RETAIL AND GAMIFICATION
FOR A NEW CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
IN OMNICHANNEL ENVIRONMENT*

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Abstract

The purpose of gamification is to foster the interest of the players/users and increase their involvement or direct certain behaviors. Specifically, it is a set of activities and processes to solve problems using or applying elements related to the game. This paper aims to explore the use of gamification to improve the customer experience in the retail field. This study is based on a qualitative approach with a literature review of the highly-influential articles on Web of Science and Scopus in Business and Management areas, referencing marketing experts. It also contains a case study on gamification. In Italy and in the Republic of San Marino, the company UCI Cinemas has implemented a promotional strategy for the sale of tickets for the film Fantastic Beats: The Crimes of Grindelwald. This promotional strategy is based on the combination of omnichannel retail and gamification.

Keywords: Retail, Gamification, Promotion, Customer Experience, Omnichannel.

1. Introduction

The retail sector is in constant turmoil, characterized by a profound transformation linked to digitalization processes. These changes have affected multiple areas of the retail sector with the integration of stores with e-commerce through the implementation of omnichannel strategies and tools (Jocevski et al., 2019; Alexander & Blazquez Cano, 2020; Hübner et al., 2021). The pandemic has accelerated the digitalization process, with the introduction of new technologies

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(Pantano & Vannucci, 2019) affecting both consumer behaviors and retail business strategies and tools (Cakir et al., 2021; Fortuna et al.; 2021). In particular, digital innovation is used as a lever to recover the social and emotional component of the purchase, even in the store (Hagberg et al., 2016; Quach et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2020). In this framework, the development of digital games – as a retail marketing tool – is constantly growing (Üstündağ, 2020). The phenomenon of digital innovation in retail through digital gaming tools is still unexplored and deserves specific attention.

The paper starts with the analysis of the phenomenon of gamification, followed by a description of the evolution of gamification in the world under Section 2. Section 3 presents a concrete case study on gamification in the retail service sector and concludes with some considerations on the role of gamification in retailing.

2. What is Gamification?

The word "Gamification" was coined in 2002 by Nick Pelling, a computer programmer and game developer (Pelling, 2011). The concept of "gamification" became famous in February 2010 during the "D.I.C.E. Summit" ("Design Innovate Communicate Entertain") in Las Vegas. During this meeting, Jesse Schell made a session called "Design Outside The Box". He talks about an apocalyptic future in which gaming will go beyond the traditional boundaries of a console or PC to enter every moment inside human life. Each of us will become part of a great game where actions are tracked and rewarded with special points and bonuses (Viola, 2011). During his speech he said: "you will wake up in the morning and while you are washing your toothbrush will be equipped with a sensor capable of perceiving if you are brushing your teeth correctly. Well done! 10 points for brushing your teeth ... You have to do it for at least three minutes and if you do it ... there is a bonus for you! " (Petruzzi, 2017). In his speech he does not use the word "gamification" even though he outlines the phenomenon and its rules.

According to some scholars, gamification is: "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (Deterding et al, 2011). This definition of gamification was developed in 2011 and is still used internationally. Another definition of gamification is: "the process of using Game Thinking and Game Dynamics to Engage Audiences and Solve Problems" (Zichermann and Cunningham, 2011). Gamification has similarities with the theory of "nudges". these are elements that guide individual choices and behaviors without the use of orders and preserve the freedom of choice, like a "polite push" (Thaler and Sustein, 2008).

Gamification can be usefully used as a means of re-channeling undesirable consumer behavior (Insley and Nunan, 2014). This method sometimes fails in terms of engagement and can even harm employees and the work environment. Goals and rewards associated with play systems can be perceived negatively by employees, as a method for managers to control their performance. These findings are consistent with the negative effects of rewards and progress tracking associated with playful environments (Eisingerich et al., 2019). The negative effects that reduce the effectiveness of the game are also due to the use of money. Indeed, according to (Bauer et al., 2020) monetary rewards used to incentivize game participation diminish these effects.

Gamification loses its positive effects if games are combined with monetary rewards, as consumers no longer play games to derive inherent enjoyment, but rather the extrinsic motivation of receiving a discount. Instead, playing a shopping-related game without monetary participation incentive positively influences three relational outcomes: customer satisfaction,

loyalty and positive WOM intentions. This because games enhance consumers' enjoyment of the overall shopping experience.

Gamification can have ethical effects. Some scholars argue that professionals and designers should be cautious about the use of gamification practices. this is because it could involve an unfair advantage of workers (exploitation), infringes any involved workers or customers autonomy (manipulation), an intentionally or unintentionally harms workers and other involved parties (Yang et al., 2017). This has a negative effect on the moral character of involved parties (Kim and Werbach, 2016). The game concerns the needs of self-expression, the desire to set new goals, new challenges and overcome them. It allows to create involvement, motivation, loyalty to achieve goals that are difficult to achieve with other tools. In order to be developed, games need rules and boundaries. There are four key elements from the definitions of Gamification (Mcgonigal, 2011):

- Gamification is an activity that involves doing something
- Gamification uses game design and techniques borrowed from games
- It is applied in non-game contexts
- It is used to motivate people to achieve some goals

Identify goals and success criteria is fundamental, because people are driven by an interest or a pleasure (Prensky, 2007). For this reason, is fundamental understanding who are users and what motivates them. Like any project and marketing plan, it is necessary to identify who are the target customers. Each profile could have different reasons and needs to satisfy. subsequently it is necessary understand which are the right levers to move to incentivize them. Gamification is an excellent supporter when users already have an underlying motivation to follow a certain action. To motivate people usually it can be used the "epic meaning". This can be compared to the vision and mission used by a company to define their long-term strategic goals. this means making people feel part of a higher project. For example, carrying out a specific activity not only to improve the team goals but also help others stakeholder. For this reason, it is necessary to define some KPI (Key Performance Indicator). The rules are the obligations that make any game exciting, interesting and challenging. Choosing the right mechanics is very important. They have to combined to obtain the best experience of gaming, not only according to the strategic goals but also to motivate the customers. Gamification acts on the human psyche. Within a game design it is necessary to use different mechanics (Petruzzi, 2017; Maestri et al, 2018). the most famous are:

- Points/credits: they are the immediate reward for the player's actions.
- Levels: They are a system to insert progressive goals, in order to influence the player's motivation.
- Badges / Achievements: the badges set off the achievement of a goal, increase the sense of the challenge and typify the player's profile.
- Rank: they are a method to organize users' performance. The comparison among people generates a sense of competition, foster interest and increase the time spent in the game.
- Challenges: they are obstacles which the player must overcome to earn points, badges and level up.
- Virtual assets: they are goods that have value for the player within the virtual world of the game but also in the real world.

When talking of gamification, there are some prejudice, clichés and common places. A common mistake is to consider gamification as a generalist attempt to transform serious

contexts into playful ones. When they talk about games need to make some clarifications. Deterding et al. (2011) have developed a matrix between the concepts of: gamification, serious game, toys, playful design (Fig. 1). In the matrix is shown the differences among gamification and other types of games.

Gamification is using mechanics of game design in non-game contexts to achieve a specific goal (e.g. motivate and involve). Serious games are 100% games. For example, Apple uses the "progress bars" and challenges between friends inside the Apple Watch to measure physical activity. In this case we are talking about gamification because the movement section of the Apple Watch is not a game. A "serious" game is a whole and complete game. For example, "Wii Fit" (a videogame of Nintendo) is aimed at exercising at home. The term "serious" has been used to indicate serious contexts, other than mere entertainment. They can be used in many different fields like health, marketing, social and non-profit issues, education and school, corporate and human resources.

When talking of gamification, there are some prejudice, clichés and common places. The relationship between consumers and "games" is somewhat more complex than has been suggested by those promoting gamification (Insley and Nunan, 2014). If the strategy is reduced only to inserting points or badges, without a precise objective, the result is poor, weak and users will leave the game. if this happens, we are talking about of "pointsification" or "badgeification" degenerations of gamification. Gamification does not mean adding points and rankings. Points, badges and leaderboards are some gamification mechanics but these are not enough to motivate people (Petruzzi, 2017). A common mistake is to consider gamification as a generalist attempt to transform serious contexts into playful ones. Gamification does not work miracles. If there is not a personal motivation, people will not find anything kind of gaming to convince themselves.

Figure 1 − Gamification between game and play
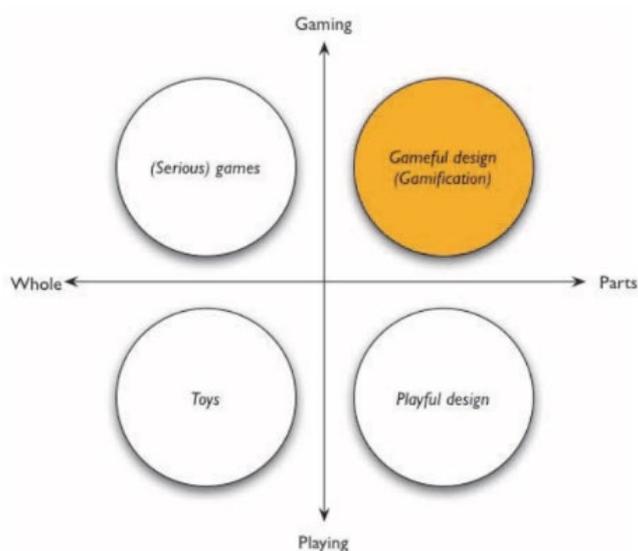
Source: (Deterding *et al*, 2011)

For instance, serious games have been used for years in the health sector. Doctors can train in simulated environments that do no harm to patients. There are games that facilitate the treatment of certain diseases. Some researchers thought of a way to reduce pain without using anesthetics and saw that it can be done using a serious game. Gamification exists in a large

number of different fields like retail, media, consumer goods, healthcare and so on. It is used as means to educate employees in all types of industry, create customer engagement to brands and businesses, and even nudge people to change their behavior (Wünderlich et al., 2020). The game that was developed by the University of Washington and some researchers to reduce the pain of hospital burns (Hoffman, 2004).

The boundary between gaming and serious game is not always defined and clear. To understand if we are talking about gamification or serious game it becomes essential to know the reasons of players and the creator's goals. The intentions of the players in some cases are able to influence the concept of entertainment. Toys are not games because they have no goals or objectives and are made to play together (Prensky, 2007). While "playful design" is the application of some elements of unstructured play not game. Obviously, in some cases the boundary lines between one quadrant and another one can be subtle and subjective (Deterding et al, 2011). Gamification design is a process focuses on human motivation. This process is called "Human - Centered Design". This term was coined by Mike Cooley in 1982 his book "Architect or Bee?". According to ISO 9241-210: 2019: "Human-centered design is an approach to interactive systems development that aims to make systems usable and useful by focusing on the users, their needs and requirements, and by applying human factors/ergonomics, and usability knowledge and techniques. This approach enhances effectiveness and efficiency, improves human well-being, user satisfaction, accessibility and sustainability; and counteracts possible adverse effects of use on human health, safety and performance" (OBP, 2019). Most systems are focused on function designed to get the job done quickly. Within the process the human variable is underestimated, for this, "Human-Centered Design" allows to improve the potentialities of the human factor inside a process, thus optimizing motivation and commitment.

The guru and pioneer of gamification Yu-Kai Chou elaborated 8 core drivers standard in his framework "Octalysis" (Fig. 2), to indicate different types of motivation (Chou, 2015). These motivational elements define and explain the user's involvement, they help to classify game motivations in relation to the needs and desires of a hypothetical user / player.

Figure 2 − Octalysis Framework
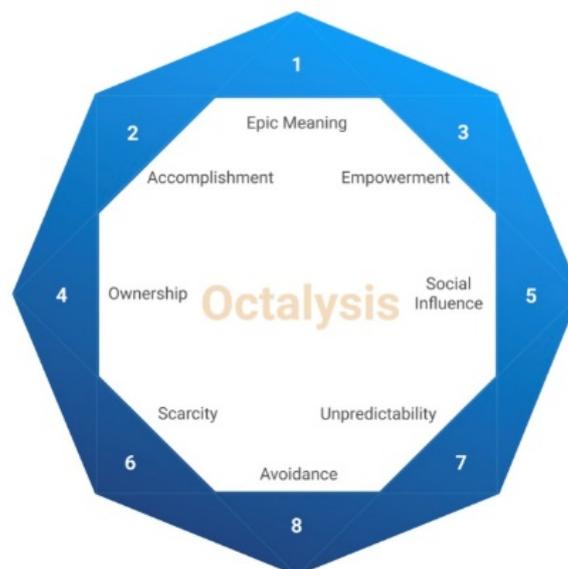
Source: Chou (2015)

The eight core drivers are:

- *Epic meaning and Calling*: The "epic" sense is the desire to participate in something higher or to help at the creation of a collective good. People decide to pursue a goal, a mission. For centuries, populations, philosophers, political and spiritual leaders have believed that the best way to give meaning to existence is to connect daily actions with something greater (McGonigal, 2011). The epic meaning can be collaborating with other people to achieve common goals, for instance "Wikipedia".

- *Accomplishment and Development*: People need motivation so they create challenges and goals of increasing complexity. The need to improve and overcome one's limits. For example, points, credits, badges, rankings, progress bars are all techniques that meet this need.

- *Empowerment of creativity and feedback*: Self-expression indicates that innate tendency that leads man to experiment, to customize, to try different creative combinations to obtain different results, for example Lego bricks or within a video game the custom-tailoring of Avatars. The need to express oneself is linked to the need of receive positive feedback.

- *Ownership and Possession*: Each person has an innate instinct of ownership, a natural desire to possess something. People usually have a hard giving up something they have built or conquered, even if the thing they own is only virtual.

- *Social influence and Relatedness*: This means that our life is influenced by the social pressure that pushes us to do or not to do a certain action. Factors can be the need for acceptance in the community, reciprocity, status and so on. Cooperative and competitive mechanics within a social system are also found inside a social game; the sense of "community" characterizes many activities, including gamification.

- *Scarcity and Impatience*: The concept of scarcity is very ancient. Already the ancient Greeks spoke of scarcity with the myth of Pandora. More a resource is scarce more the good takes on value and people do everything to get it. For instance, if in marketing strategy is possible to convey the feeling that a product or service is limited, potential buyers will try to not miss the opportunity, moved by the fear or anxiety. Mechanisms such as the countdown, rely on the time scarcity factor. Another gamification technique based on scarcity is the "appointment" that is specific predetermined moments in which the game system offers the possibility of seizing a potential advantage, think for example at "black Friday".

- *Unpredictability and Curiosity*: This motivational factor is based on psychological and medical concepts. For instance, gambling games such as prize contests, draws, bets and lotteries. However, such motivation can lead to negative consequences, people risk developing a real gambling addiction. Game designers use this core drive through bonuses or "easter eggs" game elements that the developers hide in the game letting the user discover them generating a surprise and a "wow effect" (Kotler *et al*, 2017).

- *Avoidance and Loss*: Fear of loss is an innate instinct of mankind when one wants to avoid losing something or to avoid negative events. Applied to game mechanics an example is negative reinforcements or malus. If They do not a certain action, a negative event happens or one have to lose something.

All the core drives of "Octalysis" framework act on the brain influencing behaviors (Fig. 3).

Figure 3 different motivations within the Octalysis framework
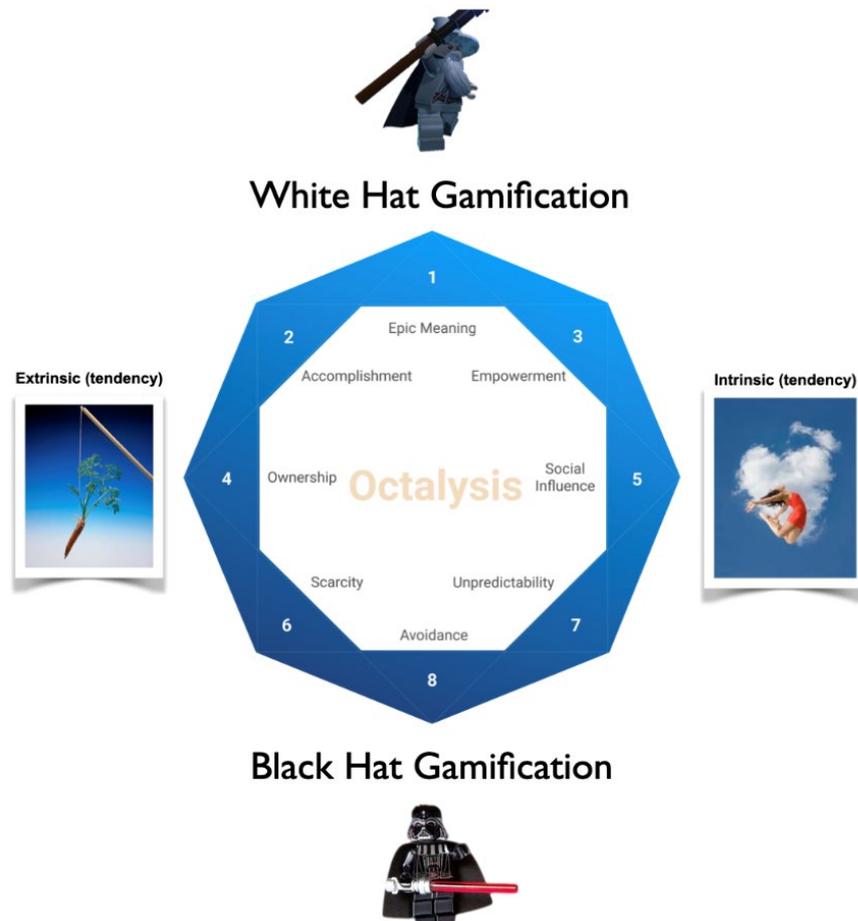
Source: Adapted from Chou (2015)

The framework can be analyzed from different perspectives of analysis. The first level of analysis is shown in the figure n.14 where the core drives on the left side are "extrinsic motivations" like logic and rational calculation, while those on the right side are "intrinsic motivations" based on creative thinking, self-expression and social aspects. Gamification influences the human mind not only in a positive way but also in a negative way (think of gambling). The upper "core drives" are defined as "white hat" (good / positive) while the lower part of the framework is based on negative "black hat" (bad / negative) motivators (Chou, 2015). The human factor within the framework is fundamental. The gaming industry was the first to adopt "human-focused design". A game is not an easy activity, it requires commitment, time, and sometimes a money outlay. However, millions of people every day spend part of their day doing this activity (Petruzzi, 2017). The 8 motivational factors do not remain fixed but change with the user's motivation, the mechanics used and the flow of time represented by the "customer journey". There are also further levels of analysis, for example the second level is based on the player's journey (Fig.4).

Figure 4 − Customer journey
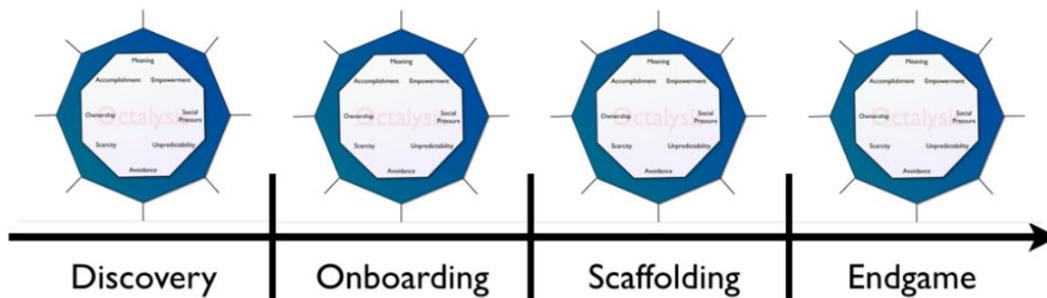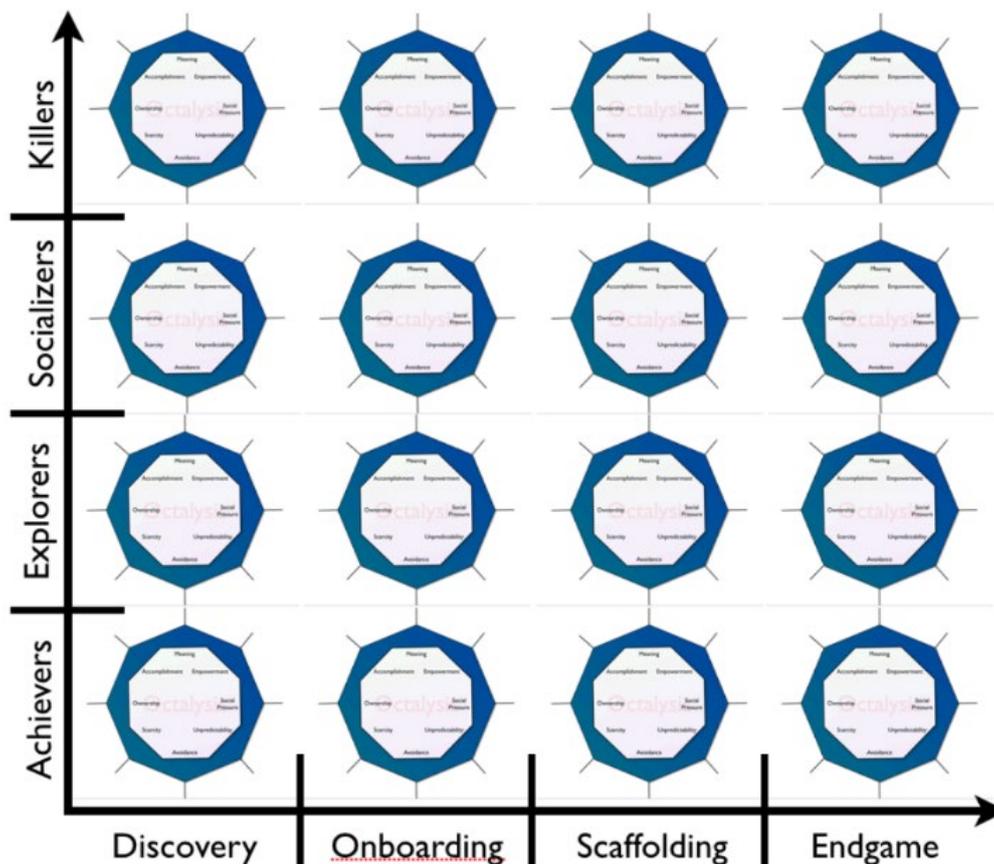

Source: Chou (2015)

During the journey, it is necessary monitoring the interaction between user and product. If the product attracts people at the start of the game, the engagement doesn't necessarily stay the same all the time until the end. Scholar Chou has elaborated 4 phases of the game experience (Chou, 2015):

- *Discovery*: the player discovers and learns for the first time the product or service offered by the company. This happens for example with the creation of an account, the choice of the type of profile and access to the service.
- *Onboarding*: in this phase it is necessary to help the player to become familiar with the game rules, options and mechanisms. Gamers want to get started quickly and want to have fun. For instance, one can use a video or an interactive tutorial. The onboarding process must inspire the user to start the game with enthusiasm and motivation. This phase ends when users are fully equipped and ready to embark on the journey on their own.
- *Scaffolding*: in this phase the players use all the rules and notions they have learned during onboarding. Players return regularly and daily to perform desired actions and try to achieve as many milestones as possible.
- *Endgame*: this phase happens when the players accomplish all the objectives or the time available is over (such as the end of a competition or contest). If game designers don't make a good Endgame, people will get bored easily and they will leave the game.

The player's journey is "the customer Journey" in the field of gamification. The customer journey can be described as the path which a consumer proceeds interacting with the various contact points of the Brand. the customer Journey is represented as a succession of phases. the historical model is represented by the "4 As": Aware, Attitude, Act, Act Again. This model was developed by Rucker as an evolution of the "AIDA" model (attention, interest, desire, action) formulated by Elias St. Elmo Lewis. However, in the digital age the community and social networks carry out a strong influence from the earliest stages of the journey. For this reason, the customer journey must be described with a new model represented by 5 A: Aware, Appeal, Ask, Act, Advocate. Throughout the course of the customer journey, businesses can use creativity to improve customer interactions. From the customer's point of view there are three levels of interaction. The first is "enjoyment" and this happens when companies receive feedback from their customers. Companies can also offer pleasant "experience" in addition to products and services. they will improve customer interactions by diversifying the service modes between in-store and online experiences. The companies reach the highest level

producing "engagement". To transform a shopper who buys a product for the first time into a loyal supporter, a series of customer engagement activities are required. there are three techniques that can increase engagement and these are the use of mobile apps, the application of "CRM" (Customer Relationship Management) and the use of gamification. Gamification is a very useful tool for improving engagement. It is based on the human desire to achieve goals and to have one's successes recognized. Some customers are motivated by rewards, others by a sense of self-fulfillment. Gamification is a way to collect customer data. Big data analysis allows you to identify trends in customer behavior, useful for marketing automation, for example in the personalization of sales and cross selling. The firms personalize products and services by offering a complete customer experience (Kotler *et al*, 2017). The journey is a more or less conscious path that people begin when decide to become buyers of a good or service, from the first contact to the final phase (Kotler and Stigliano, 2018). In the case study the journey is represented by a "treasure hunt" and ends with the conclusion of the competition. A third level of analysis takes place by building a matrix where in the x-axis there is the user's journey, while on the y-axis the types of players (Fig. 5).

Figure 5 − Third level matrix

Source: Chou (2015)

The types of players were classified by the scholar Bartle who identified the taxonomy of player types in four different personalities. Initially the classification described players of multiplayer online games, while now it also refers to players of single-player video games. The

typologies proposed by Bartle are a starting point for creating gamified systems. these are (Bartle, 1996; Zichermann and Cunningham, 2011):

- *Achiever*: this type of user aims to collect levels, equipment or any other form of progression within the game.
- *Explorer*: this type of user spends more time in the game, discovering new features, creating customized levels and generally demonstrating their knowledge of all the secrets of the game experience.
- *Socializers*: they are those who play above all for the social aspect, interpreting the game as a tool for socialization, perhaps to have only a return of image by creating a network of contacts.
- *Killers*: this type of user aspires to their own supremacy on the opponent. The killer confronts other players to assert himself, they are not interested in being hated or feared, but only aims to excel in direct confrontation with others.

3. Gamification in the World

According to Technavio Research report, Global Gamification Market to Accelerate at 27% CAGR and Register $ 17.56 Billion Growth During 2020-2024 (Fig. 6).

Figure 6 − Global Gamification Market

Source: https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20201204005520/en/Global-Gamification-Market-to-Accelerate-at-27-CAGR-and-Register-17.56-Billion-Growth-During-2020-2024-Technavio

Another report from Verified Market Research states that Business Gamification Market was valued at USD 7.17 Billion in 2019 and is projected to reach USD 33.33 Billion by 2027 (Fig.7).

Figure 7 − Global Business Gamification Market

Source: https://www.verifiedmarketresearch.com/product/business-gamification-market

A further report (TechSci Research, 2019) says that the global gamification market was valued at $6.8 billion in 2018 and is projected to grow at an impressive CAGR of 32% to reach $40 billion by 2024. This is due to demand growth for customer experience enrichment and improved engagement of employees. Gamification refers to the integration of game mechanics within business process, website, or marketing campaign. Increasing number of mobile devices is positively influencing the growth of the market. Social media platforms are contributing to the growth of gamification market as they allow users to share their experiences (TechSci Research, 2019). According to the report, the gamification market is expanding to various regions including Asia-Pacific, North America, Europe, South America, the Middle East and Africa. North America and Europe are the leaders in the global gamification market. Major players operating in the global gamification market include Microsoft Corporation, SAP SE, Salesforce.com, Inc. Leveleleven LLC and Bunchball Inc. Furthermore, gamification is a useful tool for increasing customer engagement; especially regarding loyalty programs and customer communities (Kotler et al, 2017). There are many reasons for implementing gamification in the marketing strategy:

- *Involvement*: currently people are constantly influenced by input of mass media. For this reason, among the various scarce resources available, the new "oil" is becoming time (not just data).
- *Motivation*: a gamification project is based on the study of psychological factors capable of motivating users throughout the customer journey. This type of analysis allows to categorize the target customer in the marketing strategy.
- *Loyalty*: It can be expressed in various ways. From the traditional "loyalty card" in which points are collected to obtain rewards, to the modern forms like the use of technology and digital channels.
- *Learning experience*: complex products or services require an initial learning moment by users. Gamification can be a useful tool to facilitate the "onboarding" step.
- *Data collection*: Every action made by users is tracked and monitored. Gamification can entertain users and at the same time generate a series of behavioral and profiling data to be used in marketing and R&D.

Gamification does not only concern relations between the company and the final consumer but also relations with employees. Gamification makes it possible to rethink the work experience as a means to improve the well-being of employees. This leads to better performance and better customer service, thereby increasing the company's overall competitive advantage and revenue (Hammedi et al., 2021). One of the words that is often associated with gamification is loyalty. According to a (Kim and Ahn, 2017) rewards could weaken intrinsic motivation to use a retail loyalty program. Organizations are discovering that gaming can be a useful tool in many different ways. Not only for customer loyalty, but also for users and employees, generating a sense of belonging to the company. For example, point collections in supermarkets are primal loyalty applications through mechanisms such as points and rewards, loyalty cards have been used extensively in the retail business over the last 20 years (Ennis, 2015). Today, Internet technology, social networks and technologies based on mobile marketing offer new possibilities. the applications offered are numerous and varied depending on customer target, good and service offered by the company (Petruzzi, 2017). Gamification is also used for sustainable goals, reward-based game design elements including points, badges and other rewards contribute to enhancing sustainable behavior outcomes (Mulcahy et al., 2021).

4. Gamification in retail services: The UCI Cinemas case study

The case consists of a new form of customer involvement in retail of cinema sector services. The topics about this strategy are represented by gamification in the retail sector, new methods of promotion and communication based on the fusion of virtual online and offline stores and collaborations among heterogeneous companies with the use of omnichannel retail. According to Fernandes (2018), the online channel is a valid channel, and the in-store retailers needs to rethink the inclusion of an omnichannel solution to solve the in-store versus online shopping retail system. In this case study, it is appropriate to talk about interactive marketing because the case study is based on a "treasure hunt" which falls within the widely known theme of "customer experience", i.e. a sum of total interactions that a consumer makes throughout the entire process of purchase (Rayport and Jaworski, 2001).

Omnichannel allows a synergy between various channels, physical and virtual, creating a fluid and effective customer experience (Kotler et al, 2017). The term "omni channel" is a particular approach by retailers. This approach recognizes that people interact with many touchpoints throughout the buying process. It is about creating an integrated and seamless experience for customers as they interact with the organization. For instance, a shopper at various stages in the process may interact with the retailer via email, a store branch, a call center, a kiosk/ATM, mobile app and/or online channel (Ennis, 2015). In addition, we can also speak of retail 4.0 due to the use of mobile marketing.

The use of smart technologies is increasingly catching the attention of researchers and practitioners, especially in retailing contexts. For instance, Poncin et al. (2017) examine the impact of two gamification mechanics, challenge and fantasy, on customer experience. Gamification through continued engagement intention is positively associated with brand engagement (Högberg et al., 2019). Playability, design aesthetics, goal clarity, incentive provision and symbolic benefits were drivers of consumer–brand engagement, which in turn generated purchase intention, app continuance intention and brand loyalty (Tseng et al., 2021). In particular, the case study is based on the use of QR Code technology combined with data management through cookies and click baiting strategies. Cookies are fragments of data stored on a user's computer when connecting to a specific site. This allows us to reconstruct user

behavior, preferences and improve navigation with "suggestions". The exchange of information allows to send customized information. From this point of view, the omnichannel strategy makes it possible to place the use of the service offered above technology. The goal is to use a holistic approach recognizing the uniqueness of customer (Kotler and Stigliano, 2018).

Retail in service sector is characterized by four distinctive elements, the so-called "4 I": Intangibility, Inconsistency, Inseparability and Inventory (Kerin et al, 2014). The services are intangible because they cannot be seen before deciding to purchase them, they are a performance for consumers, so their evaluation is very difficult a priori. The heterogeneity is due to the difficulty of deciding how to promote a service because the human factor is relevant. The quality of a service changes according to the type of consumer, desires and the time available. Inseparability consists in the level of interaction and involvement between the consumer and the service offered. Their perishable nature is due to their immateriality and therefore the impossibility of maintaining them over time. In this case study the "gamification" technique is used through a prize competition to promote the sales of tickets for the film "Fantastic Beasts - The Crimes of Grindelwald". The competition, thanks to the method of participation, allows for a playful experience in line with the company's mission.

The case study concerns the company UCI Italia S.p.a, which through the delegated firm Wepromo S.r.l. implemented a marketing mix strategy based on gamification and omnichannel retail, in the Italian territory and in the Republic of San Marino. The goal of the strategy was to promote the sale of tickets for the film "Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald". The film is part of © "Wizardind World", a limited liability company (LLC) created as a joint venture between Pottermore Ltd and Warner Bros.

The company is part of a franchise owned by British writer © JK Rowling for editorial and theatrical rights, and © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. for film market rights. The franchise originated from writer Rowling's Harry Potter ™ series of novels. The firm UCI Italia S.p.A. to promote the sale of tickets for the film: "Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald" "has set up with the help of partner companies, a prize competition called" Win magical prizes with UCI Cinemas and Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald ". This contest lasted from 31 October 2018 to 2 December 2018 with the final prize draw by 18 January 2019. The company has implemented a marketing mix strategy focusing on the "promotion" of the marketing mix. The competition was designed using the dynamics and mechanics of gamification. In addition to buying the ticket, the customer can decide to participate in a "treasure hunt". The game mode was designed using the retail omnichannel by connecting physical and virtual channels thanks to the collaboration of partner companies (Fig.8).

According to (Jami Pour et al., 2021), few studies have empirically examined how gamification influences customer experience by considering the mediating role of brand engagement in the online retailing context. In this case study the element of the brand plays a very important role, because the treasure hunt was designed using characters linked to the Harry Potter franchising. In addition, some mechanics, based on the wow effect (such as the "lumos" spell) allow you to make the customer's journey even more engaging.

Figure 8 − Partner companies

Source: screenshot of Video Advertising

Several associated parties and a delegated party were involved. Specifically, these companies have hidden posters / banners relating to the game within their sites and physical stores. The customer/player begins this treasure hunt by looking for the advertising icons of the film (Fig. 9) within the UCI Cinemas, the numerous partner sites and in the brick and mortar Coverstore stores.
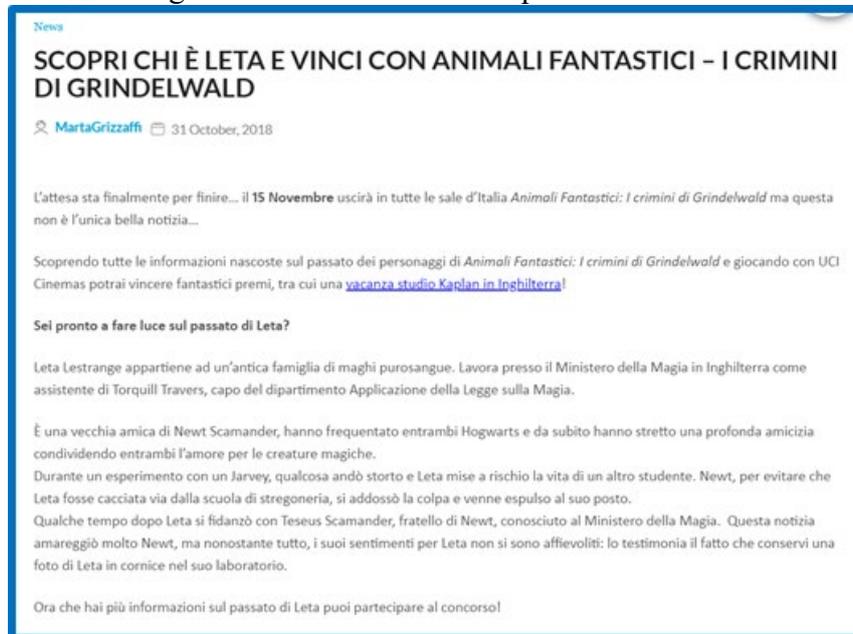
Figure 9 An example of game banner

Source: Banner made by the promoter of the contest

By clicking on these icons for the first time via smartphone or QR code in participating real stores, the user registers on the website "www.combattiloscurita.ucicinemas.it" providing their personal data requested. In this way begin the treasure hunt which, as explained in the regulation, is aimed at identifying a maximum of 5 characters from the film: "Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald". At this stage of the customer's journey, the technology of cookies and click baiting comes into play. The advertising icons are not fixed on a predefined page, but must be searched by clicking the various windows of the sites even without any correlation. The treasure hunt also lasts several days, as the player can find the character's icon on a partner site where there was no trace in the past few days. Depending on the number of characters found, the customer has access to a predetermined list of various prizes. the final prize is a "Kaplan study holiday" in England. To participate in the awarding of prizes, participants must

reveal the identities of 5 characters in the film by first reading a short biography of the character and then answering a question of elementary difficulty inherent in the text read (Fig.10).

Figure 10 − Clues about the specific character

Source: https://www.kaplaninternational.com/it/blog/scopri-chi-e-leta-e-vinci-con-animali-fantastici-i-crimini-di-grindelwald

After reading with clues from the life of the character from the film, players must associate the image with the correct description. In addition to the awarding of the various prizes provided for in the competition, the game also includes intermediate milestones such as the awarding of rewards. Players who manage to find all 5 mystery characters receive a special email - "wow effect" (Fig.11).

Figure 11 − Email received from a player
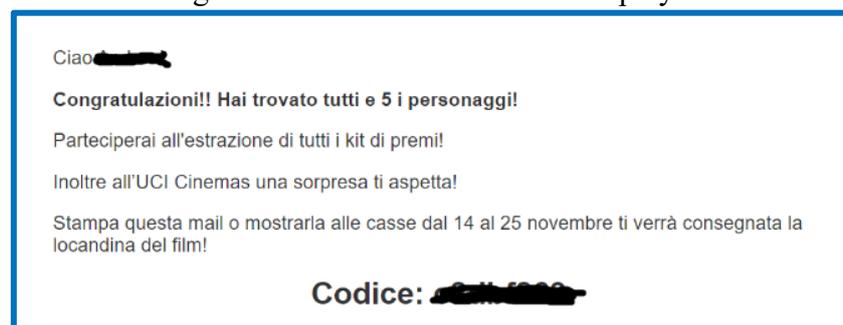
Source: promoter of the contest

In detail, those who deliver the completed e-mail printed to the tills of a UCI cinema (during the period from 15 to 25 November), will receive the film poster for free (Fig.12).

Figure 12 − Special prize

Source: promoter of the competition

The playful experience does not end with the search for the characters, in fact by purchasing the film ticket at a UCI cinema, the customer has the possibility to access the internal rooms prepared with some "special" posters provided with QR Code. QR Codes unlock the spell "Lumos" (Fig.13) (term linked to the fantasy world of the film) double the chances of winning by appearing twice on the extraction database.

Figure 13 "Lumos" spell
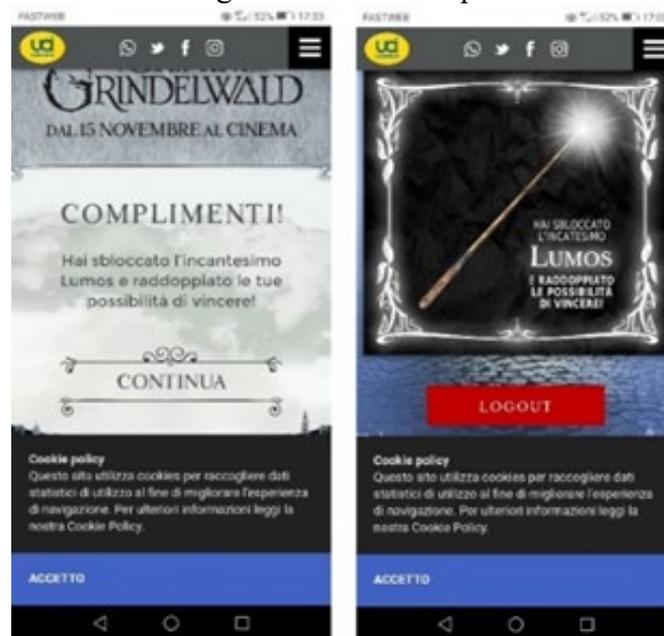
Source: promoter of the contest

5. Concluding Remarks

The goal of a gamification strategy is to create "engagement". The real player wants to immerse themselves in the game, following the rules. The main reward is the game itself. Each player needs to know when they have achieved a goal or how close to achieving its. A game must have feedback because it provides the motivation to keep playing. To correctly implement gamification within the marketing strategy, it is necessary to collect and analyze feedback to understand if the actions taken are correct or have to be changed and improved. The methods of collecting feedback change according to the project but they can be divided into two types:

Quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative feedbacks are statistical and structured data. They can be also the KPIs decided at the beginning of the marketing plan. These must be used as a parameter to analyze the effectiveness of the implemented system. Quantitative feedbacks are normally collected and measured by online tools such as Google Analytics, Hotjar and could relate to the click rate on a given button, the time spent on a given page, the number of shares or likes of a post, the percentage of people opening an email and so on. Qualitative feedbacks collect information that attempts to describe a topic rather than measure it. They are used to understand the reasons, viewpoints and motivations behind a certain action. One of the easiest ways to collect qualitative feedback is to ask questions via online surveys, one-to-one live or remote interviews, or how the customers react to the gamification experience. Quantitative feedback helps to understand if the project is working while the qualitative ones will be able to tell why it is working. Gamification follows the pull logic based on player involvement. The player decides to accept the objective, the rules and the feedback system. Gamification within retail companies makes it possible to overcome obsolete and ineffective organizational models. It allows the creation of interactive, engaging and self-directed learning environments in which stakeholder is not just a passive recipient of orders and notions.

By exploiting the symbiotic relationship that exists between play and learning, gamification can become an ally to stimulate the continuous improvement of all stakeholders in their relationships with the reference organization. Through gamification, the retail company can establish a direct contact not only with customers but also with employees (internal stakeholders). Through the implementation of game design, stakeholders can become "ambassadors" of the company in the specific and general environment. It must be clarified that gamification is not a panacea, which can be used "one best way" in any context to make a product or service a winner. There is not a tested formula but infinite applications with different methods to be discovered. Gamification helps people to improve their involvement through fun in daily activities. All in the name of innovation and play. It can help people to be better workers. For this, it should not be used as a trend or a passing fashion but a real "cultural revolution" to be used systemically in the life of the company.

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