Gamification and Brand Engagement on Facebook: An Exploratory Case Study

Full Paper

Jama D. Summers
University of Tennessee
jdsummers@utk.edu

Amber G. Young
UMass Amherst
amberyoung@umass.edu

Abstract

In recent years organizations have recognized the indirect value customers add to a brand through their engagement online in word of mouth, product ideas, and increased interactions with the business and other consumers. This has sparked a focus on methods for increasing this customer value by encouraging brand engagement on social media. One method increasingly used to encourage brand engagement is the use of game elements, or gamification. Despite its popularity, the majority of gamification strategies fail. Our research investigates the use and efficacy of gamification elements (challenge, curiosity, fantasy, and control) by organizations in their efforts to promote brand engagement on social media. We find that although gamification elements in general are associated with greater brand engagement, a successful social media strategy will carefully consider the type of elements they use in order to achieve the highest value.

Keywords
Gamification, social media, brand engagement

Introduction

Customer value was once considered a direct function of acquisition and retention costs in relation to customer spending over time (Kumar 2008). However, more nuanced conceptualizations, spurred by both industry and scholars, of customer value highlight the potential for customers to add value to a business indirectly by promoting the brand through word of mouth, contributing new product ideas, and more (e.g. Kumar et al. 2010). This understanding sparked increased interaction between businesses and customers in an effort to promote personal engagement with the business. Brand engagement references a business approach to creating “deeper, more meaningful” connections between consumers and businesses with the objective of increasing both direct and indirect customer value (Kumar et al. 2010: 297).

One way businesses can promote brand engagement is through social media, which by increasing the breadth of businesses’ audience and the interactivity of communication has revolutionized the way businesses interact with customers. In particular, Facebook is a popular tool for promoting brand engagement. On Facebook, brand engagement is observed through user actions of liking, sharing, and commenting on materials posted by a business (Malhotra et al. 2013). These user behaviors can increase the visibility of businesses’ brands and products. Despite widespread adoption of social media as a tool for brand management, there is a dearth of empirically supported guidance for practitioners seeking to optimize the level of engagement achieved in relation to the effort expended managing social media (Miranda et al. 2012).

A popular approach to promoting brand engagement is gamification, sometimes referred to as advergaming or advertainment. Today, many business processes occur online, as does most gaming. In particular, advergaming, the process of advertising products through games, has dramatically increased in popularity in recent years. In fact, 70% of Fortune 2000 companies are expected to use gamification by 2015 (McCammon 2013). Many of gamification attempts by companies will fail due to poor design (Gartner 2012) and as many as 80% of companies will fail to implement a strategy when designing gamification.
policy (McCammon 2013). These failures are the result of a dearth of research and theory to inform strategy.

Traditionally, gamification entails one or more of four elements: (1) peaking users’ interest or sparking curiosity, (2) engaging users in a challenge, (3) enabling users to fantasize (Malone 1981) and (4) providing users a sense of control (Malone and Lepper 1987). Given the importance of social media as a tool for interacting with customers and the potential gamification hold for engaging customers, this research asks the following questions: How do organizations embed gamification in social media posts to promote brand engagement? and How do users engage with the brand in response to gamification on social media?

**Literature Review**

**Gamification**

Gamification refers to the process of adapting something not typically considered game-like to have qualities of a game. Gamification has been described as “the concept of applying game-design thinking to non-game applications to make them more fun and engaging” (gamification.com) and “the infusion of game design techniques, game mechanics, and/or game style into anything” (gamification wiki). Researchers have defined gamification as *the use of game mechanics, dynamics, and frameworks to promote desired behaviors* (Lee and Hammers 2011) and “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding et al. 2011). Though gamification has been explored in the education literature for almost a decade (McGonigal 2011; Santhanam et al. 2008; Young 2009), researchers have only more recently begun to develop an understanding regarding how gamification can be used to promote business objectives.

**Social Media and Brand Engagement**

The notion of a brand describes a cognitive asset which consumers associate with certain attributes, beliefs and attitudes. In turn, this cognitive structure serves to act as a collectively held meaning about the brand that is used to capture and create shareholder value (Gensler et al. 2013). In addition to shareholder value, increased levels of consumer engagement are associated with other organizational performance outcomes such as sales growth, brand referrals and consumer collaboration in product development (Hollebeek et al. 2014). The importance of this concept to long-term organizational performance has resulted in a stream of literature focused on building consumers’ involvement with the brand. Recently, scholars have warned of the limitations of studying brand “involvement,” which reflects only a one-way connection (Hollebeek et al. 2014). With the advent of social media technologies, firms are not limited to listening to what consumers are saying about a brand, but they can actively leverage and stimulate consumer-generated brand stories as part of their brand management process (Gensler et al. 2013). Thus, focus has turned to the interactive relationships between consumers and brands, described as brand “engagement.”

Consumer psychology approaches describe brand engagement in terms of the strength of a consumer’s connection between self-concept (Swaminathan et al. 2007) and the brand, and how the consumer views their relationship with the brand (Fournier 1998). In the marketing literature, brand engagement is defined as a “motivational state” developed through interactive experiences with a brand (Brodie et al. 2011). More specifically, Hollebeek (2011: 565) defines customer brand engagement as a multidimensional construct describing “the level of a customer’s cognitive, emotional and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions.” The manifestation of a consumer’s engagement with a brand is demonstrated through behavioral expressions of support for the brand, such as participation in brand communities, blogging, and voluntarily interacting with the brand and other consumers on social media sites (van Doorn et al. 2010).

More and more, organizations have turned to social media as a key channel for creating brand awareness and driving engagement with their brand (Malhotra et al. 2013). This media provides marketers a new environment for creating brand communities, helping to establish and reinforce relationships using a direct interaction approach (Labrecque 2014). “At its best, social media has the potential to drive meaningful connections and provoke conversations with actively engaged audiences” (Briggs 2010: 47).

There is also great potential for distancing the brand from customers the brand is seeking to engage (Labrecque 2014). This double-edged sword has spurred a great deal of research by both academics and
practitioners on understanding how best to use various media in building brand recognition. The interactive nature of social media drives consumer expectations about the brands that use it. Consumers expect brands to not only interact, but also to provoke thought, act as a member of an individual's social sphere, and entertain them (Briggs 2010; Park and Kim 2014).

Theory Development

Game Elements for Motivating User Engagement

The applicability of gamification in a learning context has spurred several theories aimed toward framing the motivational elements of game design. For instance, the MDA framework (Deterding et al. 2011; Zichermann and Cunningham 2011), based upon the mechanics (i.e. components of a game at the data level), the dynamics (i.e. behavior of the game in response to user input), and aesthetics (i.e. the emotional responses evoked) of a game, focuses on the impact of the technical aspects of the game. The ARCS model focuses on four factors related to the learning responses by a user – attention to stimuli, relevance to prior experience, confidence in performance, and satisfaction with the process (Keller 1987). A great deal of focus has been on the use of game design and mechanics as motivational affordances for behavioral outcomes (Hamari et al. 2014). These include concrete elements such as badges, leaderboards, and a focus on a story or theme. While these theories focus on gamification in particular contexts or with particular emphasis on design, the factors map at a more abstract level to broad categories of motivational characteristics (Kim and Lee 2012).

Malone (1980) describes 3 categories, or core reasons, why game elements evoke intrinsic motivation. Games create challenges, which motivate a user to achieve a specific goal given uncertain outcomes. This goal might be in the form of competition or contest (Costello and Edmonds 2007) wherein users are pitted against one another. Alternatively, the challenge may be against certain odds of achieving outcomes based upon the difficulty of the task or the randomness of the outcomes (Kim and Lee 2012). Games also encourage curiosity, drawing the attention of the user through novelty of information, situations, or sensory experiences (Deterding et al. 2011). Finally, games evoke fantasy. Fantasy creates mental images of things not present (Malone 1980) and spur imagination regarding experiences that are outside of the user’s current experience (Kim and Lee 2012). Later, a fourth category was added to the model, describing the manner in which games provide a sense of self-determination or control over the experience (Malone and Lepper 1987). These more abstract categories represent a conceptual model of key game elements traditionally used to encourage cognitive absorption and engagement with a game (Malone 1980).

Links between Brand Engagement Themes and Gamification Themes

Research in practice has begun to identify factors, which may encourage brand engagement on social media. For instance, one study finds that organizations can effectively engage consumers on Facebook and Twitter by providing content that entices a response and responding to consumer contributions (Smith et al. 2012). The motivational goals of the brand engagement literature (Hollebeek 2011) resonate with the core motivational themes for gamification (Malone 1980). Brand engagement goals focus on influencing a consumer’s cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity by activating concentration, passion and energy toward particular brand interactions (Hollebeek 2011). Similarly, gamification serves to activate these types of engagements by identifying elements which motivate them.

The interconnection between the digital and physical brands is evident in the increasing inclusion of gamification elements within social media spaces in order to engage users as ambassadors of a brand. For example, the popular FourSquare mobile application uses badges and points to share their visits with specific shops and locations (Briggs 2010). These gamified experiences allow brand designers to spur engagements by delivering compelling experiences associated with their particular brand (Briggs 2010). In response, the interaction with consumers creates a dynamic brand community in which the brand story evolves to include both the identity established by the brand and the identity assigned to the brand by the consumers (Gensler et al. 2013).
Research Methods

To address our research questions – How do organizations embed gamification in social media posts to promote brand engagement? and How do users engage with the brand in response to gamification on social media? – we examine Walmart’s brand engagement efforts on social media site, Facebook, using an exploratory approach. Though gamification research is gaining steam in marketing and IS literature, there is still a dearth of research on the use and impacts of gamification elements in business contexts. Due to the open-ended nature of our inquiry and the sparse nature of this literature stream, we adopted an exploratory approach. Because use of gamification elements and their impact on business and consumer interactions is socially constructed through the interactions on a social media site (Klein and Myers 1999), we apply a grounded theory approach to a case study of Walmart’s social media posts on Facebook (Racherla and Mandviwalla 2013) to allow our concepts to emerge.

Study Context

Sam Walton, who believed low cost structures on everyday goods would help individuals achieve a better life, founded the multinational retail giant, Walmart, in 1962 (Drexler 2007). Today, Walmart is a household name employing 2.2 million associates and serving approximately 245 million customers per week worldwide (Walmart.com 2014). Given our interest in the promotion of brand engagement on social media and the high visibility of Walmart’s customer interactions on Facebook, we chose to focus intensively on the company’s use of gamification elements on Facebook posts as related to brand engagement.

The sample for this research consists of 217 posts by Walmart in the four weeks surrounding Thanksgiving in 2012 and in 2013 (total of 8 weeks). Data was collected manually by two independent coders and cross-referenced to ensure accuracy. This window includes the date “Black Friday,” celebrated as the time when most business go from “being in the red” to making profit and “being in the black” for the year. We chose this period due to the elevated importance of brand engagement efforts during this critical period, which determines many organizations’ success or failure (Neisser 2013). Additionally, with the importance of savings associated with the holiday shopping season, the use of and response to gamification elements as may demonstrate the efficacy of such tactics despite the noise associated with increased advertising and promotion related posts. Walmart is also particularly noted for using Facebook as a vehicle for brand promotion during the holiday shopping season (Chernev 2012).

These posts received a total of 3,059,881 likes (mean = 14,099.80, stdv = 28,456.82), 136,627 shares (mean = 629.52, stdv = 1976.91), and 370,669 comments (mean = 1,707.82, stdv = 4,961.06). To understand which posts were fostering engagement, we selected the 20 posts with the highest number of like, the 20 posts with the highest number of shares, and the 20 posts with the highest number of comments. Given the overlap in these groupings, the resulting high brand engagement sample contained 40 posts. A sample of 33 low brand engagement posts was selected in the same manner. While a more traditional approach would be to label posts with engagement one standard deviation above and below the mean and top and bottom, respectively, the data was too skewed for such an approach.

Analysis

Our analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase consisted of iterative coding, following the process advocated by Strauss and Corbin (2007), to surface the gamification elements used by Walmart in their efforts to encourage brand engagement in Facebook users. The second phase investigated the categories surfaced in the first phase using quantitative grounded theory (Glaser 2008; Miranda et al. 2015) to understand the efficacy of various gamification elements on the brand engagement behaviors exhibited by users.

Phase 1: Identifying use of gamification elements in social media posts

Following a three-step coding process (Strauss and Corbin 2007), we manually coded our posts, iterating through our sample of Facebook posts multiple times. During the open coding stage, we first identified posts that did not embody gamification elements. These posts often contained news or an advertisement. Posts such as “Get an iPad 2 for $399 with a $75 gift card...” and “Game on, gamers. Xbox One is finally here!” were coded as not gamification. Of the 217 posts, 24.79% did not contain gamification. The
remaining 75.21% were coded as containing one of more elements related to gamification such as “challenges users to find differences in pictures” or “lets users vote for their favorite”.

We then iterated through the data during the axial coding process, discussed the categories surfaced during open coding and identified hierarchical relationships among codes. Our initial coding efforts focused on the various types of format used to encourage engagement. For example, we came up with categories such as “multiple-choice question,” “invitation to vote,” and “invitation to share.” However, the behavioral outcome encouraged was often split across these concrete formats. Therefore, we re-coded our categories with a focus on more conceptual, behavioral outcomes, e.g., “challenges users to find differences in pictures” and “challenges users to be the last to be the n-th person to comment” fall under the higher-level code “challenge.”

Axial coding gave way to four categories of codes: challenge, expression, learning, and voice-giving.

Finally, during selective coding, we mapped our categories of posts to gamification elements identified in the literature. In doing so, we discovered that our categories, challenge, expression, learning, and voice-giving, aligned with the existing gamification categories of challenge, fantasy, curiosity, and control, respectively. The first category of gamification element use by Walmart in Facebook posts represent posts that challenge users to achieve a certain goal. For instance, some posts challenged users to compete against other users by being the first to “like”, “comment”, or “share” a post. Other posts challenged users to overcome a difficult task, such as “Do you think you know everything about MIB? Test your MIB knowledge...”

The second category of posts revealed Walmart’s use of gamification through invoking curiosity in the users. Posts in this category encouraged greater exploration through creative thinking and novel ideas. As an example, Walmart suggested users may find new ways to use turkey, “Thanksgiving leftovers? Turkey sandwiches, salads, quiche...get ideas on Pinterest...” or suggest new ways to use Walmart products, “Here’s a quick and easy meal, so you have more time to focus on the shopping! http://...”

The third category represents posts that evoke some type of imagination or fantasy. Posts in this category referenced objects or situations that were not present. For instance, many posts in this category if users were encouraged to tell stories about past or potential future events. For example, many posts asked open-ended questions such as, “How are you getting ready for Thanksgiving?” Others would lead the user to describe a hypothetical choice, “Leave a comment and tell us which glittery color of new Duck Glitter tape is your favorite! A. Pink B. Silver C. Red D. Aqua.”

The final category of posts offered users a sense of control over an outcome. “The ingredients of contingency, choice, and power contribute to the control feature of the ... experience.” (Kim and Lee 2012: 26) Posts in this category put some sort of power in the hands of the users by suggesting the outcome will depend on their input. Often, this takes the form of opinion-giving or voting, allowing the user a choice in events going forward. For instance, Walmart suggested that users have the power to determine store prices, “Now you have the chance to decide a holiday Rollback. Click here to vote now! http://walmarturl.com/Y11v2T”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gamification Elements</th>
<th>Example posts from Walmart's Facebook page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Challenge             | “Tell us how many differences you see in the two pictures”  
“Tell us how many differences you see in the two pictures”  
“We know you like to be the first to comment. Now, we want to see who can be the LAST to comment. Ready, set, GO!”  
| Curiosity             | “Forget "can-berries" for Thanksgiving. Try this easy, delicious recipe for Homemade Whole Berry Cranberry Sauce with fresh Ocean Spray cranberries...”  
| Fantasy               | “What would you do with a $7,500 Walmart shopping spree? ...”  
“The best Christmas cookie is ______.” |
Phase 2: Understanding how use of gamification elements affects brand engagement on social media

Phase one of our investigation focused on how organizations embed gamification in social media posts. During this phase we identified four categories of gamification elements that can be embedded in social media posts. During phase two, we sought to understand how using gamification elements in social media posts affects brand engagement using quantitative data to engender insights (Miranda et al. 2015). Thus, we categorized the top and bottom brand engagement posts according to the four gamification elements identified in phase one. This comparison revealed differences in the prevalence of types of gamification elements, i.e., of all posts, 5.98% were coded as Challenge, 22.22% were coded as Curiosity, 41.03% were coded as Fantasy, and 5.98% were coded as Control.

Gamification theory suggests that individuals will engage when presented with a challenge, which aligns with our finding that despite only 5.98% of all posts containing a challenge, 12.5% of top posts did. Only 3.03% of bottom posts in our sample presented a challenge. This suggests that challenging users elicits strong positive and negative effects in terms of brand engagement. Qualitative analysis around the top and bottom posts reveals that challenges requiring little efforts were more likely to promote high levels of engagement, e.g., “We know you like to be the first to comment. Now, we want to see who can be the LAST to comment. Ready, set, GO!”. Challenges requiring greater levels of effort tended to fall flat, e.g., “Sending mail to the North Pole? Post a picture of the letter and we might feature it on our cover.” This finding aligns with research describing social media engagement as a function of participation costs (Miranda et al. 2016).

Additionally, gamification theory suggests that individuals will engage when presented with an opportunity to fulfill their curiosity. Notably, while only 7.5% of top posts fit this category, 15.15% of bottom posts did. This suggests that, contrary to received wisdom, sparking and fulfilling curiosity for users may decrease brand engagement. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that each of the bottom curiosity posts contained a link, which redirected users away from the Walmart Facebook page. For example, the post, “Perk up your potatoes with this amazing Mexican Potatoes Au Gratin recipe! http://...” received 1624 likes, 47 comments, and 30 shares. In contrast, only two of the three top curiosity posts contained a link, which redirected users away from the Walmart Facebook page. For example, the post, “Perk up your potatoes with this amazing Mexican Potatoes Au Gratin recipe! http://...” received 1624 likes, 47 comments, and 30 shares. The third, which ranks highest among the three, did not contain a url; rather, this post – which was liked 3,639 times, commented on 191 times, and shared 3,560 times – contained an image with a recipe and the caption, “Boring biscuits? No way! Try this Sweet Potato Biscuit recipe.” The absence of a link from this page allowed users to view the recipe and engage without leaving Facebook, thus enabling low-cost engagement.

In line with gamification theories, which suggest individuals engage in activities when given the opportunity to fantasize, we found that 50% of top brand engagement posts contained opportunities for fantasy, compared to 18.18% of bottom posts. This suggests that, contrary to research findings that a strong sense of community can develop online when social media facilitate creative self-expression, sharing of a personal narrative, and self-validating emotional experiences (Miranda et al. 2016).

Finally, posts that allowed users to take control over some issue appeared in only 3.03% of bottom and 2.5% of top brand engagement posts. Thus, it seems control gamification elements were not associated with very high or very low brand engagement. Notably, 48.48% of bottom engagement posts contained no gamification elements, compared to 24.97% of all posts, 22.5% of top engagement posts.

Table 1. Gamification Elements used in Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>“You decide the next toy Rollback. Vote now at My Local Walmart:<a href="http://walmarturl.com/Uzxp6h%E2%80%9D">http://walmarturl.com/Uzxp6h”</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>“Last year, more than 145 nonprofits received special holiday grants during our 12 Days of Giving, including Crittenton Center. Nominate a worthy nonprofit for a grant this year, too: <a href="http://walmarturl.com/12daysgiving1%E2%80%9D">http://walmarturl.com/12daysgiving1”</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-second Americas Conference on Information Systems, San Diego, 2016 6
Discussion

Our research objective was to understand what gamification looks like on social media and how using gamification elements in social media posts affects brand engagement. To this end, we raised two research questions, which we now address in turn.

RQ1: How do organizations embed gamification in social media posts to promote brand engagement?

Our findings revealed that gamification elements are embedded in organizations social media posts at a conceptual level, by which posts of various formats encourage certain responses in terms of four gamification categories: challenge, curiosity, fantasy, and control. Our initial coding efforts focused on various post formats, based upon structures such as multiple-choice question or requesting specific actions in response. However, as we further analyzed the data, more abstract, hierarchical categories emerged, e.g. challenge, expression, learning, and voice-giving. During our final coding, we discovered that the categories of gamification elements in social media posts we surfaced closely related to four traditional conceptualizations of gamification elements, e.g. challenge, fantasy, curiosity, and control.

These findings indicate that gamification elements can be embedded in a social media context, despite the lack of concrete game design mechanics available. Based upon these ideas, organizations may choose to promote brand engagement through social media gamification not through the more visible motivational affordances offered by leaderboards, badges or rewards but through posts that offer the same type of psychological outcomes as more traditional affordances. For instance, a challenge may be created by encouraging certain actions within a timeframe or in competition with other social media users. Curiosity can be engendered through posts that give users access to new ideas and concepts. Likewise, fantasy can be encouraged not only through stories by the organization but also by posts that call the user to interact and express their own fantasy regarding certain topics. Finally, social media posts can offer the users an opportunity to have some control over brand outcomes by giving them the power to choose or vote amongst various alternatives.

RQ2: How do users engage with the brand in response to gamification on social media?

Our findings reveal that not all gamification elements have the same effect on brand engagement. In fact, contrary to popular belief, curiosity elements may diminish brand engagement by directing users' attention elsewhere. Fantasy, on the other hand, was strongly associated with high levels of brand engagement. While posts expressing organizational narratives received little attention, posts which facilitated self-expression by users elicited the strongest brand engagement of the four gamification elements. Findings around challenge elements suggest that challenges posted to social media ought not to be too onerous for users. Rather, low to moderate levels of challenge are most likely to promote brand engagement. Finally, our findings reveal that control gamification elements may not be as effective in promoting brand engagement as other gamification elements.

Contributions

This research contributes to understanding of gamification theories, which are still in a nascent stage. By using grounded theory methods to develop categories of gamification elements, we map the existing framework of four gamification elements (i.e., Challenge, Fantasy/Expression, Curiosity/Learning, and Control/Voice-Giving) to their application in a social media context. The framework of four gamification elements presented in this manuscript provides a starting place for future gamification research in social media contexts. Although much of the research in this area has focused on game design mechanics and their usefulness in e-learning (Santhanam et al. 2008) and business contexts such as advergaming (McCanm monument 2013), the more abstract psychological outcomes engendered by gamification elements can be applied to contexts in which the more traditional game design mechanics are not available. Thus, rather than trying to design for gamification, organizations may instead be able to use the affordances offered by existing platforms to embed gamification elements in their efforts to promote brand engagement in social media users.

Findings around which gamification elements were most effective at promoting brand engagement also provides a basis for more theoretical development and have implications for practice. First, the finding that
use of gamification elements led to high levels of engagement, while posting without gamification elements led to low levels of engagement. This finding lends credence to the popular belief that gamification has the potential to add value to organizations. In particular, this extends the gamification literature by focusing on gamification elements’ conceptual nature in order to apply gamification in business contexts that were not designed for such applications. Second, efforts to promote brand engagement online should not focus only on organizational expression, but should allow users to fantasize and express themselves and their personal narratives in a way that fosters positive self-validation. While prior research in the field of education has found fantasy to be less predictive of outcomes (Malone 1981), in the context of brand engagement on social media, this gamification element proved effective. Third, challenges presented on social media should require low to moderate amounts of efforts, as high effort challenges may dissuade users from engaging. Fourth, posts designed to evoke and/or satisfy users’ curiosity or provide a learning can promote brand engagement, but work best when information is neatly packaged in an easy to share way. These posts should not direct traffic away from the focal platform. Finally, control elements appear to be less effective than other gamification elements when the objective is brand engagement. Combined, these findings introduce a more nuanced view of gamification as used to achieve positive business outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research

This research provides an important early step and framework for future social media and gamification research, but is not without limitations. First, the research reflected in this manuscript draws from a small sample of posts from only one organization and one social media platform. Future research should examine whether the element categories surfaced in this research hold in a broader sample, for instance, by extending the sampling longitudinally, across different organizations, or investigating brand engagement at the product level rather than at the organizational level. Future research confirming or augmenting the findings of this exploratory study using more rigorous methods and drawing on a positivist perspective would hold value for theory and practice. While quantitative grounded theory utilizes quantitative data to surface insights, the intention is not to provide statistical rigor (Miranda et al. 2015). Therefore, future research should build upon our framework to conduct empirical hypotheses testing to further our understanding of this phenomenon. Additionally, brand engagement by users by encompass and interact with context outside of the social media platform we investigated. It would be beneficial to expand this research to include the use of gamification on and interaction with alternate platforms, both in social media and other media sponsored by the brand. Second, this research focuses on the categories of gamification rather than the more overarching theme of playfulness (Deterding et al. 2011). Future research could investigate whether users tend to respond in kind to gamification themes, in which the structure and type of response is suggested by the organization, rather than responding in a more free-form, unstructured fashion.

Conclusion

Our research suggests that gamification can be a useful method for promoting brand engagement in users on social media. Not only can organizations embed gamification elements in social media without inherent game design mechanics, but the use of these game elements can be a viable option for engaging with social media users and promoting the organization’s brand. However, it may be that much of the failure associated with gamification strategies in the past are due to a lack of understanding regarding how gamification elements can impact user behaviors in the context of social media. Our findings reveal that not all gamification elements are equally successful in promoting brand engagement. Specifically, organizations should carefully focus on user self-expression through fantasy, challenges, and curiosity that promotes learning and ideas specifically related to the organization’s brand.
REFERENCES


Gartner. 2012. "Gartner Says by 2014, 80 Percent of Current Gamified Applications Will Fail to Meet Business Objectives Primarily Due to Poor Design."


