Examining the failure of gamification in implementing innovation from the perspective of problematization in the retail sectors of emerging economies

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ABSTRACT

Gamification is a strategy, methodology, or activity that has picked up pace over time and has been successfully deployed in organizations. Despite massive efforts to capture the success of the deployment of gamification in implementing innovation, its failure in this regard has hitherto been ignored. Until recently, it has been difficult to understand such failure from a contributing factor perspective. In bridging this gap, we conducted our study through the lens of problematization and social cognitive theory. We drew qualitative data from the field by recording the experiences and observations of stakeholders involved in attempting and failing to implement gamified projects in the retail industry. Our qualitative analysis was aimed at developing a signposting suited to help firms answer the fundamental question of "Why does gamification fail as an innovation strategy?" Our results highlighted four main factors that lead to the failure of gamified projects: a) self-efficacy, b) immersive dynamics, c) the personalization privacy paradox, and d) disengagement. Our study offers a conceptual framework suited to act as a guidebook for firms and consultants who wish to implement various gamified solutions at various stages. Further, we discuss the implications of our findings and propose future research perspectives.

1. Introduction

The rise of internet shopping as a crucial avenue for businesses has been accompanied by an increase in the number of studies in the field. While online buying has already been the subject of a substantial corpus of research, less emphasis has been placed on the generation and management of online customer experience, which has emerged as a critical success factor in modern commerce, compelling companies to go beyond pricing strategies and product innovation (Rose et al., 2011). Consequently, many firms are turning to gamification in order to enhance customer satisfaction, participation, retention, engagement, and performance management (Durugbo and Kalverkamp, 2012). Gamification involves the use of game elements in non-game contexts, turning everyday customer interactions into games for business purposes (Zichermann and Linder, 2010). Gamification may thus enable the development of an immersive consumer experience through innovative and customized shopping journeys (Durugbo and Kalverkamp, 2012). Numerous success cases and reports highlight the theoretically and practically synergetic relationship between gamification and marketing (Durugbo and Kalverkamp, 2012). Interestingly, although the use of gamification-as-intervention in any business process is backed by innovation (AlSaad and Durugbo, 2021), the overall life of the related innovation cycles has sharply declined in recent times (Eisingerich et al., 2019; Huotari and Hamari, 2017). It has been observed that the co-existence of multiple innovation cycles for technologies has made it difficult to assess the interdependence among them (Hyypiä and Parjanen, 2015; Durugbo and Kalverkamp, 2012). Although the successful implementation of gamification has been discussed, its failure in relation to innovation has received less attention (AlSaad and Durugbo, 2021; Behl et al., 2021; Behl et al., 2021).