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Gamification Enhances the Customer Engagement: A Theoretical Framework

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Although gamification is a recent topic, it has become increasingly popular in various contexts. The first definition of gamification appeared in 2011 and continues to be the most widely used by researchers (e.g., Huotari and Humari, 2012; Nobre and Ferreira, 2017; Bauer et al., 2020). Gamification refers to using game design elements in non-game contexts to motivate and increase activity and retention in digital design and marketing activities (Deterding, 2011). Huotari and Hamari (2012) and Hammedi et al. (2017), for example, claim that gamification is a tool that integrates the service process of the gaming experience that aids and enhances the

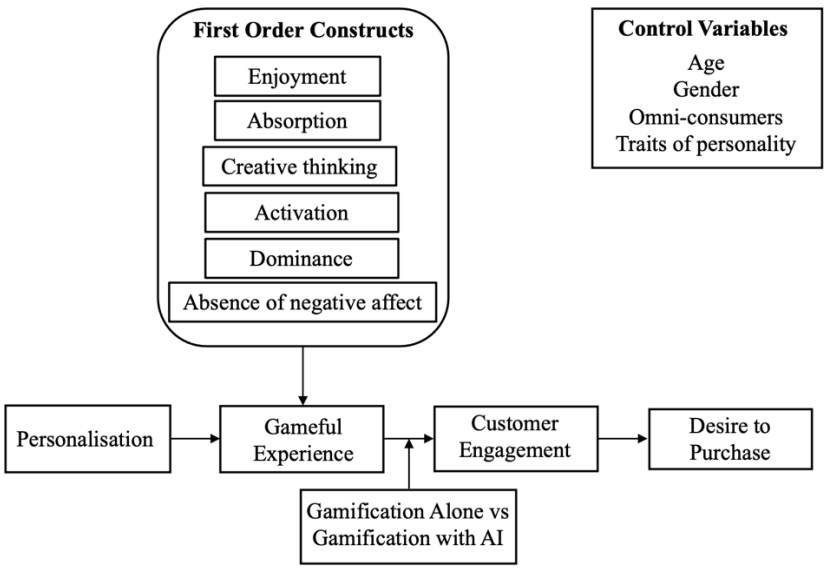
creation of the overall value of the user experience. User experience can be considered as customer experience (CX), which, according to Bagdare and Jain (2013) and Godovykh and Tasci (2020), is defined as a customer's cognitive, affective, sensory, and behavioral responses throughout the consumption process.

Consequently, the experience becomes more flowing, increasing utilitarian and hedonic perceptions. According to Rialti et al. (2022), gamification has characteristics such as fun and storytelling that benefit the flow of the customer experience and is therefore capable of changing their behavior and their responses to technology.

Recent phenomena such as personalization, which aim to make customer experiences more personal, can make the experience of using platforms more attractive and benevolent because they are more oriented towards customers' hedonic and utilitarian emotions. Consequently, with this impact on customers' emotions, personalized platforms such as gamification can lead users to buy products and improve their relationship with brands. Another phenomenon that continues to develop is artificial intelligence (AI). AI can make user experiences more pleasant and engaging by programming algorithms capable of learning. Furthermore, when personalization is combined with AI, it can improve the use of gamification, consequently impacting customer emotions and, in turn, improving the gamified experience.

Based on the different definitions of gamification and considering more recent phenomena this article aims to provide empirical information on the impact of gamification and AI on the customer experience to improve customer engagement. To respond to the aim of this article, this empirical research presents a theoretical framework (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



Source: author’s elaboration

In this empirical study, we expect to conduct two experiments: the first with consumers using a gamified mobile application in the context of an FMCG retailer in a laboratory environment, and the second experiment involves using the gamified app with AI in the same context and environment. Both experiments have a control group of consumers who use the mobile app without gamification and AI. We hope to collect data through a questionnaire given to consumers after the experiment. A 5-point Likert scale will be used to measure agreement or disagreement among gamification users. The statistical data will then be analyzed using R software.

The expected finding of this empirical study is firstly to contribute to the topic of gamification by including AI and personalization in gamified mobile platforms. It is expected that customers who use the gamified mobile application will have greater engagement with the brand than those who use the mobile application without gamification. Finally, it is expected that with the second experiment, consumers will use the gamified mobile app with AI.

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