistency of brand image, and other factors. Brands must consider these factors when formulating gamification strategies to ensure that activities can maximize users' desire to participate and achieve the desired marketing results.

3. The Impact Mechanism of Gamification Marketing Strategy on User Consumption Behavior--based on SOR Model

The SOR model (Stimulus-Organism-Response Model) proposed by Mehrabian and Russell in 1974 is a psychological framework that aims to explain how external stimuli affect an individual's behavioral response through his or her psychological state (organism). This model has been widely used in many fields such as consumer psychology, environmental psychology, and social psychology, especially to study how individuals perceive and respond to different environmental stimuli.

3.1. Stimulus

Stimulus refers to various factors or events from the external environment that can affect an individual's perception, emotions, and behavior. Gamification marketing attracts users' attention and encourages them to participate by carefully designing a variety of stimulus elements. The core goal of these stimulus elements is to stimulate users' interest and desire to participate through interaction, rewards, and feedback mechanisms. First, points, badges, and leaderboards are the most common motivational elements. These elements work together to provide immediate feedback, help users set clear goals, and motivate them to continue participating to improve their rankings or get more rewards. Second, tasks and challenges are another common stimulus element, which usually attracts users by setting clear goals. The different difficulty levels of task design allow users to experience different senses of accomplishment during the completion process. In particular, high-difficulty tasks can enhance users' desire for challenge [4]. This task-driven gamification approach can keep users engaged, motivating them to complete tasks and continue to interact with the brand.

Third, social interaction is also an important stimulus element in gamification marketing. Through social functions, brands can encourage users to interact with others and increase sociality. For example, functions such as competitions, collaborative tasks, and social sharing encourage interaction between users, thereby increasing participation and promoting brand communication [6]. The addition of social elements not only improves user experience but also expands the brand's influence, allowing gamification marketing to be widely disseminated through users' social circles. These stimulating elements cooperate to work together on users' motivation to participate and promote the effectiveness of brand activities.

3.2. Organism

Organism refers to the internal state of an individual, including his or her emotions, attitudes, cognition, motivation, and other psychological processes. In this model, the organism is the key factor mediating the relationship between stimulus and response. In other words, how a stimulus affects an individual's behavior depends on the individual's emotional and cognitive processing. Gamification marketing can trigger deep psychological responses from users at the emotional, cognitive, and motivational levels through carefully designed interactive elements. These responses directly affect user engagement, loyalty, and brand identity, thus helping to achieve brand goals. Gamification marketing can satisfy users' pleasure needs through entertainment and fun. Many gamification elements themselves have entertainment attributes, allowing users to experience fun during the participation process [4]. For example, the sense of accomplishment after completing a task or overcoming a challenge is often accompanied by pleasant emotional feedback, which strengthens the user's motivation to invest time and energy. By enjoying the gamification experience, users can not only feel the immediate fun but also cultivate the willingness to continue to participate in the process, making brand activities more attractive. When users complete certain tasks or goals, they will experience their progress in the activity, and this sense of accomplishment strengthens their emotional connection with the brand. As the sense of accomplishment continues to accumulate, the user's brand loyalty will also increase.

3.3. Response

Response is the final behavioral reaction of an individual to a stimulus. This response can be an overt behavior (such as a purchase decision to leave a place) or an internal emotional response (such as feeling happy, relaxed, or nervous). Gamification marketing stimulates users' emotional responses and motivations and ultimately guides them to produce specific behavioral responses. These behavioral responses not only reflect the user's participation attitude but also determine the effectiveness and value of brand marketing to a certain extent.

First, gamification elements can significantly increase user engagement. By providing instant feedback and reward systems, brands can encourage users to participate frequently and maintain continued investment. The incentive mechanism not only increases users' enthusiasm for participation but also enhances the long-term appeal of the event.

Second, gamification marketing helps improve brand loyalty by enhancing users' emotional involvement. By setting up tasks, achievements, and rewards, users can gain satisfaction and self-recognition after completing tasks, and these positive emotions further encourage them to establish a deeper emotional connection with the brand. Gamification strategies not only make users feel happy but also strengthen their identification with the brand.

Third, gamification marketing can effectively promote consumer behavior. By setting tasks and challenges, brands not only attract users to participate in brand activities but also stimulate purchase intentions through reward mechanisms. This reward mechanism directly prompts users to make consumption decisions during the activity, thereby driving sales.

Fourth, gamification marketing significantly affects users' behavioral responses by stimulating users' enthusiasm for participation, emotional identification, and purchase motivation. These responses include increasing engagement, strengthening brand loyalty, promoting consumer behavior, and driving social communication, ultimately contributing to the achievement of brand marketing goals.

4. Case Analysis

Duolingo, a popular language learning app, cleverly incorporates gamification elements into its marketing strategy, thereby increasing user engagement and learning motivation, and effectively enhancing user stickiness and word-of-mouth communication [2].

Task and level design is a key component of Duolingo's gamification marketing. To make the language learning process more interesting and challenging, the app divides the learning content into multiple "levels" and "tasks", each of which focuses on specific language skills, such as listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar. The difficulty of each level increases gradually, presenting a clear learning path. This design allows users to see their progress. In addition, this progressive task and level setting can continuously stimulate users' desire for challenge, allowing them to have fun in the process of constantly overcoming difficulties. The charm of this design is that it not only makes the learning process rich in layers but also effectively avoids monotonous and repetitive learning methods, allowing learners to maintain interest in constantly challenging themselves, thereby increasing the possibility of long-term participation.

The points and rewards system is another important part of Duolingo's gamification marketing strategy. In this system, users gain "experience points" (XP) by completing tasks and challenges. XP not only reflects learning progress but also becomes an important indicator of user engagement. By continuously accumulating experience points, users can experience a sense of accomplishment in the learning process. This positive feedback mechanism effectively motivates users to learn. Leaderboards and social competition mechanisms further enhance Duolingo's gamification experience. Users can not only compete with learners around the world but also view their rankings in daily and weekly leaderboards. This competition not only increases the interactivity of learning but also stimulates users' desire to challenge by publicly displaying their learning achievements.

By cleverly combining task and level design, points and reward systems, as well as leaderboards and social competition mechanisms, Duolingo has successfully applied gamification strategies to the field of language learning. These elements not only enhance users' interest in learning, but also provide instant rewards, increase interactivity, and stimulate competitiveness. As the language learning market continues to expand, gamification strategies may become an undeniable competitive advantage in educational applications, driving more users' long-term participation and word-of-mouth communication.

5. Conclusion

As Generation Z and young people continue to increase their demands for interactivity, personalization, and emotional connection, traditional marketing methods can no longer meet their expectations. Gamification marketing has emerged as an effective tool for brands to enhance user participation, improve stickiness, and expand brand influence.

Gamification marketing can not only improve user experience but also stimulate users' desire for competition, sense of achievement, and social needs through carefully designed interactive mechanisms. These factors jointly promote brand communication and user loyalty. Take Duolingo as an example. The application successfully combines language learning with gamification elements through task and level design, a points and reward system, and a leaderboard and social competition mechanism. This not only stimulates users' learning motivation but also improves users' long-term engagement and brand recognition.

In addition, this article has carefully classified the target groups of gamification marketing. Different user groups have different acceptance levels of gamification elements, so brands need to consider these differences and the rationality of their needs when designing strategies. With the continuous advancement of technology, gamification marketing in the future may become more personalized and intelligent. Therefore, further research on the relationship between gamification elements and user behavior, as well as the long-term impact of these strategies, will provide theoretical support for companies to develop more effective marketing plans.

In summary, as an innovative marketing method, gamification marketing can enhance user experience, enhance brand loyalty, and promote consumer decision-making by stimulating a sense of participation, achievement and social interaction. With the advancement of technology and changes in market demand, gamification marketing is expected to become an important strategic tool in brand competition, profoundly affecting the market performance and user retention rate of enterprises.

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