

The Evaluation of Potentials of Gamification in Tourism Marketing Communication

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Abstract

Traditional communication theory that marketers are active and consumer is passive is going to be obsolete. Instead, by developing participatory culture with Web 2.0, Co-creation and engagement marketing are suggested. By entering the Conceptual age which game and fun in life and work is emphasized, Gamification can be effective tool to motivate customers to collaboration. Accordingly, with review the theoretical background of gamification, the paper aims to evaluating the potentials of gamification in online tourism marketing. The results of review of gamification literatures showed that, gamification by boosting data driving, customer loyalty, brand awareness, user generated content, virality, online engagement and of course revenue can be useful tool for success of online advertising activities.

Keywords: Gamification, Online Advertising, Tourism, Participatory Culture

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1. Introduction

The importance of marketing communications (MARCOM) as a promotion part of marketing mix has increased dramatically in recent decades (Shimp 2006). Actually, As has been mentioned by Lamb, Hair and McDaniel (2011). Surviving in the high competitive marketplace without effective use of promotion is really hard for products and services; “no matter how developed or priced”. In the tourism as a service industry (Singh 2008), promotion is even more vital than other industries (Morgan and Pritchard 2013). However, advertising which is the most visible part of iceberg of MARCOM mix (Pride, Ferrell, Lukas, Schembri and Niininen 2012) has been assumed as a key tool in the tourism.

Such as tourism which information communication technology (ICT) has become a central part of that (Neuhofer and Buhalis 2012) there is same story for advertisement. In 2014, according to the Internet World Stats, more than 3 billion people worldwide used the Internet; this means 42% of the whole population and 741 % growth in comparison to 2000 (IWS 2014). Based on this situation, more and more advertising company and business are going to shift their spending from traditional to the online advertisements due to its efficiency (Kuo 2011). The latest estimates of PWS (2014) which by 2018, Internet advertising will be poised to overtake TV as the largest advertising segment (pwc.com) can be evidence.

In addition to changes in ads, ICT has changed consumer behavior too. “Web 2.0 by facilitating information sharing, user-centered, collaboration and interaction” (Power and Phillips-Wren 2011), has shaped new culture as the “participatory culture” which in it individuals do not act as consumers only, but also by actively participate in different social media act as contributors or producers of information (Delwiche and Henderson 2013). This situation especially in tourism is obvious, because “tourism consumption often takes place in the social contexts, which interactions and shared experiences with other tourists form a crucial part of the service experience” (Rihova, Buhalis, Moital and Gouthro 2014). Thus, today should not be overlooked the fact that organizations, destinations and firms are no longer the only source of information and messages for consumers. For effectively use of this situation, “Co-creation ads” (Thompson and Malaviya 2013) and “engagement marketing” (Goodman 2012) has been suggested. But, attracting the attention of consumers to participate is not easy. Therefore advertisers must look for an updated and creative way to motivating customers. It seems that by entering the conceptual age which in it game will be one part of our life (Pink 2006), integration game mechanics and game design techniques or in another word; gamification, can be innovative tool to motivate consumer to co-creation and engagement. Accordingly, research aims to evaluating the potentials of gamification in the online advertising.

2. Literature Review

Before praising the “goods” of gamification, it is imperative to draw a picture of marketing communications as a concept. All in all, marketing communications is the process of interaction between the product, service or brand with its key publics. These publics would range from consumers to suppliers, even employees of the particular business venture. It should be noted that the deployment of marketing communications tools and tactics by no means limited to a business enterprise. It may well be applicable to non-profit sectors.

The key term here is “communication” and its not limited to a message conveying procedure, verbally or non-verbally. It is a perceptual process and often accomplished when a particular brand or a product is placed in stakeholders’ mind in a desired slot. What is this “desired slot” or having positive associations in peoples’ mindset? How it can be attained? And, What is it called? Answering these questions will not surface the value and practicality of the marketing communications; it will also fill the gap between gamification and communication.

Evidently, the most easy answer goes to the very last question that it is called positioning. Physical world alike in individuals’ mind terms, concepts, names and logos have a certain place. That place might have positive connotations so as to when an individual recalls a particular name or logo; it is retrieved along with positive associations, experiences or stories. This is a desired state of mind and very essence of positioning.

How this can be attained is another obstacle to tackle. Obviously, when it comes down to how to accomplish a good or desirable positioning, marketing communication mix or tools must come into the play. These tools are advertising, public relations, sales promotions, personal selling and direct marketing. Note that, tools like advertising and public relations to some extent require a medium in order for mediating messages to audiences. Other marketing communications mix elements may not require a medium however this does not alleviate their essence of being a communication processes in the first place.

For instance, with or without a medium, personal selling is a human communication activity that involves face-to-face interactions undertaken by individuals. It is instantaneous and often feedback is possible.

None of these aspects makes the gamification significant for marketing communications. The answers can be found in “sharing” and “participatory” nature of it. The traditional marketing communications, on the other hand is much more a “one way” street of which messages can only be effective if media, message and the consumer trio meets in a circle.

2.1. Participatory cultural and prosumer

Web 2.0 and Social Media (e.g. Facebook, Couchsurfing), visual social medias (e.g. Paintrest), microblogging services (e.g. Twitter), content-sharing sites (e.g. YouTube and Flickr), wikis (e.g. Wekipedia), location based sites (e.g. foursquare), and review sites (e.g. Tripadvisor) have offered large scale online participation (Rotman et al. 2011).

Jenkins (2009) believes that developing Web 2.0 by increasing the ability of people to create, upload, share and recirculate information has been shaped participatory cultural. This new culture can be characterized as:

- Low obstacles to public engagement
- Strong support and motivations for creating and sharing of information and content
- Members feel that their participations are helpful (Hopkins, Hare, Donaghey and Abbott 2014).

Based on this new situation, some researches have emphasized transformation of consumer to more active roles, which is called prosumer (Izvercian and Potra 2014; Johnson et al. 2013). The concept of the prosumer, one who is both producer and consumer, is certainly not new. It was mentioned by Karl Marx and later by McLuhan and Nevitt (1972), (Trentin and Repetto 2013). However, the term was introduced by Alvin Toffler (1980) in his book “Thired Wave” (Renna 2012) and in the 21st century emphasizing on it is being increased. In generally, following factors can be the reasons of rise of prosumer:

- Emerging “factory without walls” (Gill and Pratt 2008); especially about activates such as marketing, advertising and software which are primarily about the production of ideas. In these activates customer actively promote and encourage to active engagement. For example, the open-source software (e.g. Firefox) or review websites (e.g. tripadvisor).
- The rise of the service industries and emphasis on “putting customers to work” which based on those customers do much of works by themselves (e.g. taking food to the table). This strategy is common in the fast food industries (e.g. McDonald) (Ritzer 2009).
- The development of ICTs help consumers to become prosumers (Han et al. 2013). For example, in the field of tourism, travelers with help of websites, social medias and

apps such as priceline, kayak, expedia, and skyscanner can more easily do almost all of the work by themselves (e.g. search, compare, reserve and buy).

2.2. Gamification

The concept of gamification first introduced in 2008 and has raised in 2010. Some factors including; smart phone, tablet and cheaper technology, have played a great role in re-emerging of gamification (Nelson 2012). As a new term, its definition is continually changing. "Gamification is the use of game design elements, characteristic of games, in non-game contexts" (Simões et al. 2013). In other word, "the process of adding game mechanics to processes, programs, and platforms that would not traditionally use such concepts. More recently, Gartner redefines gamification as, "the use of game mechanics and experience" design to digitally engage and motivate people to achieve their goals" (Dale 2014). In this definition, interaction only is limited to digitally engagement; meaning interaction with digital devices, rather than with a person. The definition has been criticized by Marczewski, Herger and Rackwitz (2014) for limiting engagement to only digital ones (Burke 2014). Regardless of some differences, most of definitions have focused on the following factors:

- There is differences between game and gamification: While the main aim of game is pure fun and entertainment, gamification isn't only about entertainment (Marczewski 2013) but it's about using game mechanics (e.g. point, levels, badges, and etc..) and dynamics (e.g. rewards, status, competition, and etc..) to motivate engagement in non-game contexts; for example advertisement, royalty programs, etc. (Flory 2012).
- Gamification can helps to costumer engagement: Almost all definition have suggested gamification as an effective tool for engagement (Nicholson 2015; Rauch 2013; Cronk 2012; Zichermann and Cunningham 2011).
- Gamification can increase the efficiency of customer loyalty programs: Paharia (2013) who is recognized as "the father of gamification" (Fleming 2012) in his book "loyalty 3.0" suggests that loyalty is going to enter the next level. According to Paharia (2013) loyalty 3.0 has tree leverages
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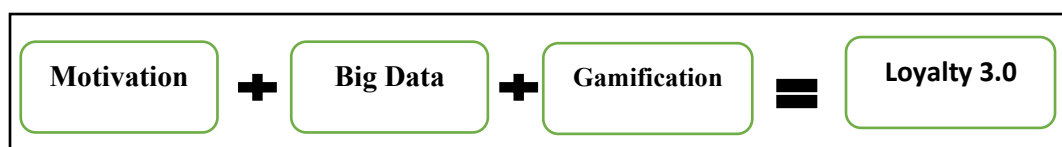


Figure 1: Tree leverages of loyalty

Soruce: Paharia 2013

- Gamification can be data-driven motivation: in the connected world which customers spend more time online, "user generated content (UGC)" (Moon, Kim and Armstrong 2014; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012) are exploding. The UGC has become more influential; due to its help to better understanding target customers, being more trustworthy in the information search and the decision making process (Cox, Burgess, Sellitto and Buultjens 2009; O'Connor 2008). Accordingly, today business tries to motivate customers to generate content. For being successful, gamification is suggested as an effective tool (McNeal 2014).

As a result, Gamification is gaining more and more attention. "With over 70% of the Forbes Global 200 saying they planned to use gamification for marketing purposes by the end of 2014 in a survey performed by Gartner" (Forbes 2014).

2.3. Game Design Elements

In order to being successful in gamification, the game design elements play critical role. Leading IT research and analysis companies, Gartner has warned that 80% of all gamification apps will fail to meet their objectives due to poor design (Browne, Anand and Gosse 2014). In generally, game design elements are divided into two groups: game mechanics and game dynamics (M&D). While they are closely related and sometimes used interchangeably (Chandler 2013); but game mechanics (rules of game) are “mechanisms that are used to gamify an activity” (Simões, Redondo and Vilas 2013) and Dynamics are consequence of mechanics implementing (Dillon 2010) or motivations of play a game. Some of the most popular M&D are shown in Table 1

Table 1.
Main Game Design Elements

Mechanic	Dynamic
Points: “the heart of any game” (Zichermann and Cunningham, 2011) are rewarded users for completing actions.	Status: Most humans have a need for status, recognition, fame, prestige, attention and, ultimately, the esteem and respect of others. Status can be earned by the user in isolation, by performing certain actions
Levels: Levels indicate the proficiency of the player in the overall gaming experience over time.	Collaboration: The community collaboration game dynamic rallies an entire community to work together to solve a riddle, resolve a problem, or overcome a challenge.
Bonus: Bonuses are rewarded for having completed a series of challenges or core functions.	Achievement: A reward for completing a clear and desirable goal.
Badges: Badges consist of optional rewards and goals whose fulfilment is stored outside the scope of the core activities of a service.	Competition: Competitions enable users to challenge each other.
Leader Boards: Leaderboards are used to track and display desired actions, using competition to drive valuable behavior.	Altruism: Altruism refers to virtual gift giving with the aim of strengthening the relationships between users.
Virtual goods: Virtual goods are non-physical, intangible objects that can be or traded.	Self-expression: Self-expression results from having a desire to express autonomy, identity or originality, or to mark one's personality as unique.

Source: Thiebes, Lins and Basten 2014

As mentioned, encourage to engagement is the main aim for gamifying of an activity, in order to want individuals to do this end; the psychology of motivation has effective role. In other word, effectiveness and success of gamification depend on the motivation.

In generally motivation can be divided into two groups; intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation, is defined to do activity for the enjoyment of the activity itself (e.g. positive feelings and happiness, and etc.), and extrinsic motivation, refers to perform something for its external rewards (e.g. praise, money, and etc.) (Ryan and Deci 2000). Based on motivation, Bartle (1990) suggested four type of player, including:

- Achievers: the key motivation is getting reward.

- Explorers: finding and learning new and unknown things motivate them.
- Socializers: the main motivator is communication with others.
- Killers: competition with other players is the main motivator behind play a game (Insight and Gauge et al. 2010)

Bartle’s classification is based on game, but as mentioned, gamification is not completely the same as a game. Therefore, it seems that Bartle’s typology need to be revised in the field of gamification. One of the valuable tries in this area is Marczewski’s works. By integration of Self Determination Theory (SDT) and Daniel Pink’s Theory, he suggested a more detailed and specific typology for gamified systems (figure 2).

Pink (2015) indicated in his book; Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us, that in contrast of most common believe that external rewards like money is best way for motivating others, autonomy, mastery, and purpose are three elements of true motivation (Pink 2015). Same as Pink, Deci and Ryan focus primarily on three intrinsic motivations, including:

Autonomy, Competency and Relatedness (Deci and Ryan 2000). According these two theories, The transformation from motivation 2.0 to motivation 3.0 is suggested (Benson and Morgan 2014; Williams and Reitman 2013; Dolenc 2011).

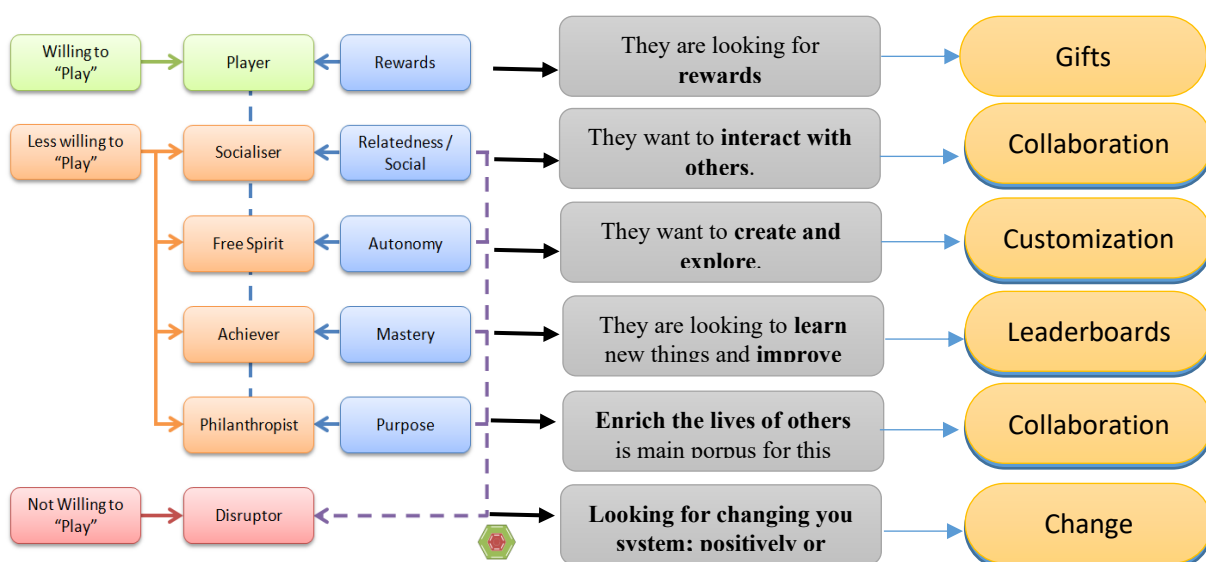


Figure 2: Gamification User Types

Source: Adopted with some changes from: Marczewski 2015

As Figure 2 shows, Marczewski has accepted the motivation 3.0 as the root of his typology of gamification user types. However, by using player term indicates that till now external motivation is important in the gamification.

2.4. Potentials and Application of Gamification in Tourism Marketing Communication

During the past few years ago, gamification has been used to a variety of fields such as education, health, environment, news and work (badgeville.com). According to the main aims of gamification which involves: motivation, increasing engagement, loyalty, and brand awareness, applying gamification to marketing and advertising activities is being approved (Lucassen and Jansen 2014).

Emerging concepts such as In-game advertising (IGA), Advergaming (Terlutter and Capella 2013) and game based marketing (Zichermann and Linder 2010) can be evidence for acceptance of gamification in advertising and marketing.

Motivation, engagement, loyalty, and brand awareness are key concepts for consumer marketing. Therefore, in the tourism as a high competitive consumer centered industry applying of gamification in marketing and advertising activities which most of them take place in an online format can be helpful for meeting the key factors of consumer marketing.

Today, which being online is vital, gamification can offer following benefits for online marketing and advertising activities of business and destinations:

- More funny and enjoyable online experiences: According to Pink (2006) by entering the conceptual age, only being serious will not be enough for success of business. In this age, marketers must look for tools to add fun and play to their activities. In this situation, the gamification which fun and play are two main roots of that, can help marketers to offer more funny and attractive activities.
- Encourage online engagement: According to Peterson visitor engagement is a function of the number of pages view (Click Depth Index), the spent time on website (Click Depth Index), the rate at which the visitor returns to the site over time (Recency Index), their long-term interaction with the site (Loyalty Index), their measured awareness of the brand (Brand Index), their willingness to directly contribute feedback (Feedback Index) and the interaction with content (Interaction Index) (Jackson 2009). But, motivating customer to co-creation and engagement in online advertising activities is not easy and need a creative and innovative strategy. In this situation, the most of gamification based researches have suggested gamification as an effective tool for increasing engagement (Xu, Weber and Buhalis 2013). For example according to study by “Gigya of billions of user actions with partners like Pepsi, Nike, and Dell, adding gamification to site boosts engagement by almost a third. In fact, gamification boosts commenting 13 percent, social sharing to Facebook, Twitter, and networks 22 percent, and content discovery by a massive 68 percent” (Kumaresan 2013).
- Today, people are no longer just a consumer, receiver or “reader” of information, they are producing and consuming content (King 2012). Based on development in ICTs and “Internet of Things (IoT)” (Zhao, Sun and Jin 2015), prosumers more easily can receive and upload photographs, videos, texts, audio, anywhere and anytime. Interesting is here that prosumer generated contents are more important for others; even more than marketers generated content. For example, in the tourism industry, based on a study by TripAdvisor (2013) around 69% of global travelers have been used travel review websites and only 30% of them have been used magazine and brochures for travel planning (TripAdvisor 2013). It is estimated that gamification by focusing on internal and external motivation can boost user generated content.
- Virality: viral advertising means persuading individuals to send a marketing message to others through Internet (Petrescu and Korgaonkar 2011). According to Osipov, Volinsky and Grishin (2014) applying of gamification can successfully boost virality.

- Revenue: through effect on, internal and external motivation, engagement, virality, and user generated content, increase in revenue can be expected (badgeville.com).

Based on these Potentials, as table 2 shows, applying of gamification in tourism industry is soaring.

Table 2.
Gamification in Tourism

Section	Company	Description	Game Elements
Transportation	American Airlines	“A simple game mechanic is used by American Airlines to visually represent your current elite status qualification”(Edwards 2011) .	Levels, Points
	Turkish Airlines	“QR-coded national flags have been placed on 100 digital bus shelters for London 2012. Users who read the code can win a ticket to Australia. Goal is to have most check-ins in one place or individual place” (Xu et al. 2013: 532)	Physical rewards
Food&Beverages	Starbucks	Motivating members to register and spend their gift cards to receive bigger and better benefits with every purchase (Postano.com)	Progress bars, leveling and rewards
	foods	Motivating customers to create sandwiches as they want and share them. The most popular choices rise to the top of the leaderboard (Yukaichou.com, n.d.)	Leaderboard, relatedness
Destinations	Foursquare	Foursquare is designed to “turn life into a game” by rewarding people with mayorships and badges for going to physical locations (Frith 2013).	Points, badges Real rewards (discounts)
Tour	City Boots	“is a new game that is available in the US where travellers or local people can go on an urban adventure, solve fun clues, discover cool spots and learn more about the destination or particular places”(Thinkdigital.travel).	Achievement Competition
	Expedia	“Expedia.com, the world’s largest online travel agency, launched a	

		travel Around the World in 100 Days game in June last year. The game was created to increase the awareness of Expedia's loyalty program and engage with customers. Players can earn"(Weber 2014)	Real-world Expedia Reward
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3. Conclusion

By integration of ICTs in tourism industry, transformation of activities, approaches, strategies and even structure of business involved in tourism is in process. In general, Marketing as one of the main dimensions of tourism and marketing communication in special as one of the most determinative factors in the success of this sector are in pressure to change. Traditional communication theory which based on that, firms, companies, marketer are active and consumer is passive is going to be obsolete. Emerging terms such as C2C, value co-creation, User generated ads, and prosumer can be witness.

Today injecting information and messages directly in to the mind of customers, who are more powerful, knowledgeable and have more control over the information they want to receive, is really hard. For using power (E-word of mouth) and knowledge of customers and finally increasing the efficiency of advertisement, marketers need to look for creative and innovative tools to motivate customers to engaging in the advertising activities.

Evidently, gamification by improved customer loyalty, expanded brand awareness and offering more funny experience boosting data driving, user generated content, virality, online engagement and of course revenue can be effective tools. Due to being new concept there are few empirical study about gamification, but by passing time, we will hear more about new benefits of gamification.

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