

# Analyzing Customer Engagement Online Using Gamification

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of gamification options on customer engagement while shopping online. We further investigate the impact of gamification on customer experience and sales.

**Methodology:** A study was conducted on E-commerce websites, which have gamification options (like Flipkart and Amazon). These websites were analyzed for games, which had brand collaborations.

The games with immersion-related features such as badges/medals, points/score, leader-boards, /high-score lists were considered. The users on the leader boards were interviewed. Interviewees were transcribed and analyzed for understanding their level of engagement, which was measured by expressed feelings or affiliations towards the brand; posts on their social media accounts, the recommendation to their friends, and finally, if they purchased products of that particular brand. A list of standardized questions using a 7-point Likert Scale was used to measure brand awareness and affiliation.

**Practical Implications:** Brands can use this study to understand the customer's engagement level to strategize before investing in gamification activities online.

**Originality:** The article is based on social media analysis of customer engagement through Gamification in e-commerce website and the assessment of brand association through interviews. Multiple sourcing helps in reducing common method bias to a minimum.

## Keywords

Customer Engagement; Gamification, E-commerce, Likert Scale, Marketing Ecosystem.

## Imprint

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## 1. Introduction

Gamification is the process of adding a game-like environment to not game settings like a website or application or with any tool used to communicate with the end-user to increase participation and engagement. The goal is to help the user interact with the websites and applications further than the primary use [1].

In today's extremely dynamic online marketing ecosystem, engagement with the customers is becoming the most preferred method for creating robust, sustainable, and long-lasting consumer & relationships or various brand associations. Engaging customers may have a significant role in buying behavior and attitude formation and boosting brand equity [2]. Within an E-commerce domain, the customer to the brand, engagement levels are getting increasingly essential and make for an interesting research effort domain.

In the Indian E-commerce retail marketing space, less research has been conducted, which will help explore those various factors; these might slightly higher significance based on the brand experience and commitment levels [3]. The current literature has already demonstrated that customer engagement for brands can be built on using a positive and delightful experience in the E-commerce and retail marketing environment. Previously conducted studies showed that for the formation of an emotional connection and trustworthiness factor, social communists and social networking play a vital role [4].

Unique brand experiences in online shopping are significant due to the dynamic and rich information flow. The challenges of intangibility and uncertainty in an online setting are increased due to the lack of physical clues [5]. It has been observed that in an online retail environment, there are opportunities that tend to open up various possibilities for engagement of customers using inter-activities and real-time metrics and activities where customers are encouraged to engage with brands of their choice; this also helps in gathering relevant data insight a real-time scenario in a virtual online environment. For creating memorable and unique experiences, we need to explore how

brands will react to an online retail environment while engaging with consumers [6].

To understand how it works, we need to delve into game mechanics. They are rewards or rules which appear on a program or a digital platform. Mechanics may include points, badges, progress achieved, missions, levels, and leader boards. These mechanics are used on how the participants engage with various gamification programs [7].

Gamification is about driving engagement to influence business results. Participants usually engage with your game; they interact with your products, brands, and services in the most desired manner deemed suitable for the business. Gamification business value is not limited to the participant. Engaging with game mechanics mentioned earlier provides valuable metrics which can help influence marketing campaigns better, optimum utilization of the platform, and key performance goals. Every employee or customer interaction gives a sense of how a participant spends their time on the platform, their preferences, and how it drives interest. This study explores and provides the studies showcasing customer behavior showcased online in customer engagement methods used by brands in the online retail marketing environment [8].

Shopping is not a daily necessity. How do we keep our customers/users engaged and also drive high-value actions? Games are a platform that can engage users and drive high-value actions, which increases brand recall and reach.

Platforms like Flipkart and Amazon are increasingly investing in gamification options; brands want their customers to associate with them and have a memorable experience; hence during a new launch on eCommerce websites, brands do not mind spending gamification options [9].

The reasons why brands opt for this Gamification are:

1. Driving Actions – Gamification promotes shoppers to take actions and interact with a brand which is the core concept of engagement
2. Ability to engage users on multiple touchpoints within the game – The game has various stages points; at some points, the shopper can be forced to see an ad to proceed with the game or subtly placed it within the game. The ads are usually played before, in-between, or after a game.
3. Opportunity to reach out to a large and ever-growing user base - some platforms have an average dai-

ly user base of more than 1mn+ shoppers; not all shoppers come to purchase a product online, but some might be motivated to shop seeing the in-ad placement in a game

4. Reaching shopper across genders and throughout the countries – Games have the options of being targeted to a particular user base based on demographics, geography, and other filters available on the platform so that brands can reach out to their target groups
5. Game Customisation – Games can be customized according to a brands preference; they can be used customized according to brands events, festivities, and seasonality
6. Integration - Brands can integrate their logo, banners or even take over an entire game for a day
7. Metrics - Advanced platforms like Flipkart and Amazon offer full-funnel metrics for game offerings, which help brands measure awareness, recruitment, and purchase behavior. These help brands in supporting their investment decisions and what customers want [10].

While Gamification is a great engagement tool, it comes with its own set of cons. It is extremely expensive compared to other media options. There are no proper methods to check the awareness and engagement levels of consumers. Hence brands need to know when and how to invest in Gamification.

This research tries to explore how consumers get engaged playing these games, their levels of engagement.

## 2. Review of Literature

The literature review is done to understand how we can explore different perspectives across journals and other resources, which is to understand how customers behave on online shopping portals, what encourages them to buy, and how they change.

We explore and understand the various methods previously used to develop a proper structure for this paper. Consumers have more recently started to purchase good online it is comparatively new when it is compared to the traditional shopping experience; the Indian consumer is familiar with the practices at modern trade retail, which is one of the most popular methods to shop in urban India (e.g., aisle positions, Point of Sale materials, salespersons, in-store sampling, customer service kiosks, technology-enabled gadgets- touch screen navigation and displays) these

have a significant impact on how a customer shops- their behavior and presents an opportunity for brands to present themselves in front of potential customers and helps engage consumers to encourage them for their purchase decision [11]. The Internet, on the other hand, has lesser points of interaction with a consumer in their purchase journey; it is now being made possible by e-commerce websites to provide them with a delightful experience at each stage of the consumer journey, from consideration to purchase and all the stages in between. These portals have different media such as paid ads, Gamification, social network feeds, and even movies to interact with consumers. The Internet has brought about monumental changes in consumers' purchase and shopping habits online, which has further helped understand the consumers' choices and how they behave as platforms have access to real-time information and data based on consumers' actions, each action is accounted for and for recording. The buying preferences of different shoppers become increasingly significant; with these advancements in the platforms and marketing tools available to brands, the growth of online commerce retail is benefitting marketers to reach out to a large new section of potential buyers [12]. Online shopping is witnessing an upward trend in the Indian E-commerce space. Penetration of smartphones, cheap mobile Internet, and the global pandemic that has forced everyone to stay indoors further fuel this growth.

## 2.1. Tangible Benefits and Motivation While Shopping Online

Researchers have highlighted how customers' primary purchase intention on online platforms is significantly dependent on different shopping behaviors demonstrated, which can be impacted with multidimensional components or variables. It was demonstrated by Gehrt et al., seven different types of such orientations- reformation or recreation, novelty or newness, impulse purchase decisions, convenience, quality, brand, and price. Lower prices and flexible-payment procedures (such as no-cost EMI, cash on delivery) on eCommerce shopping platforms motivate millennial consumers to maximize their shopping experience, satisfaction and value [13]. Besides from the cost factor, some other factors can also influence the consumer and an e-commerce shopping platform; some of these influences are as follows: a variety of products available, confidence and trust assurance,

and reliability. Convenience is an important factor as well; it supports saving time, personalized shopping experience, product status updates, updated information, remote accessibility, simplicity of ordering and a flexible payment system. Apart from the tangible benefits provided, there are a few intangible benefits that help shoppers in their purchase decision online while selecting brands that ultimately help to satisfy the consumer or consumer customer satisfaction in the realm of marketing [14], which will aid us in understanding what the consumer is looking for in an online shopping environment further and aid in understanding the type of engagement activities that can be leveraged.

## 2.2. Brand Identity Matters during Online Shopping

Brand image is an essential associated with the online e-commerce space; they explained the primary methods by which brand image and brand identity from which consumers' preferences and behavior regarding their purchase intention can be derived. Few prior studies conducted by researchers focus on the aspect of the brand attitudes imparted by a consumer and how it influences their purchase decisions and levels of satisfaction. Hence, the focus on brand equity and creating a positive, trustworthy attitude is one of the key factors in the success of the brands selling their products on E-commerce platforms. The five key elements on which brands can build a positive attitude of consumers or higher brand equity online are customer service, trust, delightful experiences, emotional linkages, and promise fulfillment.

## 2.3. Building of Trust Matters during Online Shopping

Trust-based factors support the final purchase decisions and preferences of the potential customers; hence building trustful customer relationships online is essential. Prior studies have emphasized that retailing online and frequent transactions by customers' trust factor plays a significant role in retailing online and frequent transactions. Whereas on the contrary, brand distrust can malign the reputation and trust involved while shopping online.

## 2.4. A Delightful Experience Matters during Online Shopping

Psychological and emotional background plays a key role in determining the consumers' online experi-

ence (OE). Previous research has suggested that OE's can have an affirmative encouragement in purchase decision online. Lack of a smooth consumer experience, like the lack of proper communication and not being able to reach out to brands, can cause dissatisfaction in consumer. The online retail websites' attractiveness, ease of use, and attractiveness of an online retail store can help create a positive purchase experience and consumer attitude, which helps make them repeat consumers [15].

## 2.5. Internet consumers and Fun in Online Buying

E-commerce platforms are increasingly adopting state-of-the-art capabilities and technology, which augments interaction between brands and consumers and helps determine their purchase intentions. Enjoyment plays a key role in influencing the purchase decision of an online customer; higher levels of fun and enjoyment usually translate to a stronger buying intention. The users who find pleasure and fun activities online are likely to spend more time on the platform. It was found that users who spend more than twenty minutes on an online platform are more likely to make a purchase, along with improved intention to be a repeat customer and return. On an e-tailer website, fun and amusement can be explored with different media options, the most popular being gamification, to get repeat customers.

## 2.6. Association of Emotions in Online Buying

Previous research has shown how various emotions can act as a driving force for consumer behavior portrayed. The emotions of online shoppers in the online marketplace can be impacted by atmospherics like the content, theme, color, and background. Components of e-service quality high impact customer satisfaction and repurchase; the components are reliability, trust, responsiveness, personalization, commitments, etc. Hedonic components play a vital role in decision-making, which is considered a sub-division of buyer's emotional linkages. In online purchases, trustworthiness and commitment to satisfy a promise are important and play a vital role in the purchase decision.

## 2.7. Social Linkages in Online Buying

Social groups on the internet and networking communities are linked with positive linkages towards a

brand when spoken about the post-purchase decision. Online brand community and its members highly influence consumers' purchase decisions and choices. Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication and recommendations on the internet act as powerful tools of the marketing mix and for sharing of data. A positive word of mouth digitally helps create a positive image of the brands on an online platform, whereas negative WOM can dissuade buyers from making a particular purchase decision [16].

## 2.8. Online Brand Engagement Matters

Brand engagement aims to help information a strong bond between the consumer and the brand by using brand proper emotional and rational linkages. Engaging the consumers is a very challenging task in an online market place, and the virtual brand community development, which may support the brand likeability of the online consumers, observed by Wirtz et al. In the formation of the online retail brand engagement, the online brand loyalty, and positive brand attitude have an important contribution. From prior research, it can be found that online retail is becoming a growing and interesting area of research. It deals with how a customer evaluates the psychology or thought process behind their online purchase decisions in a larger context. In the Indian Marketing ecosystem, although the internet-based retail business is a growing phenomenon, fewer academic studies have been conducted to study the psychology and behavior of the young Indian consumer in association with online brand engagement and purchasing in an integrated manner. Current research has given evidence of the diverse components associated with purchase decisions and buying behavior online. However, in the Indian context, a lack of integrated research hinders the evaluation process of engagement with retail brands.

## 3. Methodology

For the research paper, a qualitative research method was chosen for a few reasons, mainly because the research is in an emergent area of study also as it is a social phenomenon that is under study, "why" a phenomenon occurs and in accordance to a particular context can only be done by exploratory qualitative research. Lastly, qualitative research gives insights into real-time events, happenings, and experiences of humans. The case study-based methodology was used to help explore engagement through Gamification or



other preferred options on E-commerce platforms and how it impacts a brand's perceived value for the user playing a game with different brand affiliations. Researchers have proved that qualitative research methods act as one of the essential ways in gathering meaningful insights. This method tries to understand the different experiences and thinking processes of the interviewees. Researchers often reach a stage called data saturation- lack of availability of new data. Interviews were the primary method for collecting relevant information and avoiding reaching data saturation points to get real-time perception and insights into how customers behave while shopping online [17].

The interviewees were approached through social media their social media platforms, especially those on eCommerce platforms' leader-boards. The second set of interviewees was selected from interviewees who regularly shop on eCommerce platforms more than twice a month.

Grounded theory is a method or approach which calls for a continual interplay between data collection and analysis to produce a theory during the research process. A grounded theory is derived inductively through the systematic collection and analysis of data about a phenomenon. This study collects data from various interviews to understand Gamification's consumers' perception and finds grounded theory as the most appropriate method.

#### 4. Data Analysis

Respondents were asked to enlist the e-commerce online shopping sites. They had purchased beauty and personal care products in the previous two months; those E-tailer sites were checked for evidence of gamification options available.

The research was conducted in over one week to study the interviews in their home in ordinary settings. Interviews were conducted over video conferencing in an online setting to make the interviewees feel confident and comfortable responding to interview questions [18]. 10 respondents were surveyed, and their interviews and observation were carried using video conferencing on a one-on-one basis which took an average time of 20 minutes. The respondents were asked to share their screen during the second half of the interview to understand better, to observe how they shop for something of their choice. They were probed using aided questions and unaided questions about their behavior while using different types of gamification strat-

egies and the factors that motivated them to engage with the brand, which used the gamification option on an e-commerce platform. The aids provided included: 'Snake Smash' & 'Quiz-time' – A fun arcade and trivia mobile game respectively, present on the E-commerce platform 'Flipkart.' The games were score based; the highest scorers for these games appeared on the leader boards and received a reward as an incentive. Aids provided are indicated in Figure 1.

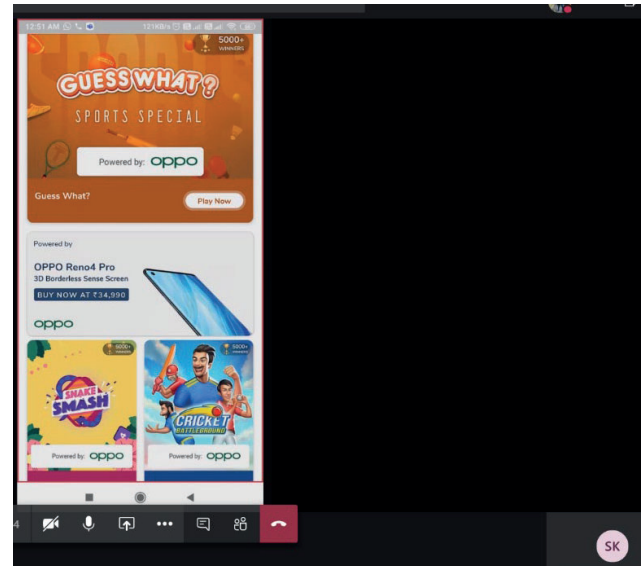


Figure 1: Aids provided

The unaided interviews were conducted with avid gamers present on leader boards to understand their behavior and motivation to purchase and level of engagement. These were set as benchmarks for the next stage of interviews. The second stage comprised online shopping enthusiasts who were not avid gamers and were asked to play the games while sharing their screens; their actions and the triggers that motivated them were noted. Once both of the interview groups' respondents' answers were completed, they were transcribed. Then, the refinement of themes took place by categorizing similar characteristics found in the transcripts.

#### Demographics

The following Figure 2 shows the demographic break-up of the respondents.

#### 4.1. Research questions

We can arrive at a core theme from the literature review based on which the five research questions were formed. The first question explores how consumers perceive their experience online, how they feel while shopping on e-commerce. It also explores their behav-

Respondent	Gender	Age	Occupation	Location
R1	M	35	Sales Manager	Mumbai
R2	F	23	Student	Chennai
R3	F	28	Designer	Kolkata
R4	M	20	Student	Delhi
R5	M	17	Student	Pune
R6	F	45	Home-maker	Mumbai
R7	M	39	Teacher	Mumbai
R8	F	21	Student	Ranchi
R9	M	34	Finance Associate	Bengaluru
R10	M	53	Businessman	Mumbai

Figure 2: Demographic profile

ior towards shopping online and their interaction with media elements online. Grewal *et al.* explained how customer experiences involving fun and surprise like Gamification are linked to a positive shopping experience. The brain registers these surprises as rewards and releases a higher amount of dopamine, resulting in a positive behavior with brands associated with these games [19].

The second question explores how game mechanisms impact attitude changes for a consumer when shopping with game elements on E-commerce platforms.

The remaining question deals with the social aspect. If these behaviors translate only to a purchase decision or if the shoppers would recommend the positive experience to someone else and recall the brand positively. The following research questions were used for guiding the study further, keeping the experiential nature of the research in mind:

1. RQ-1. How do shoppers perceive entertainment & engagement while shopping online?
2. RQ-2. What is the behavior of shoppers towards brands online after the inclusion of games and other media?
3. RQ-3. What is the shopper's attitude towards their potential purchase and the actions taken during the purchase of that brand?
4. RQ-4. Do the shoppers recall the brand after the game is over?
5. RQ-5. How do shoppers behave towards brands post-purchase, is positive word of mouth generated?

Questions 1,4 & 5 were unaided, and no visual aid or prompt was used to get these answers, and questions 2, 3 were aided, wherein interviewees were made for sharing their screens and asked to play the game of 'snake smash' on the eCommerce platform 'Flipkart'.

## 5. Results

Findings are made according to the five research questions posed above. Core thematic areas were identified regarding each of the research questions with relevant supporting evidence from interviews conducted. The themes that emerged from the transcription of the interviews were codified using open, axial, and selective coding. Open coding helped in understanding new emerging concepts. Axial coding helped in integrating concepts obtained at the open coding stage through sub nodes into broader themes [20].

### 5.1. RQ 1: Theme

Online shopping is viewed as a recreational activity

#### 5.1.1. Codes Emerging

Relaxation, stay at home, hobby, Shop in small spree, Spend more time shopping online. This question deals with the different types of ways by which the E-commerce shopping experience can be correlated to an entertainment experience. The core theme identified is how shopping online can be seen as a substitute for other entertainment sources, for example, by partaking in games online rather than watching YouTube videos.

Shopping online was viewed as a way of relaxation and had high entertainment value. The primary reason to shop was while away time rather than as an immediate need. Respondents usually spent more during sales and offers [21].

"On a Sunday afternoon, where some might prefer to watch a TV show, I prefer shopping."

"For me, shopping online is a hobby in itself; sometimes, in the middle of shopping, I like to view the social feeds like Flipkart ideas."

"I prefer to shop at home comfortably rather than go to a crowded mall" Respondents enjoyed the con-

venience of being able to shop online and did not want to go through the hassle of physically going to a store, being able to shop “At your convenience with no set timings” this primarily enables shopping online as a substitute for activities that previously had probably been reserved for other entertainment activity, they also like browsing for ideas on social to get inspiration.

“I like to shop in smaller bursts rather than all in one go; it reduces the monotony.”

“There are no store opening and closing times; I like the freedom of being able to shop any time of the day or night.”

“I enjoy shopping online because I can add products to my wish list and then decide what to buy later.”

“I usually tend to spend shop more online when I spend more time online”

The convenience of seemed to play a major role in shopping online has them a “position to enjoy it” suited to their timings. They did not view shopping online as a chore, as they did not perceive it as a chore, they could do it in their own free time, and they also usually shop more when they spend more time on the platform [22].

## 5.2. RQ-2: Theme

Games & Media add fun to the online experience and help break the monotony, thereby influencing the purchase decision.

### 5.2.1. Codes Emerging

Boredom, Influenced by media, Positive perception for Ad the second research question considered the role of game elements and other interactive media options within the shopping experience. The respondents usually viewed Gamification in a positive light, especially after during long shopping sprees online. They also suggested that media options help them make their purchase decisions and influenced them to a certain extent to buy a product if it has a good recommendation. The respondents also played games before their final purchase to get better discount offers or coupons received as a reward for that game.

“I get bored after shopping online for long periods.”

“I play games before selecting items on my cart as by then I have spent much time concentrating on what products to get for the cheapest price.”

“I like to view the social feeds to get outfit inspirations before my purchase and generally tend to purchase brands recommended in the feeds.”

“Playing games to get discounted offers and coupons before my final purchase”

The respondents were asked to play the games and explore other media options as part of the aided interviews. They liked the brands that sponsored; they usually recalled the viewed brands. The brands with discount offers were seen in a better light than brands with ads or banner placements appearing in the middle of a game and disrupting the experience. As part of the aided interview, a game with in-game ad placements of ‘Lifebuoy hand sanitizer’ was chosen; all of the respondents had noticed the brand placements and would consider lifebuoy as their top choice during purchase [23].

“I saw the lifebuoy logo in the game but do not remember the color.”

“I would consider lifebuoy if I purchase hand sanitizer online, it would buy it if discounted.”

“Lifebuoy is spreading awareness in the time of corona in games, and that is a great initiative.”

“I do not like ads appearing in the middle of gameplay, the ones in-game are fine.”

## 5.3. RQ-3: Theme

Shoppers are aware and would click on brand ads after the game

### 5.3.1. Codes emerging

Competitiveness, Inquisitiveness & Price discount the third research question considered the role of game elements and other interactive media options within the shopping experience and explored the actions taken by the consumer towards their brand. The respondents will usually click on gamification adverts but were not sure about searching for the brand later in the search bar. If co-incidentally they stumble across a brand ad., they would click on it. Respondents were also more likely to buy products of that particular brand provided it gave them good value for money [24].

“I clicked on the brand banner because I found that there was a good discount on the product.”

“I would buy only brands I trust; if it is an unknown brand, I will not consider it.” “I replay the games quite a few times to get more points so that I can redeem them for discounts later.” “When I go back to my shopping session after completion of the game, if I see a brand banner of ‘Lifebuoy,’ I will buy it, as it does not feel forced.” [25] During the aided awareness, respondents presented a different situation to check how they

reacted to different circumstances; they viewed brands with creative ads positively and preferred games with customized topicalities during festive seasons. It makes them feel more festive. Actions taken by consumers include: sharing their game results, the redemption of game coupons, improving their game score by replaying the game, clicking on ads appearing in-game and after the game, sometimes researching about the product on google afterward, and lastly, purchase of items advertised. "I replay the games because I lost and want to win the points."

"I research about the product if it was something I was looking for; the in-game ad further prompted me to do this" [26].

"I bought the product after I won the discount coupon since I was getting it at a cheap price."

#### 5.4. RQ-4. Theme

Recall the ad for a short duration, but only if it looks creative

##### 5.4.1. Codes emerging:

Attractiveness, Special effects, Short-term effect of Gamification the fourth research question tries to measure the recall value of the brand, thereby measuring its equity. This part of the interview was unaided since the brand recall and awareness were to be measured after the game was over; this is particularly necessary to check as most shoppers go back to shopping or their carts after playing the games. 6 out of 8 respondents recalled the ads mainly because of the vivid colors; they said that the ad stood out in the game and hence recalled it even after the game [27].

"The colors in the ad were bright and attractive; hence I remember it."

"I recall the animation of sanitizer bottle."

"I remember the product because of the discount mentioned in the product."

Respondents were also asked if they took a break after their gaming session, they would still recall the brand and make a purchase decision based on that. Five out of eight respondents would not remember the ad or the game played unless they were shown a prompt or trigger in the form of another ad while browsing through the platform.

"I will not think of the brand if I do not shop immediately after."

"The impact of the ad in the game does not last for another browsing session."

"I only remember the ad if I see the same ad again while scrolling through the shopping website."

#### 5.5. RQ-5. Theme

Inorganic posts and a neutral impact on Word of Mouth

##### 5.5.1. Codes emerging

Incentives (motive for posts), Aversion to post on social media the fifth research question tries to measure the brand's impact even after the game has ended if their investments would lead to an organic or inorganic word of mouth by shoppers. The social media quotient was checked, whether respondents would organically or inorganically post about the games over their social media accounts. It was mostly inorganic as they would post about the game only because of an incentive attached to a post over social media. Incentives include – higher points, free second product, discount voucher, discount on second purchase, etc [28].

"I would not like to post about my game results on social media."

"I will only post if the brand gives me a better discount or a free goodie."

Respondents were asked if such types of social media posts generated likes, comments, or shares to measure the engagement of such posts. Only 2 out of 8 respondents had shared such posts. It is found that such posts do not generate much traction in terms of likes & comments.

"When I posted about the game, I had got only two likes and no comments."

## 6. Discussions

The literature discusses the engagement and how it affects a customer buying decision psychology or thought process behind their online purchase decisions; the current study further divulges into a shoppers psychology towards a particular brand who sponsors Gamification on online platforms to check whether positive associations of Gamification also reciprocates towards a particular brand and ultimately aid the consumer into taking action towards the brand.

Gamification strategy is an expensive one, and when brands decide if they should invest in Gamification, they should be sure of what the consumer wants from a game. Most games, when customized, cost upwards of Rs. 5 lakhs, and hence it has a great impact on



the Advertising cost of sale – measured as advertising costs to the percentage of media attributed sales.

The being said, Gamification, when done properly and at the right time, can prove to be beneficial [29].

### 6.1. Proposition 1 (P1).

Games should be interactive and fun for consumers seeking entertainment. It is observed from the first and second research question that consumers want to break monotony associated with shopping and play games out of boredom **RQ1:** “*I like to shop in smaller bursts rather than all in one go, it reduces the monotony,*” **RQ2:** “*I get bored after shopping online for long periods.*” Shoppers do not want a challenging game that will make them use their brain cells after shopping and prefer easy-going games that let them have fun and entertain themselves.

### 6.2. Proposition 2 (P2).

Promote popular hero products on Gamification. Products which are recognized and popular are more likely to be bought over a new and unaware product by customers. It can be observed from the third research question that consumers buy only trusted brands/products if prompted “I would buy only brands I trust if it is an unknown brand, I will not consider” [30].

### 6.3. Proposition 3 (P3).

Attractive and distinctive ads with discount call-outs should be used. Ads that are unique, bold, or stand out should be used for advertisements. It can be observed from the fourth research question that consumers recall such ads “The colors in the ad were bright and attractive hence I remember it,” “I recall the animation of sanitizer bottle.”

It is also a common theme throughout those ads, and products that are discounted are preferred.

### 6.4. Proposition 4 (P4).

Gamification should not be used in isolation but along with other paid media and visibility assets. Gamification, when used along with other paid media and visibility, has a higher propensity for sale of the products as consumers do not always consider purchasing the product in the first go, they may decide to buy it after resuming to shop in which case there should be other product visibility for brand recall, which can be observed by the response in the fourth question “I only remember the ad if I see the same ad again while scrolling through the shopping website” [31].

Hence brands can use gamification options for creating awareness and stimulating a purchase as evident from ‘RQ4’ and ‘RQ3’ and for aiding discovery as evident from ‘RQ5’.

## 7. Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of customer engagement in an online retail shopping environment; it is essential to reach out to your brand’s consumers digitally and be present with them at different stages of their online purchase journey, just like in a physical store. Gamification, when done in a well-structured and organized manner, can yield positive results. It is important to remember that Gamification should not be done in isolation as it decreases the impact and would not reach its proper potential. It should be carefully done along with other paid visibility on a platform.

Overall, the research suggests that retailers should look beyond games as a promotional tool and consider the wider context when considering gamification, particularly where the retailer may be part of the game.

The research gives a perspective for different brands on whether to use gamification tools and their feasibility in different circumstances, and how brands can implement Gamification as a strategy for the different objectives of awareness, consideration, and purchase.

## 8. Limitations

The limitations were present throughout the research process, owing to no face-to-face contact; the biggest hindrance was the virtual video conferencing interviews. A face-to-face interview complements understanding of the body language, helps to form a personal connection, and builds up an emotional connection, which portrays their characteristics apart from the words they speak. It was also difficult to scout for the high-scorers in the games as they usually use a different name for their gaming avatar rather than their real name, which made it difficult to search and find these people.

The respondents were comfortable sharing their social media accounts and handle for analyzing their affinity towards the brand, which made finding the evidence of a post slightly weak. Relevant findings from my research area were limited to an extremely small audience, and interviewing them to understand their emotional and social linkages was quite challenging. However, I gathered

some meaningful insights despite this. Moreover, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, E-commerce platforms had changed their look and feel of their websites due to reduced investments from brands, especially in paid media and games; hence while taking aided interviews, it was difficult to find games on the platforms that would be appropriate for this research. The ads sponsored in the game were dynamic and kept changing on different days; hence the interviewee had to log in multiple times to the game to see the Lifebuoy ad.

## 9. Future Scope

The research was limited only to games; in the future, the research can be conducted on other media assets like virtual try-on, smart tools like voice assists, picture search, and more smart features. The study currently measures only the attitude perceived towards a particular brand; the future studies can be extended to the eCommerce platforms themselves – would consumers prefer a particular platform only because of the gamification options, social feeds, videos, and other features.

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