

## Guest Editorial Preface

# Special Issue On Role of Gamification in E-Commerce for Customer Engagement

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E-commerce has swept the world and evolved multifarious forms and features to extend its outreach to vast numbers of customers. Of particular significance and widely popular in the present-day context is ‘gamification’—application of game thinking and game mechanics in non-game contexts—in order to influence behavior (Smith & Popa, 2015). Since customers have more options and ways to purchase than ever before, retailers in order to attain and hold on to the market share, have to identify ways to make online shopping pleasant as well as gratifying (García-Jurado, Castro-González, Torres-Jiménez & Leal-Rodríguez, 2019). They have started upgrading the online client encounter by consolidating amusement components into their business forms, making internet shopping not only appealing with innovative items and low costs, but also fun (Karać & Stabauer, 2017). Games, being compelling and captivating, have the capacity to impel people to hang on to sites/apps for longer. Numerous businesses have employed gamification to bring in and retain customers over a period of time (Chiu, Wang, Fang & Huang, 2012). Some of the well-liked and engaging forms of gamification include: customer loyalty program—rewarding points/stars to customers after every purchase, which may be redeemed on future purchases; social loyalty program—rewarding points to customers for posting reviews and comments on the product as well as engaging in suggestive conversations concerning the brand on social media; expanding customer base program—rewarding customers for referrals and recommendations; participatory competitions—organize alluring campaigns with exciting and appealing prizes for winners; conferring badges—encouraging users to complete certain tasks and give them badges indicative of their customer group (e.g. VIP users); digital wallet—loading money into the digital wallet of the customer for high amount purchases, which can be redeemed during the course of future purchases, etc. (Harwood & Garry, 2015). This helps building a community of loyal customers around the brand. Gamification is thus known to be an exceptionally powerful tool that can influence users (Wong & Lee, 2016).

While gamified promotions give the ideal inspiration to potential clients by rewarding them for online purchases, it is important for marketers and retailers to study the behavioral aspects of their clients to plan activities based on the perceived motivational factors of the latter. On some occasions, a potential customer may visit the site with an explicit need (Leclercq, Poncin, & Hammedi, 2017). At other times, a visitor may merely chance upon the online store whilst browsing. Making use of a gamified element on the opening page to stimulate a casual browser may lead to a conversion that would otherwise have been a plain chance. Offering the customers, casual or otherwise, some kind of additional benefit or reward for interacting with the online store, provides them with the motivation

to proceed and considerably increase the chances of conversion (Yang, Asaad, & Dwivedi, 2017). Correspondingly, game designers can follow analytics to segregate gamification users to identify the difference between optimal game engagement and weak game engagement and aim the right game rules and mechanics for the users. With the growing popularity of e-commerce and emergence of competing brands, gamification is here to stay (Ramadan, 2018).

## **THE NEED FOR NEW KNOWLEDGE ON ROLE OF GAMIFICATION IN E-COMMERCE**

Gamification, although an emerging concept in e-commerce, has been researched scantily. A quick search on the subject flashes a host of books or conference papers, but there is dearth of peer reviewed articles featuring in reputable journals which focus on evolving trends in the domain. The Special Issue attempts to cover this gap by discussing concepts and techniques of gamification and use of the same for customer engagement. The papers selected are rich, moving and enlightening and would help academicians, researchers and experts to keep track of the recent advances in the field of gamification, behavioral analytics, web-based business data acquisition, effective computing and opinion mining from the perspectives of customer commitment and customer retention. A brief overview of the articles included in the Special Issue will give a bird's eye view of the content in each one of them.

The article by Aastha Behl, Pratima Sheorey, Abhinav Pal, Ajith Kumar Vadakki Veetil and Seema Singh discusses how with the advent of technology and its rising popularity among people, online shopping has become the need of the hour. With deep discounts floating over e-commerce websites, customers find online shopping both time and money saving. E-commerce websites, on the other hand, seek to avail the early advantage of frequently visiting customers through the recommendation engines by using gamification techniques. This tends to make their products highly attractive with the least cost paid by them along with facilities of extra discounts given to debit/credit card holders. The paper reviews the various motivating factors that make customers prefer gamified online shopping over market retailers. The review points out the effects of gamification in e-commerce websites for customer retention.

The article by Shampy Kamboj, Shruti Rana and Vinayak Drave considers how the emergence of numerous apps in smartphones with games features has brought about a distinct trend of mobile apps gamification. The study explores the domain of consumer engagement and their intentions through the gamification of mobile apps. The research focuses on how mobile apps gamification drives consumer engagement and their intentions drawing upon Self Determination Theory (SDT) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The findings of the study assert that various features of gamification of mobile apps (perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and enjoyment) lead to significant influence on consumer engagement. However, convenience is not significantly associated with consumer engagement. Additionally, consumer engagement is found to be associated with smartphone user's intentions to use gamification of mobile apps.

The article by Jayanth Jacob and Murugan Pattusamy tests the relationships between Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) constructs and the behavioral intention to use mobile internet technology with samples drawn from India and Germany. The authors test the moderating role of age, gender and user experience between UTAUT constructs and behavioral intention using hierarchical regression analysis. Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS SEM) has been employed to test the UTAUT without moderating effects. The results show that UTAUT constructs influence behavioral intention. Behavioral intention also predicts the use of technology. Empirical evidence is established for the UTAUT model based on the samples from both countries.

The article by Abhisek Dutta explains customer engagement today is imperative in creating stickiness towards a brand. The rudiments of servicescape influence the user of a website to return to the website and get involved. The study examines how servicescape impacts an online gamer's

cognitive and emotional experience through electronic media. The study brings out important factors such as aesthetics, ambience, spatial layout & functionality, symbols and artefacts in the online game, and also the engagement of the customer through cognitive and emotional responses. Social interaction and psychological engagement are also found to be important aspects of the electronic servicescape for online gamers. Several implications for marketing strategies are presented in the paper for designers like managing colour, design, and image placement so that the website/app is less crowded, easy to navigate, and fast. In an online gaming experience, gamers tend to evaluate cognitive factors in the website and form their behaviour towards investing time and money in the game.

The article by Anitha Acharya and Manish Gupta emphasizes how gamification, the usage of elements relating to game design to non-game activities, has gained considerable attention from academia and industry. The paper attempts to examine the mediating role of engagement in the relationship between skill and perceived learning as well as between challenge and perceived learning in game-based learning environments. The findings show that engagement fully mediates the relationship between skill and perceived learning as well as between challenge and perceived learning. The study contributes to literature on game-based learning by providing evidence for educational video games to be one of the effective means of learning. Results imply that the educational game designers can design challenging games to engage students.

We hope this Special Issue is an inspiration to our readers.

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