

MISQ Archivist

Impact of Gamification on Perceptions of Word-of-Mouth Contributors and Actions of Word-of-Mouth Consumers

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Abstract

Gamification has been shown to encourage contributions of user-generated reviews (word-of-mouth, WOM) in various domains, including travel and leisure related platforms (Foursquare, TripAdvisor), e-commerce (Amazon), and auctions (eBay). *WOM contributors* write reviews about products/services provided by business venues and *WOM consumers* read reviews and use them to form attitudes and make purchase decisions. Gamification elements such as points and *badges*, awarded to WOM contributors for various reasons, and displayed to WOM consumers, have a dual role in WOM context. First, points awarded for user contributions help motivate WOM contributors to increase their participation. Second, badges awarded to users for visiting business venues signal prior experience or competence, and they help determine how WOM consumers perceive WOM contributors and form their judgments based on the reviews. While the first role of gamification (i.e., motivating users) has been widely studied, the impact of WOM presented along with gamification elements on the perceptions and behavior of the target audience, WOM consumers, has not been examined. This is important to businesses that are looking to attract customers. Drawing on social psychology literature, we show that gamification symbols signaling experience that accompanies WOM leads to perceptions of positive WOM contributors as more competent. This leads to important changes in behavioral outcomes such as willingness to visit/buy and willingness to recommend the reviewed outlets.

Keywords: Gamification, word-of-mouth, badge, competence