

**EXPLORING THE IMPACTS, SETBACKS AND
POTENTIALS OF GAMIFICATION IN PROMOTING
BRAND VALUE CO-CREATION**

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Aston University

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Thesis Summary

Business-to-consumer platforms are increasingly employing gamification – which refers to the use of game design elements in non-game context – to motivate their online users' involvement in brand development. However, little is known so far about the process through which gamification promotes brand value co-creation. This PhD project is set to unravel this process, alongside addressing its major setbacks and potentials via three consecutive studies.

First, a systematic literature review study is conducted, leading to the development of an advanced framework labelled *Mechanics - Dynamics - Psychological Triggers - Motivational Effects*, which outlines the key stages of the designated process.

Second, a content analysis study of selected social threads in the online gamified community of the British mobile network operator Giffgaff is pursued. The study investigates the impact of gamification on promoting an underexamined type of brand value co-creation, associated with online users' contribution to social activities. Correspondingly, a new theoretical model titled *Motivational Drivers in Gamified Social Programs* is developed, unveiling a range of social values that are demonstrably found driving online users' engagement in this overlooked type of brand value co-creation in a gamified environment.

Third, a sequential mixed-method study is carried out to address gamification's failure in persuading a large segment of online users – so-called lurkers – to engage in brand value co-creation. The study comprises a series of focus group discussions, followed by a cross-sectional survey with lurkers of the global gamified travel review platform TripAdvisor. An original theoretical framework entitled *Lurkers' Rational in Gamified Co-Creative Platforms* is thereby generated, demonstrating the reasons of lurkers' stance. Additionally, a cluster of potential measures designated to practically address their disengagement is constructively developed.

This thesis offers a compound of theoretical contributions to the areas of gamification and brand value co-creation, and provides evidence-informed recommendations to practitioners, in addition to unveiling a set of promising future research directions.

Keywords: *Gamification, brand value co-creation, business-to-consumer, online platforms, crowdsourcing, lurkers, corporate social responsibility.*

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List of abbreviations

Brand value co creation.....	BVCC
Business-to-consumer.....	B2C
Focus group discussion.....	FGD
Hypothesis 1.....	H1
Hypothesis 2.....	H2
Hypothesis 3.....	H3
Hypothesis 4.....	H4
Hypothesis 5.....	H5
Hypothesis 6.....	H6
Hypothesis 7.....	H7
Hypothesis 8.....	H8
Hypothesis 9.....	H9
Mechanics, Dynamics, Psychological triggers, Motivational effects.....	MDPM
Research question 1.....	RQ1
Research question 2.....	RQ2
Research question 3.....	RQ3
Research question 4.....	RQ4
Systematic literature review.....	SLR
Word-of-Mouth.....	WOM

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic and key themes of the research. It prefaces by providing a general overview of the concept of gamification and its emergent role in promoting brand value co-creation (BVCC) (section 1.2). Thereafter, the purpose of the research, including its motives, aim and objectives is outlined (section 1.3), and a synopsis of the thesis structure is delineated (section 1.4), before ultimately ending with a conclusive summary (section 1.5).

1.2. Research background

Gamification is a relatively novel term that first emerged around 2010, yet the concept is quite ancient (Huotari and Hamari, 2017). As commonly defined in the literature, it refers to the use of game design elements in non-game contexts to promote behavioural change by adding a sense of value to mundane activities (Deterding et al., 2011; Petridis et al., 2014; Schoech et al., 2013). The concept has lately been gaining fast academic and industrial recognition across a wide range of disciplines, particularly in education and business management, with a remarkable base of evidence presenting it as a promising strategy for improving students' learning (Khusainova et al., 2021; Nadi-Ravandi and Batooli, 2022) and businesses' efficiency (Spanellis et al., 2020; Van der Heijden et al., 2020). Although gamification has traditionally been addressed in the context of Points, Badges and Leaderboards – prevalently referred to as the PBL triad (Manzano-León et al., 2021) – the concept is quickly evolving in the digital era, with online and offline interfaces increasingly embedding an expanding array of game design elements (Jayawardena et al., 2021).

In the business sector, the purpose of applying gamification varies across industries, yet the primary objective is to help fulfilling internal organizational targets and external marketing goals (Prasad et al., 2021). Internally, gamification is often used to prop up staff's productivity by immersing them in thrilling experiences which are proven to successfully leverage their overall competence and skills (Mitchell et al., 2020; Petridis et al., 2015).

In parallel, firms are increasingly gamifying their external marketing activities to raise customers' satisfaction and loyalty. Traditional loyalty cards entailing points and level schemes represent one of the oldest types of gamified programs introduced in this respect (Andonova, 2013). Although innovative patterns are continuously evolving in the marketing context, they are all meant to support customers' overall value creation (Huotari and Hamari, 2017).

The concept of value creation, primarily originating from the research streams of the service-dominant logic, customer-dominant logic, and service logic, has principally been recognized as the independent perception consumers conceive towards a service quality, either during or after the consumption process (Hansen, 2019). It is largely perceived as a joint and indirect collaboration between companies and their customers who use their knowledge and skills to impulsively pursue the marketing, consumption, and value creation process of the products and services they interact with (Vargo and Lusch, 2014).

With consumers increasingly asking for active roles in their brands' productions and decision-making processes (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995), firms are no longer perceiving them as passive targets (Tapscott and Williams, 2006) and are progressively opening their systems for them to craft their own customised experiences (Firat et al., 1995) and contribute to new product/service development (O'Hern, M. and Rindfleisch, 2010). This conceptual shift from value creation to value co-creation has substantially been boosted by the rise of the internet (O'Hern, M. and Rindfleisch, 2010) and the prevalence of social media networks (Rathore et al., 2016).

As per Brabham (2008), the concept of value co-creation is mainly driven by consumers' desire to build networks, support online communities, and develop self-creative skills – denoting the demonstration of personal talents not priorly raised during education. In turn, Nambisan and Nambisan (2008) identify five main areas of value co-creation activities undertaken by customers, namely: conceptualizing, designing, testing, supporting and marketing firms' products and services.

As underlined by Kavaliova et al. (2016), consumers are generally fun seekers in nature, and are ready to carry out activities without expecting anything in return if they perceive them enjoyable. Subsequently, business-to-consumer (B2C) companies are increasingly gamifying their online platforms to trigger their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and get them involved in value co-creation activities (Hamari, 2017). As per Füller (2010), these motivations are the key drivers of consumers' immersion in flowing experiences throughout which they impulsively stretch their skills to optimally achieve clearly defined goals and tasks. All over the gamification literature, the notion of value co-creation has been interpreted by researchers from two different angles. The first is generally known as "experience value co-creation" (Berger et al., 2018; Höglberg et al., 2019) and implies consumers' participation in experiences that are designed to leverage their overall satisfaction and brand loyalty. The second, which is defined as "brand value co-creation" (Nobre and Ferreira, 2017) refers to their contribution to business related activities, typically designated to support brands' innovation and growth (Iglesias et al., 2017; Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016). In the context of BVCC, "there is still lack of clarity in identifying different dimensions that constitute value for company" (Piligrimiene et al., 2015, p. 452), a fact emphasizing the need for "more thorough exploration of the goals the companies seek, and techniques of consumer engagement the companies use for it" (Piligrimiene et al., 2015, p. 452). Although gamification has largely been implemented to foster both types of value co-creation, BVCC has lately been gaining the lion's share of practitioners' interest, given its dual benefit for both companies and their end-users (Nobre and Ferreira, 2017).

Most recently, the economic curbs deriving from the Covid pandemic have forced many companies in the world to massively cut their budgets and expenditures, urging them to search for new and less costly ways to maintain the value of their endangered brands (Su et al., 2022). Hence, investing in BVCC has been one of their main resorts, typically through the development of online co-creative platforms (Vermicelli et al., 2021). In such types of platforms, companies delegate professional activities normally undertaken by skilled employees to their customers and online users. Advanced features are constantly developed in the course of attracting qualified contributors, with gamification being one of the key strategies employed in this respect (Patrício et al., 2020).

With the emergence of digital platforms using gamification to promote BVCC, businesses around the world are progressively adopting this model to foster their brand development campaigns (Noorbehbahani et al., 2019). Others are notably using it as their primary mean of operations management, reducing by this their dependence on employees and conventional physical resources (Feng et al., 2018; Yang, et al. 2021). By mainly relying on the crowd to run their day-to-day activities, the latter type of businesses is classified in the literature under what is known as the crowdsourcing model, which embraces a rising online industry that doubles its labour force every year (Schmidt, 2013).

1.3. Purpose of research

This research is driven by two key motivations. The first is the notably growing role of BVCC in businesses' marketing and operations strategies (Nobre and Ferreira, 2017). Besides consumers' increased demand of getting involved in their brands' value creation process, the economic implications of the Covid pandemic have prompted many firms to perceive their clients as rescuers rather than sheer contributors, turning this concept onto a contemporary theme of global significance (Vermicelli et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the rising role of gamification in harnessing BVCC represents the second motivation of this research, whereby a thorough understanding of how and why gamification works – or doesn't work – is still lacking (Harwood and Garry, 2017; Tobon et al., 2020).

Respectively, the aim of this research is to establish a comprehensive conception of the major impacts, setbacks and potentials of gamification in promoting BVCC, typically across the online platforms of B2C companies.

Correspondingly, the first objective of this thesis is to analyse the effectiveness of gamification on online users' motivation to engage in BVCC, following a systematic examination of a large set of empirical papers in the designated context. Thereby, the first research question ([RQ1](#)) of this thesis is developed as follows:

RQ1 – How does gamification influence online users' engagement in BVCC?

This question not only entails reporting the findings of existing studies, but ultimately aims to come out with an advanced theoretical framework that unravels gamification's process in promoting BVCC, following a deep scrutinization of their collaborative outcome.

In this respect, a systematic literature review (SLR) is conducted over the first study of this thesis (study 1). Throughout the designated study, gamification is found positively promoting four types of BVCC activities, classified in this research under four suggested categories, namely: *customer service*, *insights sharing*, *Word-of-mouth (WOM)* and *random task*. Furthermore, the findings of one of the surveyed papers reporting on gamification's role in motivating online shoppers' contribution to virtual corporate social responsibility (CSR), shed light on the dearth of studies examining its role in promoting actual CSR activities. Thereafter, the second objective of this thesis is to explore the impact of gamification on promoting this overlooked type of BVCC – hereby labelled *CSR support*. As *CSR support* is primarily a social-driven behaviour, the question

addressing this gap ([RQ2](#)) is intended to particularly examine the influence of the so-called *social interactions*' game dynamic on online users' motivation to engage in social activities as such:

RQ2 – How do social interactions in a gamified platform influence online users' engagement in *CSR support* activities?

The designated type of BVCC is explored in this research via a content analysis study (study 2) of online threads in a gamified social program launched by the British mobile network operator Giffgaff.

On the other hand, whilst all the reported papers of the SLR study inspect the impact of gamification on online users' engagement in BVCC, none of them point out its ineffectiveness in persuading disengaged ones – also known as the lurkers. As predominantly acknowledged over the literature, lurkers represent the overwhelming majority of online users (Mousavi and Roper, 2023; Zheng and Beck Dallaghan, 2022), hence, identifying the causes of gamification's failure to address them is definitely of paramount importance. The thesis intends to tackle this gap by raising the third question of this research ([RQ3](#)) as follows:

RQ3 – Why does gamification fail to engage lurkers in BVCC?

By taking on this problem via a sequential mixed-method study (study 3) that addresses lurkers' stance in the gamified global travel review platform TripAdvisor, the research opens the scope for detecting and assessing a set of factors inhibiting the efficacy of gamification in co-creative platforms. While such findings are certainly valuable to all sorts of B2C platforms employing gamification to promote BVCC, they are of exceptional significance to those of crowdsourcing nature, where contributors represent the backbone of the business flow (Nevo and Kotlarsky, 2020).

Further to investigating the aforementioned limitation of gamification, the thesis aims to come out with potential solutions to tackle it, hence the fourth and last question in this research ([RQ4](#)) concurrently addressed throughout study 3:

RQ4 – How could gamification motivate lurkers to engage in BVCC?

Whilst the unveiled causes of gamification's failure to engage lurkers in BVCC implicitly provide general indications on the paths that should be followed in tackling this problem, the goal of [RQ4](#) is to narrow those paths and edge them onto specific and feasible measures, proposed by TripAdvisor's lurkers themselves. Unlike the first three research questions primarily entailing theoretical ramifications, [RQ4](#) is mainly associated with managerial outputs, as it chiefly seeks to provide businesses with practical measures to expand the segment of their active contributors. Nevertheless, theoretical breakthroughs are still conceived, given the natural interrelation between theory and practice.

As to closely exhibit the thesis scheme, a visual illustration of the research rationale is drawn in Figure 1.1, featuring the interrelation between the developed questions.

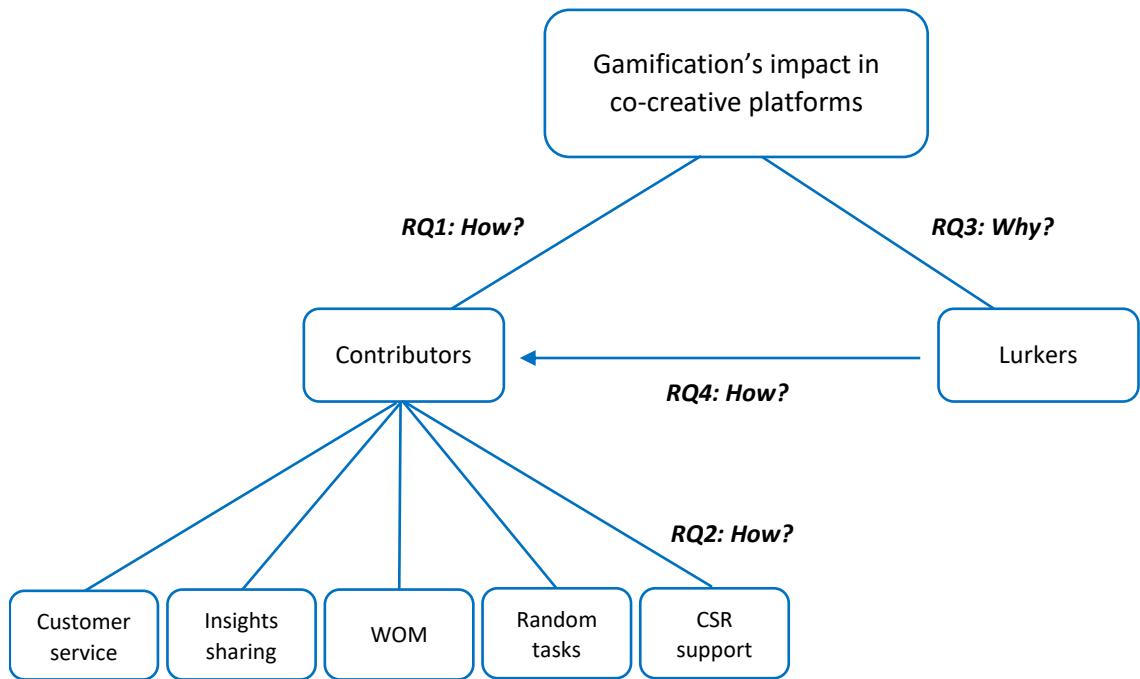


Figure 1.1. Visual illustration of the research concept.

1.4. Thesis structure

Alongside the current introductory chapter, this thesis comprises of six further chapters designed as follows:

Chapter 2: This chapter – representing the first study in this thesis – consists of an SLR that addresses the first research question. The SLR covers a set of peer-reviewed empirical papers that examine the influence of gamification on promoting BVCC across different industries. In addition to providing an evidence-based review of gamification's efficacy in raising BVCC, the study offers an advanced theoretical framework in this respect. The framework labelled *MDPM* (referring to Mechanics, Dynamics, Psychological Triggers and Motivational Effects) demonstrates the process through

which different types of game design elements distinguishably motivate online users' engagement in BVCC. Furthermore, this chapter represents the reference point over which the gaps of the literature are spotted and addressed across the research studies.

Chapter 3: This chapter demonstrates the methodology pursued in addressing the assigned research questions. It first establishes the philosophical ground upon which the research paradigm is built, encompassing its ontological and epistemological dimensions, before outlining the methods employed in handling each of the raised questions. Beyond delineating the theoretical and technical pillars of the thesis, this chapter covers the ethical scopes of the adopted research design.

Chapter 4: Post delineating the research methodology, this chapter conveys the second study in this thesis, intended to address [RQ2](#). A content analysis study in the latest threads of Giffgaff's gamified social program Charity Nominations is pursued, whereby users' posts are analysed to explore the influence of the *social interactions*' dynamic on their motivation to engage in *CSR support* activities. Correspondingly, a new theoretical model titled *Motivational Drivers in Gamified Social Programs* is developed, featuring the key social values that are demonstrably found driving online users' contribution to *CSR support* activities in a gamified context.

Chapter 5: Representing the exploratory stage of the sequential mixed-method study designated to mutually address [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#), this chapter comprises of a set of focus group discussions (FGDs) with a number of lurkers in TripAdvisor. It is ultimately meant to come out with the necessary primary data, which in turn are subject to quantitative validation over the next stage of the study.

Chapter 6: Based on the primary data collected in chapter 5, this chapter carries the second stage of the sequential mixed-method study via a cross-sectional survey that addresses a larger sample of TripAdvisor's lurkers. Post quantitatively testing the data reported in stage 1, a brand-new theoretical framework named *Lurkers' Rational in Gamified Co-Creative Platforms* is developed. The framework, alongside a newly launched set of evidence-informed recommendations, respectively address the reasons and potential solutions' of gamification failure to engage lurkers in BVCC.

Chapter 7: This chapter provides a general overview of the research outcome. It is designated to comprehensively discuss the findings of the three consecutive studies, along with recapping their theoretical and practical implications, major limitations, and future research directions.

1.5. Conclusion

All through delineating the rationale and overall structure of the thesis, this chapter provides a general overview of the research concept, motivations, aim and objectives, along with a roadmap of the flow of the forthcoming chapters. While the second chapter carries the second study of the thesis via an SLR that addresses [RQ1](#), the third chapter outlines the research methodology, chapter 4 delivers the second study tackling [RQ2](#), and chapters 5 and 6 jointly act on the third study, mutually addressing [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#). Lastly, an all-inclusive conclusion of the research is drawn in chapter 7, recapitulating its implications, limitations, and future research directions in light of its newly developed frameworks, namely: MDPM, *Motivational Drivers in Gamified Social Programs*, and *Lurkers' Rational in Gamified Co-Creative Platforms*.

Chapter 2. Study 1: Systematic literature review¹

2.1. Introduction

This chapter delivers a systematic review that examines the realized impact of gamification on promoting BVCC throughout the existing literature. The next section provides a preliminary overview of the use of gamification in promoting BVCC (section 2.2). The methods and materials of the SLR are then demonstrated (section 2.3), before reaching out to the results section (section 2.4). All along establishing a comprehensive framework that outlines the process through which gamification is found promoting BVCC, the findings of the surveyed papers are reported. The reported outcome of each paper covers its methodology, main findings, underpinning theories, nature of the gamified environment examined, key types of BVCC activities promoted, and the prominent game dynamics employed. Moreover, a special section reporting the key findings related to the crowdsourcing platforms is provided, given their significant prevalence across the surveyed case studies. The study results are then interpreted, along with reviewing its key limitations and forthcoming thesis proceedings (section 2.5). Finally, a conclusive summary recapping the major points addressed in this chapter is delivered (section 2.6).

¹ Collaboration acknowledgement: Part of this literature review study has been published in co-authorship with my Ph.D. supervisory team: Merhabi, M.A., Petridis, P. and Khusainova, R. (2021). Gamification for brand value co-creation: A systematic literature review. *Information*, 12(9), 345.

2.2. The use of gamification in promoting BVCC

Upon providing a thorough overview of the use of gamification in promoting BVCC, this section points out a number of limitations in the designated literature, necessitating a constructive resolution that is undertaken over this study.

2.2.1. Gamification in the context of BVCC

The concept of gamification has been presented all over the literature throughout a wide range of definitions, which have rapidly evolved over time. Building on the primary definition referring it to "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (Deterding et al 2011., p.1), Zicherman and Cunningham (2011, p.14) point out its major purpose by describing it as "the process of using game-thinking and mechanics to engage users". Richter et al. (2014, p. 1) further expand gamification's designated purpose, defining the concept as "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts to encourage a desired type of behaviour".

In line with the underlined goals of gamification, an advanced and all-encompassing definition has been introduced by Huotari and Hamari (2017, p. 25), describing gamification as "the process of enhancing a service with affordances for gameful experiences in order to support users' overall value creation".

Whilst the concept of value creation essentially refers to the independent support customers provide to a service using their knowledge and skills (Vargo and Lusch, 2014), the interactive nature of gameful experiences turns users' value creation into a co-creative one (Leclercq et al., 2017).

Primarily endorsed by the service-dominant logic, value co-creation typically denotes the direct interaction between companies and their customers, who are active participants in the creation of value (Merz et al., 2018). As defined by Grönroos (2012, p. 1523), this

refers to "joint collaborative activities by parties involved in direct interactions, aiming to contribute to the value that emerges for one or both parties".

On the basis of the above, gamification is perceived as the act of incorporating game design elements – such as points, badges, leaderboard and aesthetic designs – in a particular environment, for the sake of promoting the co-creation of value by the game developer and those users engaging in it (Patrício et al., 2020). While the game developer's part evidently takes place first – involving the act of financing, designing and operating the developed system – users' part of the value co-creation process is pursued throughout their interactions with that system.

As value co-creation is a broad concept entailing consumers' contribution to shaping the value of products and services they interact with, researchers in the field of gamification have broken it into two sub-concepts so-called experience value co-creation (Berger et al., 2018; Höglberg et al., 2019) and BVCC (Nobre and Ferreira, 2017). Throughout the former type, individuals co-create the value of their experience with a brand by taking actions such as downloading its gamified App and interacting with its features (Lei et al., 2022). In this context, brands' ultimate purpose is to raise their customers' purchase intentions, satisfaction and loyalty. Examples of adopting gamification to drive experience value co-creation are numerous, one of which is Nike+ brought by the giant athletic footwear and apparel corporation Nike. All across this App, points, badges, levels and leaderboards are incorporated to motivate users to track their exercises while competing and communicating with fellows and gaining prizes (García-Magro et al., 2023).

On the other hand, BVCC refers to consumers' contribution to business-related activities, typically designated to support brands' innovation and growth (Iglesias et al., 2017; Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016). As stated by Merz et al. (2018), "Brand value co-creation takes place when a firm and its customers interact to co-create the actual experience (i.e., value-in-use) that is solely attributable to the brand". As per Fournier et al. (1998), customer-owned resources by which they co-create such a value involve four

key aspects, namely: their knowledge, persuasion/skills, creativity, and network/connectedness.

Gamified experiences promoting BVCC are typically fostered by hedonic values, implying but not limited to features that trigger users' psychological sense of enjoyment, flow and competence (Suh et al., 2018). Such hedonic values are set to stimulate users' intrinsic motivation to engage and continue engaging with the brands offering them these experiences (Suh et al., 2018).

As defined by Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 56), intrinsic motivation is "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence". When intrinsically motivated, individuals are moved to certain behaviour driven by aspects like fun and challenge, rather than by external provokes, pressures, or rewards (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Based on the Learning Theory which argues that all behaviours are initially motivated by physiological drives (Hull, 1943), intrinsically motivated activities are believed to satisfy innate psychological needs. According to the Self-Determination Theory – which is one of the major theories associated with understanding humans' intrinsic motivations (Ryan and Deci, 2000) – such needs typically refer to the gratification of the feeling of competence, autonomy and social relatedness. Once those needs are fulfilled, individuals would intrinsically feel motivated to undertake a certain task. (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

However, since not all individuals have the same modes and levels of inherent psychological needs, intrinsically motivating them through gamification does not have a universal effect (Buckley and Doyle, 2016). Hence, many gamified systems are set to promote utilitarian values in addition to hedonic ones, as to correspondingly address their users' extrinsic motivations (Hsu and Chen, 2018).

Originally endorsed by the Operant Theory (Skinner, 1953), extrinsic motivation contrasts with intrinsic motivation by associating human behaviour with the desire of obtaining external rewards or the fear of exterior threats, arguing that an individual tends to rationally take an action based on its practical consequences. According to Wu and

Lu (2013), such consequences are typically projected via a pure utilitarian scope, whereby only beneficial principles guide a person's attitude and behaviour.

Although concurrently promoting the two types of motivations through gamification is commonly believed to be the optimal approach that appeals to all different types of audiences, such a combination is yet deemed counterproductive in some cases (Siegrist and Li, 2016). As per the "over-justification effect", the promotion of extrinsic rewards might deteriorate the effect of intrinsic motivations deriving from the enjoyment of an activity (Levy et al., 2017). Subsequently, any perceived decrease in the level of extrinsic gratification may push players to abandon a system they priorly used to enjoy for pure intrinsic motives (Glover, 2013)

Likewise, conditionally combining intrinsic rewards with extrinsic ones can stimulate the feeling of guilt among people who are only looking for utilitarian benefits (Lu et al., 2016). Accordingly, individuals essentially looking for financial rewards or social exposure might refrain from using a system in which engaging with entertaining features is a prerequisite. All through stimulating individuals' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to engage in BVCC, gamified experiences are associated with a range of prominent procedures and mechanisms.

As per the framework developed by Werbach and Hunter (2012), a standard gamified procedure would typically consist of six consecutive steps as follows:

- Defining business objectives – Setting the purpose of employing gamification, e.g., increasing sales or improving productivity.
- Outlining target behaviours – Marking the particular behaviours the game developer wants to encourage, e.g., leveraging purchasing intention or task completion.
- Recognizing players – Defining the people who will be using the gamified system alongside distinguishing their motivations and intentions.

- Devising appropriate short-term engagement and long-term progression loops – Speculating how will the gameful experience keep users engaged in the short term, and how will it help them to progress towards their assigned goals in the long term.
- Ensuring not to forget the fun – Incorporating thrilling vibes to maintain users' appeal.
- Deploying the appropriate tools – Choosing the right game design elements that match all the aforementioned aspects.

In the course of deploying the appropriate game design elements denoted in the aforementioned procedure, Octalysis' framework (Chou, 2016) outlines eight drives of human motivation that should be typically stimulated by a gamified system as follows:

- Epic Meaning & Calling: The desire to belong to something greater than oneself, to have a sense of direction and to have a purpose.
- Development & Accomplishment: The desire to develop oneself, discover new things and master a skill.
- Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback: The appeal to creatively self-express, to be challenged and to receive feedback.
- Ownership & Possession: The desire to possess things, feel in charge, and accumulate things.
- Social Influence & Relatedness: The need for social collaboration, acceptance, and group affiliation.
- Scarcity & Impatience: The desire to get things fast, acquire something that is scarce or limited, and avoid missing out.
- Unpredictability & Curiosity: The desire to discover new things and experience mystery.

- Loss & Avoidance: The need to feel secure, avert pain, and avoid loss.

All the above-stated motivational drives are correspondingly reflected in the MDA framework (Hunicke et al., 2004) under a range of so-called game dynamics, which, alongside a set of game mechanics and aesthetics, are suggested to represent the overall mechanism of gamification. The three designated pillars of this framework are defined as follows:

- Mechanics: The components of a game, embracing its practical features, rules and procedures, e.g., points, badges, missions, and progress schemes.
- Dynamics: Players' psychological status directly associated with their gameful experience, e.g., the sense of completion or competitiveness.
- Aesthetics: Players' emotional responses to their psychological status deriving from their gameful experience, typically involving their feeling of enjoyment, immersion and achievement.

Very close to the concept of the MDA framework lies the MDE model, which emphasizes the interdependent relationship of a game's mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics – alternatively labelled "emotions" (Robson et al., 2015). According to this model, a range of game mechanics is set to correspondingly promote an array of dynamics, which in turn are meant to prompt players' emotions, impulsively motivating them to keep engaging in the system.

2.2.2. BVCC activities promoted by gamification

BVCC is predominantly associated with brands' "indirect benefits" acquired from consumers' contributions and inputs (Walter et al, 2001). This implies brands' progressive innovation and development occurring throughout their continuous

cooperation with their clients, who take the initiative of sharing feedback and recommending their products and services to others. As such, brand value is co-created "if and when the customer is able to personalize his/her experience in using company's products or services" (Piligrimiene et al., 2015, p. 453).

Kumar et al. (2010) respectively label customers' feedback and recommendation actions highlighted by Walter et al. (2001) as "customer knowledge value" and "customer influencer value". As per Piligrimiene et al. (2015), these values simply refer to consumers' "idea generation" and "word of mouth", which represent key types of BVCC that are promoted by gamification.

In turn, Verleye et al. (2014) reveal a third type of BVCC that is associated with customers' support and assistance to each other's – typically involving handling enquiries and issues on behalf of the brand. As outlined by Harwood and Garry (2017), gamification is prevalently used in promoting this type of BVCC, which typically takes the shape of peer-to-peer questions and answers over interactive online platforms.

According to Merz et al. (2018), customers' motivation to undertake all the above-stated types of BVCC is typically underpinned by three dimensions, namely: passion, commitment and trust towards the brand. Furthermore, Brabham (2008) reverts individuals' motivation to co-create to their desire of showcasing their skills, building networks and supporting the community, whereas Cannas et al. (2019) link it to their yearning for social networking, relationship building, reputation, enhancement and experimentation.

Over and above the three underscored types of BVCC, a fourth type is increasingly attracting companies' interest in recent years. This refers to the act of enabling customers' contribution to social value creation, which goes beyond a firm's internal environment to the wider welfare of its local community (Porter & Kramer, 2011). With CSR increasingly attracting companies' interest, this type of value co-creation is getting more and more penetrated into their CSR strategies (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

As defined by Kotler & Lee (2005, p. 3), CSR refers to the “commitment to improving community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources”. This involves considerations of environmental, social, ethical and human dimensions (Halkos and Nomikos, 2021) and is often raised through various forms, such as “corporate philanthropy, cause-related marketing, sponsorships, volunteerism, or corporate social marketing” (Lee et al., 2020, p. 201).

In turn, customers’ co-creation of CSR is typically pursued by generating and sharing content on social media, raising petitions, voting, volunteering and donating to social cases (Lim et al., 2015; von Weltzien Høivik & Shankar, 2011).

Out of many examples of CSR value co-creation, those associated with Hurricane Harvey are worth highlighting. In the designated incident that took place in Texas back in 2017, major global firms like Amazon, Costco, eBay, and Walmart actively urged the public to donate to disaster relief funds across their online platforms, with some of them offering to release matching funds (Lee et al., 2020).

Lee et al. (2020) who label this type of BVCC as Participatory CSR, emphasize its dual benefit on both companies launching it and the larger society in which they operate. From companies’ perspective, Participatory CSR is quite advantageous as it significantly improves their brand awareness, image and reputation, whilst increasing consumers’ loyalty and purchase intentions. As realized by Ruiz de Maya et al. (2016), Participatory CSR campaigns are found to result in greater output to social welfare than non-participatory ones.

On the other hand, the actions that individuals undertake when engaging in Participatory CSR – such as donating and volunteering to social cases – are believed not only to benefit the wider society but also to stimulate their awareness and interest in similar issues (Lee et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, promoting Participatory CSR is quite challenging, as the issues addressed by CSR campaigns are not often considered priorities among the mass of people, and necessitates huge efforts of persuasion (Du et al., 2010). While the Relationship

Management Theory and the Situational Theory of Problem-Solving suggest that organization-public relationships and the social-case particularities can predict the public's behaviour towards CSR co-creation activities, little is still known about the public's modest level of engagement in such activities (Lee et al., 2020).

In order to address this issue, many firms have taken the lead to gamify their co-creative CSR projects – typically through launching virtual promotional games – in an attempt to make them become more appealing to their customers (Korschun and Du, 2013). Mainly relying on persuasive narratives, programs like Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan, United Health Group's Optimize Me, and the Charity Miles App represent outstanding examples of promoting this emergent type of BVCC via gamification (Jun et al., 2020).

2.2.3. Study rationale

While gamification plays an undeniably effective role in promoting BVCC (Nobre and Ferreira, 2017) a number of ambiguous aspects still require substantial enlightenment. First, there is still no unified terminology that embraces the key game design elements shaping this concept, alongside inconsistent segregation of those elements, typically among the categories of the MDA and MDE frameworks. This inconsistent segregation chiefly derives from the subjective nature of classifying psychological statuses across the dynamics and aesthetics/emotions categories of the aforementioned frameworks. For instance, while some researchers consider "challenge" to be a game dynamic (Blohm and Leimeister, 2013), others view it as an aesthetic or emotional one (Ruhí, 2016).

Similarly, although BVCC incorporates different types of activities that have previously been revealed in the literature, these are still not defined under definite and unified notions in the gamification context.

Lastly, although gamification is proven to effectively motivate individuals to engage in BVCC, the reported findings are still generic, with no clear understanding of how the process of such influence eventually streams. While the frameworks of Werbach and Hunter (2012), Octalysis, MDA and MDE respectively outline the broad protocol, motivation drives, mechanism and cycle of a successful gamified system, a thorough identification of how each single game design element triggers individuals' motivation to engage in BVCC is still vague.

This study is meant to address those limitations by initiating clear-cut labels for the different types of BVCC, all along developing a conceptual framework that demonstrates the process through which gamification promotes them using an all-embracing terminology and classification of the major game design elements discussed in the literature.

2.3. Methods and materials

Given the overlapped understanding of the gamification notion in the literature, it is of vital importance to provide a clear-cut explanation of the term, before embarking on the empirical stage of this study. Although predominantly referred to as the simple use of game design elements in non-game contexts, the gamification term is widely mixed with the concepts of *serious games* and *game-based learning* (Krath et al., 2021; Petridis et al., 2015). Moreover, gamification in the marketing field is broadly intersected with the models of *advergames*, *in-game-advertising*, and *advertising in social network games* (Terlutter and Capella, 2013). While individuals in all the above-mentioned contexts get exposed to gameful experiences for non-game purposes, these do fundamentally differ from the principal concept of gamification, as they exceed the tactical integration of basic game design elements, and are rather associated with full-scale games.

As such, it is noteworthy stressing that this study – together with the whole research –

Is purely gamification-centred, and do not embrace any of the comparable models identified in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Gamification vs. full-scale game models.

Gamification		Serious games	Game-based learning	Advergames	In-game advertising	Advertising in social network games
What?	Game-design elements in non-game contexts.	Custom-built games for non-game purposes.	Existing games harnessed for non-game purposes.	Brand-tailored promotional games.	Brand advertisement inside digital games.	Brand advertisement inside social network games.
How?	By incorporating game mechanics such as points, badges and leaderboards.	By involving individuals in a simulative game experience.	By engaging individuals in an existing game while altering its original context and purpose.	By engaging individuals in a game that is exclusively crafted to promote a particular brand.	By inserting a brand's name, logo, or virtual products inside an existing digital game.	By inserting a brand's names, logo, or virtual products inside an existing social network game.
Why?	To promote engagement and value co-creation.	To boost training, learning and engagement.	To support learning.	To promote a particular brand.	To promote a particular brand.	To promote a particular brand.

All the way through attaining an evidence-informed knowledge in the designated research subject, a systematic review model is processed. Unlike narrative reviews entailing informal data extraction and often biased by reviewers' presumptions and subjectivity, the systematic review is commonly recognized as the most efficient and qualified method for scanning and conveying existing literatures (Tranfield et al., 2003). Characterised by its transparent, effective, and comprehensible method in gathering and analysing information (Shojania et al., 2007), it is generally considered as a paradigm shifter in the research field it gets applied in, as it delivers a thorough compilation of the existence evidence, identifies gaps, and provides a rigorous guide for future related studies (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006).

As the aim of this review is to perform a general assimilation of the reported findings in the literature, a textual narrative synthesis approach is followed. This involves describing the scope of evidence outlined all over the surveyed papers, along with quantitatively counting the major trends and patterns these papers have in common (Xiao and Watson, 2019).

As indicated by Popay et al., (2006, p.5), this approach is efficient when synthesising the findings of multiple studies, as it concisely "tells the story" of each by reutilizing its key words and texts.

All across their different fields of application in the management discipline, systematic reviews are employed in line with a structured protocol, which – despite its variation from one study to another – enjoys a set of broadly common steps that are followed in this study (Tranfield et al., 2003).

Post developing the research question – which represents the first step in this protocol – a funnel procedure that is first reviewed by peer academics to validate its relevance, reliability, and successful reproduction (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006) is established as follows.

First, in an attempt to scan the largest number of relevant papers in the context of gamified co-creative environments, EBSCOhost online research platform is selected. The covered databases are EBSCO's private library, Gale Academic OneFile, The Directory of Open Access Journals, in addition to the four major databases embracing the highest number of papers in the subject area, namely: ScienceDirect, Springer, Emerald and IEEE Xplore (Noorbehbahani et al., 2019).

Next, as gamification has only begun to get substantial academic recognition around 2010 (Huotari and Hamari, 2017), the search query was set to cover the period between 2010 and 2022. Using the Boolean research technique for results' filtration and irrelevancy minimisation (Thiem and Dusa, 2013), the first search hit covered all the papers that comprise a conjunction of the term *gamification* with a set of terms in their abstract sections as follows: *GAMIFICATION and CO-CREATION* or *GAMIFICATION*

and CROWDSOURCING or GAMIFICATION and SHARING ECONOMY or GAMIFICATION and CUSTOMER(S) or GAMIFICATION and CONSUMER(S) or GAMIFICATION and ONLINE USER(S). These terms were prudently selected, given their remarkable predominance across dozens of randomly selected papers in relation to the study context, just prior to pursuing the searching process. The first search hit – which only covers papers written in English – resulted in a sample of 1512 papers, which were then automatically reduced to 1087 following an exact-duplications removal.

Thereafter, the searching inclusion criteria in the assigned research platform were set to solely hedge quality academic papers. Thus, only peer-reviewed academic articles and conference papers were filtered, leading to a result of 798 papers.

Subsequently, a manual check of each of the collected papers was processed to ensure that only empirical studies examining the use of gamification for BVCC in the B2C sector are kept. Consequently, 51 relevant papers were retained.

Finally, as to ensure that no relevant articles were missed, a further manual check of the 798 papers gathered in the third stage of searching was performed. The revision conversely resulted in the withdrawal of one paper out of the adopted pool, as it merely examines the impact of gamification on gig workers rather than end-users, which does not match with the B2C inclusion criterion set in the review protocol. The final number of adopted papers thus dropped to 50.

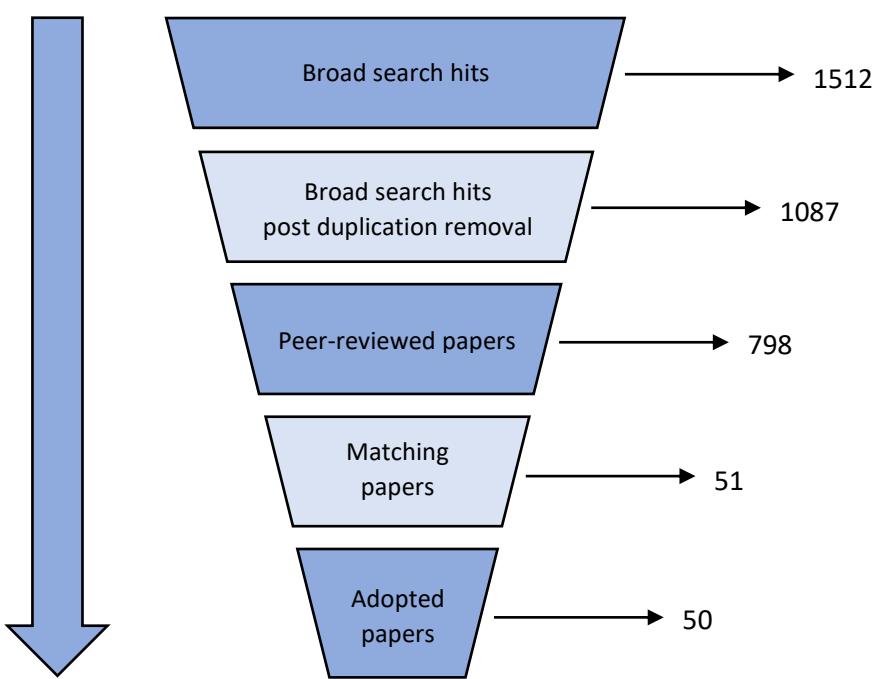


Figure 2.1. SLR structural funnel.

2.4. Results

Following a comprehensive analysis of the maintained papers, this section summarizes the empirical findings of each, and provides a description of their key notions and theoretical patterns. The studies' collaborative figures are then reported, and their collective outcomes are synthesized in a brand-new framework expounding gamification's detected impact on BVCC.

2.4.1. Key findings of the reported papers

Alongside providing a summary of the key empirical findings revealed, Table 2.2 outlines each paper's context of study, type of co-creative environment examined, major types of co-creation activities promoted, key game dynamics employed, as well as the methodology and theories underpinning it.

Table 2.2. SLR summary.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Chen et al. (2022)	"UX Stack Exchange" crowdsourcing Q&A IT platform	Online community	Customer service	Challenge Intangible rewards Motivational stimulus	Field data set analysis study	Goal-setting theory — Expectancy-value theory	In Q&A communities, users' granted badges and closeness to the next hierarchical privileges are positively associated with their continued knowledge contribution. Notably, users with already established reputation are less influenced by privilege levels and granted badges.
Feng et al. (2022)	"Zhihu" collaborative knowledge crowdsourcing platform	Online community	Customer service	Challenge Cooperation Customization Intangible rewards Social interactions	Cross-sectional survey	Self-determination theory	Self-esteem and competence enhancement positively mediate the impact of immersion, social relatedness, and achievement on knowledge contribution, whereas extrinsic motivation negatively mediates this impact.
Galler et al. (2022)	Crowdsourcing platform promoting idea generations of healthy snacks for pre-adolescents	Creative focus groups & online community	Insights sharing	Competition Social Interactions	Laboratory experiments	Self-determination theory	Preadolescents show promising results in generating new healthy food product ideas in the setting of focus groups as well as in the setting of the online community. In the former setting, ideas are few, detailed and actionable given the dynamic role of the group moderator, whereas in the latter setting ideas are more but less detailed and less actionable given the lack of human control.
Leclercq (2022)	Fictitious crowdsourcing company	Interactive website	Random task	Competition Intangible rewards Tangible rewards Uncertainty	Laboratory experiments	Uncertainty-resolution theory	The more users perceive uncertainty to win, the more curious they are and the more they enjoy the experience and show intention to engage with the brand, even after a win/loss decision is made. However, when including valuable tangible rewards, the positive impact of uncertainty to win is mitigated, and users' interest is mainly shifted to the prize.
Li et al. (2022)	Gamified social mobile marketing systems	Interactive mobile App	WOM	Cooperation Intangible rewards Tangible rewards	Mixed-method laboratory experiments design	Uncertainty reduction theory — Anxiety uncertainty management theory	Compared to weak-tie groups where members don't know each other, strong-tie groups involving friends can result in a lower level of user's emotional, manipulation, privacy and social anxiety, which in turn lead to higher user intentions to participate in a gamified social mobile marketing campaign. Moreover, users' gender and disposable income significantly moderate their anxiety during their interactions with the campaign.

Table 2.2 Cont.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Lu et al. (2022)	"StackOverflow" IT question/answer crowdsourcing platform	Online community	Customer service	Intangible rewards	Two-rounds cross-sectional survey	Self-determination theory	The quantity and quality of the contributions made by the platform's users are primarily driven by intrinsic motivations, involving tendency for altruism, and the need to satisfy competency and autonomy needs, as well as self-improvement aspirations. Extrinsic motivation towards leveraging career prospects is also detected, yet is deemed less effective compared to intrinsic factors.
Ouyang et al. (2022)	"Haodf" Chinese online health community platform	Online community	Customer service	Intangible rewards	Cross-sectional survey	Social cognitive theory	Physicians with the "Annual Physician" badge, reflecting their high records achievements, competence and popularity in the community, are more likely to receive reviews from patients than physicians with no badge.
Rather et al. (2022)	Travel/Tourism Mobile Apps	Mobile Apps	N/A	N/A	Cross-sectional survey	Service-dominant logic — Protection motivation theory	During the Covid pandemic significantly undermining tourism, gamified apps promoting tourism are found positively affecting their users' brand engagement, brand co-creation, brand loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth. Moreover, online users' brand engagement is found moderating the effect of gamification on their brand value co-creation, brand loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth.
Xu et al. (2022a)	Four gamified E-commerce Mini Apps	Interactive mobile Apps	Customer service Insights sharing WOM	Competition Cooperation Intangible rewards Social interactions Tangible rewards	Cross-sectional survey	Affordances-psychological outcomes- Behavioural outcomes framework	Four perceived gamification affordances – namely, autonomy support, self-expression, interactivity, and competition – are positively associated with consumers' psychological outcomes. In turn, the psychological outcomes generated fully mediates the effect of self-expression and competition, and partially mediates the effect of autonomy-support and interactivity on consumers' citizenship behaviour, including but not limited to helping others, sharing feedback and making recommendations.

Table 2.2 Cont.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Xu et al. (2022b)	"Xiao Yu'er" Chinese crowdsourcing platform	Interactive website	Random task	Customization Intangible rewards	Structural equation modelling & fuzzy set comparative analysis	N/A	In a crowdsourcing platform, gamification-based indicators of trustworthiness, particularly crowdsourcers' use of avatars, number of badges collected, and levels achieved are positively associated with their proposed tasks' popularity and successfulness.
Xu and Hamari (2022)	Testing task creativity experiment	Online platform	Random task	Intangible rewards	Laboratory experiment	Organismic integration theory	Task accomplishers are significantly more creative (in terms of task fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration) when rewarded with a badge than when not rewarded at all or even when provided with monetary incentives.
García-Jurado et al. (2021)	Amazon e-commerce platform	Website and mobile App	Customer service	Competition Intangible rewards	Cross-sectional survey	Self-determination theory	Not all reviewers are influenced by gamification. For those who are, gamification is primarily associated with their egoistic motive, particularly their desire to gain reputation and draw attention. Accordingly, gamified platforms should prudently segment their reviewers, and target the ones positively influenced by gamification through a set of game design elements – typically points, badges, and ranking systems – that should be publicly exposed to the platform's audience.
Hajarian and Hemmati (2021)	"Digikala" e-commerce website	Interactive website	Customer service	Intangible rewards Tangible rewards	Influence metric method	N/A	When the e-commerce platform rates its products according to reviewers' influence reflected throughout their payback points, products' ranking rates decrease, yet become more accurate and genuine compared to the classical reviewing model weighting all reviewers' comments equally.
Raman (2021)	Online shopping websites	Interactive websites	Customer service	Competition Intangible rewards	Cross-sectional survey	Technology acceptance model	Perceived enjoyment and social interactions partially mediate the positive effect of gamification on the behaviour intention of young female consumers to like, comment and post reviews in online shopping websites. In turn, the behaviour intention to like, comment and review is directly associated with the buying intention.

Table 2.2 Cont.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Rodrigues et al. (2021)	Portuguese companies operating in the service sector	Online platforms	N/A	Competition Intangible rewards	Semi-structured interviews	N/A	Although the interviewed managers have different levels of familiarity with the concept of gamification, most of them perceive it as an effective tool for promoting experience value co-creation and brand value co-creation.
Weretecki et al. (2021)	"IFA" 2018 - World's leading experiential event for consumer electronics and home appliances	Multi-actor service ecosystem event	insights sharing	Aestheticism Challenge Competition Cooperation Customization Fantasy Intangible rewards Social interactions Tangible rewards	Cross-sectional survey	N/A	Experiential value generated throughout a gamified experience in a multi-actor service ecosystem positively influence customers' knowledge-sharing attitude and information-exchange behaviour with fellow customers and employees.
Worimegbe et al. (2021)	Nigerian banks	Websites and mobile Apps	Insights sharing WOM	N/A	Cross-sectional survey	Means-end theory	Gamification is an essential element that leverages the competitiveness of deposit money banks, typically in terms of new customers' referrals, new products development, and the generation of new credit sourcing ideas.
Yang et al. (2021)	"Zhubajie" general crowdsourcing platform	Online website	Random task	Competition Intangible rewards Motivational stimulus	Cross-sectional survey	Self-determination theory	In a competitive crowdsourcing platform, points positively affect solvers' intrinsic motivation by fulfilling their need of competence, as well as their extrinsic motivation by raising their reputation. On the other hand, immediate performance feedback only enhances their intrinsic motivations.
Hajarian and Hemmati (2020)	Cosmetics e-commerce website	Interactive website	Customer service	Competition Intangible rewards Tangible rewards	Field experiment	N/A	Gamified recommendation systems including points and leaderboards positively affects customers' visits and purchase behaviour.

Table 2.2 Cont.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Jun et al. (2020)	Virtual online shopping experience	Website	Virtual CSR activities	Aestheticism Competition Intangible rewards	Scenario simulation experiment	Theory of behavioural reinforcement — Theory of planned behaviour — Social cognitive theory — Psychological benefit theory	Customers' continuance intention to participate in social value co-creation of behaviour-based reward is significantly higher than that of result-based reward. The psychological benefit mediates the relationship between the game reward mechanism and customers' continuance intention to participate in social value co-creation.
Kim et al. (2020)	Virtual shop	Interactive website	Customer service	Intangible rewards Social interactions	Laboratory experiment	Means-end-chain theory — Social comparison theory — Goal-setting theory — Prospect theory	Hedonic value and novelty-seeking positively influence customers' repurchase intention in the context of gamified omnichannel environment, yet, gamification should be optional, as customers with no novelty-seeking traits could show negative behaviour if compelled to take part in it.
Prott and Ebner (2020)	Online survey with a restaurant's customers	Mobile App	Insights sharing	Aestheticism Customization Intangible rewards Motivational stimulus	Field experiment	N/A	Although the use of game design elements in a survey has no influence on participants' involvement and satisfaction, it seems significantly triggering them to give more precise and longer answers.
Wang et al. (2020)	"KpopRally" music video tagging crowdsourcing App	Interactive mobile App	Insights sharing	Challenge Competition Intangible rewards Motivational stimulus	Longitudinal laboratory experiment	Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology	During early stages, users are influenced by hedonic and social factors. On later stages, they are influenced by hedonic, social, and usability-related factors.
Xi and Hamari (2020)	"Huawei" and "Xiaomi" electronics and telecommunication brands	Online community	Customer service Insights sharing WOM	Aestheticism Competition Customization Intangible rewards Motivational stimulus Social interactions	Cross-sectional survey	Self-determination theory	While achievement and social interaction are found positively associated with all three forms of brand engagement – namely, emotional, cognitive, and social engagement – Immersion is only positively associated with social brand engagement. Furthermore, brand engagement is positively associated with brand equity.

Table 2.2 Cont.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Zhang et al. (2020)	"Taobao" and "Tmall" online shopping sites	Interactive website	WOM	Intangible rewards Social interactions Tangible rewards	Cross-sectional survey	Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology — Social role theory	Rewards giving and badges upgrading are positively related to perceived enjoyment and social interactions. In turn, perceived enjoyment and social interactions are positively related to impulse buying. Demographically, the effect of rewards giving and badges upgrading on perceived enjoyment and social interactions is stronger for males and younger digital natives than on females and older digital natives.
Adornes and Muniz (2019)	"Waze" GPS navigation crowdsourcing app	Mobile App	Insights sharing	Intangible rewards	Qualitative focus groups interviews	N/A	Surprisingly, both regular and advanced users do not recognize significant gameful experience in the platform. Besides the trust in the App's benefits that both user types have shown, regular users are mainly driven by reciprocity, whereas advanced users are mainly driven by personal values such as empathy and altruism.
Köse et al. (2019)	"My Drive Assist" live road data crowdsourcing App	Interactive App	Insights sharing	Intangible rewards	Cross-sectional survey	Technology acceptance model	Perceived ease of use positively affects users' perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, continued use intention and contribution intention. Perceived enjoyment and perceived usefulness positively affect continued use intention and contribution intention.
Leszczyński and Zakrzewicz (2019)	Mobile apps and restaurants' review crowdsourcing platform	Interactive website	Customer service	Intangible rewards	Laboratory experiment	N/A	Involving intangible rewards that reflect users' reputation show promising results on both the quantity and quality of users' reviews.
Moro et al. (2019)	"Tripadvisor" travel review crowdsourcing platform	Interactive website	Customer service	Intangible rewards Social interactions	Qualitative data-driven case study	N/A	Gamification features influence travellers at the time they write their reviews. Badges affect travellers' quantitative performance (more review length) but has no significant effect on the quality of sentiment expression.

Table 2.2 Cont.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Morschheuser et al. (2019)	"ParKing" parking data crowdsourcing App	Online community	Insights sharing	Competition Cooperation Intangible rewards Motivational stimulus	Field experiment	Social interdependence theory — Self-determination theory — Goal-setting theory	Among cooperative, competitive, and inter-team competitive gamified systems, the latter is most likely to lead to higher enjoyment, crowdsourcing participation, and willingness to recommend the system.
Ruiz-Alba et al. (2019)	"Agorize" innovation-seeking crowdsourcing platform	Interactive website	Insights sharing	Challenge Competition Intangible rewards Social interactions Tangible rewards	Mixed experimental design	Theory of planned behaviour — Self-determination theory	Attitudes towards behaviour and perceived behavioural control affect users' entrepreneurial intentions. These effects are enhanced through gamification by matching the self-determination theory principles.
Xi and Hamari (2019)	"Huawei and Xiaomi" electronics and telecommunication companies	Online Community	Customer service Insights sharing WOM	Aestheticism Competition Customization Intangible rewards Motivational stimulus Social interactions	Cross-sectional survey	Self-determination theory	While achievement and social related features meet competence, relatedness and autonomy needs satisfaction, immersion related features only meet autonomy need satisfaction. Furthermore, achievement related features are the strongest predictor of both autonomy and competence need satisfaction.
Feng et al. (2018)	"zbj.com" crowdsourcing website	Interactive website	Insights sharing Random task WOM	Competition Intangible rewards Motivational stimulus Social interactions	Cross-sectional survey	Classic motivation theory — Social cognitive theory — Social exchange theory — Self-determination theory	Self-presentation, self-efficacy and playfulness mediate the influence of points rewarding and feedback giving on participants' engagement.
Hsu and Chen (2018)	Online bookstore	Interactive website	Customer service WOM	Competition Intangible rewards Social interactions Tangible rewards	Laboratory experiment	N/A	Hedonic and utilitarian values associated with gamified engagement activities positively influence customers' attitude, behaviour and loyalty towards the brand.

Table 2.2 Cont.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Leclercq et al. (2018)	"Ibrain" + virtual crowdsourcing communities	Online community	Insights sharing	Competition Cooperation Tangible rewards	3 laboratory and 1 field experiments	Equity theory	Competition and cooperation positively affect customers' engagement through enhancing their experience characterized by uncertainty. In contrast, the concept of certainty of receiving a win/lose decision weakens the experiential benefits of those two gamification elements. Losing a contest of competitive nature has a stronger negative impact on customers' experience than losing a contest of cooperative nature, whereas in both cases, prior level of engagement moderates the negative impact of losing a contest on their experience.
Pacheco et al. (2018)	"Stepbox" logistics App	Online community	Customer service	Intangible rewards Tangible rewards	Qualitative interviews	N/A	Such a proposed application can lead to increasing the efficiency of haulers' logistic operation via shared economy. In addition to the credits that clients can redeem for discounts in case of delivery delay or cancellation, the scores and comments received by both the clients and the haulers increase the level of trust and insights for the service users.
Penoyer et al. (2018)	"StackOverflow" IT question/answer crowdsourcing platform	Online community	Customer service	Intangible rewards	Cross-sectional survey	N/A	Highest ranked users find Intrinsic factors such as altruism, reciprocity and making an impact much more motivating than extrinsic rewards.
Hamari (2017)	"Sharetribe" online peer-to-peer marketplace	Online community	Customer service Random task	Intangible rewards Social interactions	Longitudinal field experiment	Theory of planned behaviour — Social proof theory — Social influence theory — Social comparison theory — Theory of flow	Rewarding users with badges have a positive effect on their number of transactions, comments and page views.

Table 2.2. Cont.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Leclercq et al. (2017)	Online products/services crowdsourcing platform	Online community	Insights sharing	Competition Cooperation Social interactions Tangible rewards	Longitudinal in-depth case study	Agency theory — Communication theory — MDE framework	Four profiles of participants were identified according to their level of engagement and participation in the co-creation activities: competitors, cooperators, cooptitors and invisible users. The four profiles are respectively driven by the following motives: extrinsic rewards, social relatedness, collaboration on own projects, curiosity and fun. In addition to the emphasized emotional and behavioural outcome of engaging in a gamified co-creation experience, cognitive outcome has additionally been revealed.
Liang et al. (2017)	"Airbnb" online accommodation rental marketplace	Online community	Customer service	Intangible rewards	Multivariate econometrics model	Rational action theory	Badges granted to accommodation hosts positively influence the number of reviews, the rating level, and the spending behaviour of the website guests.
Nobre and Ferreira (2017)	Gamification for brand value creation	N/A	N/A	Competition Customization Intangible rewards Social Interactions Tangible rewards	Qualitative semi-structured Interviews & Focus group discussion	N/A	Consumers seek gamified co-creative environments that provide them with fun, rewards, competition, social interactions and recognition, customization and sense of community. Gamified co-creative platforms allow firms to collect spontaneous and valuable data on consumers' opinions, interactions and profiles.
Poncin et al. (2017)	Laptop bags producer	Interactive website and smart store	Insights sharing	Challenge Fantasy Tangible rewards	Mixed experiments (online scenario based and smart store)	N/A	Fantasy and challenge in an online co-productive environment enhance customers' experience by generating feeling of arousal, compelling experience, and patronage intentions. In the case of in-store technology interface, fantasy also generates feelings of control, yet technology's ease of use is fundamental to enhance the quality of the perceived experience.

Table 2.2. Cont.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Yoo et al. (2017)	Mobile travel crowdsourcing App	Online community	Customer service	Intangible rewards Social interactions	Cross-sectional survey	Gratification theory — Theory of consumption value — Flow theory — Technology acceptance model — Social exchange theory	Whilst privacy concerns about information collection negatively affect the intention to use the gamified app; perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and hedonic motivation are found positively affecting it. Surprisingly, perceived ease of use had no influence on participants' intention to use, probably because of their high technology literacy level. Unlike information motivation, interaction motivation has significant relationship with intention to use. Networking positively affects perceived enjoyment and perceived usefulness. Information quality positively affect perceived ease of use.
Kavaliova et al. (2016)	"Threadless" online crowdsourcing apparel store	Online community	Insights sharing	Challenge Competition Intangible rewards Motivational stimulus Social interactions Tangible rewards	Netnographic case study	N/A	Consumers are fun seekers. If they perceive a task is fun, they may carry out without expecting anything in return. Besides extrinsic rewards, intrinsic factors are found fundamental for maintaining consumers' continued engagement, mainly: flow, addiction, achievements, recognition, relationship building and escapism.
Harwood and Garry (2015)	"Samsung" electronics and telecommunication company	Online community	Customer service Insights sharing WOM	Challenge Competition Intangible rewards Social interactions Tangible rewards	Netnography & Participant observation	Social cognitive theory — Flow theory	Setting a clear goal for customers' continued interaction positively influence their interest and engagement behaviour. Tangible and intangible rewards positively affect customers' engagements. Positive emotional engagement (fun, enjoyment, satisfaction, low-level dissatisfaction) positively influence continuous engagement.
Piligrimiene et al. (2015)	Lithuanian business companies	N/A	Customer service Insights sharing WOM	Intangible rewards Tangible rewards	Focus group discussion	N/A	Consumer comments help attract other customers as it inspires trust. The interactive community leads to significant brand awareness in similar small markets through word-of-mouth communications.

Table 2.2. Cont.

Source	Context	Platform	Users' main co-creation activity	Gamification key dynamics	Methodology	Theoretical underpinning	Main findings
Sigala (2015)	"TripAdvisor" travel review crowdsourcing platform	Interactive website & Facebook App	Customer service	Competition Intangible rewards Motivational stimulus Social interactions	Cross-sectional survey	Self-determination theory — Flow theory	Intangible game mechanics such as points, badges and leaderboards positively influence users' interaction and engagement with the website, decision making process, and overall trip experience. Facebook users are more motivated and engaged than guest users due to higher social interaction.
Conaway and Garay (2014)	"Amazon Mechanical Turk" online crowdsourcing marketplace	Interactive website	Insights sharing Random task	Challenge Competition Intangible rewards Social interactions Tangible rewards	Two cross-sectional surveys	Visual design model of gamification elements (Conway and Garay 2020; Palmer et al., 2012)	Business relationship, rewards, competition, and fun are fundamental driving dimensions in the gamified experience. Users engage with gamified websites that begin with an easy task and then progress to more complex challenges. Users want rapid indications of success through virtual and monetary rewards. Websites must be attractive to users in terms of video game graphics and web page design.
Goes et al. (2014)	Online knowledge exchange crowdsourcing platform	Online community	Customer service Random task	Competition Intangible rewards	Quantitative panel data methods	Goal setting theory	Incentive hierarchies motivate users to put higher effort before reaching goals, but lower effort afterwards. The impact seems to be temporary and counterproductive.
Hamari (2013)	"Sharetribe" online peer-to-peer marketplace	Online community	Customer service Random task	Intangible rewards Social interactions	Longitudinal field experiment	Theory of planned behaviour — Social proof theory — Social influence theory — Social comparison theory — Flow theory	The use of badges shows no significant effect on users' activity, yet users who actively monitor their own badges and those of others show increased activity on the website.

All the reported papers consist of empirical studies that practically assess the role of gamification in promoting BVCC, mainly across online co-creative platforms. Among the 50 reported studies, 36 are involved in real-life business cases, 23 are associated with crowdsourcing business models, and 6 are related to the sharing-economy industry noticeably thriving in recent years (Hamari, 2017).

Despite their varying, and occasionally unmatching findings, the surveyed papers generally showcase a significant impact of gamification on online users' attitudes, behaviours, and continued intention to engage in BVCC across different industries. Although gamified platforms differ in terms of the type and weight of game design elements employed, most elements are set to enrich users' experience through the generation of hedonic values, intermittently combined with utilitarian and social ones. Hedonic value refers to the psychological gratification a person feels when consuming or experiencing something, and is primarily carried via intrinsic motivational attributes such as the sense of enjoyment, achievement, or self-esteem (Hsu and Chen, 2018). In turn, utilitarian value implies external benefits an individual gets out of consuming or experiencing something, and is often conveyed via extrinsic motivational factors involving incentives and recognition (Hsu and Chen, 2018). On the other hand, social value encompasses a range of intrinsic feelings, including but not limited to the sense of relatedness, altruism and reciprocity (Adornes and Muniz., 2019; Feng et al. 2022). As widely advocated in the literature, a dual incorporation of intrinsic and extrinsic incentives is generally deemed more efficient than solely considering either, such as in the context of students' engagement (Saeed and Zyngier, 2012) and salespeople's motivation (Khusainova, 2018).

2.4.2. Underpinning theories

Although the surveyed studies are conducted in various fields and through different methodologies, Table 2.3 highlights the predominant theories underpinning them, along with the key findings associated with each.

Table 2.3. Major theories underpinning the reported studies.

Theory	Description	Reported findings
Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1980)	An individual's self-motivation and personality integration are subject to the fulfilment of three inherent needs primarily triggered by intrinsic drivers: competence (being effective in dealing with an environment), autonomy (feeling in control of own choices and behaviours), and social relatedness (the sense of belonging and connection to others).	Achievement, personalized features and social values (emerging from social interactions) respectively influence users' feeling of competence, autonomy and social relatedness in gamified systems, leading in turn to positive behaviour towards brand value co-creation
Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975)	People will only get optimally involved in an experience when they perceive its challenges and opportunities matching their capabilities and skills. Such an environment puts them in a mental state of flow and immersion, throughout which they stretch their capabilities to attain allocated objectives.	Extrinsic motivations, and mostly intrinsic ones leading to users' enjoyment and satisfaction positively influence their immersion in gamified systems, and consequently, their co-creation activities with the brand.
Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985)	People's decision to adopt a specific behaviour is predicted by their intention to engage in it based on three motivational factors: their personal attitude towards this behaviour, the social norm of how others look at it, and their perceived behavioural control during the foreseen experience.	Users are more determined by their psychological perception towards the game experience than by its expected rewards. Positive perception towards the expected behaviour and behavioural control – often leveraged by the social norm - positively influences their intentions to contribute to brand value creation.
Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989)	A person's decision to try a new technology is determined by their perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the experience. While the former refers to the benefit they expect to get out of it, the latter implies the degree to which they see the experience free of effort and far from complications.	Perceived ease of use of gamified systems which is found relatively high among young online users has positive influence on their perceived enjoyment and perceived usefulness of it, which in turn leverage their intentions towards contributing to brand value creation.
Goal-Setting Theory (Locke (1968)	One's behaviour is chiefly driven by having a clear goal to attain, since goals are more rational and rigorous than emotional desires and momentary intentions. Rational goals are characterised by five attributes: clarity, challenge, commitment, feedback, and task complexity consideration.	Gamified systems with clear goals have better influence on users' intention to engage in brand value co-creation, yet games should be optional, and rules should be carefully crafted to avoid counterproductivity.
Social related theories: Cognitive (Bandura, 1969), Comparison (Festinger, 1954), Influence (Kelman, 1958), Exchange (Homans, 1958), Proof theories (Cialdini, 1984).	<p>Social cognitive: A person's knowledge acquisition is partly related to what they observe others doing during social interactions, experiences, and external media communications.</p> <p>Social comparison: People determine and evaluate their personal social positions by comparing themselves to others, usually of similar characteristics.</p> <p>Social influence: Individuals are more likely to change/adopt behaviours according to what they perceive is the norm in their social surrounding.</p> <p>Social exchange: All through their social interactions with each other, people are largely motivated by acquiring some value in return of giving something else.</p> <p>Social proof: During uncertainties and complex situations, people are inclined to imitate the mass as to mitigate the risk of wrong behaviour.</p>	Perceived social values generated through social interactions across gamified systems highly affect users' behavioural intention towards brand value co-creation.

In addition to the above-stated theories, the following theories are less frequently used across the reported studies, yet with promising implications, and hence are deemed worth underscoring:

Means-End-Chain Theory: A value-based and cognitive model that enables the understanding of consumers' decision-making and behaviour. It links the tangible attributes of a product or service (the mean) with the intangible value (the ends) consumers perceive in it (Gutman, 1982).

Uncertainty Reduction Theory: Particularly looking at people's pre-social interaction stage, the theory argues that humans are uncomfortable with uncertainty in nature, and tend to interact with others to reduce this uncertainty by utilizing passive, active, and interactive strategies that help them in making better predictions (Berger and Calabrese, 1975).

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology: Essentially adopting the principles of the Technology Acceptance Model, this theory links users' intention to use a technology to four variables, namely: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

All the underlined theories are referred to in the reported studies using a wide range of research methods. Qualitative methods mostly involve interviews, focus groups discussions and netnographies, and are primarily associated with the detection of in-depth insights. On the other hand, the majority of the research papers follow a quantitative approach largely comprising cross-sectional surveys, out of which many are combined with field and laboratory experiments.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods employed are designated to explore and evaluate the impact of game design elements on online users' attitudes, behaviours, and continuance intention to engage in BVCC activities.

2.4.3. Types of gamified environments

Out of the 50 reported papers, 45 papers involve empirical studies of gamified programs occurring in online platforms, where game design elements represent the key driver of users' engagement. The online platforms examined belong to one of the following three categories:

Non interactive websites and mobile apps: These refer to conventional webpages and mobile applications developed by companies for the sake of communicating with their audiences. These platforms are established on a company-user basis, where companies communicate their news, updates, and co-creation tasks to their online users, who in turn interact with them independently. As indicated by Cappa (2022), these platforms are nowadays opting to further open their interfaces for random users to engage in them, after being traditionally exclusive to subscribed customers. The reason behind this embracing strategy is for companies to promote their brands, products and services to a wider audience of users, along with gathering a higher volume of data for analytics and research purposes.

Interactive websites and mobile apps: Very similar to non-interactive ones, these platforms are yet characterized by establishing a user-to-user channel along with the company-to-user channel, whereby online users can interact with each other, and often perform collaborative tasks together.

Online communities: Slightly differing from interactive websites and mobile apps, online communities are designed to give a wider space of freedom to online users who can partake in shaping, amending or even refuting the topics, themes, and co-creation tasks assigned by companies. Furthermore, members of online communities are often homogeneous in nature, whereas most of them are normally subscribers with validated credentials, and share a relatively mutual perception and level of loyalty towards the brand they interact with (Tsai and Hung, 2019). However, this type of online environments is often dominated by small numbers of individuals who substantially influence the rest of the community members (Castle et al., 2014).

2.4.4. Types of brand value co-creation activities

The examined gamified platforms promote different sorts of BVCC activities across various industries, yet these diverse activities clearly manifest clusters of mutual characteristics.

Since using an automatic text mining method with an advanced clustering algorithm in similar reviews is deemed poor in detecting complex concepts that require deep interpretation, a manual concept classification and terminology approach was followed (Thomas et al., 2011). All through this approach, the surveyed papers are subject to in-depth reading, alongside coding, grouping and abstracting the detected meanings associated with the selected unit of analysis, which – in this study – refers to the co-creation activities undertaken by online users.

Accordingly, every co-creation activity outlined in each paper was associated with the ultimate objective it is deemed designated for, ultimately leading to the generation of four generic nodes respectively labelled as follows:

Word-of-Mouth (WOM): Referring to all kinds of online endorsements that users perform in promoting a brand or any of its products or services, either by sharing and forwarding brand related contents, or by inviting friends to join the co-creative platform, e.g., recommending people to join Samsung Nation (Harwood and Garry, 2015).

Insights sharing: Implying all sorts of insightful information users provide to a company. This can take the form of systemised tasks, such as undertaking surveys in Amazon Mechanical Turk, voting on creative proposals at Threadless (Kavaliova et al., 2016), or sharing live data to My Drive Assist (Köse et al., 2019). On the other hand, insights sharing can be formless, whereby users impulsively share their ideas, feedback, and recommendations with their companies, e.g., expressing ideas and opinions at Huawei and Xiaomi's online platforms (Xi and Hamari, 2019).

Customer service: Comprising all types of online assistance users provide to each other, such as answering questions, solving technical issues, or submitting helpful ratings and informative reviews about products or services, e.g., responding to users' IT enquiries on StackOverflow (Lu et al., 2022) or providing hotel/restaurants ratings and reviews on TripAdvisor (Moro et al., 2019; Sigala., 2015).

Random task: Involving all other activities besides *WOM*, *insights sharing*, *customer service*, and *CSR support* (virtually addressed in the study of Jun et al., 2020). This typically refers to on-demand tasks in crowdsourcing platforms or trading tasks in sharing-economy ones, e.g., delivering projects on ZBJ (Feng et al., 2018) or posting trade proposals on Sharetribe (Hamari, 2017).

Post analysing the frequency rate of occurrence of each of the above-stated types of co-creation activities, the statistics displayed in Figure 2.2 show that *customer service* and *insights sharing* are the most prominent activities undertaken by online users,

respectively appearing in 25 and 21 studies, followed by a 10-time appearance of *WOM* and a 9-time appearance of *random task*.

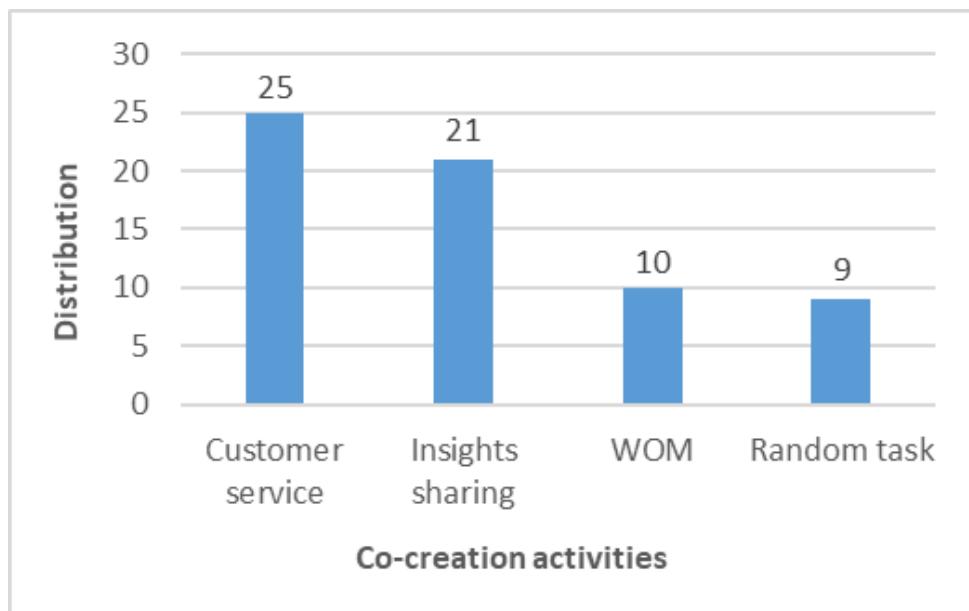


Figure 2.2. Distribution of co-creation activities across the reported studies.

2.4.5. Predominant game dynamics

In line with the remarkable absence of a unified terminology that defines the major game design elements referred to by researchers in the literature (Szentrői et al., 2020), the reported papers are found using different terms when denoting mutual game mechanics and dynamics. Hence, one consistent terminology is developed in this study, adopting the terms that are predominantly used across the reviewed papers. Correspondingly, the statistics in Figure 2.3 show that the *intangible rewards* dynamic, mainly carried through points and badges (de Ca Ziesemer et al., 2014; Meder et al., 2018), is the most employed dynamic across the reported studies, appearing in 45 of them. The second most prevalent game dynamic is *competition*, commonly manifested through ranking tables and leaderboards (Morschheuser et al., 2019), followed by *social interactions*, denoting individuals' interaction in social threads, and typically triggered by intrinsic drivers such as altruism and reciprocity (Adornes and Muniz, 2019; Penoyer et al., 2018),

sense of belonging (Sigala, 2015; Xi and Hamari, 2019) and social network building (Kavaliova et al., 2016; Yoo et al., 2017). Fourthly comes *tangible rewards*, implying all sorts of monetary and beneficial incentives online users get out of engaging in BVCC (de Ca Ziesemer et al., 2014; Meder et al., 2018). The three stated dynamics succeeding *intangible rewards* were found respectively appearing in 26, 23 and 18 studies.

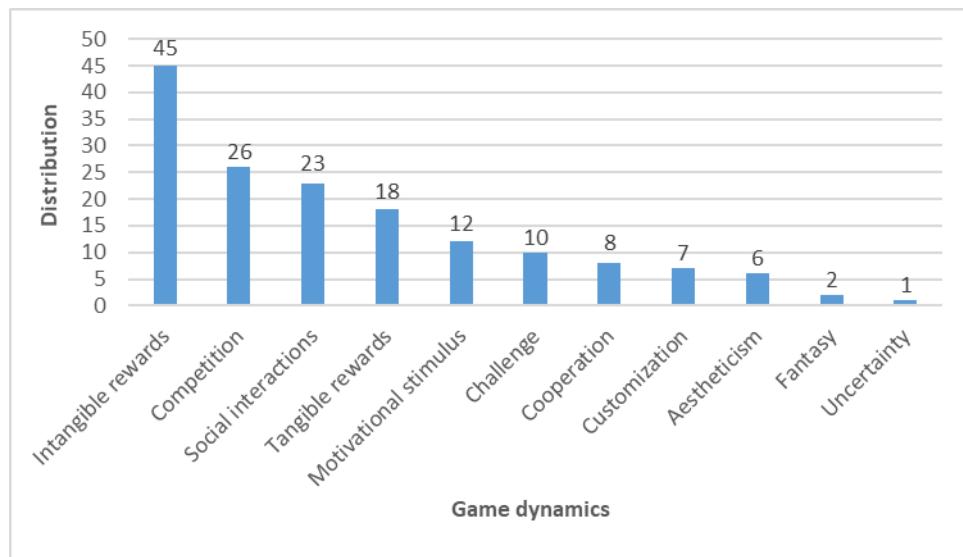


Figure 2.3. Distribution of game dynamics across the reported studies.

Furthermore, the studies involve a set of less frequently employed dynamics. These are similarly titled in this review as per their mostly adopted labels, and are dominantly associated in the literature with a range of corresponding game mechanics as follows:

Motivational stimulus: Referring to the thrilling vibes one experiences when engaging in a gamified environment. The prevalent game mechanics driving it are progress bars, scoring systems, and prompt notifications/feedback (Feng et al., 2018; Kavaliova et al., 2016; Yang et al. 2021).

Challenge: Implying the self-competitive feeling to beat one-self by achieving a defined target through stretching efforts and skills. This is often employed via game mechanics

such as levels, timeframes and missions with win/lose outcomes. (Chen et al., 2022; Poncin et al., 2017; Ruiz-Alba et al., 2019)

Cooperation: Pointing the spirit of belongingness a person experiences when teaming up with others to achieve a mutual goal. The major mechanic prompting it is collaborative-tasks (Leclercq et al., 2018; Li et al., 2022; Morschheuser et al., 2019).

Customization: Denoting a customized experience leading to one's intimate attachment to the gamified system. This is usually established by incorporating game mechanics such as avatars and personalized features. (Nobre and Ferreira, 2017; Prott and Ebner, 2020; Xu et al. 2022b).

Aestheticism: Inferring the appealing design of a gamified system – mostly carried via narratives/storylines and audio-visual features (e.g., animations, playful sounds) (Xi and Hamari, 2020; Prott and Ebner, 2020; Weretecki et al., 2021).

Fantasy: Designating thrilling experiences individuals go through when encountering fascinating game mechanics mostly established through advanced technologies, such as augmented reality, virtual reality and mixed reality (Kim and Lee, 2015; Kusuma et al., 2018; Weretecki et al. 2021).

Uncertainty: Deriving from the odds of outcomes associated with game mechanics such as mystery box and lottery draw (Leclercq, 2022).

Arising from the findings of the surveyed studies, an evidence-informed framework labelled MDPM is developed as below. The framework's acronym respectively standing for Mechanics, Dynamics, Psychological Triggers and Motivational Effects, demonstrates the interrelated stages over which gamification is found effectively promoting BVCC.

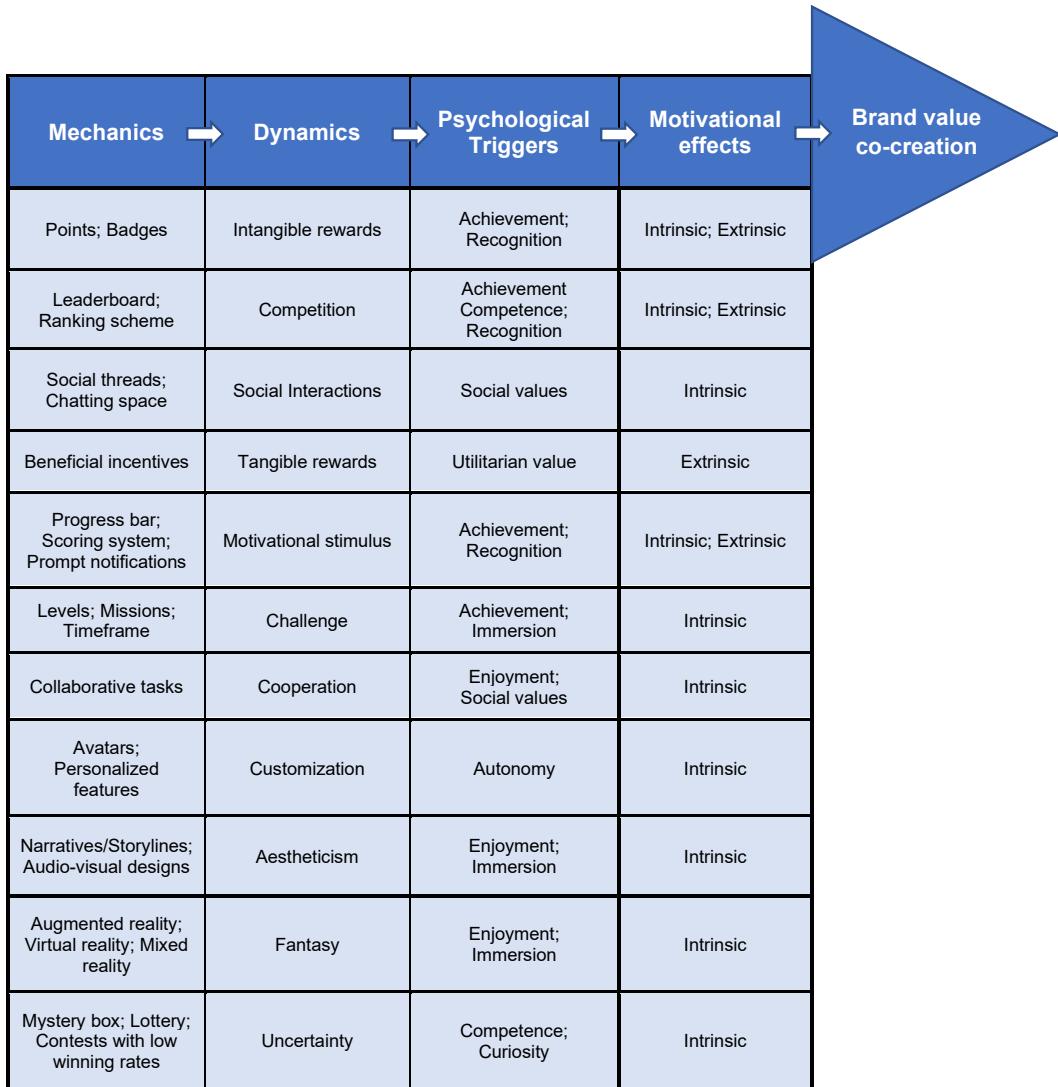


Figure 2.4. Gamification's MDPM framework.

2.4.6. The crowdsourcing industry

The crowdsourcing term has first been coined in 2006 by the Wired columnist Jeff Howe, who defined it as "the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call" (de Villiers, 2022, p.400). The concept finds its roots way

before the digital era, as exhibited in the very famous example of the Longitude Act established by the British parliament in 1714, whereby monetary rewards were offered for anyone from the public who can find an efficient method to precisely determine a ship's longitude (Vermicelli et al., 2021). However, with the rapid evolution of telecommunication technologies in the last decades, the cost of information transfer and the boundaries of interaction have substantially been reduced, turning the model onto a new paradigm that disrupted the conventional dominant logic across numerous industries and disciplines (Palacios et al., 2016).

In the business sector, the digital crowdsourcing model has fundamentally altered the traditional way of business operations. Besides employing it as an occasional channel to promote BVCC – just like the case of most of the business examples covered in this survey – many companies are adopting it as their sole mode of business operations. Those companies forming what is known as the crowdsourcing industry – involving small, medium, and large enterprises all over the world – primarily rely on the crowd in running their day-to-day businesses, with a very little existence of offices, workforce, and physical operations (Felstiner, 2011).

As realized in Table 2.2, most of the crowdsourcing examples reported in this study operate in the fields of crowd-generated data, information technology, and travel review. The statistics in Figure 2.5 show that *insights sharing* is the most frequently employed type of co-creation activities in this industry, followed by *customer service*, *random task* and *WOM*. On the other hand, Figure 2.6 reflects a broad consistency in the distribution of game dynamics in the crowdsourcing industry compared to the general ranking presented in Figure 2.3.

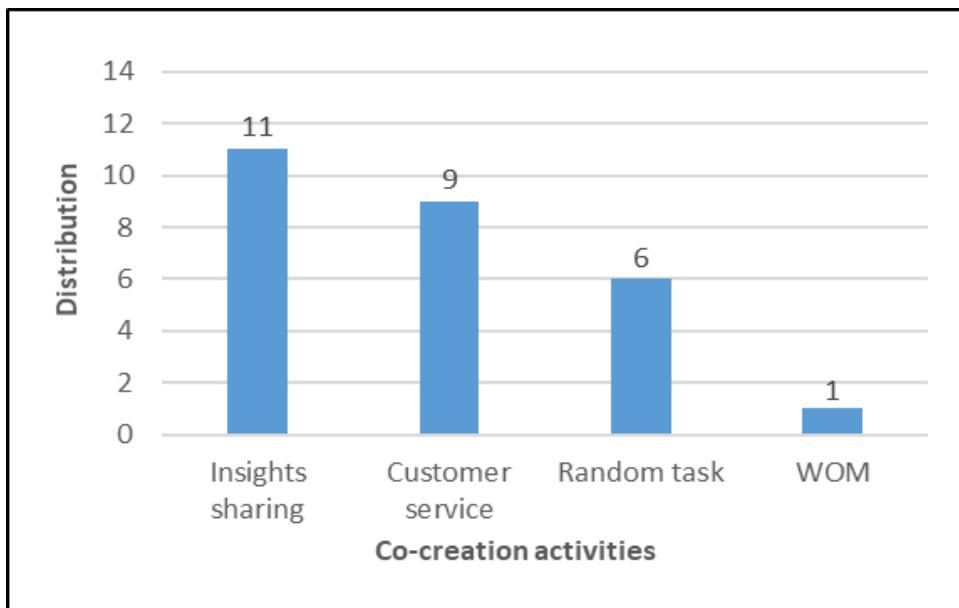


Figure 2.5. Distribution of co-creation activities across crowdsourcing case studies.

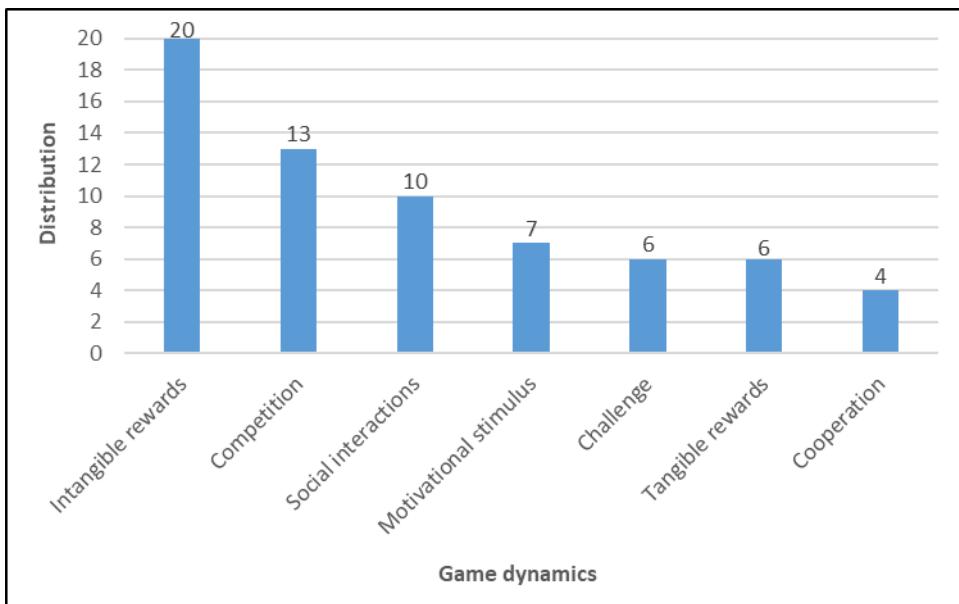


Figure 2.6. Distribution of game dynamics across crowdsourcing case studies.

2.5. Discussion

Following the reported results, this section provides a comprehensive interpretation of the overall outcome of this literature review. Moreover, a number of limitations are underscored, and an outline of the thesis proceeding addressing a couple of spotted gaps is ultimately presented.

2.5.1. Results Interpretation

This literature review examining the role of gamification in promoting BVCC unveils four types of co-creation activities that are positively influenced by a set of game design elements. Among these activities, *customer service* and *insight sharing* are the most prevalent ones across the reported studies. This prevalence is aligned with the findings of Van doorn et al. (2010) and Verhoef et al. (2010) who link customers' engagement behaviour to the acts of supporting other customers and sharing recommendations with the firms they interact with.

In the crowdsourcing industry, the same two types of co-creation activities prevail, with *insights sharing* leading instead, given the predominance of crowd-generated data businesses.

Surprisingly, *WOM*, which is traditionally recognised as a core component of customers' engagement behaviour (Van doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010) and BVCC (See-To et al., 2014), appeared in less than quarter of the fifty reported studies. In a primitive interpretation of this paradox, this could be linked to the findings of Nobre and Ferreira (2017), who revealed consumers' impulsive tendency to spread positive WOM when enjoying the gamified experience, thus limiting firms' need to stress on such a "spontaneous" activity via hedonic, utilitarian or social incentives. A good example here is *TripAdvisor*, where online users voluntarily tend to post their achievements on their social media accounts, with no incentives persuading them to do so (Sigala, 2015).

Moreover, almost all the identified *random task* activities in the surveyed papers are executed in the crowdsourcing and sharing-economy industries, whereby firms respectively promote random on-demand business projects and trading activities. Despite the undeniable efficiency associated with the recruitment of freelancers and the facilitation of commercial transactions in these two respective industries, it is worth noticing that legal and ethical complications apply. In recent years, commercial laws and regulations are considerably tightening in attempt to control these types of freely operating businesses, typically in the course of protecting labourers' rights and curbing tax-evasion activities (Barykin et al., 2021; Unterschütz, 2020).

In terms of game design elements, the data analysis of the surveyed studies underlines a predicted predominance of the *intangible rewards* dynamic. This dynamic often manifested through the points and badges mechanics plays a pivotal role across gamified systems, whereby many game dynamics are unlikely to function without getting combined with it. For instance, game mechanics such as leaderboards and beneficial incentives, respectively triggering the *competition* and *tangible rewards* dynamics, are usually determined according to the points and badges collected by highly engaged users.

Surprisingly, the prominent role given to the *tangible rewards* dynamic in the gamification literature is remarkably surpassed by hedonic dynamics. This matches with the findings of Kavaliova et al. (2016), who emphasizes users' inclination towards fun and networking over tangible returns when engaged in gamified experiences. This also applies to the crowdsourcing industry, whereby *competition* is ranked second just after *intangible rewards*, apparently reflecting the fierce environments crowdsourcing companies promote in attempt to get the most out of their recruited contestants (Nevo and Kotlarsky, 2020). Amazingly, *tangible rewards* is barely employed in this competitive industry too.

2.5.2. Theoretical implications

Alongside unravelling the major types of BVCC activities employed across the examined platforms, and the key game design elements promoting them, this review provides a brand-new framework that demonstrates the relationship between gamification's mechanics, dynamics, psychological triggers, and motivational effects, ultimately evoking online users' engagement in BVCC. The developed framework broadly embraces the principles of the popular MDE framework – standing for Mechanics, Dynamics and Emotions (Leclercq et al., 2017). However, it offers a closer scope onto gamification's functionality process through revealing the game elements shaping it, using an all-inclusive terminology that could henceforth be adopted in future studies.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that most of the marketing theories adopted across the surveyed papers match with those previously reported by Tobon et al. (2020). Besides, the Goal-Setting Theory – largely related to the Flow theory – is remarkably used in many studies, whereas a number of social-related theories beyond social-influence are likewise applied, namely: Social-Cognitive, Social-Comparison, Social-Exchange, and Social-Proof theories. The findings of the studies involving these social-related theories showcase that, when it comes to BVCC, users' psychology is fundamentally influenced by a set of social values deriving from their interactions with their peers.

Overall, the findings of this study underline a substantial role of a set of psychological triggers – primarily of hedonic value – in mediating the relationship between gamification and online users' contribution to BVCC. In contrast, *tangible rewards* principally offering a utilitarian value (Shi et al., 2017) is found effective, yet less essential in shaping users' BVCC experience. The reason behind the remarkable shortage in applying this dynamic is probably linked to the claims assuming that utility-oriented people feel guilty when engaging in hedonic consumption more than utilitarian consumption (Lu et al., 2016), making it worthless for companies to incorporate utilitarian rewards that are primarily leveraged by hedonic values in their fun-centred environments. Another possible reason for the relatively limited inclusion of tangible rewards across the examined platforms

could revert to the fact that most firms simply try to hire co-creators without offering them any monetary compensations – including those of tiny values – for purely financial reasons (Arvidsson, 2008). As per Ambler and Roberts (2008), such promotions and incentives could be significantly costly for small and medium enterprises, with no accurate methods to calculate their return on investment.

2.5.3. Practical implications

This study provides practitioners with a bunch of evidence affirming the effective role of gamification in promoting BVCC. It highlights for them the most prominent game design elements used in practice, along with delineating the psychological triggers and motivational values associated with each. In this respect, it draws companies' attention – particularly those critically looking for competitive advantages – on the promising role of the modestly employed *fantasy* game dynamic. Although typically entailing the use of novel technologies such as augmented reality, virtual reality and mixed reality, individuals encountering such experiences explicitly manifest high level of satisfaction and a remarkable tendency towards engaging in BVCC (Poncin et al., 2017; Weretecki et al., 2021).

2.5.4. Limitations

Despite its insightful outcomes, this chapter has a couple of limitations. First, the scanning stage in the employed methodology is hedged onto one bibliographic search provider. Although all major academic databases are covered, searching in these databases independently could have been of benefit. In this respect, a final search was executed post finishing this review as to ensure not having missed any lately uploaded paper in the EBSCOhost platform, yet no new hits occurred.

On the other hand, the survey only involves empirical studies providing evidence-informed evaluation of the impact of gamification on BVCC; however, plenty of real-life examples in various industries are dismissed because of no concrete findings to examine. Such missed opportunities could perhaps be empirically addressed in future studies, especially in the context of emerging industries such as the sharing-economy one, which is only covered in this review throughout six examples, two out of which related to the same brand so-called Sharetribe. Another limitation embedded in this study lies in grouping together a wide range of co-creation activities under one proposed class, labelled *random task*. As random tasks could vary from very simple activities to highly professional projects, future studies can refine this category further and split it into more visible sections.

Furthermore, this study reviews the influence of gamification on BVCC from a general perspective, with limited information associated with users' demographic attributes and type of personalities. As indicated by Köse et al., (2019), Nobre and Ferreira (2017) and Xi and Hamari (2019), analysing users' demography could definitely help in better understanding their attitudes and behaviours towards online gamified systems, whereas Zilinskaite and Spanellis (2020) affirm gamification's disparate level of influence on users according to their type of personalities.

The reviewed cases also lack a profound assessment of the actual and prospective implications of negative gamified experiences on users' satisfaction and brand loyalty. Although a few studies minorly address this subject, the consequences of undesirable gamified experiences are still vague and should be examined further as to anticipate the extent to which gamification could be counterproductive for brands (Kavaliova et al., 2016; Leclercq et al., 2017; Harwood and Garry, 2017).

Finally, although gamification is proven to be significantly effective in encouraging a segment of users to engage in BVCC, this is majorly associated with their short-term monitored behaviour and merely long-term intentions. As implied by Tobon et al. (2020),

there are still many doubts regarding the effectiveness of gamification on users' engagement momentum on the long term.

2.5.5. Thesis proceedings

Post delineating the process through which gamification motivates online users to engage in BVCC, the next studies of this thesis are set to explore further impacts, major setbacks and key potentials not previously addressed in the literature.

All through [study 2](#), the research seeks to investigate the impact of gamification on motivating online users to engage in *CSR support* activities – remarkably overlooked across the reported papers. As previously outlined, *CSR support* refers to a unique and emergent type of BVCC that is interchangeably known in the literature as "social value co-creation", "CSR value co-creation" and "Participatory CSR".

In fact, examining this type of BVCC in this research is of vital importance, since CSR is being increasingly associated with organizations' vision and values, most of which are substantially investing in it to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Fatima and Elbanna, 2022). Although starting to get academic and industrial recognition since the 1950s, CSR implementation – however – has just received significant attention over the past decade, with consumers' increased interest in environmental protection and social welfare, as well as corporates' emerging need of being socially visible (Fatima and Elbanna, 2022).

Besides the traditional implementation process of CSR activities – through which corporates independently select, design and support social cases – many firms are remarkably integrating their customers in these processes over their social media platforms. In these platforms, customers get invited to contribute to social activities through designing philanthropic projects or sharing altruistic proposals, as well as voting for charities, or even co-funding them (Hsieh et al., 2018; Silva et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, many studies affirm that online users' participation in similar activities is still relatively limited, mainly due to companies' failure to address their psychological triggers (Jun et al., 2020). Correspondingly, a content analysis study carried in chapter 4 is set to identify the social values mediating gamification's successful promotion of this type of BVCC. This research stream initially derives from the promising findings of the simulative CSR experiments undertaken in one of the reported papers in this review (Jun et al., 2020), whereby a positive influence of gamification is detected over users' intention to participate and continue participating in virtual social activities, such as donating books to libraries and buying necessities to poor babies.

Consequently, the content analysis study is intended to examine gamification's influence on users' actual, rather than virtual contribution to *CSR support* activities – involving the nomination, voting and co-funding of real charities. From a theoretical perspective, the designated study is perhaps the first to explore the impact of gamification on online users' motivation to contribute to *CSR support* activities in a B2C context. On the other hand, its implications are foreseen to provide researchers and practitioners with insightful tips all across this under-examined area.

On another subject, since the aforementioned studies merely examine the effectiveness of gamification on active users' engagement in BVCC; the third study of this research is devoted to investigating its ineffectiveness in persuading passive ones, as well as revealing the responsive measures that should potentially be taken in this respect. Passive users hereby addressed refer to regular visitors of co-creative platforms who are simply not attracted to the gameful environment, and prefer behaving as spectators, or "lurkers" (Sun et al., 2014).

The term "lurker" deriving from the verb "to lurk" which means "to lie in wait" (Merriam-Webster, 2022) is predominantly adopted in the literature of virtual environments, with reference to the vast majority of online users who tend to "log into a community, read blogs and discussions, but don't contribute" (Edelmann, 2013, p. 654).

Just as "every lurker is a potential customer in E-business" (Edelmann, 2013, p.647), this research suggests that every lurker is a potential co-creator too, hence, none should ignore such a silent army that could turn into a game changer if successfully addressed. All over the literature, lurkers' behaviour is generally associated with four major factors: their personalities and preferences (Nonnecke and Preece, 2001), their security considerations related to online privacy and safety (Nonnecke and Preece, 2001), the influence and environmental design of their online community (Nonnecke et al., 2004), and the nature of the user-community relationship – such as the level of commitment expected from the community members (Küçük, 2010).

In the context of BVCC, the ISTO model of lurking developed by Nguyen (2021) offers a thorough overview of lurkers' behaviour. Built upon a compilation of empirical findings drawn from the literature, the model links lurkers' stance to four general factors, namely: individual factors, social factors, technical factors and organizational factors. Individual factors reflect people's perceptions about their cognitive need of contributing, contribution effectiveness, and potential loss of power when contributing. As expounded by Nguyen (2021), these perceptions respectively refer to lurkers' non-recognition of the need to contribute to co-creative platforms (Merry and Simon, 2012; Nonnecke et al., 2006; Park and Gabbard, 2018), scepticism of their potential contribution's impact on the community (Gray, 2004; Preece et al., 2004), and the fear of losing the privilege of knowledge exclusivity after exposing it to others (Bishop, 2011; Xiang et al., 2013). On the other hand, social factors underlying lurkers' behaviour denote their weak bond with other community members (Chow and Chan, 2008; Liu et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2013), their distrust in peer users (Chen and Hung, 2010; Preece et al., 2004; Yang and Chen, 2007), and their perception of the huge volume and poor quality of existing contributions (Merry and Simon, 2012; Park and Gabbard, 2018; Simon et al., 2013). Such conceptions are often interlinked and mutually associated with open communities, characterized by massive numbers of users and posts (Nguyen et al., 2019).

In turn, technical factors imply the high level of effort lurkers expect to exert in a co-creative system, and the poor functionality they perceive in it (Fan et al., 2009; Nonnecke et al., 2006; Preece et al., 2004). Deriving from the Technology Acceptance Model, those two variables respectively refer to users' perceived ease of use and usefulness of a co-creative platform (Nguyen, 2021)

Lastly, organizational factors involve individuals' dissatisfaction with the structure, norms and rules of a community, the way it is managed and moderated (Han et al., 2014; Han et al., 2012), and the lack of commitment they feel towards it (Tsai and Cheng, 2012). In contrast with the case of private communities characterized by members' close relationships with each other, organizational factors typically prevail in public communities, whereby controlling contributors' input is quite challenging, with no steady bonds generating users' sense of accountability or commitment towards each other (Nguyen et al., 2019).

While lurking has traditionally been regarded from a purely negative angle, and typically associated with peripheral members of a community, the perception towards the concept has gradually changed over time. Recent research acknowledges the fact that lurking is not necessarily a fixed behaviour associated with a definite segment of online users, since lurkers in a particular community could be quite active in parallel ones (Nguyen, 2021). On the other hand, further research remarkably sheds light on lurking's positive aspects, often associated with the reduction of e-traffic, and the avoidance of unproductive or negative contributions (Edelmann, 2013). Moreover, an intriguing segregation of the lurkers' segment has lately been arising, classifying them under the so-called passive and active classes. Unlike the former class involving lurkers with low interest and attention to detail, the latter class denotes disengaged users who are highly immersed in content reading, up to date with the latest news, and occasionally interacting and sharing positive word-of-mouth with their own networks (Sun et al., 2014). Subsequently, considerable credit is being given to a large segment of lurkers,

who, on top of their indirect value-added, could have great direct potential towards online communities if well addressed.

Nevertheless, in the case of co-creative platforms entirely relying on the contribution of their members to run the business flow – such as crowdsourcing ones – turning both types of lurkers into active engagers is crucial for the business to thrive.

In response to ISTO's model of lurking, a model of de-lurking strategies has been developed by Nguyen (2021), over which the author addresses the underlined individual factors of lurking, alongside the social, technical and organizational ones associated with co-creative communities. In sum, the model suggests launching campaigns that accentuate the personal and social benefits of users' contributions, in addition to developing user-friendly interfaces and private channels for people looking for anonymous engagement. Furthermore, the model calls for promoting welcoming and friendly atmospheres that help build strong ties and trust among the community members, as well as persuading them with motivating incentives – such as financial and non-financial rewards, social praise and recognition.

While the first two strategies are subject to execution via relevant marketing and technological means, the third and fourth strategies could be typically employed via gamification. In this respect, game design elements such as interactive social threads and collaborative missions could significantly help build trust and amity among members (Li et al., 2022; Morschheuser et al., 2019; Nobre and Ferreira, 2017; Yoo et al., 2017), whereas other elements such as payback points, badges and leaderboards can provide users with gratifying compensations and social recognition (Nobre and Ferreira, 2017; Hsu and Chen, 2018).

While gamification represents an effective approach to promoting de-lurking (Katikaridi et al., 2021) lurkers still represent a major segment of gamified co-creative platforms' users (Grant, 2020; Thiel, 2016) – urging for a deep investigation of the reasons behind such a setback.

Since engaged users in gamified co-creative platforms are found mostly attracted by *intangible rewards, competition* and *social interactions*, a primitive interpretation would suggest that lurkers are probably not interested in any of these game dynamics. Furthermore, there could possibly be a correlation between users' previous negative experiences in gamified systems and their passive behaviour towards it as implied by Xi and Hamari (2019). Indeed, such experiences are often associated with users' dissatisfaction towards some game rules or results, or with some undesired behaviours exerted by other players.

Moreover, lurkers' non-familiarity with gamified systems is probably another factor explaining their reluctance to engage in gamified platforms, given the positive relationship found between active users' familiarity with gamified systems and their general attitudes towards it (Bittner and Shipper, 2014; Jang et al., 2018).

Whilst all the aforementioned presumptions are eventually considered while embarking on this research steam over the third study, lurkers' demographic factors are critically taken into account. As lurkers are largely estimated to represent over 90% of online users (Zheng and Beck Dallaghan, 2022), they would definitely cover all age ranges; however, this research particularly focuses on generations Y and Z, characterized by their large familiarity and interaction with social media networks and digital game systems (Hysa et al., 2021). Unlike members of older generations – such as generation X – many of whom are reluctant to fully-fledged immersion in digital experiences (Asoba and Mefi, 2022; Venter, 2017), generation Y encompassing people born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s have been exposed to digital technologies all over their lives (Twenge, 2023). Prevalently known as the millennials, the Net-generation, the web generation, and the digital natives (Venter, 2017), members of generation Y are "native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the internet" (Prensky, 2001, p. 29). Moreover, they are renowned for their tendency towards getting involved in group interactions and receiving prompt feedback (Venter, 2017; Zhang et al., 2017). In addition to being instant, collaborative, expressive, responsive and flexible in nature,

the interactions of digital natives are characterized by being playful – typically denoting enjoyable and challenging sorts of engagement with others (Liu, 2012).

Likewise, members of generation Z involving individuals born after the mid-1990s, are known for being comparably and even more connected to digital technologies, social media networks and gameful experiences (Cilliers, 2017; Giray, 2022). Distinguished by "living and breathing technology" (Cilliers, 2017, p. 190), members of generation Y are marked by their yearning towards interactive games, collaborative projects, and challenging tasks (Rothman, 2016). Accordingly, it is of critical importance to particularly understand the disengagement of members of generation Y and Z with gamified co-creative platforms, since, unlike older generations who might simply be disinterested in such environments, are intertwined with interactive, collaborative and gameful digital experiences.

2.6. Conclusion

As firms are increasingly involving their end-users throughout their business processes, the concept of BVCC is gaining notable academic and industrial interest, with gamification regarded as one of its key means of promotion. In this systematic survey reporting on a set of empirical studies that examine the impact of gamification on promoting BVCC, four major types of co-creation activities are unveiled, namely: *customer service, insights sharing, WOM and random task*. These activities which are found positively influenced by gamification are dominantly performed across non-interactive websites and mobile apps, interactive websites and mobiles apps, and online communities. Overall, the surveyed studies which are remarkably underpinned by a range of theories – most of which of psychological and social nature – affirm a generally positive relationship between gamification and online users' attitudes and behaviours towards BVCC. Post combining the literature's inconsistent lexicon of game design

elements under one unified terminology, a brand-new framework comprehensively expounding the process through which gamification promotes BVCC is provided. Ultimately, a set of intriguing research areas representing the core of the thesis' subsequent studies is delineated. While the first study is set to reveal the social values mediating the influence of gamification on promoting *CSR support* activities, the second study attempts to explore the reasons and potential solutions of gamification's failure to persuade disengaged users. By addressing those two areas, this thesis will add a missing piece of evidence that ratifies the process of gamification's influence over an overlooked type of BVCC, alongside exposing and addressing its ineffectiveness in engaging the counterpart of active users – commonly known as the lurkers. Consecutively, an all-inclusive picture addressing gamification's impacts, setbacks and potentials in promoting BVCC is drawn.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology followed in this thesis. It illustrates the philosophical background of the research, featuring its paradigm embracing its ontological and epistemological dimensions (section 3.2), before exploring the research design (section 3.3). The research design incorporates a content analysis study carried via a concurrent mixed-method approach addressing [RQ2](#), along with a sequential mixed-method study involving a set of FGDs and a cross-sectional survey – jointly addressing [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#). Post presenting a thorough overview of the content analysis model (section 3.4), the choice of participants, the method of administration and the pretesting phase of the FGDs are delineated (section 3.5), before similarly outlining the measuring instruments, choice of respondents, method of administration, and the pretesting phase of the cross-sectional survey (section 3.6). Alongside covering the technical facets of the above-stated methods, the ethical considerations associated with each are reviewed. Lastly, an all-encompassing conclusion of the research methodology is provided (section 3.7).

3.2. Research paradigm

A research paradigm refers to "a basic set of beliefs or assumptions adopted by a scientific community which define the nature of the world and the place of individuals within it" (O'Reilly & Kiyimba 2015, p. 3). It essentially reflects the philosophical underpinning of a research, and addresses its ontological, epistemological and methodological questions, jointly aimed to communicate the concepts, choices and processes adopted by the researcher (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

As delineated by Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.108), the outputs of any research paradigm are "inventions of the human mind and hence subject to human error". Therefore, although deriving from rigorous and scientifically supported evidence, research outcomes can never be absolute and are always subject to continuous evolution.

The research ontology – which represents the first pillar of the research paradigm – originates from the Greek term "ontologia", which means the study of what exists in being, and refers to the recognition of the existing reality or truth (Killam, 2013). As ontological positions are subject to continuous evolution, there has been various theories about the existence of the reality; however, all of the theories admit the fact that reality is created in humans' minds and elaborated over their consciousness (Killam, 2013).

The ontology notion is traditionally interpreted from two paradoxical viewpoints: objectivism and subjectivism (Saunders et al., 2016). Although both perspectives acknowledge that reality is recognized in humans' minds, the former views it as a sheer external value which is totally independent from humans' influence, whereas the latter considers it a projection of what they personally envision (Saunders et al., 2016). As ontological positions vary among disciplines, subjectivism – also denoted as relativism – is recognized as the most adopted stance in the social science arena, given the fact that humans' thoughts and views can never be universal, but rather relatively dependent to their personal experiences and circumstances (Moon and Blackman 2014).

On the other hand, the research epistemology answers the question of "what human knowledge is, what it entails, and what status can be ascribed to it" (Crotty, 1998, p. 2), and hence attempts to identify what is possible to know about reality, and how that could be reached out (Saunders, et al., 2016). Therefore, a research epistemology is strongly connected to its ontology, and represents the next stage of the enquirer's searching journey for the reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Such a correlation implies that, an objective ontology would rather be carried through an epistemology that perceives the reality as an external and absolute value, whereas a subjective ontology is more likely

to be associated with an epistemology that considers the reality as primarily depending on humans' relative interpretation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Although this research is conducted in the social science field, its foreseeable subjective outcomes are meant to be fostered by objective inputs in the course of limiting the margin of bias, as well as to ground the overall results on a solid basis (Saunders, et al., 2016).

By following such an approach, this research adopts a combination of the post-positivism and interpretivism paradigms, mutually forming what is known as the pragmatism paradigm (Tashakkori et al., 1998).

Deriving from the positivist paradigm which suggests the possible existence of one context-free and objective reality, the post-positivist paradigm considers such a reality to be probably true and not necessarily perfect nor certain (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). By adopting a modest axiology based on justice and respect, post-positivists believe in causal relationships normally attained through quantitative methods, though admit these can never be totally precise nor confirmed (Killam, 2013; Tashakkori et al., 1998).

On the other hand, interpretivism – which represents the second component of the pragmatic paradigm of this research – perceives the reality to be relative rather than absolute, and emphasizes the necessity of qualitatively expounding it (Schwandt, 1994). Interpretivists argue the possibility of the existence of more than one reality, which are all mentally constructed and co-created by the enquirers, making it unlikely for them to fully avoid bias (Bucci, 2002; Killam, 2013).

Despite the wide divergence between positivism and interpretivism, many scholars refute the impossibility of combining the two views together. Howe (1988, p.15) considers such allegations to be "blown out of proportion", whereas many others affirm that pragmatism could build bridges between the two philosophies (Gioia and Pitre, 1990; Goles and Hirschheim, 2000; Wicks and Freeman, 1998). As per Morgan (2007, p.72), in a pragmatic approach, "there is no problem with asserting both that there is a single real world and that all individuals have their own unique interpretations of that world". Some scholars went even farther, considering pragmatism as an inevitable

choice for researchers. According to Mingers (1997, p. 492), "adopting a particular paradigm is like viewing the world through a particular instrument such as a telescope, an X-ray machine, or an electron microscope. Each reveals certain aspects, but is completely blind to the others".

From a pragmatistic point of view, the research question is much more important than the philosophical approach through which it is addressed, since the core objective of a research is simply to find out what works (Goles and Hirschheim 2000). Pragmatism is therefore characterized by its inclusive, pluralistic and complementary methodological trends, often embracing mixed method approaches involving both quantitative and qualitative methods (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Unlike most paradigms following either deductive or inductive reasoning, pragmatists often follow an abductive logic, whereby they tend to move back and forth between the two reasonings based on the research conditions and circumstances (Mitchell, 2018).

The pragmatistic paradigm is adopted in this thesis not only because of the research social context – whereby reality can neither be totally definite nor entirely relative (Saunders et al., 2016) – but principally because the four questions raised are fundamentally related to comprehending online users' psychology. As predominantly acknowledged, understanding humans' psychology – typically associated with their attitudes and behaviours – is optimally attained through a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches, whereby the former serves in gathering essential raw insights, which in turn are measured and assessed throughout the latter (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Although the quantitatively reported outcomes would still entail human interpretations with some inevitable margin of subjectivity, this margin is nonetheless framed within objectively generated boundaries. As such, a pragmatic exploration of gamification's impacts, setbacks and potentials in motivating online users' engagement in BVCC is deemed critically vital for attaining evidence-based and transferrable results. While [RQ1](#) (see page 16) is carried via the prevalent systematic review method, it is pursued in light of the same grounded theory strategy followed with respect to [RQ2](#), [RQ3](#)

and [RQ4](#) (see pages 17-18). The grounded theory strategy is commonly pursued in social science studies when seeking to attain or develop theories by initially distilling their variables that are implicitly grounded in systematically examined data (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The data across which the theories are grounded are typically of qualitative nature, and are often approached via a wide range of interactive and non-interactive methods (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

Beyond the major theories reported in [study 1](#) (see Table 2.3), new theoretical approaches are foreseen to be mined throughout the grounded theory strategy. While the Self-Determination Theory developed by Deci and Ryan (1980) solely examines individuals' intrinsic motivation from the scopes of Autonomy, Competence and Social relatedness, those do not represent all humans' psychological triggers (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Furthermore, comprising intrinsic variables such as the sense of flow – ratified by the Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) – or humans' attitudes, perceived social norms and perceived behavioural control – deriving from the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985) – might not sufficiently address this gap. This is due to the major limitation of those two theories, which – alongside the Self-Determination Theory – overlooks humans' pre-defined judgements and sentiments in the first place (Donyai, 2012).

Likewise, users' perceived usefulness and ease of use of a gamified system – representing the pillars of the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) – respectively address their perceptions towards the system's technical features, without reviewing the variables controlling their primary initiative of undertaking such experiences (Islam et al., 2014).

3.3. Choice of the research design

"A research design is the overarching plan for the collection, measurement and analysis of data" (Gray 2017, p.184). It represents the technical facet of the overall paradigm and

consists of the methodology over which it is practically pursued. A research design is typically defined according to the nature of the research questions which can either be descriptive, exploratory or explanatory (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Descriptive questions are meant to draw a picture of a phenomenon that has not been sufficiently framed before (Gray, 2017). In turn, exploratory questions – such as [RQ1](#), [RQ2](#) and [RQ4](#) – chiefly aim to rummage and detect key aspects of under-examined topics, whereas explanatory questions like [RQ3](#) seek to explain the causes of a well-defined problem (Gray, 2017).

All the way through answering [RQ2](#) – which is designated to explore the influence of *social interactions* on online users' engagement in actual CSR support activities – a non-interactive method is chosen, given the scarcity of gamified programs promoting this type of BVCC, and hence, the modest size of population that could be directly approached. Subsequently, the content analysis method is selected, given its substantial efficacy in unveiling the variables of grounded theories all across the meanings and patterns of publicly available textual, audio and visual data (Birks and Mills, 2015). Furthermore, this method is characterized by its replicability and high ecological validity, given its association with publicly available data that are organically generated without being influenced by the researcher, who's input is posterior and unobtrusive (Neuendorf, 2017).

In this respect, a set of threads are retrieved and analysed out of Giffgaff's gamified social program Charity Nominations, whereby a set of game dynamics such as *aestheticism*, *competition*, and *social interactions* are employed to promote members' contribution to nominating, voting and funding local charities (Giffgaff, 2022). The content analysis study is carried via a concurrent mixed-method approach, whereby secondary data deriving from users' generated content across the program's online threads are simultaneously interpreted and quantified in the course of gauging their significance and generalizability (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

On the other hand, all the way to addressing [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#), respectively intended to explain the reasons and explore the potential solutions for gamification's failure to engage lurkers in BVCC, a sequential mixed-method design is chosen. As emphasized by Creswell and Creswell (2017), when tackling such complex questions in the social science discipline, it is well asserted that using either quantitative or qualitative approaches by themselves is inadequate. Given the dearth of secondary data analysing the influence of gamification on lurkers, as well as lurkers' invisible nature – which is difficult to distantly observe – an interactive approach is adopted in carrying the sequential mixed-method design. Such an approach enables promptly eliciting implicit insights from relevant individuals, who are specifically selected in line with the context of the designated subject under study (Benz et al., 2008).

Primary data are first sought following an in-depth qualitative phase, before testing their validity and generalizability throughout a quantitative phase performed at a larger scale (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). In this respect, the FGD method is selected for pursuing the first stage of the sequential mixed-method design. This method is desired over peer interactive methods – typically one-to-one interviews – given its advantage in concurrently eliciting insights from lurkers throughout an open conversation entailing both researcher-to-participant, and participant-to-participant discussions. (Cyr, 2019).

Post collecting, mining, and analysing the primary data deriving from a series of FGDs – typically pursued until reaching the point of theoretical saturation (Hennink 2013) – a set of hypotheses addressing [RQ3](#), and raw items addressing [RQ4](#) are subsequently developed and tested throughout the quantitative stage. While surveys represent one of the predominant quantitative techniques used in this stage, one should decide whether to go for the cross-sectional model or the longitudinal one. In line with the provisions of the adopted research design, the former model is chosen over the latter. Beyond its higher efficiency in terms of time and resource consumption (Rindfleisch et al., 2008), the cross-sectional survey is deemed more suitable in tackling the raised research questions, since the targeted population is projected to consist of regular lurkers of a

well specified gamified co-creative platform. Therefore, they are expected to be familiar with the reasons of their disengagement, as well as their aspirations for improving the appealingness of the platform's gamified system. As such, taking the designated participants through a long journey of interaction with a gamified co-creative program while recurrently surveying them is judged irrelevant.

To address [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#), the gamified program of the global travel review platform TripAdvisor is selected as the study sample. In addition to being one of the platforms that are mostly referred to over the gamification literature (Moro et al., 2019; Schuckert et al., 2016; Sigala, 2015), TripAdvisor is chosen for two main reasons. First, it is the world's largest travel guidance platform (TripAdvisor, 2022), making it relatively easy to find and recruit lurkers out of its millions of users. Second, the gamified program of TripAdvisor – so-called TripCollective – promotes a set of co-creation activities over a wide range of game design elements, making it a typical exemplar for this study. In the TripCollective program, online users undertake *customer service* activities by sharing useful ratings and reviews, *insights sharing* activities typically through adding and updating locations in the platform, as well as *random task* activities such as writing articles about specific journeys or locations (TripAdvisor, 2022). On the other hand, the gameful environment of the program is substantially rich and diversified, and includes prominent game design elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, and interactive social threads – respectively reflecting the main game dynamics revealed in the literature review chapter, namely: *intangible rewards*, *competition*, and *social interactions*.

While the detailed process and outcomes of the mixed-method study are provided in chapters 5 and 6, the following are the set of hypotheses and independent items that were developed and subsequently tested all across the designated study.

H1 - Lurkers' unfamiliarity with a gamified co-creative program leads to their negative attitude towards participating in it.

H2 - Lurkers' perception of distributive injustice in a gamified co-creative program leads to their negative attitude towards participating in it.

H3 - Lurkers' perception of procedural injustice in a gamified co-creative program leads to their negative attitude towards participating in it.

H4 - Lurkers' perceived uselessness of a gamified co-creative program leads to their negative attitude towards participating in it.

H5 - The more effort lurkers expect to exert in a gamified co-creative program, the more negative is their attitude towards participating in it.

H6 - Lurkers' perception of distributive injustice in a gamified co-creative program leads to their perceived uselessness of participating in it.

H7 - The more procedural injustice lurkers perceive in a gamified co-creative program, the more effort they expect to exert when participating in it.

H8 - Lurkers' perceived uselessness of a gamified co-creative program mediates the effect of their perceived distributive injustice of the program on their negative attitude towards participating in it.

H9 - The effort that lurkers expect to exert when participating in a gamified co-creative program mediates the effect of their perceived procedural injustice of the program on their negative attitude towards participating in it.

Item 1: Lurkers will be more inclined to participate in a gamified co-creative program if tangible rewards are included.

Item 2: Lurkers will be more inclined to participate in a gamified co-creative program if their achievements could build them a strong reputation among global audiences and business clients.

Item 3: Lurkers will be more inclined to participate in a gamified co-creative program if progressing across levels is perceived easier for them.

Item 4: Lurkers will be more inclined to participate in a gamified co-creative program if the scores of the program's existing members are regularly reset to zero.

Summarizing, Table 3.1 concludes the adopted research paradigm in this thesis, encompassing its ontology and epistemology, reasoning approach, methodological strategy, and operational design which is thoroughly outlined in the next sections.

Table 3.1. Summary of the research paradigm.

Research Paradigm				
Ontology	Epistemology	Reasoning	Strategy	Design
Subjectivism Understanding gamification's impact, setbacks and potentials in promoting BVCC is subject to the researcher's reflection.	Pragmatism Addressing the designated research subject is optimally acquired via a combination of post-positivistic and interpretivist approaches.	Abductive The research logic embraces a mixture of inductive reasoning drawing on raw data, and deductive reasoning building on existing theories.	Grounded theory The theories upon which this research is built are implicitly grounded in real-world data, and are subject to constructive extraction.	<u>RQ1 (Study 1)</u> Concurrent mixed-method design Qualitative + Quantitative Systematic literature review
				<u>RQ2 (Study 2)</u> Concurrent mixed-method design Qualitative + Quantitative Content analysis
				<u>RQ3 – RQ4 (Study 3)</u> Sequential mixed-method design Qualitative FGDs ↓ Quantitative cross-sectional survey

3.4. Content analysis study

This section illustrates the model of the content analysis study, outlining the process of the data scanning, collection and analysis, along with the key ethical dimensions considered.

3.4.1. The model of the content analysis study

Analysing online contents – particularly user-generated ones – has concurrently emerged with the rise of social media platforms a couple of decades ago. It embraces the same broad stages of data collection and analysis traditionally employed with respect to the contents of books, newspapers, magazines, and other transcribed materials (Neuendorf, 2017). This method is typically used when a grounded theory can solely or optimally be attained through analysing archival data (Neuendorf, 2017). The designated data is often of qualitative nature; however, the key objective usually entails interpreting their meanings alongside quantifying their level of occurrence. The broad procedure of this method – typically outlined through Elo and Kyngä's prevalent model (2008) – consists of three key phases that begin with a researcher's selection of the appropriate unit of analysis, before ending with reporting meaningful data as depicted in Figure 3.1.

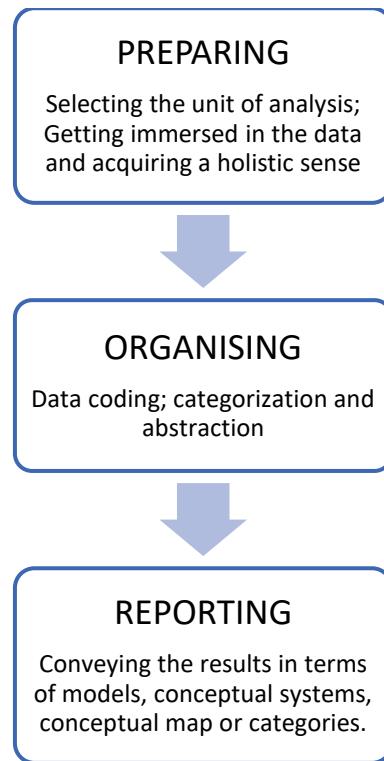


Figure 3.1. Content analysis process: adopted from *Elo and Kyngäs, (2008)*.

When opting for online content analysis, selecting the data sample depends on the nature of the user-generated content being sought (Hai-Jew, 2017). Whilst tweets or posts in a particular conversation can randomly be retrieved following the random sampling technique (Kim et al. 2018), picking independent contents such as social threads out of a sequence of periodic threads is usually pursued following a systematic sampling approach (Neuendorf, 2017). As denoted by Neuendorf (2017), topics' homogeneity of such independent threads as well as their periodic order are major factors to be taken into account when carrying out this technique. In this study targeting independent threads from Giffgaff's biannual social program entitled Charity Nominations, the threads of the last six seasons in the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 are picked as the data sample. Although earlier threads were sought to be considered for a richer data compilation, these entail different game rules and incomplete data availability with respect to the number of votes and the amounts of money donated out of members'

payback points. Therefore, they were excluded from the final pool as to ensure relevance and consistency across the selected data sample (Neuendorf, 2017).

Post selecting the sample of the study, the program's game design elements associated with active members – particularly their held badges, written posts and aesthetic reactions – are thoroughly reviewed as to select the study's units of analysis. As widely recognized by qualitative researchers, a unit of analysis should match the criteria of relevance and measurability, based on which the next stages of the study are pursued (Krippendorff, 2018). Next, the data of the selected units of analysis are subject to coding, categorization and abstraction, before having them ultimately reported throughout convenient models or systems (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008).

3.4.2. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations associated with the usage of secondary data has always been a controversial topic, typically with respect to the questions of when, how and why a consent is needed from the original data generators. Nevertheless, content analysis studies of archival data usually entail less critiques, mainly due to the unobtrusive analyses of publicly available content (Neuendorf, 2017). Unlike studies involving secondary data related to human subjects – such as medical records – or those originally deriving from primary data collected for private purposes, publicly available user-generated contents are generally free to use, at the condition of keeping users' identity confidential (Neuendorf, 2017). This confidentiality is primarily driven by the fact that social media content creators have the right to object to being publicly exposed in research studies, alongside having the right to delete their contributions at any point of time, making it inappropriate to permanently publishing them along with their identities (Yilmaz et al., 2021). Accordingly, all the extracted quotes in this study are anonymized, with no reference made to any of the contributors' profile details. Furthermore, the

extracted quotes were subject to scrutinization prior to publication, as to ensure none of them does explicitly nor implicitly contain violent, abusive or disrespectful content to any third party.

In accordance with the above-mentioned considerations, a favourable opinion was granted by Aston's research ethics committee to pursue the study.

3.5. Focus group discussions

This section represents the overall structure of the FGDs. It demonstrates the model adopted, the choice of participants, the method of administration, the ethical considerations, and the pilot study preceding the formal sessions.

3.5.1. The model of the focus group discussions

Although there is no definite way to conduct FGDs, a common model comprising broadly recognized principles is predominantly followed across social studies (Hennink, 2013). First, a sampling frame is pre-settled in line with the research question, as to target the best matching participants for the study. In this course, relevant recruitment criteria are defined in order to form homogenously reliable groups (Cyr, 2019).

As argued by Krueger and Casey (2014, p. 33), an ideal group should be "small enough for everyone to have an opportunity to share insights and yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions". Although there has been no consensus in the literature on the ideal number of focus group participants, a range between 5 and 8 participants is largely deemed acceptable, since less participants may not be sufficient for gathering the required insights, and more participants could be too large to handle (Krueger and Casey, 2014). As established by the grounded theory strategy – generally referred to in this type of qualitative methods – FGDs are projected to keep running until reaching the

level of theoretical saturation, denoting the point when no major information are newly elicited, typically after a sequence of at least two sessions (Hennink 2013).

Unlike interviews entailing one-to-one discussions using structured or semi structured questionnaires, a FGD allows gathering multiple individual opinions and reactions simultaneously (Cyr 2019). Moreover, FGDs – which are usually unstructured – run not only between the researcher and the participants, but also between the participants themselves, whereby participants query each other and explain their views to each other (Morgan, 1996).

One further principle commonly associated with FGDs is the presence of a group moderator – often being the researcher – for the sake of managing the flow and dynamics of the ongoing conversation within specific thematic boundaries and time frames. Although there exists no definite intervals for running a FGD, it is widely recommended not to exceed two hours per session, as participants' interest and focus is likely to be lost afterwards (Cyr, 2019; Hennink, 2013; Krueger and Casey, 2014).

Finally, FGDs are designed to be held in carefully selected venues providing a calm and relaxing atmosphere, where participants can comfortably speak and self-express (Krueger and Casey, 2014). In recent years, virtual FGDs carried via online platforms have increasingly been adopted in social science studies, given their efficiency and accessibility (Cyr, 2019). Despite hindering participants' interpersonal communications, such digital experiences are characterized by providing them with a significant margin of privacy. As argued by Bozkurt (2018), many individuals – especially shy and introvert ones – prefer it over face-to-face conversations, as they see it as more secure and less socially compelling. Accordingly, the virtual mode is chosen for this study, which coincided with the social restrictions imposed in the UK due to the Covid pandemic, making this option unavoidable.

Once conducting the group sessions in line with the aforementioned guidelines, the discussions are then transcribed and analysed following the thematic analysis approach. As indicated by Hennink (2013, p. 90), "thematic analysis is perhaps the most common

approach to analysing focus group data. It involves breaking data into smaller segments by using the issues raised by participants to define the segments". Figure 3.2. depicts the stages over which the designated segmentation evolves, following the prominent model of Braun and Clarke (2006) – predominantly adopted in psychological and social studies.



Figure 3.2. Thematic analysis process: adopted from Braun and Clarke (2006).

3.5.2. Choice of the participants

Given the nature of the selected study, three criteria are set to identify candidates' eligibility to take part in the FGDs. First, in order to ensure solely addressing lurkers, only regular users of TripAdvisor who have never engaged in the platform in terms of posting, rating and reviewing are considered. Indeed, adopting such a definitive criterion "that can be readily observed" (Krueger and Casey 2014, p. 202) is necessary to avoid any potential nuance and to guarantee an organic coherence all through addressing the research questions. One of the anticipated nuances here could be – but not limited to – the recruitment of irrelevant candidates, such as occasional users or partial lurkers intermittently contributing to the platform. Second, in order to ensure that all participants are adult members of generations Z and Y – respectively aged between 18 and 25, and 26 and 40 (Hysa et al., 2021) – only participants aged between 18 and 40 are deemed

qualified to take part in the study. As argued in the literature review chapter, the main reason for exclusively admitting candidates from the aforementioned generations is due to their large familiarity and interaction with social media networks and digital game systems, alongside the need of leveraging the validity and reliability of the study outcome by focally associating it to a clearly defined social segment. Lastly, the third pre-requisite criterion applied is for candidates to be residing in the UK. Besides the impossibility of covering nationalities from all over the world in the qualitative phase of the study, the main reason for solely selecting UK residents is to create an overall consistency among the outcomes of this study and those of the prior study which exclusively covers UK-based subscribers to Giffgaff. As such, the research findings deriving from [study 2](#) and [study 3](#) would be cohesively generalizable to comparable markets sharing parallel characteristics, typically in terms of culture, economy and level of digitalization (Davies and Hughes, 2014).

Although vital demographic factors such as candidates' genders and socio-economic status are not included among the sampling criteria, these are carefully considered while forming the groups, as to ensure a representative social diversity in each. Indeed, securing such a variety is highly important in FGDs, as it helps generating a better reflection of the target segment, as well as enabling the researcher to exploit variant thoughts and opinions deriving from different backgrounds within each single group (Cyr, 2019).

3.5.3. Method of administration

Since FGDs were set to be virtually led, the telecommunication platform Microsoft Teams is selected for conducting the online sessions, given its user-friendly features and accessibility for both subscribers and guest users (Microsoft, 2022). Moreover, the platform embeds an automatic transcription software that separately transcribes each

participants' contribution during the discussion, making it easy for the researcher to assign each of the recorded quotes to their relevant speaker.

In order to ensure leading a successful recruitment campaign, a financial incentive is allocated for attending the FGDs. Such an incentive is highly pursued in this type of interactive methods, since potential candidates are expected to make substantial efforts of brainstorming over a considerable period of time (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2014). However, since monetary incentives are less common in academic research (Hennink, 2013), and since some applicants may be solely interested in the monetary incentive they get offered at the cost of their sought input (Morse, 2007), a prize draw is chosen instead.

As the study is not expected to involve more than four focus groups with an average of six participants in each, a prize draw of four £100 Amazon E-vouchers is deemed satisfactory.

Accordingly, a recruitment advertisement is released (see Appendix 1a), prominently featuring the study objective, the participation criteria, the rewarding prize, and the approximate duration of the sessions. Since the number of participants alongside their schedules cannot be known in advance, the anticipated sessions are planned to be executed over a flexible period of two weeks, as to allow gathering enough information about the successful candidates, and hence forming relevant and comparable groups (Krueger and Casey, 2014).

The advertisement communication is simultaneously executed throughout offline and online channels for the sake of reaching out the widest number of potential candidates (Hennink, 2013). Thus, advertisement copies are posted in multiple venues at the university of Aston and a number of accommodation halls, along with uploading and sharing digital copies across various online networks such as VLE, LinkedIn and Facebook.

In accordance with the common time frames generally presumed in similar recruitment campaigns, a three-week period is set to spread the word. Thereby, sufficient time is

given to reach out potential candidates, while treasuring successful ones before losing their interest or availability (Hennink, 2013).

3.5.4. Ethical considerations

The execution plan of the FGDs – including the recruitment stage – were subject to a thorough ethical review by the Research Ethics Committee of Aston Business School, from whom a favourable opinion is ultimately granted. The ethical aspects reviewed essentially revolve around the rights and roles of the participants, before, during and after the group sessions. In this respect, an information sheet is issued (see Appendix 1b), explicitly clarifying the purpose of the study, the objective behind participants' contribution, the anticipated benefit they will get out of it, as well as the way their inputs will be used.

Since preserving participants' privacy and confidentiality is regarded as one of their critical rights in this type of research studies (Aston University, 2022), it is clearly pledged that all participants' identities and extracted quotes are strictly anonymized throughout the published thesis and all future publications referring to the data collected. Respectively, video recordings of the sessions are safely stored in a secure cloud storage device (Aston University, 2022).

While participants were invited to raise any question or enquiry before and during the sessions, they were also asked by the end of each session if they would like to receive a lay summary of the study results. These were expected to be ready for dissemination in 1 to 2 years from the time of holding the sessions, following the successful completion of the thesis.

On the other hand, the prize draw administration, rules and conditions are clearly outlined in the information sheet, whereby winners are given a period of two weeks to confirm accepting the prize, before running new draws and picking new winners in case of no response.

Finally, in order to ensure participants' recognition and agreement on the terms of the information sheet, a corresponding consent form is issued for them to sign prior to joining the group discussions (see Appendix 1c).

3.5.5. Pilot study

Before launching the FGDs, it is highly recommended to conduct a pilot session to test the process of the intended experience – particularly in virtual environments such as the one adopted in this study – in order to get familiar, and swiftly familiarize participants with essential digital features (Krueger and Casey, 2014). Therefore, a simulative session was led on Microsoft Teams with four individuals who meet the participation criteria. The purpose of the session is to foresee the flow of the discussion with the participants, in addition to the functionality of all technical facilities.

During the pilot session which lasted for around 45 minutes, a number of useful tips were drawn and subsequently considered during the formal sessions. First, as some participants remarkably showed unfamiliarity with the TripCollective program – although being regular users of TripAdvisor – it was decided to consider prefacing the formal sessions with an introductory presentation of the program, as demonstrated on TripAdvisor's website (Tripadvisor, 2022). Moreover, as part of the crucial time-management principle associated with FGDs (Cyr, 2019), the conducted session implied the need of proportionally addressing the two respective topics of [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#), since one was found extensively covered during the experimental discussion at the cost of the other. As such, participants' input was carefully monitored and consistently steered towards the two interrelated topics of the research during the formal sessions.

Furthermore, the reluctance of one of the participants to switch on their camera while speaking during the pilot session, raised the importance of keeping participants' full names and identities discreet during the formal sessions, unless opting to sharing it by themselves. Besides respecting their privacy, establishing such a discretion is foreseen

to offer many of them the feeling of security, which is one of the vital elements that help encouraging participants to take part in similar interactive studies (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2014).

From a technical perspective, the pilot session highlighted the importance of ensuring participants' microphones are only turned on while speaking, as permanently opening them during the sessions can generate noises and resonance that hinder the stream of the online experience.

Last but not least, the absence of one attendee during the pilot session raised the need of allocating a substantial number of participants for each group – typically exceeding the minimum target of five – as well as sending them reminders just before the formal sessions, in order to avoid the risk of no show, which could put the whole session at stake.

Table 3.2. Pilot session's takeaways and reflections.

Pilot session takeaways	Reflections in the formal sessions
Not all regular users of TripAdvisor are familiar with the TripCollective gamified program	Providing participants with a general overview of the TripCollective gamified program
Disproportionate time spent in discussing RQ3 and RQ4 respective topics	Constantly steering group members' input towards the two interrelated topics of the sessions
Not all the participants are comfortable with switching on their camera	Participants' identities are kept confidential unless opting to revealing it by themselves
Detection of casual sound resonance	Asking participants to turn off their microphones if a resonance is detected
Unexpected absence of one participant	Allocating more than the minimum target number of five participants per group, along with sending them reminders just before the sessions

3.6. Cross-sectional survey

Post collecting and analysing the data of the FGDs, a cross-sectional survey is developed to test the set of hypotheses deriving from the reported outcomes. This section provides an overview of the survey's measurement instruments, choice of respondents, method of administration and key ethical considerations, before reviewing the pre-testing stage of the questionnaire.

3.6.1. The measuring instruments

In the course of addressing [RQ3](#), the outcome of the qualitative data collected from the FGDs are relevantly associated with a set of theoretical constructs from the literature (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The relationship between these constructs serve in developing a theoretical framework which is subject to validation upon testing its reflective hypotheses (see pages 81-82).

Although referring to constructs from one particular theory represents the standard pattern followed across many studies, referring to constructs from multiple theories provides a richer and more comprehensive scope of the studied phenomenon (Varpio et al., 2020). As per Neuman (1997), developing a novel theoretical framework incorporating constructs from multiple theories can represent a quantum leap not only in the designated research area, but across broader contexts too.

As highly recommended by survey experts, each of the adopted constructs should be manifested through a minimum of three pre-validated items for the respondents to assess (Wolf et al., 2016). Such an assessment is often pursued using a Likert scale design, whereby respondents provide a score on a 1 to 5 or 1 to 7 scheme, usually ranging from a "strongly disagree" position to a "strongly agree" position or vice versa (Nardi, 2018). Just as pursued across the majority of the papers reported in the literature review chapter, the 7-point Likert scale is adopted in assessing the survey items related

to [RQ3](#). This is due to the fact that "the 7-point scale provides more varieties of options, which in turn increase the probability of meeting the objective reality of people" (Joshi et al. 2015, p. 398).

Similarly, a further 7-point Likert scale questionnaire addressing [RQ4](#) is separately developed and incorporated in the survey. Unlike [RQ3](#) items adopted from pre-validated constructs, [RQ4](#) questionnaire comprises of raw items exclusively deriving from the findings of the FGDs.

Whilst the linear regression technique is used for testing the hypotheses related to [RQ3](#) (Stockemer, 2019), [RQ4](#) items are subject to evaluation using the central tendency measurement technique (Stockemer, 2019). Such a descriptive measurement approach is widely used in social studies for gauging respondents' level of agreement towards particular notions and ideas (Stockemer, 2019). In contrast with the linear regression model leading to hypotheses' confirmation or rejection, the central tendency measurement serves in ranking the raised items according to their mean values – denoting the average score of respondents' answers associated with each (Stockemer, 2019).

In addition to the Likert scale questionnaires used to validate the FGDs' outputs regarding [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#), the survey is set to include a set of categorical questions designated to collect respondents' demographic details – particularly their gender, age and occupational status. As widely recognized in the literature, collecting such information is crucial for running a comprehensive analysis and undertaking a meaningful interpretation of the quantitative data collected (Nardi, 2018).

3.6.2. Choice of the respondents

The sequential mixed-method design employed in [study 3](#) prompts the usage of identical criteria for recruiting the participants over the interrelated qualitative and quantitative

stages (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). As such, the same recruitment standards considered in the FGDs are adopted in the cross-sectional survey, whereby only individuals who are aged between 18 and 40, live in the UK and regularly use TripAdvisor without engaging in it are deemed entitled to taking part in it (see pages 89-90).

An all-inclusive dissemination plan of the recruitment advertisement is pursued as to attain a diverse audience involving individuals from various demographic backgrounds within the pre-defined boundaries. As per Stockemer (2019), securing such a representative sample is vital for making valid inferences about the population under study.

3.6.3. Method of administration

Given the viral and wide-ranging accessibility of online surveys – particularly those addressing internet-oriented individuals such as members of generations Y and Z – the survey is developed via the prominent online survey development software Qualtrics.

In contrast with FGDs substantially consuming participants' time and mental effort, multiple choice surveys are considered much easier to undertake, therefore no monetary incentives are deemed necessary for recruiting respondents (Gray, 2017).

In the course of deploying a widespread and all-encompassing recruitment plan, the snowball sampling technique is followed (Stockemer, 2019). All through this technique, an online recruitment advertisement embedding the survey's rationale and link is issued and distributed across a wide range of online networks similar to those approached in this first phase of the study, whereby members are asked to reshare it with their own network mates and so forth.

The survey's distribution span is initially set for two weeks, which is a fair dissemination period for cross-sectional surveys (Gray, 2017); however, one further week was eventually added up in attempt to cross the threshold of 200 participants – predominantly

recommended for pursuing adequate statistical comparisons and sub-analyses (Kraetschmer et al., 2004). Successfully, the supplementary week served in extending the number of participants to 224.

3.6.4. Ethical considerations

All through developing the survey, a number of key ethical aspects are critically considered. The demographic information section – often known for its sensitivity – is prudently shaped in line with the broad ethical standards followed across professional surveys, whereby all social categories are denoted across the responses options (Nardi, 2018).

Just like in the FGDs study, an information sheet is released (see Appendix 2a), outlining the study nature as well as participants' role, rights and expected input. The sheet was embedded within the online survey for respondents to review and electronically sign by ticking a consent checkbox. As globally advocated, digital consent checkboxes for similar publicly open surveys are judged legally equivalent to electronic signatures (Geier et al., 2021).

Finally, since respondents were free to withdraw from the survey at any stage, the survey settings in Qualtrics were adjusted to solely count completed forms in the final responses' pool. This step is pre-emptively taken to avoid the integration of incomplete forms which would distort the data analysis and inflicts erroneous conclusions (Nardi, 2018).

Before going live, the survey template was reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee at Aston University which has granted it its favourable opinion.

3.6.5. Pre-testing the survey

As with all surveys, it is essential to pre-test the adopted items and to pilot test the whole survey with various users and across different platforms (Nardi 2018). This step not only serves in verifying the relevance and reliability of the questionnaire, but also helps in technically envisioning the overall respondent experience. Overall, the pretesting stage helps improving the survey quality, typically in terms of the questions' formulation and the clarity and lucidity of the whole survey structure (Stockemer, 2019). As generally advocated by researchers, a qualitative assessment of the survey draft is first executed via protocol interviews with a number of survey-design experts, knowledgeable people in the research area, and random people from the targeted population (Lee and Lings 2008). The goal of the interviews is to gather relevant feedback and recommendations and to practically reflect them over the survey draft before proceeding onto the pilot test stage.

Apart from the raw items exclusively deriving from the FGDs' findings, the survey questionnaire comprises of existing items that have already been tested and validated by previous researchers, hence, a minimal number of interviewees is deemed satisfactory (Hunt et al., 1982). As such, two researchers who are experts in the researched topic as well as in designing surveys are contacted, alongside three research fellows who meet the criteria of the targeted population.

Whilst the general feedback received from the interviewees was significantly positive, Table 3.3 summarizes a set of insightful recommendations that were considered and respectively reflected upon the final draft of the survey (see Appendix 2b).

Table 3.3. Key takeaways of the survey's pretesting stage.

Content takeaways	Structure takeaways
Adding a self-developed audio-visual overview of the TripCollective program at the beginning of the survey, instead of inviting respondents to check the program's overview page by themselves on TripAdvisor's website	Allocating one checkbox for all the statements in the consent page, instead of one statement for each
Adding an explanatory statement before each set of items	Relocating the section of the demographic questions at the end of the survey
Customizing the thankful statement at the end of the survey, and making it feel more cheerful and personal	Adding a progress bar that synchronously reflects respondents' progress while completing the survey
Adding an example to statement.2 of question.4 to further clarify the designated notion (see page 264)	

While most of the recommendations were swiftly reflected onto the final survey draft, producing the video was a bit of a challenge, since preparing a comprehensive and brief overview of the TripCollective program entailed a lot of training and a sequence of recording trials. Once suitably fulfilled, the video was subject to review by the interviewees and the ethics committee who advocated it with no reservations.

Following the protocol interviews, the survey draft was revised and ready for testing throughout a pilot study. In this respect, nine individuals meeting the initial sampling criteria were invited to complete the survey and provide their feedback. While all the respondents denoted a comfortable experience, two of those who accessed the survey from their mobile devices suggested revising the mobile version as to facilitate a smoother surfing experience. Correspondingly, the mobile-friendly feature was enabled in the survey's settings.

Finally, the time that the respondents spent while completing the survey – as automatically detected by the software – was reviewed. Although some respondents

spent a relatively longer time than others, the average time detected for completing the survey was 6:47 minutes. Accordingly, a message featuring an estimated completion time of 4 to 5 minutes – excluding the 2 mins video watch – was communicated at the beginning of the survey. Eventually, highlighting such a relatively short completion time at the beginning of the survey is foreseen to positively impact the number of respondents and the rate of completed forms (Nardi, 2018).

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter delineates the methodology framework of the thesis following the research onion approach developed by Saunders et al. (2016). It first begins by outlining the adopted research philosophy, which comprises a subjective ontological stance incorporated with a compatible pragmatic epistemology. The pragmatic epistemology – typically entailing abductive reasoning – involves a mixed-method research design that flexibly deals with the disparate types of questions raised, following the grounded theory strategy. Post tackling the first research question with a systematic literature review, the second question is carried out through a content analysis study of selected threads in Giffgaff's gamified social program Charity Nominations. In this respect, both qualitative and quantitative approaches are concurrently used for collecting and analysing the data in the course of establishing an all-inclusive exploratory review. The third and fourth research questions are then jointly tackled by sequentially addressing lurkers of TripAdvisor's gamified program, using a series of FGDs and a cross-sectional survey. Alongside demonstrating the practical procedures of the designated research methods, this chapter covers the key ethical considerations associated with each.

Over the next chapters, the analytical results and reported findings of the collected data in study 2 and study 3 are shared and discussed.

Chapter 4. Study 2: The influence of the social interactions' dynamic on online users' engagement in CSR support activities in a gamified community

4.1. Introduction

This chapter carries the second study in this research addressing [RQ2](#). The designated question aims to explore the influence of the *social interactions* dynamic on online users' engagement in *CSR support activities* – a fifth type of BVCC poorly addressed in the reported literature. In this respect, a content analysis study of archival discussions in Giffgaff's gamified social program Charity Nominations is pursued. Post providing a thorough overview of the biannual program which was initially launched in 2010 (section 4.2), the study's method and materials are reviewed (section 4.3), the collected data are analysed, and the findings are reported (section 4.4). The study's output is then discussed, encompassing its implications and limitations (section 4.5), before ultimately concluding with an all-inclusive summary (section 4.6).

4.2. The Charity Nominations program: An overview

Giffgaff is a British mobile network operator, distinguished from its rivals by almost entirely relying on its own customers in running its day-to-day marketing activities and customer service operations, with zero branches operating over the country (Giffgaff, 2022). In the course of running and sustaining its crowdsourced business, Giffgaff promotes a set of BVCC activities throughout its online platform, which incorporates a wide range of game design elements. All over the platform, Giffgaff members get progressively promoted for contributing to *customer service*, *insights sharing* and *random task* activities. *Customer service* activities mainly involve supporting other members of the online community by answering their questions and resolving their

enquiries, whereas *insights sharing* and *random task* activities respectively imply the submission of innovative ideas, and the execution of sales activities by ordering and delivering sim cards to new customers (Giffgaff, 2022).

In addition to the aforementioned co-creation activities, the company implements a novel line of BVCC in relation to CSR. All through this line – denoted in this study as *CSR support* – Giffgaff members are not only encouraged to co-fund charities, but also to genuinely lead the company's donation campaigns. The prominent program in this respect is called Charity Nominations, recurrently occurring at the mid and the end of each year. Over each season of the denoted program, members of the Giffgaff community get invited to nominate local charities, out of which five are ultimately picked by the company according to their total number of nominations raised. As to secure a fair donation output, the five winning charities are then subject to voting via email by Giffgaff's wider audience of subscribers, for the sake of ranking them in line with the following donation distribution scheme:

- 1st charity: Receives 40% of the total donations raised in the program.
- 2nd charity: Receives 30% of the total donations raised in the program.
- 3rd charity: Receives 15% of the total donations raised in the program.
- 4th charity: Receives 10% of the total donations raised in the program.
- 5th charity: Receives 5% of the total donations raised in the program.

Following the nomination and voting stages, all Giffgaff's members are requested to choose between the option of liquidating their payback points collected from their previous co-creation activities, or donating them to the winning charities. For those opting for the second option, their donations will be automatically paid by Giffgaff to the five winning charities according to the priorly defined scheme. In turn, the mobile company commits to grant the same amount of money that is collectively donated by its members to the same winning charities following the same donation scheme.

Table 4.1 outlines the four types of co-creation activities supported throughout the platform, along with the game design elements promoting them, following the categorization developed in the literature review chapter (see section 2.4.4).

Table 4.1. Giffgaff's BVCC activities and major game design elements promoting them.

Game Mechanics	Game Dynamics	BVCC activities
Points; Badges	Intangible rewards	Customer service: Addressing members' questions and enquiries. Insights sharing: Suggesting innovative ideas to the company. Random task: Ordering and delivering sim cards to new customers. CSR support: Nominating, voting and donating to local charities.
Payback incentives (cash; mobile credits; donations)	Tangible rewards	
Social threads	Social interactions	
Leaderboard; Ranking schemes	Competition	
Missions; Timeframes	Challenge	
Prompt notifications	Motivational stimulus	
Narratives; Special emojis	Aestheticism	

Out of the wide range of game dynamics promoting Giffgaff's BVCC activities, *CSR support* – in particular – is driven by three key dynamics, namely: *social interactions*, *aestheticism* and *competition*. This is respectively due to the fact that members openly discuss their proposed charities over the social threads of the Charity Nominations' program, use a wide range of vibrant emojis to appraise their mates' posts, and ultimately vote for the charities they favour out of the winning list. As priorly expounded in the developed MDPM framework (Figure 2.4), *aestheticism* is mainly designated to raise online users' enjoyment and immersion, whereas *competition* is fundamentally associated with triggering their psychological desire of achievement, competence and recognition. However, given the array of social values that are found mediating *social interactions'* influence on online users' intrinsic motivation to engage in BVCC (see Table

2.3), this study strives to unravel those particularly prompting them to engage in CSR *support* activities. Accordingly, members' profiles and interactions in six selected seasons of the Charity Nominations program are comprehensively reviewed, in attempt to identify the major social values driving their contributions to this under-examined type of BVCC.

4.3. Method and materials

Six seasons of the Charity Nominations program – respectively occurring in the months of May and November of the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 – were selected as the data sample for this content analysis study out of a long series of seasons primarily launched in 2010. The reason for choosing the last six seasons of the program at the time this study was undertaken is due to their consistency in terms of data availability (donations and voting figures), as well as game rules and procedure (nomination procedure; total number of admitted charities, structure of ranking scheme). In fact, these two variables were subject to continuous moderation during the preceding years.

Table 4.2 underlines the key outcomes of the six seasons as shared by the qualified admins of the program, encompassing the total number of votes casted by Giffgaff members during the ranking stages, as well as the total amounts donated to the winning charities by both the company and its customers.

Table 4.2. Key outcomes of the Charity Nominations program for the years '20, '21, '22 (Giffgaff, 2022).

	Number of winning charities	Number of votes casted at the ranking stage	Amount of payback points donated to the winning charities	Amount matched by Giffgaff	Total amount donated to the winning charities
Half 1 – 2020	5	11,213	£31,790	£31,790	£63,580
Half 2 – 2020	5	10,619	£30,106	£30,106	£60,212
Total – 2020	10	21,832	£61,896	£61,896	£123,792
Half 1 – 2021	5	8,659	£20,960	£20,960	£41,920
Half 2 – 2021	5	9,657	£25,327	£25,327	£50,654
Total – 2021	10	18,316	£46,287	£46,287	£92,574
Half 1 – 2022	5	13,127	£21,103	£21,103	£42,206
Half 2 – 2022	5	14,430	£16,336	£16,336	£32,672
Total – 2022	10	27,557	£37,439	£37,439	£74,878

In the course of exploring the social values driving Giffgaff members to actively engage in the gamified program, a thorough review of the interactors' profiles was first pursued, particularly to identify the badges they already hold. Although this mechanic is not part of this particular program's gamified system, interactors' badges – mainly those acquired out of their *customer service* co-creation activities – are prospected to give an indication of their social orientations.

Giffgaff's platform incorporates three types of badges that are earned in recognition of the help and support members provide to each other, namely: Buddy, Educator and Senior Educator (Giffgaff, 2022). Following a frequency analysis of the number of badge(s) held by the program's interactors over the six researched seasons, less than 10% of the contributors in each thread were found holding at least one of the three reported badges. Subsequently, interactors' badge was dismissed from the prospective list of units-of-analysis for this study, given their evident lack of significance.

On the other hand, interactors' assessment of each other's posts using responsive emojis such as heartpulses, rainbows, thumbups and celebrating Tadas were equally dismissed from the analysis process despite their significant social connotations. This is due to the incapability of identifying the profiles exerting those aesthetic responses, and hence, the impossibility of gauging their prevalence – which could possibly be initiated by just a few members.

As a result, only members' written posts were selected as the unit of analysis for this study, given its acknowledged relevance and measurability (Krippendorff, 2018).

While social discussion forums are prevalently present across online platforms and communities, social interactions in Giffgaff's social threads are characterized by their core association with gameful features such as aesthetic emojis, redeemable payback points and competitive aspects involving counting and voting activities. As outlined by Werbach and Hunter (2015), when integrally incorporated in a gamified environment, and organically correlated with a range of game design elements intended to promote motivation, social interactions turn out to be a core part of the gameful experience. On the other hand, whilst many of the members' posts consist of independent statements, these are yet recognized of interactive nature, as they promptly fall within the organic flow of the rolling discussions. As such, both independent and responsive posts were deemed part of members' social interactions.

In the course of analysing members posts across the six social threads, the prevalent content analysis process developed by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) – illustrated in Figure 3.1 – was pursued. All through this process, a full immersion in the adopted content is first carried, before embarking on coding the prominently detected meanings and patterns, which in turn are subject to rational categorization, abstraction, and reporting. As the researched content embeds hundreds of posts, the analysis was processed over the qualitative data analysis software NVivo, so as to secure a relevant and accurate data collection process (Hai-Jew, 2017).

4.4. Analysis and results

All over the first stage of the analysis process, the full discussions of the six allocated threads of the program were thoroughly reviewed in the course of obtaining a holistic sense out of their content (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Unsurprisingly, a significant passion onto nominating, voting and co-funding charities was explicitly touched among the interactors of the six threads.

The total number of contributors and communicated posts in each thread is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Total number of contributors and their uploaded posts over the six discussion threads

Thread season	Number of contributors	Number of posts
Half 1 – 2020	130	191
Half 2 – 2020	94	158
Half 1 – 2021	58	105
Half 2 – 2021	108	180
Half 1 – 2022	57	75
Half 2 – 2022	76	97
Total	523	806

As to measure the relevance and generalizability of the collected data, a thorough review of the posts' initiators was undertaken (Hai-Jew, 2019). With the exception of three admin profiles holding over 25 posts each, the 523 interactors shaping the 806 posts across the six threads were found correspondingly associated with 389 independent profiles. Thereby, no threat of profile dominance was envisioned.

As proposed over the adopted framework, the second stage of the analysis process entails the progressive creation of open codes that reflect particular patterns and

meanings implicitly or explicitly detected all the way through reading users' posts. In this respect, seven generic nodes embracing all different types of coded posts were ultimately concluded. Table 4.4 delineates the seven developed nodes along with samples of related quotes extracted from the six discussion threads.

Table 4.4. Generated nodes along with their sample quotes extracted from the six discussion threads.

Node name	Half 1 – 2020	Half 2 – 2020	Half 1 – 2021	Half 2 – 2021	Half 1 – 2022	Half 2 – 2022
Recommending charities	My suggestion is "Ourmala", it's a UK charity focused on refugees and asylum seekers that provides yoga and meditation, as well as hot meals, travel refunds, English teaching, education and health services.	My nomination is the children's mental health charity Place2be. They offer support throughout the UK to children and young people experiencing mental health problems.	British Lung Foundation. Support and research for all types of lung conditions.	I'd like to nominate the Mayhew, an animal welfare charity working with cats, dogs and communities; the charity also works internationally, training animal welfare workers and running neutering and vaccination programmes abroad.	The Big Issue, because they help homeless people.	I recommend Mencap, supporting people with learning disabilities and Autism.
Expressing emotional appreciation	It's always nice to see the charity nominations thread up and running now. It is hard to choose one of those eligible charities . All are worthy of a change, so whoever wins, it will certainly help good causes greatly indeed :)	Happy to see so many charities listed. Looking forward the donation :)	Thank you [X] for your support. Nice photo. We have muntjac in our local woods too. It's hard to beat being in a wood hearing only birdsong.	So lovely I do enjoy looking after horse's and donkeys whenever I can, I also admire people who dedicated time to look after animals as they do need a voice to protect them.	Love this charity nomination thing that giffgaff have going on.	Great stuff this Giffgaff charity donation. Now just need to have a think of who I would like to nominate
Asking a question	When do nominations close?	I can't believe I missed this. Is this the end of year that I choose who I donate the money to or is this something different?	What happens If more than one from the list end up in the top 5 charities?	Has there been a mistake? In the feedback thread both you and [X] state quite clearly that UK Men in Sheds would be in the tie breaker vote but here it's not included.	How do we do that??	Which is the one of the previous receivers that are eligible for nominations please. Is it Changing Lives?
Answering a question	Hi [X]. I hope you are well. We should be closing nominations on the 25 th May which is next Monday.	All the information is here [Link].	Great question [X], our thinking around this is that if we did have more than 1 charity nominated from that list then we should count the charity with the most votes. In the event of a tie, we would go with the charity that was nominated first.	I can see where the confusion has come from, we only allow one charity to go through if they have received funds in the past.	Hi [X]. At this stage it is just nominations for charities you can choose to nominate your own charity or pick a charity another member has already nominated.	There is nothing new about this. As the link shows, the previous nominations thread was worded the same.
General thoughts/Info	Unfortunately, many schools don't know how to help a dyslexic pupil in their class. I could write a book of what my son has had to endure from teachers throughout his school years.	Sorry but it looks like only registered charities can be nominated. If William's Fund isn't a registered charity then you will have to nominate Oxford Hospitals' Charity instead ;)	This might just be the hardest choice I've ever seen for a while...	Hi. If your post was intended to support Rennie Grove Hospice Care would you please state so in the post as without the words Rennie Grove Hospice Care it won't count as a nomination.	Hello all, I'm really pleased to announce that we now have our final figures that each charity will receive after our lovely members donated their Payback to these very worthwhile causes.	Hello, don't know yet my payback always goes to local animal shelters but dogs might be a pointless vote this time, thinking cap on.
Backing viewpoints	I'd like to vote to Restless too!!	I know what you mean. And my nomination goes for British dyslexia association for the same reason.	I would like to vote for the Woodland Trust for the same reasons as others above.	Very dear to my heart, I second that please.	I support your charity nominations for UK Men's Sheds Association. I wish you success on this occasion.	It's mind blogging that it's a charity isn't it? Great nomination!
Complaining	I am a little concerned to see that some members who have only joined Giffgaff within the last day or two have nominated a particular charity. As there are a few of them doing this, it appears they have only joined for the purpose of getting that charity nominated.	N/A	The above paragraph is listed below the charities that have previously won but are now re-eligible for nomination. It reads as if you're telling members not to nominate them. I suggest this paragraph is deleted!	This is very confusing! According to the pie chart there are four winners and seven in equal fifth place on two points, is that correct. If not, the pie chart should be reconfigured. I assume only eligible charities are included within the chart?	N/A	N/A

As delineated in Table 4.4, the first node created is labelled *Recommending charities*, referring to hundreds of posts chiefly consisting of charity nomination and promotion.

The second node issued is labelled *Expressing emotional appreciation*, denoting a large number of posts merely dedicated to endorsing the program and greeting contributors' input.

Next, given the considerable number of informative posts entailing questions, answers and general thoughts and information raised by the program's contributors, three nodes are respectively introduced and coded *Asking a question*, *Answering a question* and *General thoughts/Info*.

On the other hand, the remarkable support shown by many members towards suggestions raised by others, led to the creation of a sixth node titled *Backing viewpoints*.

Lastly, the dissatisfaction and objection of a number of members towards some of the raised content in three of the six covered threads resulted in releasing a seventh and final node labelled *Complaining*. Eventually, all the posts detected in this regard respectively enquire charities' eligibility and the transparency of the counting process.

All the way through theoretically abstracting the detected findings, comparable nodes with convergent concepts and notions were subject to regrouping under all-embracing categories. In this respect, the nodes *Asking a question*, *Answering a question*, and *General thoughts/Info* were grouped together under one category named *Interacting with fellows*, given their mutual denotation of ideas' interchangement between fellow members. However, all the other nodes were deemed autonomously reflecting separate patterns, and were thus kept independent.

Despite the open-ended debate among scholars regarding the relevance and applicability of reliability tests in qualitative research – which are interpretivist-based in nature (O'Connor and Joffe, 2020) – the Subjective Assessment method was employed as to undertake a provisional appraisal of the reliability of the established coding. This method was chosen over the Percent Agreement method and the Cohen's Kappa

reliability method, since the core objective of the testing is to validate the representability of the developed nodes, rather than scrutinizing their rates of accuracy (Silverman, 2011). Accordingly, the set of data was shared and peer-reviewed by a qualitative researcher who replicated the coding process using the same suggested nodes, as to evaluate their overall representability. Despite the occasional occurrence of coding discrepancies – typically related to posts that are divergently interpreted as being part of the *Interacting with fellows* node and the *Backing viewpoints* node – these were subject to consensual re-coding following a constructive discussion (Silverman, 2011). Examples of such controversial posts typically consist of stand-alone texts and emojis, which were carefully reviewed within their tight contexts.

Ultimately, all seven nodes were agreed to be consistently representative of the designated content, and no recoding strategy was deemed required.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the quantified distribution of the total number of posts, independently distributed among the five developed categories following the Subjective Assessment phase as computed on NVivo.

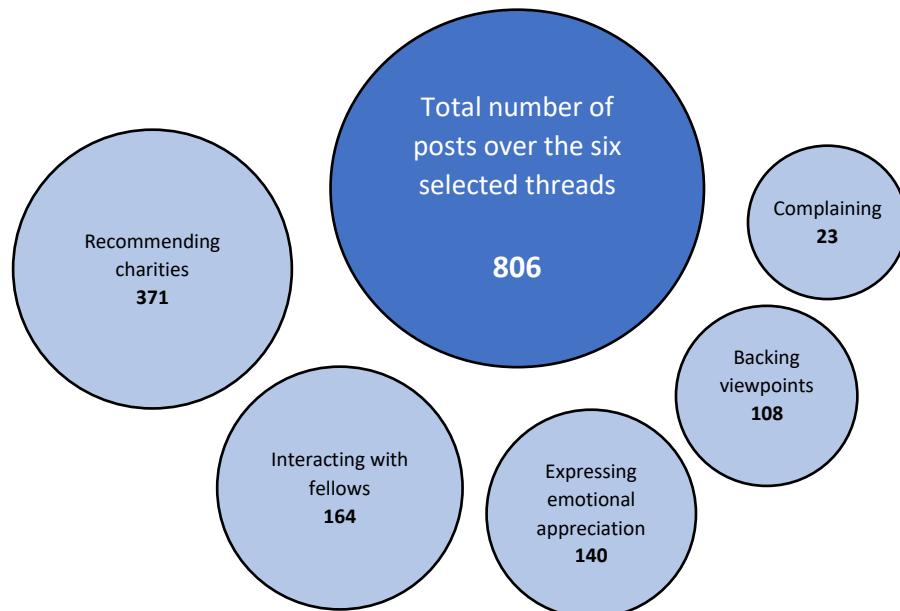


Figure 4.1: Posts' distribution across the five developed categories.

Next, each of the five designated categories was theoretically abstracted using a corresponding variable mined from the literature. While the second and fourth ranked categories – namely, *Interacting with fellows* and *Backing viewpoints* – were respectively linked to the Social Relatedness and Social Influence variables, prevalently rooted in the gamification literature, theorizing the remaining categories was subject to deep research in the Marketing and CSR literatures. As a result, five reflective variables were elected as presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Theoretical abstraction of the five developed categories.

Category	Theoretical abstract	Definition
Recommending charities	Altruism	Altruism is the ultimate yield of the Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis, and denotes individuals' goal of protecting or promoting the welfare of others (Batson et al., 2015).
Interacting with fellows	Social Relatedness	Deriving from the Self-Determination Theory, social relatedness refers to the sense of belonging and connection to other individuals in a particular group or community (Ryan and Deci, 2017).
Expressing emotional appreciation	Empathy	Empathy represents the predictor variable of the Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis, and is defined as the emotion that triggers an altruistic motive (Batson et al., 2015).
Backing viewpoints	Social Influence	The Social Influence Theory argues that individuals can be highly influenced by the ideas and actions of others, which in many cases could represent the social norm (Turner, 1991).
Complaining	Complaining Behaviour	As defined in the Model of Consumer Complaining Behaviour, complaint is the explicit expression of dissatisfaction towards a particular product or service (Blodgett and Granbois, 1992).

Given the insignificant number of complaining posts – most of which being initially raised by a handful number of participants in only three out of the six selected threads – it was decided to omit the *Complaining Behaviour* variable from the study outcomes over the final stage of the analysis process. Besides its limited occurrence, the withdrawal

decision was equally emphasized by the nature of the final stage, which is dedicated to merely report the social values driving contributors' willingness to engage in the Charity Nominations program. As such, the designated variable was dismissed given its lack of significance and relevance – mutually representing an essential criteria of outcome reporting in content analysis studies (Neuendorf, 2017).

Based on the grounded theoretical variables revealed in this study, a proposed theoretical model is presented in Figure 4.2. In the proposed model, each of the adopted variables – manifestly reflecting an independent motivational value as spotted in the literature (see Table 2.2) – represents an autonomous social driver of online users' contribution to *CSR support* activities. While Social Relatedness and Social Influence are conceived to have a direct effect on online users' motivation to engage in *CSR support* activities, Empathy's effect is perceived mediated by Altruism, in line with the pertinence of the inveterate Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis (Batson et al., 2015). According to this predominantly validated hypothesis, it is patently affirmed that Empathy – defined as "the other-oriented emotional response elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone in need" (Batson et al., 2015, p. 1) – represents the ultimate driver of Altruism, which refers to the motivational state of reducing that need (Batson et al., 2015).

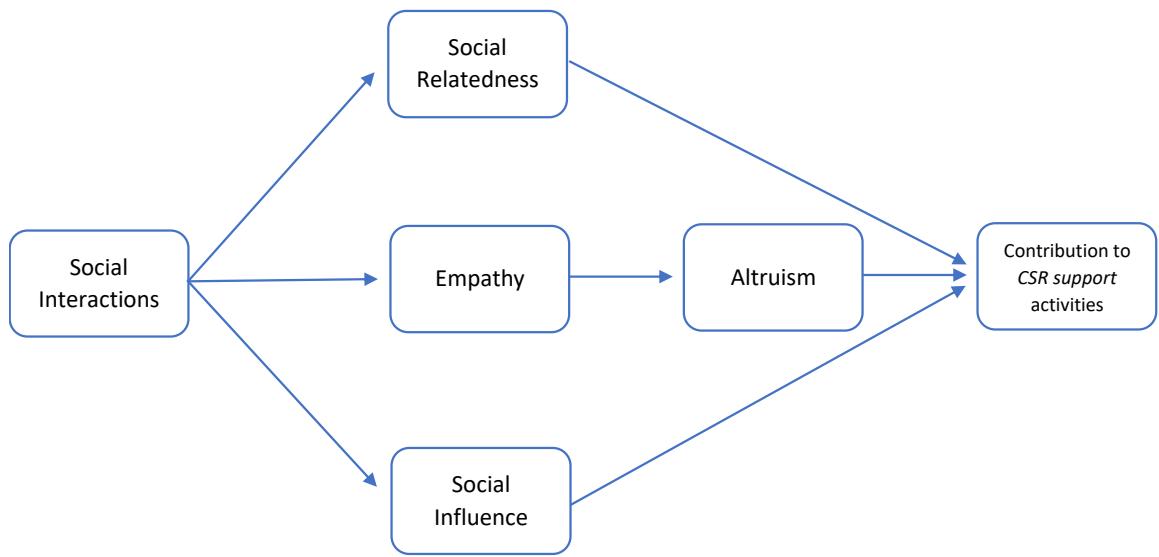


Figure 4.2. Motivational Drivers in Gamified Social Programs.

4.5. Discussion

In this section, the study findings are interpreted in light of their theoretical and practical implications, alongside outlining a couple of inevitable limitations.

4.5.1. Results interpretation

This study demonstrates how gamification not only can motivate online users to contribute to virtual CSR activities – as shown in the scenario simulation experiments conducted by Jun et al. (2020) – but to actual ones too. All through the Charity Nominations program mainly embedding the game dynamics of *social Interactions*, *competition* and *aestheticism*, Giffgaff members show an outstanding eagerness to recommend, vote and donate their payback points to local charities.

Upon analysing the threads' posts of the last six seasons of the program at the time this study was pursued, Giffgaff's contributing members are found significantly driven by four

social values, namely: Social Relatedness, Social Influence, Empathy and Altruism. As suggested by the Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis, the last two variables are significantly interrelated, with the former often triggering the latter (Batson et al., 2015).

In turn, Social Relatedness – typically reflected through members' involvement in raising enquiries, answering questions, and sharing general thoughts and information – reflects contributors' willingness to build bonds with their fellows. According to the Self-Determination Theory, such a social desire represents a major psychological factor that sparks individuals' intrinsic motivation to engage in external actions – such as *CSR support* activities (Ryan and Deci, 2017).

Lastly, the remarkable influence of many contributors over the choices and judgments made by their fellows, suggests a considerable role of the Social Influence variable in driving the flow of the interactive discussions. Whilst this variable is moderately considered across the papers examined in the literature review chapter, this study presents it as a key motivational aspect mediating gamification's influence on customers' engagement in *CSR support* activities.

Besides Empathy, Altruism, Social Relatedness and Social Influence, a few posts are found associated with a complaining behaviour towards the programs' procedure and outcomes; however, these were discarded from the study's reported results due to their insignificant occurrence and their irrelevance to the purpose of the study. As emphasized by Sibai et al. (2013), similar conflicts are often inherited in the nature of online communities due to many posters' intrinsic tendency towards drama.

4.5.2. Theoretical implications

The study outcome demonstrates the effectiveness of gamification – particularly *social interactions* – in promoting an under-researched type of BVCC, hereby labelled *CSR support*. Since online users of various individual attitudes and values are believed to engage in sustainability-aligned behaviour typically when assembled in groups

(Champniss et al., 2016), the designated game dynamic represents a vital tool for supporting the efficiency of such collective programs. Besides Social Relatedness, Social Influence, and Altruism, Empathy represents a poorly reviewed variable that is found significantly mediating the effect of *social interactions* on online users' engagement in BVCC. Although it might have limited influence on individuals' motivation to undertake the four types of BVCC previously reported in the SLR study, it certainly represents a prominent psychological factor evoking their intrinsic motivation to contribute to *CSR support* activities. Building on its prevalently acknowledged role in shaping individuals affective, cognitive and behavioural stance towards social work practice (King, 2011), empathy is hereby found significantly triggered by their social interactions in the first place.

In sum, users' tendency to social collaboration, and their manifested altruism driven by their empathy towards goodwill, significantly contribute to the existing theoretical grounding of the designated context – mainly underpinned by the Relationship Management Theory and the Situational Theory of Public Solving (Lee et al., 2020). While the two aforementioned theories are prevalently used in understanding the act of social value co-creation from the respective contexts of organization-public relationships and social-case particularities, the newly detected variables highlight the critical role of essential psychology aspects. In addition to the characteristics of the social case being promoted, and the strength of individuals' relationship with the organization sponsoring it, this study associates human motivation to engage in *CSR support* activities with their psychological tendency to social collaboration, and their level of compassion towards social goodwill.

On the other hand, the study findings emphasize those previously revealed by Jun et al. (2020), who argued that customers' intention to participate in social value co-creation is primarily driven by gameful experiences of behaviour-based reward (where psychological benefit stems from engagement), over gameful experiences of result-based reward (where psychological benefit stems from personal achievements).

This is distinctly traced in this study given the limited number of badge holders detected across the six covered threads, along with the lack of personal hedonic or utilitarian benefits promoted in the program.

4.5.3. Practical implications

Promoting individuals' contributions to *CSR support* has prevalently been recognized as a challenging and laborious mission, typically due to the fact that CSR campaigns are not often considered priorities by the mass of people (Du et al., 2010), as well as humans' scepticism of the impact of their individual contributions on the community (Nguyen, 2021). Besides the intensive integration of *aestheticism* in establishing virtual games that promote *CSR support* activities (Jun et al., 2020), this study sheds light on the valuable role of the *social interactions* dynamic in raising this type of BVCC. By incorporating it with competitive and aesthetic features, *social interactions* is found considerably efficient in motivating individuals' participation in sponsoring, endorsing and funding philanthropic charities, many of which primarily survive on public donations (Blades et al., 2012).

Moreover, launching such social programs is conceived to increase customers' brand attachment (Chamniss et al., 2016). This is manifestly realized in this study with many Giffgaff's users distinctly expressing their pride of being part of the brand's community. Unlike the common relationship established between brand loyalty and brand pride – often referring to the feeling of narcissism and self-esteem (Nandy and Sondhi, 2022) – the designated type of pride is rather driven by the feeling of being part of a socially responsible and philanthropic entity.

On the other hand, an innovative tactic of harnessing the *tangible rewards* dynamic is highlighted in this study, whereby payback points could potentially be used in promoting different types of BVCC through prompting customers to devote them – rather than to profit from them – as is usually the case in gamified systems (Burke, 2016).

4.5.4. Limitations

Despite its original outcome, this study has a couple of limitations. All over the employed methodology, only threads occurring after the outbreak of the Covid pandemic were covered due to the lack of available data and the inconsistency of the program rules over the pre-Covid period. Such a partial coverage prevents comparing the level of customers' engagement in the program before and after this global health crisis – apparently raising people's inclination towards social support activities (Kifle and Adarkwah, 2022). On the other hand, the study only examines contributors' written posts in the program, and does not tackle the *aestheticism* dynamic employed through a wide range of reactive emojis used all over the threads' discussions. In spite of their remarkable input in cheering up the discussions' vibes, such elements were unfortunately impossible to track and validate in the study.

From a conceptual perspective, the study does not examine the weight of each variable shaping the developed theoretical model, and thus, could not gauge the extent to which each one of those variables drives users' motivation to engage in *CSR support* activities. While Social Relatedness and Social Influence are fundamentally associated with the *social interactions* dynamic, users' altruistic behaviour and empathy towards social cases may largely reflect built-in feelings which – although revealed throughout their social interactions – are detached from gamification. As such, it is crucial to acknowledge that users' empathy and altruism towards charity support could be merely facilitated – rather than mediated – by gamification.

4.6. Conclusion

Besides *customer service*, *insights sharing*, *WOM* and *random task*, this study discloses the process over which gamification promotes *CSR support*. Inspired by a previous empirical study in a virtual CSR context, a content analysis of hundreds of posts raised

in an actual CSR context is pursued over the Charity Nominations' gamified program launched by the British mobile network operator Giffgaff. All through the program promoting customers' nomination, voting and co-funding of local charities, contributors are found broadly driven by their empathetic feeling, altruistic attitude, fellows' influence, and the overall sense of relatedness to the online community. Alongside unveiling the aforementioned social values mediating *social interactions'* influence on online users' contribution to *CSR support* activities, the study underlines the positive impact of promoting this type BVCC on customers' satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Chapter 5. Study 3: Unveiling the reasons and potential solutions of gamification's ineffectiveness to engage lurkers in BVCC.

5.1. Introduction

This chapter conveys the qualitative phase of the sequential mixed-method study mutually addressing [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#). While the former question examines *why* gamification fails to engage lurkers in BVCC, the latter attempts to explore *how* such a setback could potentially be tackled. In this respect, lurkers of TripAdvisor's gamified platform are addressed over a series of FGDs that are comprehensively reviewed in this chapter. As justified in the methodology chapter, TripAdvisor is chosen as the study sample given its substantial reliance on gamification in promoting different types of BVCC, as well as due to its global prevalence – making it relatively easy to recruit lurkers out of its millions of users.

Post providing a general overview of the platform's gamified program – so-called TripCollective – (section 5.2), the method and materials employed in pursuing the FGDs are described, the data analysis and results are demonstrated, and an all-inclusive discussion is delivered, before ultimately ending with a conclusion that paves the way for the quantitative phase of the study conveyed over the following chapter (section 5.3).

5.2. The TripCollective program: An overview

TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel guidance platform, with hundreds of millions visiting it every year (Tripadvisor, 2022). Retaining a crowdsourcing model, TripAdvisor primarily relies on its users in running its business' operations, typically by assigning them *customer service* activities – involving answering users' questions, as well as rating, reviewing, and posting photos and videos about destinations and attractions.

Furthermore, the platform endorses *insights sharing* and *random task* activities, respectively implying the insertion of new locations on the platform's map, and the creation and adjustment of articles (Tripadvisor, 2022).

In order to boost its business flow, TripAdvisor has established a gamified program labelled TripCollective to promote users' involvement in the above-stated co-creation activities (Tripadvisor, 2022). All through the designated program – comprehensively reviewed on the [TripCollective Overview²](#) page at TripAdvisor's website – users can earn points, unlock badges, and progress through levels and leaderboards the more they contribute to the platform. Badges explicitly reflect masteries in specific fields, such as the *Hotel Expert*, *Restaurant Expert* and *Attraction Expert* badges, whereas points are variably awarded depending on the weight allocated for each co-creation activity – ranging from 1 point for receiving a *Helpful Vote* from a fellow, to 100 points for writing a review. Respectively, the more points are collected, the higher levels and rankings are attained.

Table 5.1: TripCollective's BVCC activities and major game design elements promoting them.

Game Mechanics	Game Dynamics	BVCC activities
Points; badges	Intangible rewards	
Social threads	Social interactions	Customer service: Answering users' questions.; Rating, reviewing, and sharing photos and videos about destinations and attractions.
Levels	Challenge	Insights sharing: Adding new locations to the platforms' map.
Leaderboard	Competition	Random task: Creating and editing articles.
Prompt notifications	Motivational stimulus	

² Link of the TripCollective Overview page: <https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/TripCollective>

With the latest statistics indicating that lurkers still represent the overwhelming majority of online users (Mousavi and Roper, 2023; Zheng and Beck Dallaghan, 2022), TripAdvisor would certainly comprise a large number of users belonging to this segment, despite its persuasive gameful environment. While TripCollective is "an enhanced contributor programme" that is introduced to promote the engagement of everyone visiting the platform (TripAdvisor, 2022), it is assumed to particularly motivate those missing the inherent incentive of posting, rating and reviewing, and potentially turning into regular lurkers. Just like the case of comparable gamified programs – typically those launched by crowdsourcing platforms – gamification is primarily intended to maintain the vitality of active users, and to promote the engagement of passive ones, who, once addressed, could substantially leverage the business flow (Feng et al., 2018; Morschheuser et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020). As a result, this study seeks to identify the reasons behind the program's failure to engage passive users, as well as the measures that could potentially be taken in order to increase its appealingness from their perspective.

5.3. Method and materials

Post developing the recruitment advertisement of the FGDs – thoroughly covering the objective of the research study and the criteria and benefits of candidates' participation, a recruitment campaign was pursued over a three-week period. As delineated in the methodology chapter, this timeframe is deemed typical for reaching out to an adequate number of potential candidates, while treasuring those already admitted at early stages (Hennink, 2013). As a result, twenty people matching the sampling criteria were enrolled. As to ensure crafting consistent and representative groups – with each ideally comprising 5 to 8 participants (Krueger and Casey, 2014) – two groups of seven and one group of six were formed – each involving participants of various age, gender and occupational status (Cyr, 2019). However, the absence of two participants in one of the

groups dropped the number of the attendees to five, yet the number was still deemed acceptable for pursuing the session. A general description of the three groups, involving the number of participants alongside their demographic characteristics is presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: General characteristics of the focus groups' members.

	Group A	Group B	Group C	Total
Number of participants	6	5	7	18
Generation distribution	Generation Y: 5 Generation Z: 1	Generation Y: 5 Generation Z: 0	Generation Y: 2 Generation Z: 5	Generation Y: 12 Generation Z: 6
Genders' distribution	Males: 4 Females: 2	Males: 4 Females: 1	Males: 4 Females: 3	Males: 12 Females: 6
Occupational distribution	Students: 3 Employees: 2 Unemployed: 1	Students: 2 Employees: 3 Unemployed: 0	Students: 4 Employees: 2 Unemployed: 1	Students: 9 Employees: 7 Unemployed: 2

Following the guide of the FGDs' hourglass design (Hennink, 2013), the three FGDs mutually consisted of six key stages summarized in Figure 5.1. Just after introducing myself as the researcher and the moderator of the session, participants were given a general outline of the research study. This mainly covered the purpose and the prospective outcome of their participation as described in the information sheet. Subsequently, a live overview of the TripCollective program was provided by referring to its official page on TripAdvisor's website. The overview summarizes the concept and model of the program, including the roles assigned to its contributors, and the game design elements promoting them. Thereafter, the participants were invited to share their thoughts about the first topic of the discussion, which enquires the reasons behind their disengagement in the program, before asking them to share their suggestions to further improve its appealingness. Ultimately a conclusive summary recapping the main points

of the sessions was provided as to refresh participants' memories and open the scope for final questions, contributions and follow-ups. (See FGDs' transcripts in Appendix 1d).

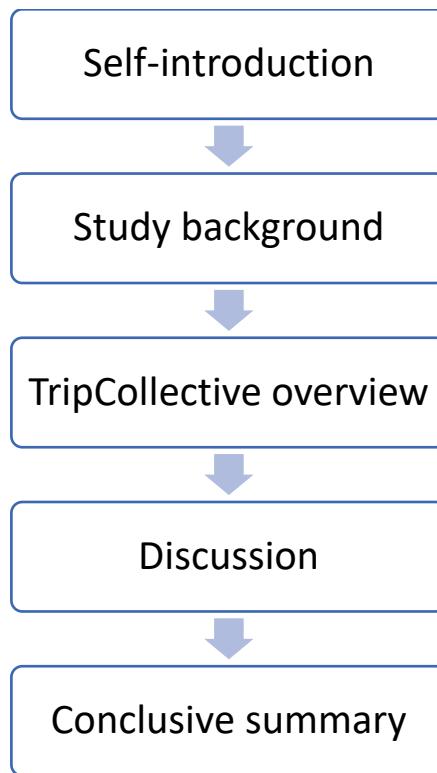


Figure 5.1. Key stages of the FGDs.

One of the unsurprising challenges encountered over the three sessions is the reluctance of some participants to engage in the sessions (Krueger and Casey, 2014). However, those participants were addressed by gently inviting them to share their views, and were subject to follow-up questions as to encourage them to further elaborate their ideas. Such tactics are commonly followed in this type of interactive studies, as they substantially help in tackling interviewees' hesitancy through gradually motivating them to engage in the ongoing conversation (Krueger and Casey, 2014). The follow-up technique was equally used with some active participants whose ideas necessitated more illumination. Indeed, this served not only in clarifying their thoughts, but also in

generating sub-threads which led to more insights being attained (Cyr, 2019; Hennink, 2013; Krueger and Casey, 2014).

On the other hand, although the three discussions were automatically transcribed via Microsoft Teams' robotic engine, the transcriptions' level of accuracy was expectedly modest, urging for a long-winded manual scrutinization and editing of the transcripts while carefully reviewing the recorded sessions (Bokhove and Downey, 2018).

Post accomplishing the transcription stage, the transcripts were subject to a comprehensive analysis following Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis process (2006), previously outlined in the methodology chapter (Figure 3.2). The first stage in this process entails thoroughly reading the transcripts until becoming pretty familiar with their content. As stressed by Braun and Clarke (2006), a sufficient level of familiarity is only attained at the point where significant patterns and meanings are markedly identified. These patterns and meanings are then formally associated with particular nodes in stage 2, which in turn are grouped under broad themes in stage 3, before having them respectively reviewed, defined, and reported in stages 4, 5 and 6.

5.4. Analysis and results

As outlined in the methodology chapter, each session of the FGDs was designated to jointly address the interrelated topics of [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#). This section is hence split into two sub-sections respectively conveying the data analysis and results associated with each question.

5.4.1. Analysis and results – [RQ3](#)

After self-familiarizing with the FGD's recorded contents, all the patterns and key notions associated with the topic of [RQ3](#) were gradually coded under independent nodes while scrutinizing the transcripts on the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. "With these nodes, one can express relationships between concepts or respondents and provide a space where evidence for those relationships can be coded Cyr (2019, p. 121).

As a result, a total number of eight initial nodes were released as presented in table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Primary nodes generated in the second stage of the thematic analysis process alongside a sample of their corresponding quotes ([RQ3](#) topic).

Node Name	Sample Quotes
Unfamiliarity with the Program	<p>Group A: "Let's put marketing aside but I haven't been informed enough about it".</p> <p>Group B: "I don't feel there is a lot of touchpoints or engagement features for me to then get involved with it or even be aware of it".</p> <p>Group C: "I'm just discovering it now in the sense that it didn't really have much of an impact, you know, maybe if it had the huge or bigger impact, we would be more aware of it".</p>
Lack of Tangible Benefits	<p>Group A: "It's just not enough to just get these badges because they're not enough incentive, they're not, they're not real".</p> <p>Group B: "There's nothing physical that let me say I'm going to sit down and do this, because I'll be rewarded or uplifted through the gamification process".</p> <p>Group C: "I just go to see the reviews, but I feel as if I wouldn't go on like I said, there's no reward, there's no benefit for the users".</p>
Disutility of the Program	<p>Group A: "What's in it for me if I actually participate? in sharing this information as well, other than I get points?".</p> <p>Group C: "I don't sign into things where you just get points and points and points, and you don't actually know what it means".</p> <p>Group B: "I mean to me it felt like there was just badges and points, but ok, that's really good, but what are there for?".</p>
Lack of Financial Fairness	<p>Group A: "I think everything that we do is based on consensus. Do this for me, and you get this. Do this advertisement for me or this promotion for me and you get 10% off whatever comes out of it. It's an agreement. So, at the end of the day, we just have to make sure that the terms of the agreement are met, so no one will be different".</p> <p>Group B: "You know it is benefiting from peoples' reviews. And it has made a business from people's reviews, so you know it's monetising itself through peoples' reviews. So, there's no reason why it shouldn't reward the people who've left those reviews".</p> <p>Group C: "It's a win-win situation rather than you know, they get the money, and we just get the yellow badge".</p>
Time Consumption	<p>Group A: "If I have the time. I might leave a review, maybe, but there's no reason to spend time to leave a review".</p> <p>Group B: "Yeah, also we, I mean those generations, are busy all the time. You know sometimes we don't have the time or the patience or whatever to sit down and leave a review even if we have had a good meal!".</p> <p>Group C: "There's no incentive for us to stay on the website and share our time. And as you know, time is money"</p>
Effort Prospect	<p>Group A: "There's a lot of work and effort we need to put in to get to this".</p> <p>Group C: "You should go to many restaurants and do a lot of reviews, so maybe you can't because you don't go every day to a restaurant and put a review, you may just go once per week, for example, or whatever, maybe every two months".</p>
Not the Only Program	<p>Group B: "I think one problem that I am personally facing is that there are too many companies probably providing the same service, so to whom should I contribute, to whom should I actually review?".</p>
Unfair Competition	<p>Group C: "When you see all those scores, all those leaderboards, this guy is in the one thousand and the other guy is in the nine hundred. It feels a bit demoralizing to join. You feel like who am I? And you know it's difficult to step in and put your foot in, so it's kind of demoralizing to start up with".</p>

As delineated in Table 5.3, one of the majorly recognized patterns associated with participants' claimed reasons for not engaging in TripCollective refers to the unfamiliarity of many of them with the program, despite being regular users of TripAdvisor. Accordingly, the first node was proposedly labelled *Unfamiliarity with the Program*.

The second identified pattern across the three transcripts is the dissatisfaction of almost everyone with the lack of tangible returns in the program. Hence, the second node was correspondingly named *Lack of Tangible Benefits*.

Furthermore, participants' perceived disutility of the program – which they often link to the lack of tangible benefits – represents the third detected pattern across the three transcripts, leading to a third node denoted *Disutility of the Program*.

Additionally, it was realized that many participants consider that active contributors in the program do not get the portion they deserve out of the profit they generate to TripAdvisor. For them, TripAdvisor's footfall and profits principally derive from the ratings, reviews, articles, photos and videos provided by those contributors – who receive nothing of that profit in return. Therefore, a fourth node was initiated under the name of *Lack of Financial Fairness*.

The last pattern observed across all three FGDs refers to participants' implication of not having enough time to spend on contributing to the program. Accordingly, a fifth node was issued and labelled *Time Consumption*.

In addition to the aforementioned patterns explicitly manifested across all three FGDs, an interesting pattern was identified between members of the first group denoted as group A, and members of the third group denoted as group C. The detected pattern refers to the idea raised by a couple of participants, who envisage that they would have to exert a lot of effort to start getting recognized in the program. As such, a sixth node was issued and dubbed *Effort Prospect*.

Apart from the patterns that were traced across the focus groups, two noteworthy notions were independently and respectively raised and endorsed by participants in the second and third groups. In the second group referred to as group B, a node was created under

the name *Not the Only Program*. The node title articulates the idea raised by some of the group participants, who indicated that they get constantly exposed to similar gamified programs in comparable platforms which they similarly use, and hence cannot participate in all of them. In turn, the eighth node originating from group C was introduced under the name of *Unfair Competition*, which addresses the claimed allegation that new members joining the program do not have a fair chance to compete with existing members already enjoying high records in terms of points, levels and badges.

As defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), the third stage of the thematic analysis process is designated to review the initiated nodes in attempt to regrouping them under a number of inclusive themes wherever possible. Whilst the nodes *Unfamiliarity with the Program*, *Lack of Financial Fairness* and *Not the Only Program* were kept independent, the nodes *Lack of Tangible Benefits* and *Disutility of the Program* were merged together under a theme so-called *Lack of Useful Benefit*. The merging decision derives from the fact that both nodes denote a mutual objection against the absence of tangible benefits that could be of use to the contributors. Similarly, the nodes *Time Consumption*, *Unfair Competition* and *Effort Prospect* were grouped together in one theme holding the title of the last node, since all three nodes principally allude to participants' perceived struggle in participating in the program. Nevertheless, amid the fourth stage of the process – which is dedicated to reviewing and refining the developed themes – the node *Unfair Competition* was withdrawn from the encompassing theme *Effort Prospect* and retained as an independent node. This step was taken simply because the retrieved node is thought to be associated with the *competition* dynamic of the program rather than with the *challenge* dynamic typically related to the other two nodes of the designated theme. As defined in the literature review chapter, while the former dynamic implies users' contest with fellow users, the latter denotes users' pressuring feeling of beating one-self to achieve a pre-defined goal. Furthermore, the reviewal stage entailed the abandonment of the independent theme *Not the Only Program* from the final list of themes, as it is evidently deemed out of TripAdvisor's control.

As a result, the fifth stage which is set for defining the ultimate pool of adopted themes consisted of five themes, namely: *Unfamiliarity with the Program*, *Lack of Financial Fairness*, *Lack of Useful Benefit*, *Effort Prospect* and *Unfair Competition*.

Post completing the five stages of the thematic process, the sixth and final stage consists of producing the findings' report – hereby presented in Table 5.4 – before theoretically abstracting them and having them hypothesized.

Table 5.4. Key reported themes reflecting the reasons of lurkers' disengagement in TripCollective.

Theme	Description
Unfamiliarity with the Program	Limited or no awareness of the program.
Lack of Useful Benefit	The absence of tangible incentives beyond the intangible ones involving points, badges and rankings.
Lack of Financial Fairness	Active contributors are deemed not receiving the share they deserve out of the profit they generate to TripAdvisor.
Effort Prospect	The prospective contribution to the program is predictably associated with considerable effort and time consumption.
Unfair Competition	New contributors are prevented from a fair competition with existing ones already enjoying high records.

Unlike the content analysis study pursued in chapter 4, entailing independent posts that could be easily traced and assessed by a second coder, no reliability test was pursued in the designated thematic analysis process. This is due to nature of the interviews' unframed quotes, making the implementation of such a test difficult and even misleading (Nobre and Ferreira, 2017). The decision was also driven by the triangulated nature of this study, whereby the reported outcomes are subject to validation throughout a subsequent quantitative method.

In line with the designated set of reported themes, a thorough review was conducted over the literature in order to associate each of them with a correspondingly matching construct. In turn, the adopted constructs are set to jointly offer the skeleton of the projected hypotheses. As argued by Hulleman et al. (2010), whilst some of the prospective constructs may typically be used in particular contexts; these might still be selected for the current study as long as their core notions and items do harmoniously fit.

The review ultimately led to the selection of five constructs largely reflecting the core of the generated themes, and were thereby set as the independent variables of the projected hypotheses. Table 5.5 introduces the five adopted constructs along with their definitions.

Table 5.5. Adopted themes and their corresponding constructs mined from the literature.

Theme	Corresponding Construct	Construct Definition
Unfamiliarity with the Program	Brand Unfamiliarity	Originating from the Brand Familiarity construct, "Brand Unfamiliarity refers to the lack of knowledge of the customers towards the brand" (Arora and Neha 2016, p. 912).
Lack of Useful Benefit	Perceived Uselessness	Lying at the opposite spectrum of Perceived Usefulness, which is one of the three constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model, Perceived Uselessness is defined as "an individual's negative assessment or perception about the usefulness of a particular technology or service" (Pal et al. 2019, p. 38538).
Lack of Financial Fairness	Perceived Distributive Injustice	Representing the flip side of the Perceived Distributive Justice construct of the Theory of Justice, Perceived Distributive Injustice refers to the perceived unfair distribution of outcome between relevant stakeholders (Jiang and Wagner, 2015).
Effort Prospect	Effort Expectancy	Extended from the Perceive Ease of Use construct of the Technology Acceptance Model, Effort Expectancy is one of the four constructs of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Model, and is defined as the degree of effort associated with the use of a system (Keong et al., 2012).
Unfair Competition	Perceived Procedural Injustice	In contrast with the Perceived Procedural Justice construct which represents the second pillar of the Theory of Justice, Perceived Procedural Injustice implies the level of unfairness perceived towards the way decisions are made and individuals are treated (Jiang and Wagner, 2015).

On the other hand, since most of participants' suggested reasons for disengaging in the program are explicitly associated with their connoted negative attitude towards participating in it (see Table 5.3), a sixth construct so-called *Negative Attitude* was acquired from the literature and set as the dependent variable of the study.

As plainly implied from the term itself, the construct initially refers to individuals' "negative emotional disposition toward a subject" (Zan and Di Martino 2007, p. 159).

Despite the prevalent use of the extended version of The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) in addressing users' behaviour in comparable contexts (Tamilmani et al., 2021), full adoption of the model's variables in reflection of the developed themes is judged irrelevant. Aside from selecting the Perceived Usefulness and Effort Expectancy variables respectively reflecting the Lack of Useful Benefit and Effort Prospect themes, all remaining constructs – namely: Social Influence, Facilitating Conditions, Hedonic Motivation, Price Value and Habit – are deemed off the subject.

Despite the presumable correspondence between lurkers' perceived Lack of Financial Fairness and Unfair Competition in TripCollective, and the program's Facilitating Conditions, the designated variable of UTAUT2 could not be adopted, as it typically reflects the efficacy of a platform's technical resources and support (Tamilmani et al., 2021) rather than users' inherent feelings towards its overall justice. Likewise, Price Value could not critically reflect lurkers' Perceived Lack of Financial Fairness in TripCollective, despite their mutual financial aspect. This is due to the fact that the former construct primarily refers to users' perceived value for the money they pay (Tamilmani et al., 2018) rather than their perceived value for the effort they exert – such as their contributions to the program.

All the way through developing the hypotheses in accordance with the adopted constructs, five direct causal relationships were respectively initiated between each one them and the dependent variable. Except for the *Brand Unfamiliarity* variable, whereby a speculative hypothesis is generated following the prevalent linkage in the literature between individuals' level of familiarity with a brand and their attitudes towards it (Rhee and Jung, 2019), the four remaining hypotheses promptly derive from the FGDs' findings. On top of their organic generation – promptly stemming from participants' input – each of these hypotheses are comparably exhibited in the existing literature of different disciplines. This refers but is not limited to empirical findings regressing individuals' attitudes towards new technologies to their effort expectancy and level of perceived

usefulness (Chen and Aklikokou, 2020), as well as comparable findings regressing employees' attitude towards organizations to their level of perceived distributive and procedural justice (Ambrose et al., 2007).

Subsequently, the first developed relationship in this study is set to demonstrate a prospective direct influence of lurkers' unfamiliarity with a gamified co-creative program on their negative attitude towards participating in it as follows:

H1 - Lurkers' unfamiliarity with a gamified co-creative program leads to their negative attitude towards participating in it.

On the other hand, the participants' perceived distributive injustice and procedural injustice of the TripCollective program – which they explicitly linked to their negative attitude towards participating in it – respectively led to the second and third hypotheses as below:

H2 - Lurkers' perception of distributive injustice in a gamified co-creative program leads to their negative attitude towards participating in it.

H3 - Lurkers' perception of procedural injustice in a gamified co-creative program leads to their negative attitude towards participating in it.

On the other hand, the direct relationship inferred between lurkers' perceived uselessness of a gamified program and their negative attitude towards participating in it is manifested throughout the fourth hypothesis in this study:

H4 - Lurkers' perceived uselessness of a gamified co-creative program leads to their negative attitude towards participating in it.

Similarly, the direct relationship presumed between the effort lurkers expect to exert in a gamified co-creative program and their negative attitude towards participating in it is exhibited via the fifth generated hypothesis as follows:

H5 - The more effort lurkers expect to exert in a gamified co-creative program, the more negative is their attitude towards participating in it.

In addition to the direct relationships delineated above, two interrelations between two couples of independent variables were framed. These internal associations derive from the implicitly inherited meanings spotted throughout participants' quotes shared under the nodes *Lack of Financial Fairness* and *Unfair Competition* in Table 5.3. All through the designated quotes, lurkers' respectively regress their perceived uselessness and efforts expectations in a gamified co-creative program to the distributive injustice and procedural injustice they perceive in it. The two prospective relationships are thereby hypothesized as follows:

H6 - Lurkers' perception of distributive injustice in a gamified co-creative program leads to their perceived uselessness of participating in it.

H7 - The more procedural injustice lurkers perceive in a gamified co-creative program, the more effort they expect to exert when participating in it.

Correspondingly, two mediating relationships are impulsively inferred out of the combinations of [H2-H4-H6](#) and [H3-H5-H7](#), respectively leading to the last two hypotheses in this study:

H8 - Lurkers' perceived uselessness of a gamified co-creative program mediates the effect of their perceived distributive injustice of the program on their negative attitude towards participating in it.

H9 - The effort that lurkers expect to exert when participating in a gamified co-creative program mediates the effect of their perceived procedural injustice of the program on their negative attitude towards participating in it.

Figure 5.2 below provides a visual illustration of the direct in indirect hypothesized relationships drawn between the five predicting variables and the predicted variable.

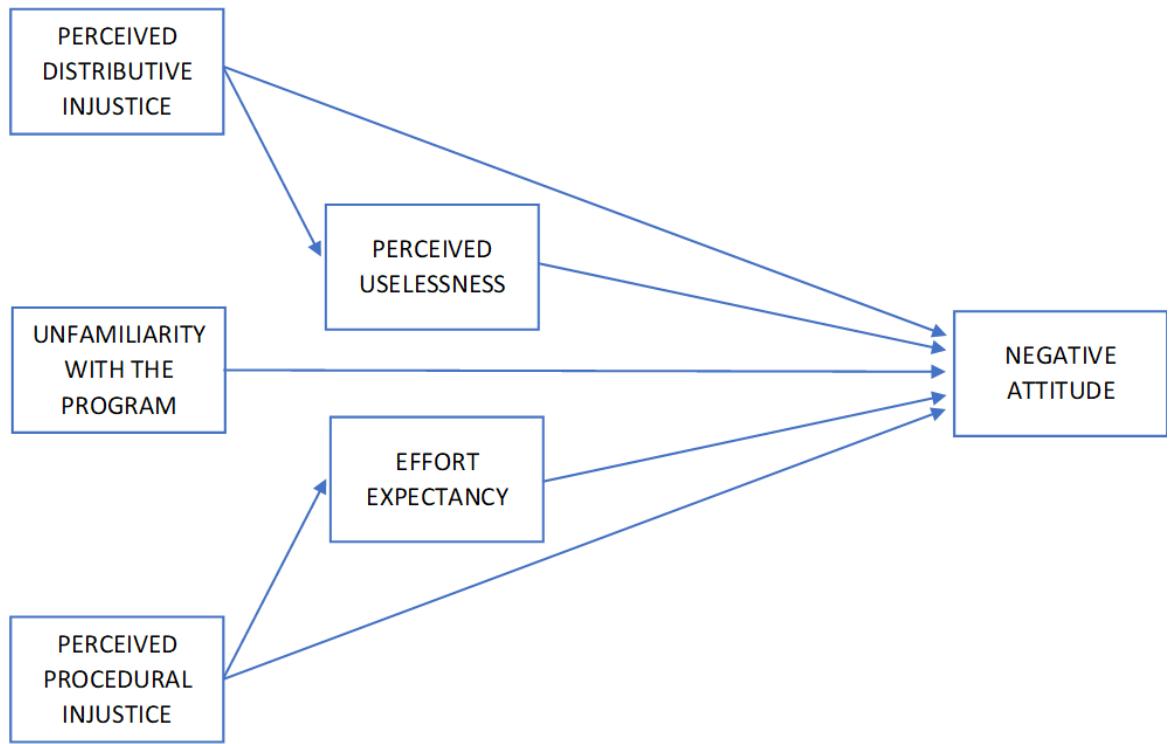


Figure 5.2. Suggested reasons of lurkers' disengagement in gamified co-creative programs.

Prior to validating the designated theoretical framework throughout the quantitative phase of this study in the next chapter, the following sections of this chapter replicate the thematic analysis process with respect to [RQ4](#).

5.4.2. Analysis and results – [RQ4](#)

Following the same thematic process pursued in analysing [RQ3](#) topic in the FGDs, a set of predominant patterns and notions were detected and coded with respect to [RQ4](#) topic as presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Primary nodes generated in the second stage of the thematic analysis process alongside a sample of their corresponding quotes ([RQ4](#) topic).

Node Name	Sample Quotes
Including Tangible Rewards	<p>Group A: "Other things may be better as incentives to motivate me to participate, like a discount voucher or physical prizes".</p> <p>Group B: "I think a monetary incentive always helps you out with everything. So, people would definitely be more inclined to leave reviews and get involved with the gamification side of it, because they want to achieve different levels to receive financial rewards".</p> <p>Group C: "Rewards can be just like a discount for the next visit. It shouldn't be something very precious".</p>
Promoting Active Contributors on Social Media	<p>Group A: "So, for example, if I do get a badge, maybe I get promoted more, maybe they give me like a blog in order to start writing my reviews on and this would be a source of revenue".</p> <p>Group B: "For myself, if I want to contribute, I think from a psychological perspective, I might like to receive more attention from other people or third parties".</p> <p>Group C: "I would like my name to be featured, maybe on Facebook or Instagram or something of that nature, stating you know that this particular individual regularly contributes to our work, and this is how he does it. I mean there is no financial gain for me, but that recognition itself is quite motivating".</p>
Relieving the Progression Scheme	<p>Group A: "If the process itself is easy for me to participate, this may motivate me to participate".</p> <p>Group C: "So yeah, we may still have to contribute a lot harder to have a reward, there should be less steps".</p>
Penalizing Passive Users	<p>Group A: "My first thought which I don't actually think is a good idea, would be to limit the number of reviews that non-members can access. So, I can just read for example three, four, five reviews and then for me to be able to read more reviews, I'll have to write reviews myself".</p> <p>Group B: "I think one way they can use to push people to put reviews and picture is by removing some of the free feature on the website. So, let's say, maybe for example, they move features that you take for granted, and these would then be only available if you contribute somehow to the website".</p>
Soliciting Passive Users	<p>Group A: "The last thing is relying on the goodness of people by putting out a post just to highlight the importance of how putting out reviews and pictures, how that helps".</p>
Advocating Winners to Third Parties	<p>Group B: "If there was any good advice to give to TripAdvisor it might be to create a good relationship between us as customers and probably hotels, or these restaurants, or probably the third parties".</p>
Regularly Releasing New Seasons	<p>Group C: "Like some actual games, they have what we call seasons, and you know, it lasts for one month or three months and after that the leaderboard gets reset, so you re-feel the energy that you are lacking at the moment in going through the process, because you will now have the hope that one day your name might actually be on the top".</p>

As demonstrated in the Table 5.6, the first realized pattern associated with participants' suggested measures to improve the gamified program is unsurprisingly the inclusion of tangible rewards – particularly discounts vouchers. Thus, the first node initiated was labelled *Including Tangible Rewards*.

The second pattern remarkably traced across the three transcripts refers to the idea of prominently featuring the program's most active users throughout TripAdvisor's social networks and channels. As per the participants proposing this idea, such a step would foster active contributors' exposure on social media and help them in building their own advisory blogs. The second node was therefore entitled *Promoting Winners on Social Media*.

In addition to the two aforementioned patterns tracked across the three groups, one further suggestion commonly raised by members of group A and group C was identified. This entails the potential decrease of the number of levels required to progress across the program, in a way that makes it become more reasonable for users with less access to local and international attractions. Accordingly, the third node created was dubbed *Relieving the Progression Scheme*.

On the other hand, a mutual idea was raised by members of groups A and B, suggesting the possible restriction of advantageous features on passive users – such as limiting access to posts, photos and articles – until becoming more active. Correspondingly, a fourth node was released and labelled *Penalizing Passive Users*.

Furthermore, an intriguing notion that was raised and endorsed by a number of participants in group A was added to the pool of nodes. In contrast with penalizing passive users, the notion suggests emotionally soliciting them to contribute to the program, by stressing how their contributions could have a great impact on the society. Respectively, a fifth node was issued under the name *Soliciting Passive Users*.

On the other hand, a noteworthy measure was proposed in group B, calling for TripAdvisor's advocation of active members to third parties – such as hotels and

restaurants – with whom they can build productive relationships. Subsequently, a sixth node was generated and labelled *Advocating Winners to Third Parties*.

The last detected measure was recommended in group C, and implied the need of regularly releasing new seasons in the TripCollective program, so that new users would have an equal chance to compete with existing ones in terms of gathering points and badges, and progressing over levels and leaderboards. Therefore, the last node was initiated under the name *Regularly Releasing New Seasons*.

All the way through producing comprehensive themes in the third stage of the analysis process, the nodes *Promoting Winners on Social Media* and *Advocating Winners to Third Parties* were grouped together under the name of the former, since both nodes imply the action of featuring winners on social media and getting them recognized by both fellow users and commercial parties. However, all the five remaining nodes were deemed independently representing particular themes, and were hence kept autonomous.

Over the next stage dedicated to reviewing the adopted themes, the theme *Penalizing Passive Users* was permanently withdrawn from the pool of themes, due to the disagreement of many participants with it – including those raising it – as it was presumed to be counterproductive as expressed through the following extracted quotes:

"Yes, but the problem is that this can turn against TripAdvisor because I would probably just stop reading the reviews".

"Like Participant.3 said, punishing the users for not contributing will probably benefit the competitors of TripAdvisor for example. So, it's not really viable".

"I think that might get people contributing more, but it's a big risk to take because it could get people to think well, I'll just look at reviews on another site".

"Maybe on the other hand, this might be a problem because it might overtime make the website weaker and less people will be going into it".

Similarly, the theme *Soliciting Passive Users* was discarded from the thematic list, since the impact of such a measure on users' attitude could only be assessed if practically experimented. Hence, it was deemed impossible to speculatively evaluate it in a cross-sectional survey, simply by asking lurkers whether or not they would be persuaded by a pretended emotional campaign they were never exposed to.

Following the revisions made in stage 4, an ultimate thematic pool was considered in stage 5, comprising of four themes, namely: *Including Tangible Rewards*, *Promoting Winners on Social Media*, *Relieving the Progression Scheme*, and *Regularly Releasing New Seasons*.

Fundamentally deriving from the priorly cited stage of the thematic process, the sixth and final stage consists of reporting the study findings, hereby presented in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7. Key reported themes embodying lurkers' suggested measures for improving the appealingness of TripCollective.

Theme	Description
Including Tangible Rewards	Offering tangible benefits for active contributors such as discount vouchers and other financial incentives.
Promoting Winners on Social Media	Prominently featuring winners' profiles on the platform's website and social media channels, making them recognizable by fellow users and commercial parties.
Relieving the Progression Scheme	Revising the progression thresholds to embrace users with less access to local and international attractions.
Regularly Releasing New Seasons	Constantly resetting contributors' scores as to create a fair ground of competition for new entrants.

As expounded in the methodology chapter, the findings of [RQ4](#) – unlike [RQ3](#) – are not followed by a hypotheses' development phase due to the impossibility of hypothesizing speculative propositions (Kelle and Erzberger, 2003). However, the raw themes developed are nonetheless subject to a quantitative assessment using the central tendency measurement technique. As highlighted by Stockemer (2019), this technique is highly useful when opting to gauge respondents' level of agreement towards newly generated ideas.

5.5. Conclusion

The first phase of this study unveils an array of interesting findings addressing lurkers' inherent perceptions towards gamified co-creative platforms. Perhaps, one of the most intriguing findings is the prevalent unfamiliarity with the TripCollective program among the focus group participants, although all of them are regular users of TripAdvisor. Nevertheless – just like their informed peers – those participants who are newly informed of the program still show negative perceptions towards it. While some of those perceptions are associated with the hedonic side of the program, those revolving around the alleged lack of utilitarian value are significantly more prominent. Correspondingly, a set of hedonic-related, and mostly utilitarian-based measures were suggested by the participants to further improve the appealingness of the program in a way they believe could encourage them to start engaging in it. Overall, this phase of the study is merely designated to distil the variables of the grounded theories justifying lurkers' stance and aspirations towards gamified co-creative platforms. Out of a set of limitations associated with the full study – presented in section 6.4.4 – a couple of constraints exclusively related to this phase are worth noting. First, while the number of FGDs reasonably lies within the standard range identified in the methodology chapter, interviewing more groups could have led to wider collection of data. Second, the two sets of output presented in Tables 5.5 and 5.7 – respectively addressing [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#) – incorporate

all the relevant themes evoked by the group participants, with no regard to the level of endorsement associated with each. Yet, this constraint is considerably tackled via the subsequent phase of the study involving a quantitative appraisal of the reported themes. All over the next phase of this study, the theoretical implications, managerial recommendations and conceptual limitations of the full study are discussed in light of the results deriving from the quantitative assessment of the qualitative findings.

Chapter 6. Study 3: Evaluating the detected reasons and potential solutions of gamification's ineffectiveness to engage lurkers in BVCC.

6.1. Introduction

Post undertaking the first phase of the sequential mixed method study – which consists of a set of FGDs – this chapter conveys the second phase of the study, entailing a quantitative assessment of the reported findings using a cross-sectional survey. In this respect, the methods and materials of the quantitative phase are demonstrated (section 6.2), the analytical process and results are reviewed (section 6.3), and an all-encompassing discussion entailing the theoretical implications, managerial recommendations, and limitations of the full study is provided (section 6.4). Finally, a conclusive summary recapping the key outcomes of the overall study is delivered (section 6.5).

6.2. Method and materials

All the way through constructing the survey, a draft was initiated and progressively built over the survey's development software Qualtrics.

As commonly established across research surveys, the first section was set for thanking the respondents for taking part in it, along with informing them of the approximate time needed for completing it (Nardi 2018). Next, in order to ensure that the responders meet the participation criteria and agree on the survey's terms and conditions, a conditional consent form page embedding an electronic copy of the information sheet was added, whereby candidates were requested to confirm having read it and agreed on its terms.

Post checking the consent form box, a [summary video](#)³ of the TripCollective program was added for participants to access and watch before moving forward onto the questionnaire section.



Figure 6.1. Screenshot of the TripCollective overview video embedded in the survey.

All through developing the reflective items of RQ3's adopted constructs in the first phase of the study (see table 5.5), six sets of pre-validated items were carefully chosen from the literature, before having them moderated and implemented in the questionnaire section as to address the designated hypotheses (see pages 135-136). As administered throughout the constructs' initial sources presented in Table 5.5, positively-tailored items were primarily mined for each construct – except for *Negative Attitude* – before having them reversed all over the moderation process. On the other hand, one of the five items selected for the construct *Unfamiliarity with the Program* was omitted throughout the

³ Link of the summary video of TripCollective in the cross-sectional survey:
<https://aston.box.com/s/3ij0a6h5uv30h25zoszeia0u16aq1kt1>

moderation process, as it is deemed unmatching with the context of the current study. Unlike the case of formative constructs, excluding a particular item from a comparable reflective construct is tolerable in surveys since no change is foreseen to inflict its core meaning (Ketchen and Bergh, 2006).

Table 6.1 below exhibits the six sets of items selected and moderated with respect to each construct.

Table 6.1. Original and moderated formats of the constructs' items.

Construct	Source of items	Original format of items	Moderated format of items
Unfamiliarity with the Program	McClure and Seock (2020)	<p>1. I have heard of this brand before.</p> <p>2. I know what this brand stands for.</p> <p>3. I am familiar with this brand.</p> <p>4. I have a clear understanding of the person who would use this brand.</p> <p>5. I have made a purchase from this brand.</p>	<p>UP1. I haven't heard of the TripCollective programme before.</p> <p>UP2. I wasn't aware of what TripCollective stands for.</p> <p>UP3. I am not familiar with the TripCollective programme.</p> <p>UP4. I didn't have a clear understanding of what a person would go through when participating in the TripCollective programme.</p>
Perceived Distributive Injustice	Lambert et al. (2020)	<p>1. How fair has the prison been in rewarding you when you consider the amount of effort that you have put forth?</p> <p>2. How fair has the prison been in rewarding you when you consider the responsibilities that you have at work?</p> <p>3. How fair has the prison been in rewarding you when you take into account the stresses and strains of your job?</p> <p>4. How fair has the prison been in rewarding you when you consider the work you have done well?</p>	<p>PDI1. The TripCollective programme is not fair in rewarding me considering the amount of effort that I have to put forth.</p> <p>PDI2. The TripCollective programme is not fair in rewarding me considering the activities assigned to me as a contributor.</p> <p>PDI3. The TripCollective programme is not fair in rewarding me considering the time and effort associated with my potential contributions.</p> <p>PDI4. The rewards of the TripCollective programme are not fair considering the achievements that I could do.</p>
Perceived Uselessness	Phang et al. (2005)	<p>1. I think the CPF E-Withdrawal service is useful (USE1).</p> <p>2. I think the CPF E-Withdrawal service will be beneficial to me (USE2).</p> <p>3. I think the CPF E-Withdrawal service is valuable (USE3).</p> <p>4. Overall, using the CPF E-Withdrawal service will be advantageous (USE4).</p>	<p>PU1. I think that participating in the TripCollective programme is not useful.</p> <p>PU2. I think that participating in the TripCollective programme would not be beneficial to me.</p> <p>PU3. I think that participating in the TripCollective programme is not valuable.</p> <p>PU4. Overall, participating in the TripCollective programme will not be advantageous.</p>

Table 6.1. Cont.

Construct	Source of items	Original format of items	Moderated format of items
Perceived Procedural Injustice	Lambert et al. (2020).	<p>1. How fair is the promotion process here?</p> <p>2. How fair is the process of the evaluation of your job performance at this prison?</p> <p>3. How fair of an opportunity do you have for input into organizational decision making at this prison?</p>	<p>PPI1. The progression procedure in the TripCollective programme is not fair.</p> <p>PPI2. The process of evaluating my contributions in the TripCollective programme is not fair (e.g., Helpful Votes granted by others).</p> <p>PPI3. I don't have a fair opportunity for input into the TripCollective programme's rules and procedures.</p>
Effort Expectancy	Rahi et al. (2019)	<p>1. It is easy for me to become skillful by using internet banking services.</p> <p>2. I believe that learning to operate internet banking services is easy for me.</p> <p>3. As an internet user my interaction with internet banking is clear and understandable.</p> <p>4. I find internet banking easy to use for daily financial operations.</p>	<p>EE1. I think it is not easy for me to accomplish achievements in the TripCollective programme.</p> <p>EE2. I believe that progressing in the TripCollective programme is not easy for me.</p> <p>EE3. As a TripAdvisor user, the TripCollective programme does not look clear and understandable.</p> <p>EE4. I don't find it easy to progress at the TripCollective programme throughout my usual trips.</p>
Negative Attitude	Chang et al. (2019)	<p>1. I think using Pinduoduo is not a good idea.</p> <p>2. I have negative perceptions about using Pinduoduo.</p> <p>3. I am not in favor of the idea of using Pinduoduo.</p> <p>4. Using Pinduoduo never appeals to me.</p>	<p>NA1. I think that participating in the TripCollective programme is not a good idea.</p> <p>NA2. I have negative perceptions about participating in the TripCollective programme.</p> <p>NA3. I am not in favour of the idea of participating in the TripCollective programme.</p> <p>NA4. Participating in the TripCollective programme does not appeal to me.</p>

As recommended in research surveys, a one-direction scheme for the 7-points Likert scale was adopted across all the items of the survey – ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 7 for strongly agree – in order to minimize errors and confusion (Nardi 2018). Lastly, a demographic poll comprising of three categorical questions is added, whereby respondents are asked to select their age range, gender and occupational status before submitting their forms (Nardi 2018).

After three weeks of survey dissemination, a total number of 224 complete responses were assembled. Table 6.2 displays respondents' descriptive figures as recorded by Qualtrics' analytical system.

Table 6.2. *Characteristics of the survey participants.*

		Total	%
Gender	Male	128	57%
	Female	96	43%
Generation	Y	137	61%
	Z	87	39%
Occupation	Student	78	35%
	Employed	106	47%
	Self-Employed	21	9%
	Unemployed	11	5%
	Other	8	4%

All the way through analysing respondents' answers and testing the developed hypotheses, the simple linear regression and the multiple linear regression methods were employed over the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software SPSS (Stockemer, 2019).

On the other hand, since [RQ4](#)'s generated themes in the first phase of the study are not meant to be used for hypothesis structuring and testing, no corresponding constructs and items were chased in the literature. Instead, a questionnaire consisting of four independent statements – respectively articulating the key words and meanings of the four items – was developed, following the same 7-points Likert scale direction employed with respect to the items of [RQ3](#).

The four statements – which are displayed under section Q7 of the survey draft shared in Appendix 2b – are hereby outlined in Table 6.3

Table 6.3. Developed items reflecting [RQ4](#)'s generated themes.

Item no	Item	Reflected theme
1	I will be more inclined to participate in the TripCollective programme if tangible rewards are included (e.g., discount vouchers; payback points).	Including Tangible Rewards
2	I will be more inclined to participate in the TripCollective programme if my achievements could build me a strong reputation among TripAdvisor's global audience and business clients (e.g., promoting winners on TripAdvisor's website and social media pages).	Promoting Winners on Social Media
3	I will be more inclined to participate in the TripCollective programme if progressing across levels becomes easier (e.g., less points required per level).	Relieving the Progression Scheme
4	I will be more inclined to participate in the TripCollective programme if the scores of all existing members are reset to zero (e.g., regularly releasing new game seasons).	Regularly Releasing New Game Seasons

The questionnaire section was responded by all 224 participants of the survey, and the data was analysed over the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software SPSS, using the central tendency measurement method. As predominantly acknowledged, this method serves in revealing respondents' general positioning towards a surveyed subject, predicting in turn its degree of viability and acceptance (Nardi, 2018).

6.3. Analysis and results

Since the survey addresses independent items associated with the topics of [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#), this section which reviews the analytical procedure and results of the survey's collected data is respectively split into two corresponding subsections.

6.3.1. Analysis and results – [RQ3](#)

Before embarking on testing the study hypotheses, the overall measurement model is first assessed to ensure that the constructs and items used in the survey are reliable and valid (Nardi, 2018). The reliability assessment is conducted using the Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability measurements as to respectively explore and confirm the internal consistency of the items under each construct (Ketchen and Bergh, 2006). As shown in Table 6.4, the results of the two measurements with respect to all six constructs exceed the satisfactory reliability threshold of 0.7 (Ketchen and Bergh, 2006).

Table 6.4. Constructs' statistics and reliability evaluation.

Construct Name	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability
Unfamiliarity with the Program	5.17	1.61	0.89	0.92
Perceived Distributive Injustice	4.95	1.48	0.91	0.82
Perceived Procedural Injustice	4.46	1.49	0.85	0.75
Perceived Uselessness	4.99	1.69	0.94	0.93
Effort Expectancy	4.47	1.67	0.92	0.93
Negative Attitude	4.90	1.56	0.91	0.83

On the other hand, constructs' validity is tested by examining their Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity measures (Ketchen and Bergh, 2006).

Convergent validity reflects the level of internal association among the items of a designated construct, and is measured by calculating its Average Variance Extracted (AVE) following the below equation, whereby K is the number of items, λ_i is the factor loading of item i , and $Var(e_i)$ is the variance of error of item i (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

$$AVE = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^k \lambda_i^2}{\sum_{i=1}^k \lambda_i^2 + \sum_{i=1}^k Var(e_i)}$$

As commonly acknowledged, an AVE of at least 0.50 is needed for a constructs' convergent validity to be accepted (Ketchen and Bergh, 2006).

On the other hand, the discriminant validity measurement examines whether the items of each construct share more variance among each other over their correlation with items of other constructs, and is inspected by checking if the square root of the AVE of

each construct is higher than its AVE correlation with other constructs (Ketchen and Bergh, 2006).

The results of both convergent and discriminant validity measurements for all six constructs are confirmed as demonstrated in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5. Correlation matrix with constructs' square roots of AVE.

	Unfamiliarity with the Program	Perceived Distributive Injustice	Perceived Procedural Injustice	Perceived Uselessness	Effort Expectancy	Negative Attitude	AVE
Unfamiliarity with the Program	0.86						0.75
Perceived Distributive Injustice	0.35	0.73					0.53
Perceived Procedural Injustice	0.31	0.66	0.71				0.50
Perceived Uselessness	0.37	0.70	0.58	0.87			0.76
Effort Expectancy	0.34	0.40	0.59	0.47	0.87		0.76
Negative Attitude	0.74	0.68	0.63	0.74	0.52	0.75	0.56

Despite verifying the constructs' reliability and validity, the fact of collecting the data through a cross-sectional survey, raises the concern of what is commonly known as the Common Method Bias (CMB), which refers to the risk of having respondents' answers significantly influenced by the way the data was collected (e.g., questions' shape, order, etc.) (Ketchen and Bergh, 2006). Subsequently, Harman's single-factor test which is commonly used across marketing surveys is employed to check whether CMB represents a serious threat to the collected data (Ketchen and Bergh, 2006). In this respect, all constructs were loaded into an unrotated principle component to check whether one single factor accounts for more than 50% of the variance, and therefore, can explain the majority of the covariance of variables (Ketchen and Bergh, 2006).

The CMB test run over SPSS shows that the total variance extracted by single factor accounts for 47.93%, thus, no threat of a general factor was detected.

Post verifying the overall feasibility of the model, a simple linear regression was pursued to test the directional hypotheses [H1](#), [H2](#), [H3](#), [H4](#), [H5](#), [H6](#) and [H7](#).

The simple linear regression technique is used for modelling the linear relationship between two variables following the below equation, whereby Y represents the dependent variable, X represents the independent variable, β_0 refers to the intercept value of Y, β_1 refers to the regression coefficient of X, and ε denotes the random error (Yan and Su, 2009).

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Before assessing the effect of X over Y, the model of each hypothesis should first be proven fit by examining the R^2 value of the tested relationship, which reflects the goodness of fit of the linear model, and thus, the testability of the hypothesis (Yan and Su, 2009).

R^2 value is calculated following the equation below, whereby SSR refers to the sum of squared residuals and denotes the proportion of the variation in Y, and SST refers to the

sum of squares total and denotes the total variation of the dependent variable around its mean value (Yan and Su, 2009).

$$R^2 = \text{SSR} / \text{SST}$$

The higher is the R^2 value – ranging between 0 and 1 – the stronger is deemed the correlation between the two variables. As predominantly recognized in scholarly research focusing on marketing issues, R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are respectively described as substantial, moderate, and weak (Sarstedt and Mooi, 2014).

Once the linear model of the hypothesis is appraised, the strength and significance of the effect of the independent variable X over the dependent variable Y are tested by respectively measuring the regression coefficient (β) and the level of marginal significance of the regression (P -value). β coefficient ranges between -1 and +1, whereby a coefficient of -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship, and a coefficient of +1 indicates a perfect positive relationship (Yan and Su, 2009). On the other hand, a significant p-value should not exceed particular thresholds. In the social science context, linear models should have a p-value of no more than 0.05 (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003).

Except [H1](#) manifesting a weak R^2 value of less than 0.25, the results of hypotheses 2 to 7 demonstrate a well fit linear model, alongside a strong and significant relationship between the predictor variable X and the predicted variable Y, and were thereby proven supported.

Table 6.6. Linear regression results of hypotheses H1 to H7.

Hypothesis	R ²	Standardized β coefficient	P-value	Outcome
H1	0.140	0.375	<0.01	Rejected
H2	0.507	0.712	<0.01	Supported
H3	0.427	0.654	<0.01	Supported
H4	0.711	0.843	<0.01	Supported
H5	0.299	0.547	<0.01	Supported
H6	0.543	0.737	<0.01	Supported
H7	0.383	0.619	<0.01	Supported

On the other hand, the mediational hypotheses [H8](#) and [H9](#) were tested using the multiple linear regression model. This method is used to measure the linear relationship between one or more independent variable and one or more dependent variable, and aims to identify how well a combination of variables predicts an outcome of interest, as well as to detect which independent variable is the strongest driver of the overall outcome. The multiple linear regression model follows the same rationale of the simple linear regression model as demonstrated in the following equation (Yan and Su, 2009):

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \dots + \beta_p X_p + \varepsilon_i$$

In order to inspect the multiple linear regression outcomes, Hayes Process Macro Model – predominantly recognized as the most advanced model for testing mediations – is employed (Hayes, 2017).

Throughout this process, the indirect relationship between X and Y mediated by the mediator variable M is analysed. If a substantially positive β coefficient is allocated along with a bootstrap confidence interval that does not include zero, a significant mediation is confirmed (Hayes, 2017).

Table 6.7 below features the results of the multiple linear regressions pursued, confirming a significant partial mediation for [H8](#), versus a negligible mediation for [H9](#).

Table 6.7. Multiple linear regression results of hypotheses H8 and H9.

Model assessment	Total effect of X on Y		Direct effect of X on Y		Indirect effect of X on Y via M		Mediation outcome	
	R ²	Standardized β coefficient	p-value	Standardized β coefficient	p-value	Standardised β coefficient	Bootstrap confidence interval	
H8	0.729	0.712	<0.01	0.198	<0.01	0.514	LLCI: 0.4151 ULCI: 0.6205	Supported
H9	0.460	0.654	<0.01	0.511	<0.01	0.143	LLCI: 0.0587 ULCI: 0.2564	Rejected

6.3.2. Analysis and results – [RQ4](#)

The central tendency measurement which is designated to rank [RQ4](#)'s items (see Table 6.3) according to respondents' assessments over the 7-points Likert scale, can be pursued by calculating the median, mode or mean of each item's aggregate responses (Nardi, 2018). While the median is mostly useful in detecting the centre of a skewed data distribution, the mean is the most prevalent reference for identifying the average of a symmetrical data distributions, just like the one adopted in this survey. On the other hand, the mode refers to the occurrence rate of each unit in a symmetrical distribution, either being categorical or ordinal. Accordingly, the rating of the four surveyed items was measured with reference to their responses' mean and mode, respectively gauging the average and most frequently selected answers as presented in Table 6.8 below.

Table 6.8. Descriptive statistics of the surveyed items

	SD	Mean	Mode						
			Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Item 1	1.51	5.58	4%	2%	4%	7%	22%	29%	33%
Item 2	1.64	5.13	4%	4%	4%	19%	22%	21%	25%
Item 3	1.70	4.09	9%	13%	8%	28%	21%	13%	8%
Item 4	1.57	3.89	6%	16%	12%	39%	13%	6%	9%

The descriptive statistics showcase that item 1 – implying respondents' inclination to participate in the TripCollective program if tangible rewards are included – represents the most endorsed item by the survey participants, with the highest mean scoring 5.48, along with a mode of 7. The second most endorsed item is item 2 – denoting respondents' inclination to participate in TripCollective if their achievements could build them a strong reputation among TripAdvisor's global audience and business clients. The item notched the second highest mean of 5.13, along with a comparable mode of 7. The third item in the ranking list is item 3 – designating respondents' inclination to participate in the TripCollective program if progressing across levels becomes easier – with a reported mean of 4.09 and a mode of 4. The least supported item is item 4 – suggesting respondents' inclination to participate in the TripCollective program if the scores of all existing members are reset to zero. This item scored a mean of 3.89 alongside a mode of 4.

6.4. Discussion

In this section, an all-encompassing discussion of this study outcome – deriving from its sequential stages – is offered, covering its theoretical implications, managerial recommendation and overall limitations.

6.4.1. Results interpretation

The sequential mixed-method design of this study served in respectively obtaining and evaluating a set of intriguing variables that address the reasons and potential solutions for gamification's failure to engage lurkers in BVCC. Despite the incomparable number of participants across the FGDs and the cross-sectional survey, the samples of both experiments embrace a well-diversified audience in terms of age, gender, and occupational status – which covers the key demographic angles of the target population. Furthermore, the demographic attributes of the survey's respondents displayed in Table 6.2 showcase a generic convergence with those of the target population in the UK, providing further support to the relevance and generalizability of the collected data (Nardi, 2018). While the latest statistics reveal a comparably equivalent ratio of 50% between males and females in the UK (Statista, 2023a), along with a respective distribution of 53% and 47% between generations Y and Z across their joint population in 2020 (Statista, 2023b), the statistics regarding the occupational figures of the designated generations in the UK were not as easy to access. However, the publicly reported data revealing a higher-education entry rate of 38% for 18 years old individuals in 2022 (House of Commons Library, 2023), along with a national unemployment rate of 3.7% in the same year (Office for National Statistics, 2023) reflect a preliminary coherence with the occupation figures associated with the survey respondents.

Except lurkers' unfamiliarity with the gamified co-creative program, all suggested reasons of lurkers' disengagement in the TripCollective program – initially identified over the FGDs – are significantly supported by the survey participants. This is clearly

manifested throughout respondents' answers towards the four predicting constructs – pivotally revolving around the Somewhat Agree option – with means ranging between 4.46 (SD = 1.49) for *Perceived Procedural Injustice* and 4.99 (SD = 1.69) for *Perceived Uselessness*.

Furthermore, the linear regression analysis of the supported hypotheses [H2](#), [H3](#), [H4](#) and [H5](#) reveal a significant and strong effect of their independent variables over the dependent variable, with a mutual *p*-value of less than 0.01 for each, and a regression coefficient ranging from 0.547 for *Effort Expectancy* to 0.843 for *Perceived Uselessness*. The reported results emphasize the influence of organizational and technical factors on lurkers' stance in co-creative platforms (Nguyen, 2021). Organization factors refer in this study to their perceived distributive and procedural injustice of the program's design, respectively scoring regression coefficients of 0.712 ([H2](#)) and 0.654 ([H3](#)). In turn, technical factors refer to the low level of usefulness and high level of effort associated with lurkers' foreseen participation in the program, correspondingly scoring regression coefficients of 0.843 ([H4](#)) and 0.547 ([H5](#)).

On the other hand, [H6](#) suggesting an impact of lurkers' perceived distributive injustice of the gamified program over their perceived uselessness of participating in it is supported with a regression coefficient of 0.737 and a *p*-value of less than 0.01. Similarly, [H7](#) suggesting a direct effect of lurkers' perceived procedural injustice of the gamified program over the effort they expect to exert in it is supported with a regression coefficient of 0.619 and a *p*-value of less than 0.01. These two validated relationships clearly demonstrate that the levels of perceived usefulness and ease-of-use (hereby denoting ease-of-progress) that lurkers conceive towards gamified co-creative systems largely derive from pre-defined psychological stances. In contrast with the prevalent approach of the Technology Acceptance Model – which assesses users' perceives usefulness and perceived ease-of-use from a purely technical perspective (Davis et al., 2023) – this study showcases that these two variables could significantly be controlled by their psychological perception of the overall fairness of the designated system.

On the other hand, [H8](#) affirms a significant partial mediation of lurkers' *Perceived Uselessness* over the influence of their *Perceived Distributive Injustice* on their *Negative Attitude* towards engaging in a gamified co-creative system. In contrast, [H9](#) implies a trivial mediation of *Effort Expectancy* in controlling the effect of their *Perceived Procedural Injustice* over their *Negative Attitude* towards engaging in it, with a mediation coefficient of 0.143 out of a total relationship coefficient of 0.654. The results of the two mediational hypotheses suggest that, when opting to increase the level of fairness of gamified co-creative programs in the eyes of lurkers, the key variable to work on is their perceived usefulness of participating in it.

On another subject, the participants of the survey had their call on the suggestions provided by the members of the FGDs for potentially improving the TripCollective gamified program. Out of the de-lurking strategies proposed by Nguyen (2021) (see page 70), the surveyed sample particularly emphasizes the importance of incorporating motivating incentives. Unsurprisingly, adding tangible rewards such as discount vouchers – which is the most prominent measure suggested across the three FGDs – reported the highest response mean of 5.58 ($SD=1.51$) and the highest mode of 7, with 33% of responders strongly agreeing on the fact that considering such a measure would make them become more inclined to engage in the program. On the other hand, promoting winners on social media and building them a strong reputation among TripAdvisor's global audience and business clients is ranked the second most favoured measure by the survey participants, with a response mean of 5.13 ($SD=1.64$), and a mode of 7 – leveraged by 25% of the survey participants. Unlike the first two measures, the scores of the two remaining proposed measures – respectively implying the relief of the progression scheme, and the regular release of new game seasons – are remarkably less popular among the survey respondents. Whilst the former scored a response mean of 4.09 ($SD=1.70$) – barely surpassing the *Neutral* position – the mean of the latter, marking 3.89 ($SD=1.57$) apparently falls in the range of the disagreement stance. Additionally, it is worthwhile noting that both propositions scored a mode of 4,

respectively boosted by 28% and 39% of the respondents. The prompt interpretation of the informed results evidently imply a clear inclination of the survey participants towards favouring utilitarian measures over hedonic ones, which emphasizes the preliminary findings of the FGDs, suggesting that lurkers of gamified co-creative platforms are utility oriented. As such, lurkers are foreseen to engage in co-creative activities more likely if associated with beneficial features, either being direct such as tangible rewards or indirect such as social exposure.

On the flip side, hedonic-related measures directly related to improving the process of the gameful environment – such as the ones implied in items 3 and 4 – are found less persuasive for lurkers. Nevertheless, the scores reported in Table 6.8 indicate that despite lurkers' general aversion to hedonic-related measures, those who somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree with items 3 and 4 represent respective segments of 42% and 28% of the total number of respondents. Undeniably, when considering such percentages with respect to lurkers – assumed to represent over 90% of online users (Zheng and Beck Dallaghan, 2022) – the absolute numbers envisioned in a real-life context are worth considering.

Last but not least, it is critically important to highlight the fact that the reported outcomes outlining lurkers' aspirations towards improving the appealingness of TripCollective are solely associated with their behavioural intentions, and hence do not necessarily reflect their actual behaviour at the practical stage. Nonetheless, as widely validated throughout the marketing literature, individuals' revealed intentions represent a notable indicator of their primitive approaches in a practical context (Rather, 2020).

6.4.2. Theoretical implications

Overall, the study provides a set of noteworthy theoretical implications. It establishes a new framework that frames an unprecedented relationship between constructs of different theoretical roots, collectively demonstrating the reasons' behind lurkers'

negative attitude towards engaging in BVCC as presented in Figure 6.2. In an extension of ISTO's model for lurking (Nguyen, 2021), this study reveals a direct relationship between organizational factors and technical factors shaping lurkers' attitudes towards co-creative platforms via two paths. The first path is associated with the detected impact of lurkers' perceived distributive injustice of a system's structure on their perceived uselessness of engaging in it. Comparably, the second path denotes the revealed influence of lurkers' perceived procedural injustice of a system's structure on the high level of effort they expect to exert while participating in it.

On the other hand, while the proposed framework addresses the reasons of lurkers' disengagement in gamified co-creative platforms, it could evidently be used in gauging individuals' poor output in further contexts, typically with respect to students' engagement and employees' productivity. Moreover, the manifested effectiveness of the research design implemented in this study provides an advanced model for analysing the implicit sentiments of disengaged individuals – which are often hard to address. This entails qualitatively attaining their inherited thoughts across FGDs, before quantitatively validating them throughout negative-worded questionnaires reflecting their undesirable stances.

Furthermore, the study unveils the existence of four key measures that could potentially break the stance of many lurkers across gamified co-creative platforms. Expounding on Nguyen's (2021) proposed de-lurking strategy of incorporating motivating incentives, the study unveils lurkers' notable preference for utility-related measures over hedonic-related ones. Although the measure of adding tangible rewards is already applied in many comparable platforms, the three further measures are little approached in the literature, and open the floor for subsequent studies to theoretically abstracting them and validating them through empirical experiments.

In sum, the reported results of [RQ3](#) and [RQ4](#) underline a utility-oriented psychology largely controlling disengaged users' behaviour in gamified co-creative platforms, in contrast to a hedonic-oriented psychology generally driving engaged ones (Kavaliova et

al., 2016; Wang et al., 2020). This indeed adds a new argument to the repertoire of variables which are foreseen to shape lurkers' attitude – typically with respect to the organizational structure of online communities (Nguyen, 2021; Sun et al., 2014).

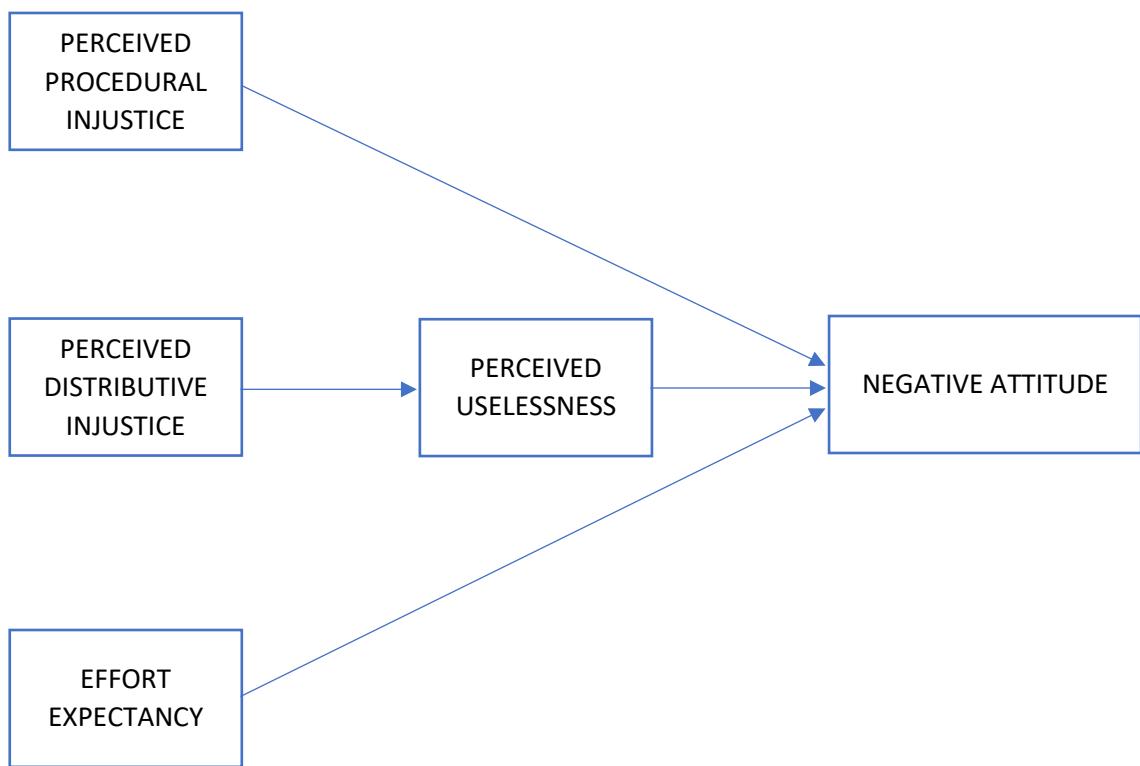


Figure 6.2. Lurkers' Rational in Gamified Co-Creative Platforms.

6.4.3. Practical implications

From a practical perspective, this study reports precious insights that could be of substantial benefit to enterprises using gamification as a tool to harness their online users' involvement in BVCC. It provides them with a comprehensive framework that explains the disengagement of their passive users – often representing the vast majority of their online audience (Mousavi and Roper, 2023; Zheng and Beck Dallaghan, 2022).

In this respect, a set of practical measures that can motivate lurkers to engage in these platforms are unveiled. Despite the indisputable advantage of incorporating extrinsic incentives in persuading a large segment of lurkers, it is worth noting that undertaking such a measure could have a deleterious impact on engaged users who are essentially driven by hedonic incentives (Rapp et al., 2019). According to the "over-justification effect", many of those users could start losing their intrinsic motivation once exposed to swaying utilitarian values (Glov, 2013; Levy et al., 2017). As such, any subsequent shrinkage, or perceived disutility of such values over time could lead to their dissatisfaction and abandonment of the gamified system. Comparably, it is noteworthy highlighting that hedonic-related measures – typically entailing the relief of a program's progression scheme, and the regular release of new game seasons – are quite sensitive and should prudently be examined before execution. This is due to the risk that satisfying disengaged users by employing such techniques could possibly be at the cost of active users' satisfaction, many out of whom could become demoralized and quit the gamified system due to a respective relapse in their perceived enjoyment and effort expectancy (Köse et al. 2019).

6.4.4. Limitations

Despite providing a significant contribution to knowledge, this study has a number of constraints. Firstly, it only addresses the case of lurkers belonging to generations Y and Z, whom – despite representing the most dynamic segment of online users – may not share the same viewpoints of lurkers from other generations. Secondly, the study's FGDs and survey only admit participants with zero prior-engagement in the TripCollective program, as to guarantee a perfect match with the criterion of being a lurker. However, such a rigorous criterion deprived the admission of TripAdvisor users with limited scope of engagement in the program, whose opinions could have definitely

enriched the study outcome. Thirdly, the reported findings of this study are merely associated with one particular exemplar in one particular country. Thereby, grabbing further validations from TripAdvisor's lurkers in other countries, as well as pursuing similar studies across different gamified co-creative programs would have certainly emphasized the generalizability of the reported findings. Lastly, although TripAdvisor has notably been used in the literature as one of the typical exemplars of employing gamification to promote value co-creation, the platform's gamified program does not cover all major game design elements – typically those of social and utilitarian values. Furthermore, just like the case of comparable gamified programs, gamification's purpose is to promote the engagement of all types of users, including but not exclusively lurkers. Subsequently, although evaluating disengaged users' perceptions of TripAdvisor's gamified program is of great value, a potential assessment of lurkers' assumptions toward a gamified experience that is specifically designed to engage them would have definitely led to sharper results.

6.5. Conclusion

The study which is pursued using a sequential mixed-method approach, uncovers a set of reasons lying behind lurkers' disengagement in gamified co-creative platforms. The example of TripCollective shows that lurkers' stance derives from an implicit negative attitude principally driven by factors of disparate weight – namely, their perceived distributive injustice, procedural injustice, and uselessness of the program – alongside the effort they expect to exert when participating in it. Moreover, the study reveals a couple of key interrelations among the detected factors. On one hand, lurkers' perceived distributive injustice of the gamified program – denoting a perceived lack of fair profit distribution on active contributors – is found substantially influencing their perceived uselessness of the program, leading in turn to their negative attitude towards participating in it. On the other hand, lurkers' perceived injustice of the game's rules and

procedure is found directly raising the effort they expect to exert in it, although the latter does not mediate the impact of the former on their negative attitude towards participating in it. Respectively, the study introduces an original theoretical framework that justifies the position of disengaged individuals – who are often hard to address – opening the scope for comparably employing it across different contexts. Furthermore, the study conveys precious insights for practitioners, and draws their attention towards vital aspects to consider when opting to boost the appealingness of their gamified co-creative programs. In this respect, a set of measures that could potentially switch the stance of a considerable number of lurkers are detected, encompassing the inclusion of tangible rewards, the promotion of winners on social media, the relief of the game rules and the regular release of new game seasons. Unlike the first two measures notably associated with utilitarian values, the last two measures fundamentally linked to the hedonic side of the gameful experience seem less tempting to lurkers. Nonetheless, the undeniable portion of endorsers of these hedonic-related measures is still worth considering when conceiving the number of lurkers all over the online environment.

Chapter 7. General discussion and conclusion

7.1. Introduction

This research comprises of three different studies that jointly address the impacts, setbacks and potentials of gamification in promoting BVCC. As to systematically combine the detected outcomes, this chapter provides an all-encompassing summary of the key reported findings (section 7.2), along with the major theoretical and managerial inferences associated with them (sections 7.3 and 7.4). Consistently, the thesis limitations are examined (section 7.5), and a bunch of potential research areas are highlighted for future related studies to build on (section 7.6). Lastly, a generic conclusion recapping the main outcomes of the thesis is delivered, incorporating the key reported impacts, setbacks and potentials associated with the use of gamification in promoting BVCC (section 7.7).

7.2. Key research findings

A set of original and interrelated outcomes are provided in this research. In light for the SLR study delivered in chapter 2, gamification is found effectively promoting four types of BVCC, which are labelled in this research according to their denoted nature as follows: *customer service, insights sharing, WOM* and *random task*. Across dozens of examined platforms, a wide range of incorporated game design elements are found collectively addressing online users' psychological triggers, in turn evoking their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to engage in BVCC. Surprisingly, utilitarian psychological values endorsed by gamification are found marginally considered among the surveyed studies, with a minor prevalence of the *tangible rewards'* dynamic vis-à-vis a respective prominence of *intangible rewards, competition* and *social interactions*. As expounded in the literature review chapter, this may simply be due to pure financial reasons

(Arvidsson, 2008), or to presumptions claiming that utility-oriented people are less likely to get persuaded by utility elements if conditionally combined with hedonic ones (Lu et al., 2016).

In addition to the four aforementioned types of BVCC exposed in the literature review, the second study in this research underlines the effectiveness of gamification in promoting a fifth type of BVCC – remarkably overlooked in the reported literature – denoted in this thesis as *CSR support*. As explicitly implied, *CSR support* refers to online users' contribution to CSR related activities. Following a content analysis study across the latest threads of the gamified social program Charity Nominations – launched by the British mobile network operator Giffgaff – the *social interactions* dynamic is found significantly influencing customers to engage in nominating, voting and co-funding local charities. Besides Social Relatedness, Social Influence, and Altruism, which are substantially rooted to in the covered literature, Empathy represents the fourth type of social values harnessed by their social interactions, and ultimately leading to their contribution to *CSR support* activities. As emphasized by the Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis (Batson et al., 2015), Empathy – which is a key factor shaping the affective, cognitive and behavioural pillars of social work practices (King, 2011) – is directly associated with triggering individuals' ultimate altruistic behaviour.

Alongside analysing the impacts of gamification in promoting BVCC, the third study in this research examines major setbacks and potentials notably overlooked in the reported literature. Post conducting a sequence of FGDs, followed by a cross-sectional survey with disengaged users of the world's largest travel guidance platform TripAdvisor, a set of factors are found inhibiting gamification's effectiveness in motivating the largest segment of users in the online universe – known as the lurkers – to engage in BVCC. The disengagement of many of the addressed lurkers in the program is found driven by their perceived distributive injustice, perceived procedural injustice, perceived uselessness, and effort expectancy associated with participating in it. Nevertheless, the study participants unveiled a remarkable yearning towards utilitarian values, which –

according to many of them – could trigger their prospective engagement in the program, typically through the introduction of financial incentives and the exposure to considerable social recognition. As highlighted by (Vitellar 2019), the latter benefit – referred to as "personal branding" – represents the trendy aspiration of members of generations Z, many of whom "seek to create a strong online identity to help them at the start of their career" (Vitellar 2019, p.1).

7.3. Theoretical implications

This research is characterized by introducing a compound of novel theoretical contributions. Alongside introducing an all-encompassing terminology of gamification's mechanics and dynamics, and unravelling their impact over a set of psychological triggers ultimately driving online users' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to engage in BVCC, an advanced version of the prevalent MDE framework is developed under the name of MDPM. Unlike the MDE framework delineating a general mechanism of how gamified systems work (Fathian et al., 2021), the developed framework offers a detailed conception of the causal relationship between games' mechanics, dynamics, psychological triggers, and motivational effects.

On the other hand, a new theoretical model delineating the impact of the *social interactions* dynamic on online users' motivation to engage in *CSR support* activities is developed in light of the grounded theoretical variables distilled from the Giffgaff content analysis study. The model which consists of four independent variables – namely, Social Relatedness, Social Influence, Empathy and Altruism – suggests a further mediating role of Altruism in controlling the influence of Empathy on online users' contribution to *CSR support* activities. In sum, the model underscores the role of the *social interactions* dynamic in shaping a new type of BVCC notably overlooked in the literature. Moreover, it supports the findings of Jun et al. (2020), which emphasize individuals' inclination towards engaging in social value co-creation driven by gameful experiences of

behaviour-based reward (where psychological benefit stems from engagement), over gameful experiences of result-based reward (where psychological benefit stems from personal achievements).

In addition to the aforementioned theoretical expansions, a brand-new theoretical framework is further developed, demonstrating the reasons of lurkers' negative attitude towards engaging in gamified platforms promoting BVCC. The comprehensive nature of the developed framework – incorporating variables of different theoretical roots – extends its applicability towards wider research contexts where the causes of individuals' disengagement could be sought.

Furthermore, while many scholars suggest a hedonic-oriented psychology controlling engaged users' behaviour in gamified platforms (Kavaliova et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2020), the research findings reveal quite an opposite outlook with regard to disengaged ones. This is showcased by the manifested tendency of many surveyed lurkers in TripAdvisor towards engaging in co-creative activities once adequate utilitarian values are perceived.

7.4. Managerial recommendations

Alongside its theoretical implications, the research provides practitioners with noteworthy recommendations to consider with respect to gamified co-creative platforms. The intriguing *fantasy* dynamic embedded in the smart-store interface and multi-actor service ecosystem examples (Poncin et al., 2017; Weretecki et al., 2021) opens the scope for designers to develop and assess the effect of advanced technologies such as augmented reality, virtual reality and mixed reality on users' co-creative experiences. If critically recognized in favour of BVCC, such technologies could provide early adopters with rapid competitive advantage over their rivals. On the other hand, the Giffgaff content analysis study highlights the fact that promoting *CSR support* activities via gamification

is not only an opportunity for companies to expend their social funds, but also an effective strategy for them to increase their engaged users' satisfaction and brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is thereby shaped by a new type of brand pride not commonly discussed in the literature – typically associated with customers' pleasure of being part of a socially responsible entity, rather than of a highly esteemed brand community (Nandy and Sondhi, 2022).

Lastly, the study of TripAdvisor provides practitioners with practical tips to consider when opting to assess the effectiveness of their gamified co-creative platforms, typically by appraising their overall fairness, utility, and ease of progress as perceived by their online users. Furthermore, the study suggests redundantly incorporating financial and social benefits in gamified co-creative platforms, as these are projected to trigger many lurkers' motivation to change their passive stance. Whilst all the aforementioned recommendations could be of benefit to all sorts of platforms employing gamification to promote BVCC, they are definitely of particular significance to those of crowdsourcing nature, where contributors represent the backbone of the business operations (Morschheuser et al., 2019)

7.5. Limitations

Besides some technical restraints associated with the research studies, a couple of conceptual limitations connected with their reported outcomes are worth underlining. First, the proposed category of BVCC activities initiated in this research under the name of *random task* is quite broad and embeds a wide set of tasks that could range from simple posts' adjustment to the delivery of highly professional projects, hence urging to split this category into further sub-categories. In turn, the Giffgaff content analysis study merely examines customers' engagement in the Charity Nominations program between 2020 and 2022, which was a period plagued with social hardships deriving from the Covid pandemic outbreak and the war in Ukraine. Indeed, a further coverage of

customers' engagement in the program over the previous years could have helped in better gauging the efficacy of gamification on their attitude and behaviour towards engaging in *CSR support* activities, typically by comparing their interactions and donations before and after the emergence of the aforementioned social ordeals. Lastly, a couple of notable limitations are associated with TripAdvisor's study. Although comprehensively pursued following a sequential mixed-method design, the reported findings are solely associated with TripAdvisor's lurkers living in the UK and belonging to generations Y and Z. Indeed, covering lurkers from different countries and from different generations, as well as addressing lurkers of different platforms could have been of benefit. On the other hand, the potential measures suggested by the addressed lurkers to increase gamification's appealingness simply reflect their behavioural intentions, with no evidence of affecting their actual behaviour in real-life.

7.6. Future research directions

In order to gainfully extend the reported findings of the research, future studies are encouraged to address some key areas highlighted in this thesis. As to further elaborate the detected impacts of gamification on BVCC, researchers may consider examining gamification's long-term effect on online users' contribution to co-creation activities, typically by pursuing longitudinal field experiments in gamified co-creative platforms. Online users' negative experiences in these platforms are also worth examining for the sake of assessing the prospective counterproductivity of gamification on their satisfaction and brand loyalty. In this respect, the discontinued intention to engage in gamified experiences implied by Harwood and Garry (2015), Jun et al. (2020) and Köse et al. (2019) may be empirically analysed, whereby new theories not previously referred to in the reported literature could be used – including but not limited to the Expectation-Confirmation Theory. Furthermore, future studies may opt for hypothetically testing the

revealed influence of the *social interactions* dynamic on online users' contribution to CSR support activities, as well as examining the impact of competition and aestheticism on their overall attitude and behaviour to engage in this type of BVCC. Given the impossibility of analysing the aforementioned two game dynamics using secondary data, these could typically be measured by surveying active members in the Charity Nominations program or other comparable programs. On the other hand, researchers are encouraged to further validate the detected causes of gamification's failure to engage lurkers in BVCC, potentially by pursuing further studies across gamified co-creative platforms other than TripAdvisor. On the flip side, it would be worthwhile considering the option of validating lurkers' reported suggestions for improving gamification's appealingness in TripAdvisor, possibly through the employment of longitudinal field experiments. In these experiments, researchers could practically test the effect of those suggestions on individuals' attitudes and behavioural intentions over time (Stockemer, 2019).

7.7. Conclusion

With B2C firms increasingly gamifying their online platforms to promote BVCC, this research is meant to explore the impacts, setbacks and potentials associated with this emerging strategy. Post undertaking a compilation of empirical studies, a number of intriguing findings are underlined, and a set of noteworthy conclusions are respectively drawn. In summary, the thesis identifies a set of BVCC activities prevalently endorsed in practice, and finds an advanced framework that demonstrates the process through which gamification successfully promotes them. Furthermore, a new theoretical model delineating the impact of the *social interactions* dynamic on online users' motivation to engage in CSR support activities – a fifth type of BVCC poorly addressed in the gamification literature – is developed. Last but not least, a qualitatively generated and

quantitatively validated framework outlining the reasons of lurkers' disengagement in gamified co-creative platforms is established, alongside providing a set of responsive solutions proposed by lurkers themselves. In line with the aforementioned novelties, a set of theoretical implications and managerial recommendations are respectively defined, along with providing an array of intriguing future research directions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1a. Recruitment advertisement of the FGDs



Win one of four £100 Amazon eGift vouchers!

Take part in an online focus group discussion and get a chance to win one of 4 x £100 Amazon eGift vouchers.

The focus group discussion is part of a research study that investigates the inefficacy of game design elements (e.g., points, badges, levels, leaderboards, interactive threads) in persuading a large segment of online users to engage in value co-creation activities (e.g., posting, rating, voting, reviewing). The discussion will last for up to 1.5 hours and will be virtually held on Microsoft Teams between **25/11/2021** and **3/12/2021**.

Application is open to all individuals who meet the following criteria:

- Regular visitor of TripAdvisor but has never engaged in the platform
- Resident in the UK
- Aged between 18 and 40

More information is available in the attached ***Participant Information Sheet***.

If you meet the criteria, you can apply by sending an email to 180208656@aston.ac.uk and confirming your willingness to participate by **22/11/2021**.

Looking forward for your applications!

Appendix 1b. Participant information sheet of the FGDs



Exploring the setbacks and potentials of gamification in promoting brand value co-creation.

Participant Information Sheet

Invitation

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study.

Before you decide if you would like to participate, take time to read the following information carefully and, if you wish, discuss it with others such as your family, friends or colleagues.

Please ask a member of the research team, whose contact details can be found at the end of this information sheet, if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information before you make your decision.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to gather insights about the general reasons and possible solutions for the inefficacy of game design elements (e.g., points, badges, levels, leader-boards, interactive threads) in persuading online users to engage in value co-creation activities (e.g., posting, rating, voting, reviewing).

Why have I been chosen?

You are being invited to take part in this study because:

You are:

- A regular visitor of TripAdvisor but have never engaged in the platform.
- Resident in the UK.
- Aged between 18 and 40.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be invited to participate in a focus group discussion for up to 1.5 hours on the online communication platform Microsoft Teams. You will be invited to discuss the reasons and possible solutions for your disengagement in TripAdvisor's platform. With the participants' permission we will video record the focus group discussion.

The recording will be typed into a document (transcribed) by a transcriber approved by Aston University. During the transcription process any names that have been used will be replaced with a pseudonym.

Video recordings will be destroyed as soon as the transcripts have been checked for accuracy.

Any extracts from the focus group discussion that are included in the reporting of the study will be anonymous.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

If you do decide to participate, you will be asked to sign and date a consent form. You would still be free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. A code will be attached to all the data you provide to maintain confidentiality.

Your personal data (name and contact details) will only be used if the researchers need to contact you to arrange study visits or collect data by phone. Analysis of your data will be undertaken using coded data.

The data we collect will be stored in a secure document store (paper records) or electronically on a secure encrypted mobile device, password protected computer server or secure cloud storage device.

To ensure the quality of the research, Aston University may need to access your data to check that the data has been recorded accurately. If this is required, your personal data will be treated as confidential by the individuals accessing your data.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

- You will be entered into a draw for four Amazon eGift vouchers of £100 each.
- You will help in researching the reasons and potential solutions for users' disengagement in gamified co-creative platforms.

What are the possible risks and burdens of taking part?

N/A

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study may be published in scientific journals and/or presented at conferences. If the results of the study are published, your identity will remain confidential.

A lay summary of the results of the study will be available for participants when the study has been completed and the researcher will ask if you would like to receive a copy.

The results of the study will also be used in the PhD thesis of Mohamad Amir Merhabi.

Expenses and payments

Just after your participation, your name will be entered into a draw for one of four Amazon eGift vouchers of £100 each. The draw will be organised and administered by the research team just after the data collection is ended. If you win, you will be sent an email notifying you that you have won and requesting you to confirm that you accept to receive the voucher via email on your same email address. Upon your confirmation, you will be sent an email with the voucher details. If no response is received within two weeks, a new draw will be executed, and an alternative winner will be picked.

Who is funding the research?

The study is being funded by Aston University.

Who is organising this study and acting as data controller for the study?

Aston University is organising this study and acting as data controller for the study. You can find out more about how we use your information in Appendix A.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study was given a favorable ethical opinion by the Research Ethics Committee of Aston Business School.

What if I have a concern about my participation in the study?

If you have any concerns about your participation in this study, please speak to the research team and they will do their best to answer your questions. Contact details can be found at the end of this information sheet.

If the research team are unable to address your concerns or you wish to make a complaint about how the study is being conducted you should contact the Aston University Research Integrity Office at research_governance@aston.ac.uk or telephone 0121 204 3000.

Research Team

- Name: Mohamad Amir Merhabi
- Contact number: xxxxxxxxxxxx
- Email address: 180208656@aston.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. If you have any questions regarding the study, please don't hesitate to ask one of the research team.

Aston University takes its obligations under data and privacy law seriously and complies with the Data Protection Act 2018 (“DPA”) and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 as retained in UK law by the Data Protection, Privacy and Electronic Communications (Amendments etc) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (“the UK GDPR”).

Aston University is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study. Aston University will process your personal data in order to register you as a participant and to manage your participation in the study. It will process your personal data on the grounds that it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(e)). Aston University may process special categories of data about you which includes details about your health. Aston University will process this data on the grounds that it is necessary for statistical or research purposes (GDPR Article 9(2)(j)). Aston University will keep identifiable information about you for 6 years after the study has finished.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally identifiable information possible.

You can find out more about how we use your information at
<https://www aston.ac.uk/about/statutes-ordinances-regulations/publication-scheme/policies-regulations/data-protection> or by contacting our Data Protection Officer at dp_officer@aston.ac.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter. If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO).

When you agree to take part in a research study, the information about you may be provided to researchers running other research studies in this organisation and in other organisations. These organisations may be universities, NHS organisations or companies involved in health and care research in this country or abroad.

This information will not identify you and will not be combined with other information in a way that could identify you. The information will only be used for the purpose of research, and cannot be used to contact you.

Appendix 1c. Consent form of the FGDs



Exploring the setbacks and potentials of gamification in promoting brand value co-creation.

Consent Form

Name of Chief Investigator: Mohamad Amir Merhabi

Please initial boxes

1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet (Version 1.0, September 2021) for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.	
3.	I agree to my personal data and data relating to me collected during the study being processed as described in the Participant Information Sheet.	
4.	I agree to the focus group discussion being video recorded and to anonymised direct quotes from me being used in publications resulting from the study.	
5.	I agree to my anonymised data being used by research teams for future research.	
6.	I agree to my personal data being processed for the purposes of inviting me to participate in future research projects. I understand that I may opt out of receiving these invitations at any time.	
7.	I agree to take part in this study.	

Name of participant _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Name of Person receiving consent. _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Appendix 1d. FGDs' transcripts

Group A

Researcher

Hello. Thank you very much everyone for attending today's session. I know that your schedules are already tight, so I really appreciate the time you're dedicating for this session.

First, I will introduce myself, my name is Mohammad Amir Merhabi. You can call me Amir and I am a 3rd year research student at Aston University. I'm doing my research in the Operations and Information Management department. My research topic revolves around gamification, which I am going to introduce you to in a while, and then we will discuss one example of gamification which I have chosen to be TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor has been prevalently chosen in the literature as an ideal example let's say, or as a typical example for using gamification in order to motivate people to engage online.

Then I will take you through the gamified system of TripAdvisor so that you know exactly what I'm talking about.

So, all of us here are in a way regular users of TripAdvisor. However, we never engaged in terms of posting or reviewing or rating or contributing in any way. The big question for which I am trying to come out with some insights is to see what are the main or let's say the broad reasons why we're not that attracted to the gamification system.

So, gamification in a nutshell is the use of game design elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, levels, progress bars, storylines and so on. Companies nowadays across all industries are increasingly using it to engage either their customers or their employees. Also, the academic industry is also embedding it within different programmes in order to motivate students and so on. So, gamification is mainly the use of game design elements in non-game context, actually to promote users' engagement.

I will take you now through the TripAdvisor website. I'll do it just right now. I will share my screen. I will do it very briefly. I know that all of us actually use TripAdvisor, but I'm going to do this just to refresh your memories so that we will be all in line with the same thread. Can everyone see the screen?

Participant.1

Yep.

Participant.4

Yeah, yeah.

Participant.5

Yes.

Researcher

OK thank you. So, TripAdvisor has developed something called TripCollective, and TripCollective is kind of a programme where people as you can see, can gain points for reviewing destinations such as restaurants, hotels, places, touristic attractions and so on. So, one could earn one hundred points for reviewing, thirty points for posting a photo of a destination, thirty points for sharing a video, twenty points for discussing an idea or a thought on the forum of the page. Also, when rating a destination, they get five points.

Accordingly, the more they get points, the more they got promoted from a level to another. So, as you can see, it starts from level one with three hundred points to level six with ten thousand points.

Then we do have the badges system, I will just click on it right now so that I can take you through it in details. So, there is something called Reviewer badge. So, the more you review, the more you get promoted from a new reviewer to regular review, then senior one, contributor, senior contributor, and top contributor with fifty reviews.

Expertise badge is another type of badges. Some people only review in one field, let's say in the hotel industry or in the food industry like restaurants and coffee shops, or in attractions. So, if you are expert in one of those three domains, you can get one of these badges.

There is also something called Passport badge. As you can see here, you can get it if you actually review more than two destinations from two different places.

We also have the Helpful Votes badge. So, as you know, not all the reviews have the same quality and the same accuracy, so reviews can get likes from other members of the platform, which are so-called helpful votes that lead to this badge that will be then featured on the profile page of the TripAdvisor member.

We also have something called Explorer badge, so if you are one of the very first people to find out an attraction, you'll get this badge called Explorer Badge.

Moreover, we do have the Travellers' Choice Reviewer badge. So, if you favourably review something and by time it has been realised that most people are agreeing with your review, then you will get this badge which shows that your opinion is really reflective to what people really think.

Finally, I'm sharing with you the leaderboard, so some people are saying that the leaderboard is no more active, while some others are saying that they are still receiving it by email. Anyway, you can see that the leaderboard includes the ranking of the top fifty reviewers, and reviewers are sorted by their total number of reviews as well as helpful votes they have been granted by other members.

So, I have just taken you through a brief summary of what the gamification system in TripAdvisor looks like. Indeed, I'm choosing this case study just as a reflection of the gamification system.

So basically, all of us here, including myself, and I believe the vast majority of people using TripAdvisor do actually use it just to get information, to get insights, to know the reviews and the ratings of specific destinations, then will just pop out without contributing to anything. And as you may know, if every single one in the world does the same thing, then the whole website will collapse, because people who are sharing the data and running the operations of the whole platform will not be there.

So, what if the vast majority of people are passive like us? Things will get worse, but if most of us get more and more active than the productivity and efficiency of the website would be much higher than now. This is what companies such as TripAdvisor and much

more across different industries should be looking at, to see how to attract disengaged users like us.

OK, so now I just took you through the basics of gamification and the typical example of TripAdvisor that I just shared with you and would like to discuss with you the reasons that you believe are behind our disengagement.

I know that there could be a wide range of factors that could start out from people not even being aware of the whole gamification system, whereas some others could be aware but not really attracted. Some others could have excuses like not having time, for example. So, this is just a brainstorming, but I need to get the insights from you and afterward I would have another couple of focus groups with other participants with the same criteria of yours, so that I can then define things and come out with ultimate insights. So, if anyone of you would like to start up by sharing their thoughts of why do you think he or she is not really attracted to the gamification system?

Participant.1

Um, so I think you touched on one of the reasons. At least in my opinion, I could think of two things that strike out. I can say that I've seen a lot of marketing about TripAdvisor itself as a platform and as a system in order to be a user to interact and get information from it.

Researcher

Good.

Participant.1

Whereas I can't exactly say that I've gotten as much marketing material or been in forever. Let's put marketing aside but I haven't been informed enough about it. What's in it for me if I actually participate? in sharing this information as well, other than I get points. If you're interested in that, that might pull you straight away and then you discover the other things, but if you're not then yeah, I think I it's more difficult to be informed about it since it's not really striking on the face.

Researcher

So, we're not being informed as you just said at a striking level, but I believe that whenever entering into TripAdvisor and checking what people are posting, if we scrutinise, we can see the badges, either being an Explorer badge, Expert badge or so on. But maybe what you are saying is that although we see it, we are probably not really attracted to it right? It's not really sparking.

Participant.1

That's true, you just see it, but I think for me it doesn't translate more, and maybe there's a reason behind this that I'm not aware of it. But for me it doesn't translate more yeah, you've described on the badge of a reliable review for example, to me that's what it says. This is a reliable review. Not in a sense, sending me, oh, you can also get this badge if you do the reviews. To me it's just for me to get information rather than telling me or attracting me to actually be a participant as well.

Researcher

OK, so we can assume that awareness is maybe one of the reasons. Participant.2? please go on.

Participant.2

Um, I think there are some reasons why people do not engage. Like doing comments or reviewing. One of the most important reasons, I think most of the people aren't aware of these incentives. You mentioned the types of levels, like senior level, somethings like that. However, these incentives are not real incentives.

Researcher

OK.

Participant.2

And so, for me, I think there is no benefit for me to get something like this. Other things may be better as incentives to motivate me to participate, like a discount voucher or physical prizes? So, the main reason is that there is no real motivation for people to participate.

In addition to this, I think it's time consuming for me when I go to some websites to search for something. In most of the times, I would like to find the thing I search for, without consuming my time, like commenting and writing something about the website or the service itself, as long as there is no incentive or real motivation for me to do this.

But somethings, like rating, if the process itself is easy for me to participate, this may motivate me to participate. Did you got what I mean?

Researcher

Can you elaborate more on this point?

Participant.2

I mean, the process itself should be easier. It should be easier for people to do it. Instead of doing a lot of steps, the first step, then the second step, then a third step to participate or to rank the service itself. This may be one step, just some stars. If I collect the stars, then the mission will be finished by using one step. This is what I mean.

Researcher

So basically, you're referring to maybe the wide range of gamified elements. So maybe because we do have lots of features, people will get a bit confused. So, they prefer a very clear and straight forward gamified system you mean?

Participant.2

Yeah, that's it. clear and at the same time, simple, not so many steps to go through, so this cannot be time consuming, that' the point.

Researcher

I think to be honest, since no one of us has engaged in the system before, I'm not sure whether there is really like a long procedure to go through in order to rate or review.

But what I believe is that one of the good takeaways I can get out of your contribution is that maybe people overestimate? Or let's say they perceive the whole system as being much more complicated than it might actually be, so maybe it is not that sophisticated as you just said, but maybe because of the perception that you already have in mind and maybe lots of people already having the same perception, they might think that going through a long procedure in order to rate and review is time consuming, so they just ignore it. Whereas maybe if we take the first step. we might find it much easier.

Participant.1

Can I add something to it?

Researcher

Yeah sure, please go on.

Participant.1

I think what I understood is that it's not necessarily the process of actually starting the accounts and going through this stuff, but if you start to think about how much reviews you need to put in. For example, to get in touch, you know. So that's how I understood it myself.

Researcher

OK, yeah.

Participant.1

There's a lot of work and effort we need to put in to get to this.

Researcher

So, what you actually mean is the fact of being kind of requested to go through many reviews in order to start getting recognised by the website?

Participant.2

Yeah.

Researcher

But again, don't you think that there should be some kind of these incentives so that people feel encouraged to go from a step to another, because if there was no levels and progress bars and so on, then people will not really feel motivated to contribute more and more isn't it? But I believe that one of the most important takeaways out of what you said is that if things were much simpler, then we could have been more motivated.

Participant.3

Hey. Actually, I agree with that. But for me it's not an incentive to get badges and points, I mean, I may spare time for getting a voucher or something like that and secondly, from what you were saying that it needs a lot of time and effort for the system to recognise you. You have to do many reviews. So, what is the goal of the replies? Or for example the target? Do we need to have more users with fewer views that means?

Researcher

OK.

Participant.3

Do we address to the broader public who maybe don't have that much time to spend on reviews? But the number of reviews will be greater, or TripAdvisor's goal is just to have less reviewers who would be very motivated? I don't know, just my thoughts. I don't have something really to add, but yes.

Researcher

So basically, you are referring to the low value of return we can get out of our contribution?

Participant.3

Yes.

Researcher

OK.

Participant.4

I think yeah, I was going to say the same thing really. If I have the time. I might leave a review, maybe, but there's no reason to spend time to leave a review. It's just so easy to go onto the website, I got what I need but I won't really benefit anything from reviewing if that makes sense. I suppose that the whole point of the gamification system is to give you something to aim for, or, you know, it's just not enough to just get these badges because they're not enough incentive, they're not, they're not real. Where's my play game on paying it for fun? When I get the badges on TripAdvisor doesn't mean much.

Researcher

OK.

Participant.4

But to add to that, if it was perceived by the public that having these badges is a good thing, as if someone saw you in public or someone saw you on the website has perceived that to be a good thing then that would be motivational enough to some extent, I think.

Researcher

So, you're basically referring to two things, the incentive, and the word of mouth.

Participant.4

Yeah, yeah, no one really talks about it. Oh, what badges do you have on TripAdvisor?

Researcher

OK., Participant.5 please go ahead.

Participant.5

The only thing that I can see which is proposed out of the labels they're offering, is that it will make me more relying on that review, I think that it will be more reliable because we know sometimes maybe we exaggerate when we give the comment or something like that.

So, for me it would be a guidance to help me to understand that. OK, this is a more reliable comment, so I will take it into account, otherwise I don't know if that will be very helpful.

Participant.6

I think service providers should be innovative. Why must we be innovative? There's one question that we should keep asking ourselves if we are in charge of a function or an operation. How do I improve, or how do I make the process more efficient and effective?

Researcher

Exactly, and that's the question that we are trying to answer. Like what are the reasons why this gamification system is not really effective in persuading us? Why are we disengaged? Although we know the website and we regularly use it, but we're not really engaged, so that's what we're trying to do in this session. So, what do you think? Is it because what some of our colleagues said, that they didn't really know about the whole thing?

Some others said they knew a bit about it but didn't feel really attracted to scrutinise more and to understand more what the whole thing is about. Some others said that they

are not really interested in wasting time just to review and get some points and badges which at the end of the day would not get them any real return like any real tangible return. So, do you have anything to add up here or to comment on?

Participant.6

I think orientation or sensitization could play a part in making people motivated and developing the interest in that.

Researcher

OK, so how do you think this could be done? How can they motivate us to engage more? How can they attract us to get more and more interested in the gamification system?

Participant.6

Yeah, maybe the ads, let me say the advertisements should be a bit catchy, and should also spell out the important things that a visitor is likely to get. It should be catchy and also shows the important things that anyone who visits the site will get. This should be summarised briefly to catch the person's attention.

Researcher

OK, so you are emphasizing on the awareness thing.

Participant.6

Perfect.

Researcher

OK, so I might revert to what Participant.2 said. Things should have been more clear and more simplified to people. Participant.4 also stressed on the word of mouth as well. So, if things were clearer and more sparking to people, this could be more attractive.

Participant.6

Yes

Researcher

Participant.3?

Participant.3

Actually, I changed my mind. I was trying to say that I had an idea that, OK, it's not good for me and for us who are not contributing to TripAdvisor, but yeah, for example,

TripAdvisor could impose a certain limit on the number of reviews we could access if we don't contribute to the platform. But on the other side, this could be against TripAdvisor, because then I would probably just stop using TripAdvisor and will not spend time anyway to write reviews. Do you understand my point?

Researcher

I would appreciate if you can elaborate a bit more on this.

Participant.3

Yeah, so I was saying that if TripAdvisor was trying to find a way to let people review, my first thought which I don't actually think is a good idea, would be to limit the number of reviews that non-members can access. So, I can just read for example three, four, five reviews and then for me to be able to read more reviews, I'll have to write reviews myself.

Researcher

OK, I got your point. So, in order to get insights, you have to contribute.

Participant.3

Yes, but the problem is that this can turn against TripAdvisor because I would probably just stop reading the reviews.

Researcher

Yeah, and I think as you said, this can give an advantage for the rivals of TripAdvisor to emerge and to exploit this situation so that people will start shifting onto them.

Participant.2

I think, highlighting the importance of participation itself is very important. Like declaring If you participate, this will help other people like you to make up their mind about places, attractions. So, this may be highlighted in a small box on their website, this may be helpful.

Also, like I said before, um I, I think incentives or tangible incentives will be very attractive, like entering people who participate in draws on vouchers or discounts or something like that. This will be very attractive.

Researcher

OK, so again we're reverting to extrinsic rewards, extrinsic motivation, the tangible ones, the financial ones.

Participant.2

Yeah, yeah, plus highlighting the importance of participation, this is very important.

Researcher

OK, thank you. Participant.4?

Participant.4

I think in a summary as everyone said I was just gonna say similar to what Participant.3 and Participant.2 said. But there's three ways to motivate people here. By the sounds of it, either you punish the users if they're not contributing, or you reward the users for contributing, or you try to rely basically on the goodness of people. So, like Participant.3 said, punishing the users for not contributing will probably benefit the competitors of TripAdvisor for example. So, it's not really viable.

Rewarding works, I think that it would definitely play a part. That's what Participant.2 was saying about maybe financial vouchers etc. Real rewards, not just the positive reinforcement of getting a badge.

And then the last thing is relying on the goodness of people by putting out a post just to highlight the importance of how putting out reviews and pictures, how that helps. It's similar to what Wikipedia did in a way when they're asking for small donations from their users. And they said if every single person just gave this much money, it will be enough to keep us running for the next whatever many years.

Researcher

OK. so basically, you are saying that the company should work on two trends, on one hand it could work on rewarding people more tangible rewards and sparking their extrinsic motivation, but on the other hand, it could touch on the goodness of people and show them that it really needs their contribution, otherwise the whole benefit they are getting out of it will not really keep working on the long term.

Participant.4

Yeah exactly, and of course, that would be the second option that could be more appealing to TripAdvisor. I think the first option would be most effective in terms of giving rewards or a combination of both of course.

Researcher

Yeah, so you're saying the same thing together with Participant.2. Anything instant, anything that people can just feel straight away could have a very impactful return on them.

Participant.1

Yeah, maybe just also building on some things that were already said. In my opinion, gamification as a concept is a really a good concept and it works, it's proven to work, but as with everything, I think it has to evolve as well. What I'm saying is that there's a lot of companies that might have already gotten on board with the idea of applying gamification concepts, and once this becomes an overload in people's minds in a sense, it becomes less effective once you see a lot of it becoming less effective. So how can you take it a level up in order to just give it that little extra edge to other people that use it.

For example, all these social media platforms which are not exactly about gamification, when Facebook first came out, everybody was using it. Then you got Instagram? You got Snapchat? You got all these different platforms. And then you'd see that the things that reward you the most in a sense were the ones that kept alive. It doesn't have to be tangible rewards like financial rewards. It could be just the attention of people, how you expose it to different audiences and attract people that you want to attract and show the value of being on the platform through getting these different badges.

So, for example, if I do get a badge, maybe I get promoted more, maybe they give me like a blog in order to start writing my reviews on and this would be a source of revenue like you'd have on Instagram because people would start to try to sponsor your blog, right?

Researcher

OK.

Participant.1

It's sort of just brainstorming, it's very fragmented as an idea, but I think the evolution of gamification is important as the concept.

Researcher

Yeah. So basically, you're implying the introduction of tangible rewards but not very instant ones, not very direct ones, where people can get some return that shouldn't be necessarily very straight forward. They can just give them the very first step of getting financial return such as offering them a blog, and then they can take it from there.

Participant.1

I think it's something like Instagram, it has a very good system the more you use it.

Researcher

Like YouTube as well, I think?

Participant.1

Like you said, maybe YouTube is a better example. Yeah, so the more you use this and the better content you put up there, like silver plaque or whatever, maybe it's not as meaningful as what it signifies, so it's a matter of, yeah, I get the badge, but maybe the thing that I get out of it should be meaningful more than the badge.

Researcher

Well, by the way, I just realised one thing. While surfing the web page of TripAdvisor a few days ago, I found out that lots of people were asking the same question. What is the benefit out of the points and badges that we're getting there? Are there any tangible rewards? Anything practical that we can use out of it, so it looks like yes, people are revolving around this idea of yes, get us something worth.

Participant.1

Yeah it does go back to the idea that's about it. What am I going to do with a badge? Plus, nobody talks about what badges you have on TripAdvisor.

Researcher

OK. Participant.5. Would you like to contribute?

Participant.5

Yes, I just agree with the rest of the participants. I don't know who mentioned that about Instagram, that a lot of people are more engaged with this kind of advertisements of restaurants and hotels because I think it's more instant and sometimes, I think that they give more immediate rewards or something like that. I suppose if they do that through Instagram sometimes from some certain people, I don't know if that makes sense.

Researcher

Yeah. So, all the ideas are pouring in the same flow in terms of getting something serious out of the time and effort we users are consuming. The effort, anything we're investing in this website should give us something in return.

I think you're right, and honestly this is what I expected to be one of the main reasons behind our disengagement. So, on one hand we are only visiting the website to get as much information as possible on whatever destination we are looking at, but on the other hand, we don't feel really attracted to do like the other people who are giving us these information.

I always had this thought in my mind. Why are some people that active, spending their time and effort doing so? And reverting to the literature, it looks like there is a significant segment of people, indeed much less than the disengaged ones, but there is a significant segment of active users who just enjoy getting intrinsic rewards and getting recognised, getting virtually promoted or ranked on a leaderboard. This gives them some intrinsic satisfaction.

But I think as you just said, Participant.5, and as most of you were agreeing on, people seem to aim to get something more serious, because even those active users may not be really attracted on the long term towards this gamification system. This is what lots of papers in the literature were actually implying.

Participant.1

Just to build on that, I think that some people do engage with it, because if you think about it again, it is some type of game in a sense, right? So, if you get badges, it's some type of game. Some people like to collect things that rank up, but other people are not as interested. It doesn't say anything about the people that are engaged or the people that are not engaged. Anything is much as it just says, it's about different tastes. I could be engaged with it because I like this type of game, other people are not because they like a different type of games. A shooter game or something like that?

Researcher

Yeah, I got your point.

Participant.1

Yeah, so I think the way to actually engage the wider public is to give something in return whereas if you want to just engage the people who would like this type of game, it's just the badges that are your way to go.

Researcher

OK, so what you're saying is that most people have some kind of mutual taste with respect to game design elements, but they differ in terms of the extent to which they get attracted to each of them? Is it to the extent of wasting their time and effort for getting badges, or they need something further so that the whole combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations builds up the whole experience and engage them to go into the experience?

Participant.1

Yeah. Well, I mean if you're enjoying it, you're not really wasting your time, but if you're not enjoying it, you feel like you are wasting your time so.

Researcher

Maybe it depends on the extent to which you are enjoying it. So, as you just said, tastes differ, some people could be very happy doing it, some others could be slightly happy, you know, so companies should maybe try to see how to make them more motivated to do that.

Participant.1

Yeah.

Researcher

And maybe let them reach out the same level of satisfaction of those people who are just happy with the intrinsic reward.

Participant.1

Yes, but when you're dealing with people who have different tastes, I think the only way to do that is to, maybe in my opinion, find something to give in return in a sense, either directly or indirectly.

Researcher

OK. So yeah, they should let's say diversify the portfolio of rewards so that they can address all type of customers, or let's say of users.

Participant.1

Yes, but there's a limit when you're dealing with intangible rewards, in my opinion, there's a limit to the amount of people you contact, whereas when you go employ tangible ones you get exposed to a much wider audience that you can control.

Researcher

I think, and this is what lots of studies are referring to, that even those users who are very happy with the intangible rewards, are not guaranteed to have the same momentum on the very long run. They could be satisfied at that moment or for a couple of days, weeks, months, whatever, but then they might just retrieve, maybe when realising that the effort or the time they are exerting is less than the return they are getting, although being satisfied on the short run.

Participant.1

Yeah, so I think that's another point If you stay on the same type of return scheme. You even lose the people you do have; you will not retain them for very long in a sense because they'd lose interest at the end.

Researcher

Yeah, so this is what I thought about today. What if you already reach all the high levels, you get all the badges and then you feel like the game is over, so there should be something more motivating probably.

Participant.1

Yep.

Researcher

Great. So, we had a brainstorming about the most probable reasons behind our disengagement in the gamification system in TripAdvisor, and potentially all other peer companies promoting brand value co-creation through gamification? Such type of crowdsourcing companies like TripAdvisor, merely relying on their own users, don't really have employees, or have very limited number of employees as the operations are being actually run by users.

So basically, gamification here is not something secondary, it is primary isn't it. It is the main tool through which these companies are running the whole business from A to Z. And this is why it is very important for them to see how they can preserve their current active users and how they can persuade the large segment of disengaged ones, including us. Because if they don't do so, some other rivals could find out some good tricks to attract us, which could be very critical to such kind of crowdsourcing companies.

Crowdsourcing as you can infer from the term itself refers to companies merely relying on the crowd, relying on us, the users for running up their operations.

So, just to summarize the potential solutions for TripAdvisor and all similar types of crowdsourcing companies, I think we can say it is first a matter of awareness. They should pay more attention on how to deliver the message and let us know about the whole thing, the whole gamified system. This could be one point and the other one is to make the system easier for disengaged users to pop in and take part, plus involving tangible rewards alongside the intangible ones so that they can spark our desire, let's say or our real interest for contributing.

And maybe another point that I think Participant.4 and also Participant.3 mentioned is that they could rely on the goodness of people, although this could not be a real effective tool, but still, they can kind of address people's emotions by telling them that we are offering you all these features of rating and reviews and information and insights, in return, we expect from you to do the same so that this company or this platform would sustain. However, this is a general suggestion and is not limited to companies employing gamification.

So yeah, I think those are the main potential responses that we as disengaged users could expect from similar platforms to implement so that they can spark our interest and let us take part and join the active users' segment. Do you have any other thing than these points I've just mentioned?

Participant.1

I can add to this, maybe I'll just go back to the idea of evolving gamification? Just remembered I think in the early days, YouTube also had a badge system in the very early days, I think if I'm not mistaken, YouTube had a badge system and then it evolved it to actually give back to the people that contribute. It may be indirect because we did touch on rewards, but maybe indirect rewards that you then have to work on forward. It's sort of employing your customer base.

Researcher

Yeah so TripAdvisor and all similar companies are getting money out of the advertisements they are promoting for other companies, such as hotels and restaurants, all this because there is a segment, a significant segment of users who are contributing

and running the operations. But in return you are saying that you feel like you need some kind of reciprocity, aren't you?

So, well, we're giving you all these features, but in return you just give us intangible things. You don't feel like you're getting much, much out of your contribution, right?

So, I think one important notion to mention here is reciprocity, so we're giving you lots of things, but in return you are giving us less, so yeah, it's about the idea of reciprocity, isn't it?

Participant.1

I think that's a good word to use, um, so it's about giving back. I can understand the challenges this can pose, it doesn't require you as a company to sort of rip off the whole business model and how you are making revenue, and how you are giving out revenue and how you engage with your customers, but I think there is always difficulty in moving forward, but this is probably the way to move forward. And of course, that's just my opinion.

Participant.6

I wanted to reach two key points. To make the process, I think in everything that we do, we should focus on the targets and on the wider market or the wider targets. If you are trying to be among the best, get their competitive advantage. You think outside of the box, who are your focus customers.

And my second point is about reciprocity. I think everything that we do is based on consensus. Do this for me, and you get this. Do this advertisement for me or this promotion for me and you get 10% off whatever comes out of it. It's an agreement. So, at the end of the day, we just have to make sure that the terms of the agreement are met, so no one will be different. I am doing something for you, and you give me similar thing again.

So basically, I got two points. What are your target markets, and who are the customer that you want to attract, and how do you attract them? And secondly, having an agreement with whatever party you want to attract.

Researcher

OK, so agreement. I think it is still kind of revolving around the idea of reciprocity. So, you're saying there should be kind of a peer or equivalent relationship between the crowdsourcing company and its users who are actually sort of unofficial employees.

Well, I believe we had very insightful information. To be honest I encountered lots of ideas that I didn't have in mind. So, I'm really happy with the findings we had out of this session. I hope that the other couple of groups I'm going to run discussions with will also come out with further insightful information.

I don't want to take more of your time. I know that your schedules are tight, so if anyone has any question or would like to add up anything I'll be very glad if you could share it.

By the way, if anyone of you is interested in getting like the summary of findings of the research, then please let me know. You can just say it here or send me an email. But as you may know this could take some sometime because we need to wait until the end of the research and then doing the report management.

So yeah that's all for now. I would like to really thank you for your participation today.
Thank you all!

Participant.1

Thank you.

Participant.4

Thank you, thank you. Bye.

Participant.3

Thank you.

Participant.5

Yeah thanks

Researcher

Thank you. Thank you everyone.

Group B

Researcher

Thank you very much everyone for attending the session. I know your schedules may not be too flexible, so I'm really appreciating your time.

I will introduce myself, my name is Mohamad Amir Merhabi. I'm a PhD student at Aston University. This is my final year and hopefully I should be finishing by the end of September 2022. My topic is about gamification, which I'm going to introduce you to in a while, and how gamification is being used to promote brand value co creation. This discussion should not exceed more than one hour and a half, but I believe it could be less.

I am going to introduce my research topic, which is the use of game design elements so-called gamification in promoting brand value co-creation. I have chosen TripAdvisor as my case study because TripAdvisor has been perceived in the literature as one of the most typical examples of using game design elements to promote brand value co-creation.

So now I'll just take you through the platform of TripAdvisor so that you have a brief idea of what I'm talking about and then basically we will start up our discussion with everyone aligned. Can everyone see the screen?

Participant.2

Yes.

Researcher

OK thanks. So, as you can see, I'm just opening the web page of TripAdvisor, where there is a programme called TripCollective. In this programme people are encouraged to take part in reviewing and posting photos and videos, raising questions in the forum and rating destinations, and the more they do so, the more they get points.

As a reward for doing so, the more they get points as you can see, they tend to cross from one level to another. Level one starts up from three hundred points until reaching ten thousand points when reaching level six.

Then we do have the badges, so I'm clicking on the badges icon so that you know more about it. Reviewers get badges the more they review, as you can see, a user with only one review is rewarded a badge so-called new reviewer, then we move to the level of Reviewer, Senior Reviewer, Contributor, Senior Contributor and Top Contributor.

Then we do have the Expertise badge, so some people are more expert in one field than another, if they usually post about hotels, then they get the hotel badge so-called the Hotel Expert badge, then we have the Restaurant Expert badge, Destination Expert badge and so on.

Passport badges are dedicated for people who post reviews or ratings or any kind of contribution in more than two destinations from two different places.

As for the votes, as you know, people reviews are not always of the same quality. So, the more people get more likes with respect to their reviews, the more they get promoted, and others will know how accurate their reviews are.

We also have the Explorer badge dedicated for people who are of the very first to explore a new destination, such as a hotel, restaurant, or an attraction.

Finally, we do have the Travellers Choice Reviewer badge, which is the one granted to people who favourably review destinations that by time were perceived as one of the best destinations chosen by others.

So, this was a brief summary of what the gamification system in TripAdvisor looks like, it embeds points, levels, badges, and also, I just remembered the leaderboard, as you can see, people are ranked from one to fifty, so those are the fifty most active contributors in a specific destination in terms of reviews and helpful votes they have been granted by others.

This was an introduction to the gamification system in TripAdvisor, and the main purpose of my research is to check why the vast majority of people, including us, are actually using TripAdvisor in order to get insights, information, to check reviews, ratings, comments, photos, videos about destinations, yet they never contribute.

So, we are kind of passive users, aren't we? We just get whatever we want, but we don't contribute, and the purpose of my research is to understand the reasons behind this disengagement and the potential solutions a company such as TripAdvisor and all other similar companies employing gamification for brand value co-creation should do in order to persuade us and shift us from passive users to active ones.

We're here to share thoughts together and discuss those reasons that could probably encompass the fact of not knowing enough about the whole gamification system, or not being really attracted to the gamification system although knowing about it and so forth. Some other people could be interested yet don't really find the time to contributing to it. So that's the main idea of my research, and I'd be very glad if you can share with me what you think about the reasons and potential solutions for not really contributing to the platform. If anyone would like to start and to share their thoughts?

Participant.1

Yes, so I've used TripAdvisor many times, not just in the UK but overseas. When looking to book hotels or restaurants in European cities, I find that TripAdvisor is a great platform. But sometimes I feel that the reviews aren't as trustworthy and honest. Somebody might be disgruntled about something minor, so sometimes I don't like what I read? I don't feel like there's a lot of validity to the reviews.

Also, once I've used TripAdvisor, I didn't feel like there was a lot of engaging features for me to get involved in one side. I read the reviews that I want, so I read the reviews, scroll down, have a look at some pictures, but I don't feel there is a lot of touchpoints or engagement features for me to then get involved with it or even be aware of it. You know, I'm just a user looking at it, when not being a daily user or someone who's contributed before, I don't feel there is a lot of a sort of messaging to encourage me or influence me to contribute.

Researcher

OK, so you're mainly talking about awareness and motivation.

Participant.1

Yeah, awareness, motivation. You're not rewarding this? You know, I know there are a lot of rewards, but the reward elements aren't clear.

Researcher

Yeah, I believe those could be a few of the most prevalent reasons why we don't really contribute. I think the reward thing you mentioned is really important. Does anyone have anything to add up with regard to the rewards, awareness or motivation?

Participant.1

I mean like on, you know when in booking.com, booking.com will give you certain deals, genius deals emails. They'll give you percentages off for your next bookings and things. Whereas in TripAdvisor, I don't feel like there's much of extrinsic rewards.

Participant.2

But if I could jump in, I think, yeah, I think for me I'm not a frequent traveller researching anything meaningful from TripAdvisor, so basically, if I'm going somewhere I will check the reviews, check the pictures, but I don't think I should contribute because in my head it's like I travel maybe once a year, I don't know how long I am going to leave reviews for until I see something meaningful. So, I don't leave reviews. I just use the site and leave it at that.

Researcher

Yeah, but that's why they have actually included the gamification system, so that they motivate us to contribute by granting us points, badges, levels and so on. Do you think those features are adequate in terms of encouraging us to take part, or they need to innovate them or to adopt any new features so that they can really catch up our attention?

Participant.2

To be fair, this is the first time I'm hearing about the gamification part of TripAdvisor. Haven't heard about it before and I don't think it's one of the pops that come when you go to their website. I don't think I've seen that as well, so I can't really say because I haven't used the system and I don't know what it entails, so not really sure.

Researcher

So just reverting to what you're saying, it just came to my attention a few days ago that the gamification system is not always shown on the web page of TripAdvisor. It depends on which device or which software you're accessing the platform from. If you're accessing it from iOS, the whole gamification features are not appearing on contributors' profiles, whereas if you access it from your laptop, you can notice it while surfing, just next to the profile of reviewers. So, if you just check the profile of any reviewer, you will

get them on spot. So yeah, I think awareness is very important to mention here. As you just said, it's not always sparking up.

Participant.2

Yeah, I also I don't click on the profile of people who leave reviews, I just read what they say. If they have any pictures, I check the pictures, I don't check their profile because it's not really a social media platform if that makes sense. I'm not really interested in checking out their profiles.

Researcher

Not even to know whether they are reliable enough or credible enough?

Participant.2

Not really.

Researcher

OK.

Participant.3

I think from my perspective this is quite an interesting way. This is really an interesting debate because I went through a state where I did use TripAdvisor a lot. I think my reservation would be that the experience of hotels, holiday resorts, pubs, restaurants, these are very unique and they're very individual so I could go to a restaurant and have a superb meal, and someone could read that review and go on the back of my review.

With the restaurant being so particular, their experience might be completely different to mine, so I'm a great believer of second time syndrome, where you go to a restaurant one time, its phenomenally good and it raises your expectation and then you go again with a high expectation and actually doesn't really reach those heights. So, if I put a second review that kind of counteract the first review.

Then the other hesitations I've got isn't very cynical, and I do believe that TripAdvisor and platforms of that ilk are susceptible to potential competitors of these hotels being able to come, speak badly or negatively about arrival. There's a lot of scope for individuals who have particularly left that establishment to try and leave sarcastic or offensive comments on there.

So, I do question the validity of it. I do use it as a guide. My father actually used it extremely, religiously, and he actually sometimes comes a cropper because he goes to somewhere where he might get highly ranked on TripAdvisor.

Researcher

OK.

Participant.3

Plus, it pays certain fees, and I don't think the number one rated hotel in Manchester is actually the best hotel in Manchester. So, for me it is interesting to get different perspectives, but from my side of the fence, the gamification is very long winded. I echo what Participant.1 said. I've got a classic Tesco Clubcard because I like to see the price of a product and the reduction and what I'm saving. I don't sign into things where you just get points and points and points, and you don't actually know what it means. In TripAdvisor, two thousand five hundred points, I don't know what it means - Booking.com, £25 off your next purchase, I know what it means.

Researcher

So, you're basically referring to the tangible thing, the tangible rewards that users are actually expecting.

Participant.3

Yeah, I mean from a TripAdvisor perspective, I think it's open to interpretation. I wouldn't book a restaurant because someone had a bad experience. And I think the reviews are very harsh on what they're actually reviewing. I've booked a holiday to Turkey last year and the hotel I've booked has got a couple of one-star reviews because there's a lot of cats in the premises, well I'm not quite sure the hotel can do much about cats and the population of cats in Turkey, so again, the points system is very individual based on the needs of that person or that family.

Researcher

OK. Participant.4 you would you like to say something?

Participant.4

Yes, I add my voice to the other guys. I think there's no point accumulating point if it's not materialised. So yeah, I mean I use booking.com also and I know that I'm getting discount now because I've been using booking.com. I've been using TripAdvisor for a long time, but I don't think I'm getting anything for using it all the time, so I think these points are only on paper. Really, they're not realised, I think that's an issue.

Researcher

OK. So just apart from the tangible thing, the tangible rewards whether discounts or vouchers or anything practical, is there anything within the current gamification system that you believe could be done in terms of innovation, I mean to improve it? So, beside the tangible thing, is there anything innovative you think could potentially attract you further.

Participant.4

I think one way they can use to push people to put reviews and picture is by removing some of the free feature on the website. So, let's say, maybe for example, they move features that you take for granted, and these would then be only available if you contribute somehow to the website. Maybe on the other hand, this might be a problem because it might overtime make the website weaker and less people will be going into it. But yeah, that's the only way I can think of. If they don't want to give discount or anything.

Researcher

OK.

Participant.5

Um, I agree with most of what has been said there. Especially regarding the awareness of gamification. The first time I used TripAdvisor was like in 2015 and I used to google things and TripAdvisor popped up in my face and I saw what the occasions are and read about some events in that place. Since then, to be honest with you, the second time that TripAdvisor popped up in my face was when I was looking for a hotel five years later.

And then yeah, I started surfing TripAdvisor because Google showed it to me, it showed me the list of prices among all other websites for booking a hotel. They took me to a third party. At that moment I didn't know about the gamification thing. They didn't for example give me any motivation to take part or to review, they did not attract me to visit another page which a lot of other platforms might do to attract their customers.

So yeah, from that point I would say, there are basically three parts I can see around TripAdvisor. The website, the third parties they are leading us to, like hotels, restaurants and other places, and there are us, their customers.

So, if there was any good advice to give to TripAdvisor it might be to create a good relationship between us as customers and probably hotels, or these restaurants, or probably the third parties. So, for example, a loyalty relationship or whatever, third parties could say well, if you go through us, you might get points, or if you book again or leave a review for the hotel, we will contact you, we will probably give you an offer, one night free at that hotel, or whatever? Yeah, so that's what I can say.

Researcher

OK, I can see that all the opinions revolve around the financial benefits people can get out of contributing. The thing is that those kind of crowdsourcing platforms, and by the way crowdsourcing means the fact of relying on the crowd, such as TripAdvisor, they merely operate the whole thing through their own users. So, if you can just imagine what would happen if all users were exactly like us, not contributing, not posting, not reviewing, not rating, just getting there in order to get the information, the whole platform will then collapse because it is literally getting operated by us as users.

So that's why I believe what we are discussing is very crucial for those kinds of platforms who are operating in the crowdsourcing industry. They should be really investigating how they can shift passive users to become more active so that the platform will sustain and would survive on the long term. Otherwise, it will just collapse. So far, we have covered a couple of dimensions, which are the lack of awareness as Participant.3 and

Participant.1 said. The lack of financial return or let's say tangible return, such as getting some good financial or practical advantage through contributing.

And a question would arise here, do you have in mind any suggestion of how these tangible rewards could look like, apart from the very basic discount vouchers and free gifts? Is there anything tangible that could be innovative in any way? Do you have anything in mind so that the portion of non-active users could decrease anyway by joining the current active ones? And as you may expect, the more active users in such crowdsourcing platforms, the more productive and efficient the operations would be, and thus more profits to the company. So, this is a question that I believe should be asked first by those companies themselves. What do you think could be added here?

Participant.1

I think TripAdvisor should be building better relationships with these restaurants and hotels and then encourage people to go and experience that hotel or to stay at that hotel and leave a review, a honest review at the cost of the hotel or maybe in return of a prize giveaway. Or maybe hotels that don't have great reviews for whatever reason can encourage people to come and stay, and show that they've made huge improvements and then asking those people to leave a honest review on TripAdvisor.

Researcher

So, what is the main innovation we're talking about here?

Participant.1

So, the innovation side of it would be to actively ask for reviews, to reach out people, to engage with people to say come and try our hotel now or try our restaurant. You know you left a bad review last time, could we offer you a complimentary stay?

Participant.2

Sorry, but wouldn't this introduce some sort of biasness, you know, customized comments?

Researcher

Good point. Anyone could maybe post a negative review and then get the compensation out of it. But to be honest, what I'm trying to focus on here is the gamification system, not anything far from it. So, I agree with what you're trying to say, but I mean in terms of tangible and virtual rewards. Do you think, for example, making the website more appealing in terms of gamifying things, making it more enthusiastic so that they trigger out our curiosity, do you think this may attract you anyway?

Maybe enabling us to post the badges or the points that we're getting on our own social media accounts so that our friends could know about it. I'm just brainstorming with you to see what the potential solutions could be so that they can shift us or a significant segment of us from being disengaged into becoming more engaged. Because again, I believe if they manage to make just 10% out of us more active, then you can just imagine the multiple of revenue the company could make a year.

Participant.3

I think from my perspective it is all around gamification, but if people have got their reservations about leaving reviews in the first place or their reservations about using TripAdvisor as a platform, then the tangibility of what they can offer is null and void because if you don't use the platform then the rewards are useless.

As I said, I went through a state where if I stayed somewhere really, really good, I would review that and then I would suggest why it's very good. I'm more inclined to review when it's very, very positive, then when it's very, very negative, because I know that everyone's experience is different, and you might catch a chef on a bad day. I don't generally like to cast dispersions publicly about negative experiences, so my reviews on TripAdvisor were generally only positive but I'm still not inclined. I've probably been on TripAdvisor for ten, eleven years and I've probably left maybe half a dozen reviews in that time because I don't take the reviews seriously, so I would expect people to be a bit sceptical about my reviews. Therefore, the rewards that they can offer me in terms of the numbers you showed before, three hundred, five hundred, and one thousand don't really resonate on me because there's no scouts to say if I left one more review I'll become a silver member or bronze member or something like that, plus I don't know what that meant.

Participant.2

Yeah, it means nothing, doesn't it? The pointing system I mean, do you know someone who uses it every now and again?

Participant.3

Yes, so there was nothing there that made me think I want to go to a restaurant next week so that I can review it to become a bronze member. It disconnects, the gamification process disconnected me from it and I didn't feel that I would go to places and review them, and I think as well we have the mentality that we're all busy people. Are you going to go back and think before I put my kids to bed? I must leave a review for that hotel on TripAdvisor or before I get in the car on map. You know, people don't do that, it's very, very hard.

In my industry, I get testimonials from our people, our people kind of expect that the service should be the service that they pay whatever they pay for, so the whole reviews is a difficult subject. And I do think engaging people to leave reviews is really, really hard. What can they do? I'm probably not best equipped to answer that because I use it as a very slight, very mere reference point. I don't look at thinking everywhere I go.

Researcher

Well, you know, just reverting to what you're saying, it just popped in my mind the fact that one of the criteria why all of you have been selected including myself, is that we belong to generations Y & Z, which means that we are more into games, technology, game design elements and so on, way more than older generations. And the big question is – well if us, young generations are saying this, then how would the situation look like when it comes to older generations? Certainly, they will not be really interested in the gamification system. So, there is a really big issue to watch out here.

Participant.1

Yeah, also we, I mean those generations, are busy all the time. You know sometimes we don't have the time or the patience or whatever to sit down and leave a review even if we have had a good meal. Maybe because there's no enough reward to influence us to go and do that. You know you get a few more points, but the points mean nothing, so there's nothing physical that let me say I'm going to sit down and do this, because I'll be rewarded or uplifted through the gamification process.

Participant.3

I think from my perspective just sort of thinking out loud about, yeah, I've usually gone to pubs and restaurants because I do try and eat out. But for instance, you know if they offered me a free drink at the end of the meal, gave me an iPad and said listen, here's our TripAdvisor page, can you just leave a review while you're having a complimentary cup of tea or a beer or a glass of wine? I'd be more inclined to do that, but again, as Participant.1 said, you know we're all very, very busy people. The first thing I've got to do when I get home, is logging into TripAdvisor, remember my username and password, find the pub that I've been to, to leave a review, then it takes a couple of days to get moderated?. Sometimes I can't be bothered unless the experience was that good.

Researcher

But then the question that just came into my mind if this was the situation, and if those were the reasons why we are not contributing, then why are those active users already there spending their time there and being very keen to collect more rewards or more points to move from a level to another? And by the way we're talking about maybe hundreds of thousands in the world doing so.

That's the question that I'm trying to answer myself. If all of us here in the room agreed that as long as there is nothing practical and less time consuming, there is no reason to contribute, then why are those active people already there?

Participant.4

I think the reason why I wouldn't put a review on TripAdvisor is because I think it's less likely to be read, because I mean why do you open TripAdvisor in the first place? What functionality it has? So, for example I am more likely to put a few on booking.com because people use Booking.com to book a hotel and therefore now they're more likely to open this app hotel and to read my view. Why would I be more inclined to put a review on Google Map? Well because I know people use Google map all the time to go from one destination to another and therefore, they click on the location. They're more likely to go to the review section and read my review. TripAdvisor doesn't have a lot of functionality, rather than putting pictures but it doesn't help with anything else, it doesn't. It's not a great application for navigation or it's not a great application to book things at. I open TripAdvisor is to see if there's any activities, but there's another app that does that it is called Viator that is very famous, where you book or do other activities.

So, there's nothing very special about TripAdvisor other than pure review and pictures. So, unless you're travelling somewhere very new that you wouldn't know, it's not an application I open every day. I open TripAdvisor maybe once every three months. Unlike Google map that I open every day or booking.com that I open every 2-3 weeks to book a hotel. So, I think the lack of functionality is a reason why I'm less likely inclined to leave

a review on that app. Why would I put a view if I think there won't be many people reading it?

Researcher

But you know, some reviews are getting lots of likes, which means lots of people backing them and appreciating them.

I think what you said in terms of functionality is still relevant, because the more it is functional, the more people will visit the website and then the likes that those reviews are getting would be multiplied by many folds.

Participant.4

Yeah.

Researcher

But well, despite what you said about other websites like Google that are more visited by yourself over TripAdvisor, there are lots of destinations where ratings and reviews are higher on TripAdvisor than on Google, but yeah, I think there is a big segment of people who are looking for functionality, yet it looks like they don't reflect the whole market. You know there are lots of people who have fun in the gamification system, they have fun earning badges or points, moving from one level to another, or maybe posting their progress at TripAdvisor on their social media accounts.

I believe one of the main takeaways out of this discussion with respect to a large segment of users is that intangible things and non-virtual things are not worthy enough to consuming your time for.

But now the last question I have in this session is that, pretending that now we have tangible rewards included in the system, in a way that the more you move up from a level to another, or the more you get points and badges, the more you'll get discounts, or more recognition from hotels, restaurants and so on - do you think this would encourage you to take part in the system? Is it enough?

Participant.1

Yep, I think a monetary incentive always helps you out with everything. So, people would definitely be more inclined to leave reviews and get involved with the gamification side of it, because they want to achieve different levels to receive financial rewards.

Researcher

So, you think having the tangible rewards included or embedded in the gamification system is enough to motivate you? Or you believe that you still need something further to innovate the system, as some people might say that those very basic game design elements are no more appealing, they maybe need something more innovative such as a virtual reality or an augmented reality experience. Something more fun, something more enthusiastic, what do you think?

Participant.1

With any kind of game, there has to be some sort of gratification, or you know, reward whether that be intrinsic or extrinsic. I'm sure TripAdvisor will always succeed or always have reviews because there are always people who like to leave reviews, they are almost addicted to it and will review anything, they like to leave a bad review, so they can maybe bring down an establishment if a glass of water wasn't cold enough or something like that, so you'll always have reviews.

If you think about McDonald's, you know when they run the monopoly games people love to go to McDonald's just to get the monopoly stickers, and you know they will always want to do it, not just to get a little number on the board, but to win something.

Researcher

Sure. So, the question is, let's say they followed the financial thing that you just implied mentioning the McDonald's example. Will this be adequate? Will this be enough to spark your motivation to take part or you think OK, that would be more interesting, though I still don't find it really attractive or really worthy consuming my time and effort to engage, just to win a discount voucher here or there.

Participant.1

Some people, regardless of whatever the reward is, will never contribute because they don't want to leave their details, they don't have time, the financial gains aren't important to them. You know you could offer somebody 50% off something and they still won't take up the offer because they're just not interested. So, it all depends on the mentality of that person as well. I think it depends on who you target with these rewards and how are you targeting them.

Researcher

OK. So, lets summarise it that way. What kinds of financially things you are thinking about? Is it discount vouchers? Is it having like what Participant.5 said before, having like a free night in a hotel? Or you prefer having something more flexible so that you will be the one managing it or using it the way you want?

Participant.2

Well, I think a mix of both might be good. So, for instance, on TripAdvisor they can ask you did you have lots of experiences in that? Or if you go somewhere they show you a top ten list or something you can have for free. So, if they could do a reward system where you would get one of them free or discounted, that would be good. It could also be a system where if you accumulate a certain number of points or get to a certain level in the league you could then access something of your own choice rather than having something assigned to you.

Researcher

Cool. And one of the last questions I have in mind is: do you think if TripAdvisor or any other similar platform follow suit of what Wikipedia has been doing lately in addressing the emotions of their users by telling them well, if you don't help us or if you don't do that then we will probably not be able to sustain, and thus you won't have the current benefit that you're getting from us anymore. Do you think addressing our emotions as users could benefit the platform in terms of encouraging us to contribute? Kind of letting us feel that we're getting lots of benefits out of the platform, yet we are not contributing in anything, and if we just stay like that then TripAdvisor will probably say goodbye and will not be there anymore. Do you think addressing our emotions could help? Could it motivate us to contribute, in terms of reciprocity? You know they are giving us something, then we have to return it back in a way.

Participant.1

I think this could always work. You know if it's something that you like and you use, so people do like to read the reviews, some people do rely on it, don't they? And I think if it just suddenly disappeared overnight, a lot of people would struggle making decisions or finding destinations. It's not just a review site, it's a directory as well, isn't it? You get to known good places you've never heard of, so it does have the directory element of it, which is a reward in itself. So, I think the emotional part would then work for some people. Definitely it would encourage some people.

Researcher

OK Great. So basically, the main points that you have raised today are most importantly awareness, making us more aware about the whole gamification system, because lots of us didn't know about it although using TripAdvisor regularly, maybe because of surfing it from a device that doesn't show it on members' profiles?

The tangible rewards element was one of the main thoughts we have been sharing and discussing. As Participant.2 said, there is a wide range of potential financial rewards that we can get, either flexible or very straight forward ones.

Also, we discussed the functionality theme. As Participant.4 said, if people tend to perceive the website as being more functional or let's say more practical, than they would be keener to participate because they are already there and using it for many purposes.

One of the last things we've mentioned was the emotional perspective of potentially addressing us.

Participant.5

I just wanted to add one contribution to your previous question regarding potential suggestions that might solve the problem. I think one problem that I am personally facing is that there are too many companies probably providing the same service, so to whom should I contribute, to whom should I actually review? to booking.com, to Google Maps or to TripAdvisor?

Is gamification enough to review on TripAdvisor rather than other parties? Why TripAdvisor? One solution for this issue could be, for example, to have some sort of cooperation between those parties. So, for example, if I want to book a flight or book a hotel, a third party is always leading me to a third party, which in turns leads me to a

third party and they all take fees from each other right? So, from that part, it would be of benefit if those parties cooperate together to create sort of a mutual platform, so that if someone review on TripAdvisor, for example, they might get a reward from another platform? So, it is sort of a cooperation between them in a sense.

Researcher

OK. So basically, you're saying that gamification could be a nice motive, but not to the extent of being a real added value, so it could be over-estimated by the website itself, believing that it will spark more interest than it actually does, right? So, gamification is important, but not to the extent of merely relying on it as a source to motivate people, before having looked on how to improve the core business aspects in the first place?

Participant.5

Yep. I see it is of high importance, but I would more probably use Google Maps as a point to review. I might, for example, if I am that kind of guys who like to get more attention or likes, go to Twitter or to other Google Apps where I can get probably more attention, right?

There are probably too many competitors there and gamification might give me a badge, whatever the badge is, but for myself, if I want to contribute, I think from a psychological perspective, I might like to receive more attention from other people or third parties. The industry is full of competitors, so, if I had a chance to review in a platform that probably has the gamification as a motivator, but can't get integrated into more intermediaries from it, then what's the point? If for example, if I write that review, it might appear in Booking.com and TripAdvisor and Google Maps at the same time, so that might give me more motivation to write my review, because I might receive more attention in that sense. And I don't see that could be impossible because there is some cooperation between these third parties already, and gamification could be used in a mutual platform. So that's just a suggestion that could bring up a solution. It is sort of combining a lot of third parties together.

Researcher

Well, I think what you just said falls into what Participant.4 was saying in terms of functionality. So how functional is the website? If it is less functional than what we expect, then the gamification system will not really change the whole thing.

So, you are kind of implying that relying on game elements and making people having some fun could be nice, but on the long term, this alone might not be enough in attracting their long-term loyalty.

Participant.1

And just one more thing. TripAdvisor is monetised as well, so they earn money from revenue streams, such as advertisements, advertising clicks and referral fees. So, there's no reason why they can't reward the people who contribute to their platform, because it is monetised itself. It's like self-funded.

Researcher

It is not a charity.

Participant.1

Yeah, it is not a charity. You know it is benefiting from peoples' reviews. And it has made a business from people's reviews, so you know it's monetising itself through peoples' reviews. So, there's no reason why it shouldn't reward the people who've left those reviews.

Researcher

OK, so basically you are reverting to the reciprocity theme. You're getting financial benefit out of us as contributors, we're requesting some of this margin in return, right?

Participant.1

Yeah, pay back. Give the people what they want.

Researcher

OK. And a very last point. What do you think about the punishment strategy? I think one of the participants just mentioned this point. I know that this could be negative for us as non-active users. But what if they punish us for not being really active? So, if we don't contribute, we will not have access to all the reviews and photos, or insights we are looking for.

Participant.1

I'll use my girlfriend's account.

Researcher

OK, so you're saying that you will always find a way out. But don't you think this could also have some negative effect in terms of how people would perceive their website too?

Participant.3

Oh, that's right. Now I think this last point would give a bit of food for thought. If you stopped reviewing, they would drop certain privileges, as in you wouldn't see all the reviews away. I think that might help people. I think that might get people contributing more, but it's a big risk to take because it could get people to think well, I'll just look at reviews on another site. I mean, as I said, I use it more for expensive holidays, I would look at it if I'm booking a holiday. I'd look at hotels more likely than using it to check a restaurant or something in the UK.

But I do think there is a few people who would probably think I've got to start with contributing, otherwise I'm going to lose privileges. I think a lot of people would think like

someone said it, I'll just use another booking platform. That's a big risk to type, but I think it could work.

Researcher

But as you just said, the market is very big, and rivals are already there. So, any small mistake may be really counterproductive.

Participant.3

Sure.

Researcher

OK. Would anyone like to add anything else? Just to let you know that the management report which actually reflects the main findings of the research you are taking part in should be ready in one to two years. As you know, PhD takes long time. But anyway, if anyone of you is interested in knowing what their contribution has led to at the end of the research, you can email me or you can just let me know here.

Participant.3

Thank you. All good. That was interesting.

Researcher

OK, thank you very much everyone for your time and for the insights you've shared with me. Thank you very much. I hope you have a very nice day and I hope to keep in touch.

Participant.3

Thank you, good luck with the rest of your degree.

Researcher

Thank you, thank you very much.

Participant.1

Yeah, it was nice to speak to you. Bye.

Participant.2

All the best.

Researcher

Thank you everyone. Thank you. Take care.

Participant.2

Bye.

Researcher

Goodbye.

Group C

Researcher

Thank you all for attending today's session. I know your schedules may not be that flexible so I'm really appreciating the time you're spending here. Hopefully this session should not take too long, the more we contribute, the more insights we'll be getting out of this session and I'm really appreciating your contributions in advance.

So, introducing myself, my name is Mohamad Amir Merhabi. I'm a third year PhD student at Aston University. I'm doing my PhD in the field of gamification, which I'm going to introduce you to in a while, and more particularly, the use of gamification for brand value co-creation.

The main topic of today's session as you know is analysing the disengagement of TripAdvisor's visitors across its gamification system, so all of us here are regular users or visitors of TripAdvisor, but at the same time, we don't really contribute in terms of rating, reviewing, posting, commenting and so on, which could be kind of harmful for similar crowdsourcing companies mainly relying on the crowd, as you can see from the name itself. So, if the crowd is not really productive and contributing, then the whole system would collapse. That's why similar companies are increasingly introducing what is called gamification, to motivate people to contribute more and more and be part of their community.

I will take you now through the gamification system of TripAdvisor. I'll share my content so that if anyone of you doesn't really know what it is about, then they will be on the same track with everyone.

So, I'm sharing my content right now. Can you see my screen?

Participant.3

Yeah.

Participant.5

Yes.

Researcher

OK great. So basically, as you can see, TripAdvisor has introduced a program called TripCollective. In TripCollective, users or let's say visitors or members of TripAdvisor can earn points out of the reviews, photos or videos they actually post on the platform for restaurants, hotels, destination and so on, or even for raising any question or any comment on the forum of the platform. The more they contribute, the more they get points.

Then, as you can see, there is like a level scheme. The more people get points, the more they get promoted from a level to another. Level one starts from three hundred points until reaching level six with ten thousand points. So, the more people contribute by posting, reviewing, rating, and commenting, the more they get points and the more they get promoted from a level to another.

And another game element here, as you can see, badges. People get badges the more they get promoted. So, I will go through the badges page right now. As you can see, people are categorized from a New Reviewer with only one review, then Reviewer with three reviews, Senior Reviewer with five reviews, until reaching the Top Contributor badge with more than fifty reviews.

Another type of badge is the Expertise badge. So, for instance, some people could be more expert in one field than others, so people who would like to focus their reviews on hotels or on restaurants or attractions get specific badges accordingly, like the Hotel Expert badge, Restaurant Expert badge and Attraction Expert badge.

The Passport badge is dedicated for those who visit and review more than two destinations from two different places.

The Helpful Vote badge is granted for people who get more likes from others. So, as you know, reviews are not always of the same quality and accuracy, thus, people who get more helpful votes from other members get higher badges, which gives them kind of more accreditation.

Explorer badge is granted for those who are from the very first to review a hotel or a restaurant or an attraction, so it is kind of appreciating them for exploring a new place and recording it on the website.

Lastly, we have the Travellers' Choice Reviewer badge. So, if the reviews you actually post are getting recognized by others and matching their choices, you will therefore get it.

And finally, I'm sharing with you the leaderboard that some people are saying it's no more available, while others are saying they are still receiving it by email. Anyway, the leaderboard as you can see ranks people from one to fifty, according to the number of reviews and helpful votes they get out of their contributions on the website.

I will stop sharing now. So, I just introduced you to the gamification system in TripAdvisor so that you have an idea about the theme that we will be highlighting today. So basically, the big question that I'm really trying to investigate in my research and I'm starting with you as focus groups is, why do you think we as regular users of TripAdvisor aren't really attracted to this gamification system? We never contributed, we never posted, we never reviewed, we never rated, we never commented, although we know the website, we know the platform and we keep visiting it to get insights and information. But when it comes to contributing and consuming some time and effort, we never do it. Although the gamification system has been basically done for this purpose, to encourage us, to motivate us to take part in this community.

I'll be glad if anyone of you could start up the discussion by sharing their thoughts. What do you think is the reason behind let's say our disengagement?

Participant.1

Hi, first thank you very much for having us here and I think I didn't know about gamification prior to this, and I really enjoyed the fact that you scrolled down and showed us the different examples of gamification within TripAdvisor, that was really nice.

In terms of your question, I think for me personally, when you are scrolling down across different badges and different points and then the leaderboard, I saw that there was no mention of tangible rewards like I didn't see the word voucher, or I mean to me it felt like there was just badges and points, but OK, that's really good, but what are there for? Like if I get a lot of points, what would I get? Will I get a voucher for Amazon, for Apple, for

anything? So, for me things like this discourage me and demotivate me, so it's not really appealing to me.

Researcher

OK. So, you're saying that it's kind of time consuming. They're asking you to spend time and effort doing this, but in return they are not appreciating this in a financial way you mean, right?

Participant.1

Yes, yes exactly.

Researcher

OK, that's a good point that I was actually expecting to be honest, because this was the main theme that was raised by other focus groups.

Does anyone has anything to add up here?

Participant.2

Yes, also as you showed up and I saw the leaderboard and everything and the badges, which was really good, but I feel as if I am in TripAdvisor and wanted to write a review, it wasn't as appealing. I just go to see the reviews, but I feel as if I wouldn't go on like I said, there's no reward, there's no benefit for the users.

Researcher

OK, but I have a question that I would like to raise here. When I took you through the gamification system of TripAdvisor, did you feel like you're familiar with it?

Participant.1

No.

Participant.2

Not really, no.

Researcher

OK, because I believe that awareness is one of the main points to probably mention here. Although being regular users, many people know nothing about the whole system. So, I think one of the main points to note is awareness or attention that crowdsourcing companies should be focusing more on maybe, so that people will know about it, the crowd, which are the real employees, the real ones running the business, they should be at least aware of the whole thing happening there, right?

Participant.3

Yeah, I think the points raised here are really the main topics. Basically, it's always easy to get what we want, get what we need. You know you just go on to the website, you find what you want and then you go. There's no incentive for us to stay on the website and share our time. And as you know, time is money.

For us to really provide feedback or provide like our own post or review, you know, once you get what you want, you just carry on and you go. All those badges are nice, but it's just like on the surface, but deep down what is this badge going to help me with, like you know am I going to get recognized? is it going to make me better, or people going to follow my advice if I have this nice lovely yellow badge or whatever?

Researcher

You know, the fact here is that we, including myself, belong to generations Y & Z who are expected to be more familiar and attracted to gamification than other generations, aren't actually reflecting this when using TripAdvisor. So, I'm just wondering, if we, generations Y & Z are as so, what about other generations?

Participant.3

Yeah.

Researcher

This might probably show that gamification should always include some serious return for people because even young people who are supposed to be really attracted to such game design elements are not really persuaded enough as I can see from what you're saying here, right?

Participant.3

Yeah.

Researcher

I will ask you the same question I asked before regarding awareness, so were you aware of the whole thing? The whole system, the badges, levels, points and so on?

Participant.3

Is the question to me?

Researcher

Yeah, to you and to everyone.

Participant.3

Yeah, so basically, I would say no. I wasn't really much aware of it. I'm just discovering it now in the sense that it didn't really have much of an impact, you know, maybe if it had the huge or bigger impact, we would be more aware of it and seems to be reflecting on all the other candidates here.

Researcher

OK, I think Participant.1 was raising his hand. Would you like to say something?

Participant.1

Just on the awareness point. I just wanted to say I am a regular visitor. I use TripAdvisor all the time, however, I was not aware about the concept of gamification at all, so it is just proving your point, that it is actually correct. Yes, that's all.

Researcher

Oh OK.

Participant.4

Hello, yes, I agree with the points mentioned that maybe they need a tangible reward rather than like maybe having badges, because I feel like even the younger generations, not just the older generations are thinking more about money, they are money oriented from an early age, so they think about it in a way, is there a financial incentive to this as well? Would they benefit from this or not?

Researcher

Good point.

Participant.5

Rewards can be just like a discount for the next visit. It shouldn't be something very precious. It can be like just 5% discount for the next visit, or for each comment, or for each review.

Researcher

Ok, so we're still revolving around the financial thing, or let's say the practical thing that people can get out of contributing, and I believe that's a big topic to raise with the people in charge both in TripAdvisor and other crowdsourcing platforms isn't it?

Participant.3

Yeah, I think maybe another point which wasn't mentioned is, you know, when you see all those scores, all those leaderboards, this guy is in the one thousand and the other guy is in the nine hundred. It feels a bit demoralizing to join. You feel like who am I? And you know it's difficult to step in and put your foot in, so it's kind of demoralizing to start up with.

So maybe if we had like a fair playground in a sense where all of us are more or less on the same ladder, let's say.

Researcher

OK, so maybe having equivalent chances to go on through the gamification system? Participant.6, would you like to say something?

Participant.6

Yeah, just talking about the point of demoralization. It's just the fact that these badges and all these leadership just make people less likely to actually write reviews, and in fact makes it more harmful towards the company. And going back to the point about rewards, you could do such a thing where the higher level you get, the higher incentive you earn. So, for example when reaching level 6 which is the highest level, you can actually get like a good 20% discount, compared to Level 1 which could be just a little voucher or something.

Researcher

Yeah, so those crowdsourcing companies like TripAdvisor are making benefits out of people's contributions. I mean, the reason why companies are advertising their own contents on TripAdvisor platform let's say or any similar platform, is that the platform is really interactive. There are lots of people contributing, rating, reviewing and making it really work. But on the other hand, users are getting nothing except those virtual rewards. So yeah, offering financial rewards or something more serious as you are suggesting could be one of the main things similar companies should be thinking of.

And as Participant.3 said, the point of having some equivalent chance in taking part in the gamification system is important. So yeah, maybe when seeing people having very high rates and rankings, whereas you're still fresh and don't have anything really big to contribute with, then we feel like maybe, why are we doing all this while competition is very high, and at the very end, we're going to get nothing out of our contribution?

Do you feel like there is anything to be innovated here? Do you think the company could adopt any innovation in the gamification system beyond tangible rewards or financial incentives, I mean in terms of game design elements? I think the R&D department should be thinking about this in TripAdvisor, right?

Participant.1

Yeah, so I can go ahead if you want.

Researcher

Yeah, sure.

Participant.1

Yeah, so I think the question is like what can they do in terms of creativity and innovation?

Researcher

100% yeah.

Participant.1

OK so for me, I mean from my experience something came to my head, if maybe you can exchange points and buy something with it. I mean, if they have a partnership, let's say with Apple or Amazon or some other party. So, for example, I recall in my school we used to have a system similar to this exactly, so we used to get points and then we used to get badges and then student complained, and they said, so what? Like yeah, we don't really want this, we want something else and then they introduced the model and what they did was they said, if you get one thousand points, then you can get fifty pounds and with those fifty pounds you can spend it at certain places. I'm not sure if this is possible, but I think that would be innovative for them.

Researcher

I think that's a good idea, so they have to link the intangible game design elements into more tangible ones so that the whole system would be much better perceived by them.

Participant.3

Following on that, if again we get higher levels or we become supposedly better reviewers in a sense, from my side I would like at least this to be reflected. So maybe, I have a banner on the website saying this is our top reviewer for this month or whatever and in a way that builds popularity to that person specifically, so at least anyway, people will now follow his advice, and this can be monetized in a sense, because now his opinion has value, and in this way, TripAdvisor wins and the guy also wins. So, it's a win-win situation rather than you know, they get the money, and we just get the yellow badge.

Researcher

OK, so now I think we spotted the main setbacks areas in the gamification system. Subsequently, what do you think should be the prompt response? Participant.1 gave a

good idea of adding up or, let's say, mixing both intangible and tangible rewards together within one system so that at the end of the day, people will feel more motivated to step in and to take part in the community.

Reverting back to the point of awareness. What do you think should be done here? Because I felt like there is a real problem of awareness here. People are not really paying attention on the whole gamification system, although being regularly on the website. So, what do you think should be done here?

Participant.2

I think advertising on social media, because that's what most people use these days, so I feel if a quick Ad about TripAdvisor comes up and is linked to a reward, I feel it would motivate users to go and write reviews.

Researcher

Do you think only social media, or maybe on the platform itself? Because personally speaking, I often go there and get the information I need and then leave without even realizing that there is something related to points and badges and levels.

Participant.2

Yep, it is pretty something that tracks you.

Researcher

Yeah, something that drags your attention.

Participant.2

Yeah.

Participant.4

I think if notifications came up featuring people who have written reviews for certain hotels, and for example saying OK this person has had a number of points added to their account or maybe showing this person has won a prize which includes an offer to a hotel for achieving a certain target of point. This will maybe raise more awareness and even motivate users to join in.

Researcher

OK, so it's like a dual advertisement. On one hand they are promoting the system, and at the same time they are sponsoring the people who are really contributing, right?

Participant.4

Yeah exactly yeah.

Researcher

Nice, I think this may motivate passive users to step in.

Participant.5

Yes, just like what participant.2 said. I think they should link social media to TripAdvisor, because for example you can directly post on Facebook, and you will have more viewers. You will have more people looking at this post and at this review. For example, if we're talking about a restaurant or a monument that you have seen and you want to talk about, you can put it on many platforms so many people can see it, not only those who open TripAdvisor for example.

Researcher

OK, so yeah, you are reverting to the awareness thing and how to increase awareness campaigns and make sure that everyone using TripAdvisor, and even those who don't know about what's going on there.

Participant.5

Yes.

Participant.3

Yeah, or maybe offer someone like an actual trip to a place in a sense like you know, they sponsor the trip.

Researcher

Can you explain more about that point?

Participant.3

So basically again, it's going to be a financial incentive. If they offer a trip and pay it for you, in a sense you will be more inclined to write a review because at least they've done something, and you feel like I have to pay back in a sense, and you write a review about the place. So, this again falls in the category of financial incentives.

Researcher

OK, so it looks like most of the comments are getting around let's say the financial benefit. Eventually, such types of crowdsourcing companies as I just said before, are mainly relying on the crowd which are actually us. We are kind of unofficial employees. You know we are the ones running the whole operations and we are the ones going

outside, taking photos, uploading them, rating, reviewing, commenting, and making the whole thing work. And we can obviously see that these companies get some financial benefit out of our contribution, but what about the compensation you get in return? Right?

Participant.3

Yeah, I like to believe that we are shareholders in TripAdvisor, like you know we are the majority, but we're getting the least reward in a sense.

Participant.1

I really like the idea of Participant.3 regarding giving them a trip. I thought because we are talking about increasing awareness here, we believe that TripAdvisor is struggling with increasing awareness. We spoke about advertisement and stuff, but I think for example, an idea about that, just to put that into practice, like what Participant.2 mentioned, the person who let's suppose has the most points at the end of the month should be given a trip in one of the most highly rated places on TripAdvisor.

I think that would be really good for their campaigns. Two reasons, because there is "Trip" in their name and then they're giving out a trip as well to the person who's on top of the boat. I think that's going to be really a good marketing technique.

Researcher

So, they will be kind of making sense of their name in a sense. OK, so the question I have is, let's assume that all the suggestions that you shared now are put in place, will you take the initiative of contributing? Will all these motivate you for real, or you think you'll still be reluctant?

Participant.5

I think if in order to get a reward, say a restaurant invitation or a free trip, you should go to many restaurants and do a lot of reviews, so maybe you can't because you don't go every day to a restaurant and put a review, you may just go once per week, for example, or whatever, maybe every two months. So yeah, we may still have to contribute a lot harder to have a reward, there should be less steps.

Researcher

So, you mean you don't want to feel like there is much to do, or there is a very big gap between you and the people before you, in a way that you will have to go through long steps before getting rewarded. Less steps per level and a fair competition, right?

Participant.5

Yeah exactly.

Participant.7

I am going to add on to that. I just think that having to continue reviewing, maybe give bigger incentives as people go along. So, like at fifty reviews you get a bonus for something so that people would actually want to keep going rather than having one level, because otherwise people will stop reviewing.

Researcher

OK, but do you feel like if what you have suggested is now implemented, you would take the initiative of going through all these levels, or you'll still be reluctant in a way.

Participant.7

Oh, I think I'd be more likely to do it, because if I know I'm getting something out of it, I will then want to do the reviews.

Participant.3

Sure. I think if we have something definite, like what Participant.7 just mentioned, stepping milestones with rewards in a sense would definitely push people to contribute. On top of that, having also random rewards to keep people motivated, if I do reviews, I get this. It's not just like typing reviews and you don't know what to expect, so expectation is really important.

Researcher

Yeah. So, it's all about what we are really expecting out of our contribution, but to be honest with you, the big question I have in mind is, if we are all agreeing on what you were saying right now, why do you think those active users are really attracted to the current gamification system? They are not really bothered with all what you mentioned in terms of poor awareness, motivation and so on. I am really curious to know why they are really spending time and effort doing what they are doing. What do you think is the main reason?

Participant.5

I think some people really like to put some reviews and to how do we say it?

Researcher

To influence maybe?

Participant.5

Not only to influence, but to tell us what they are feeling and their thoughts about places they visited.

Researcher

Well, you reminded me of the self-expression element, yeah, expressing themselves.

Participant.3

So, it's about being altruistic, isn't it?

Researcher

Yeah, it could be some sort of altruism as well. Doing good for other people?

Participant.3

Yeah, for the sake of doing good. But I think this is the minority of people. It's not like all the people.

Researcher

You mentioned something very important about minorities and majorities. So ideally, I think that in the literature of gamification, most of the studies not to say all of them were mainly focusing on how gamification is positively influencing users, let's say online users, and they do lots of research on how active users have been positively influenced, but they are not really pointing out the fact that those active users represent a small minority out of the community of online users. The vast majority which I call the silent army is not really attracted and that's the main purpose of my research. I need to know what's going wrong. Why aren't we really as a majority doing the same as the ones who are already there?

Participant.6

Ah yeah, just going on to the point why some of these active users are probably active, I think it's more depending on the experience they have, because if they had a really good experience or a really bad experience, they are more likely to write about the experience. And with respect to the "silent army" like you named them, I think they might feel they would be bothered writing a review because they don't really find their experience to be interesting.

Researcher

OK, but do you think that people who are contributing are doing so for either having a positive or a negative experience, or maybe merely to reflect a dissatisfaction with a service they have got?

Participant.6

Yeah, I think it depends on the satisfaction they have, because if they had like a really bad experience, then they will do a really bad review on TripAdvisor, so the "silent army" would probably only write a bad review. They really just don't commit themselves about what they want and what they experienced.

Participant.3

Something else. Sometimes, I notice when you maybe visit a physical place, either a restaurant or whatever, not an area, sometimes the place will actually give you a discount from their side if you actually write a review. So, I'm not sure if those active users have sometimes financial motivation, not from TripAdvisor itself, but from the places themselves.

Researcher

So, are you saying that this is actually happening, or you're just suggesting it as an idea?

Participant.3

I mean, I wouldn't be surprised if it was actually happening. You know, as part of why some people are posting, you know, I don't know.

If it seems to be mainly one place that has like lots of reviews, then it would make you think why is it this place? You know having one hundred reviews and you know the restaurant just next to it has like one or two so?

Researcher

OK.

Participant.7

Yeah, I think it does actually happen because I've been to a few restaurants where they were like, oh, if you leave a review, we can give you this much like off your next order.

Researcher

OK, so you had such an experience.

Participant.7

Yeah, with my accommodation provider. They were like oh if you leave a review on this website, we will give you this much discount on your rent. So, they kind of give you incentive to leave reviews, even if it doesn't have to be a good one. It's just like leave a review about us.

Researcher

OK, so yeah, then it seems like some of the active people whom I was always wondered why they really contribute, are probably finding some ways of getting sort of financial return out of it. But still, I don't think it's worth or it is even equivalent to the long-term effort they are really making, does it?

Participant.1

Hi, I mean in terms of that question, I think people contribute to TripAdvisor because they may feel that their input is making real difference out there in the world. And second reason could be is that different factors motivate different people as evidenced in many motivational models. You know referring to the literature for example, the people who contribute on TripAdvisor without having tangible rewards would let me imagine they are very competitive. The fact that they see a point or a number next to their name keeps them going, and this does exist. People tend to be motivated by it. However, not the majority of people share this because some people want different things and you know cash or tangible values actually mean a lot more, but since there's been no research that looked at the negative aspect of it as you highlighted, then I could see why there is no talking about it.

Researcher

Yeah, I think you've got a good point. Those people might be very active people because they are kind of game oriented, and they get very enthusiastic when it comes to competition and challenges, and getting virtual returns out of their inputs.

But you know, one of the enquiries or let's say the limitations that have been spotted in the literature so far is that even active users that most papers were studying are only showing this kind of enthusiasm on the very short run, but there are no adequate studies researching if this momentum is really sustaining on the long term. So, I think that's another thing to highlight here.

Participant.1

Definitely, so this shows that their reward system is flawed in one way or another, because if they could be getting most of the reviews from users who are not sustainable, that shows that there is a real problem.

Participant.3

Or I would like to add that, you know, sometimes it might be just out of pure luck in the sense like, some people might have been really old users and they might have been the first people to actually comment, and they got like a track, they just gain those points because they felt like, oh, it seems like I'm the one commenting the most and so on. They would want to just carry on this, and this really take us back to the point we've made earlier during the discussion about having a fair level ground where all of us are at the same level, rather than you have someone who's been there for like decades, and someone who is just starting today.

Researcher

So, I think, yeah, you're saying that there should be kind of a renovative gaming system, I just came out with this term. So, we might have always new games and new missions where people have the same chances of taking part in the experience. Otherwise, they will feel like as you just said, that there is no fair level for all.

Participant.3

Yeah, you know, like some actual games, they have what we call seasons, and you know, it lasts for one month or three months and after that the leaderboard gets reset, so you re-feel the energy that you are lacking at the moment in going through the process, because you will now have the hope that one day your name might actually be on the top. Because again, as you know, if the differences or the gap is really wide, you lose this incentive to even compete. You feel like, whoa, that's out of my league, you know.

Researcher

Yeah, and I think maybe not only the late movers would feel demotivated. I think even the current users who are having very high ranks and levels will actually feel like they've already accomplished the mission and they already got all what they can get out of this experience. So, I think both highly active users and late movers will not be really motivated to keep on contributing.

Participant.3

Yeah.

Researcher

So, it could be a lose-lose situation when it comes to TripAdvisor and similar crowdsourcing companies when they stick on one stagnant gamified system without developing it on a regular basis. I think that's a good point as well, yeah.

Participant.1

Would it be OK if I ask you a question? I mean, I know you are the one asking in this discussion, but there was a question in my head. I mean, we mentioned that potential solutions we spoke about before were about providing highly ranked users with wider recognition, as well as increasing awareness, and offering tangible rewards, and then each one of us gave different examples. But what I'm trying to wonder here is, is this generalizable to other contexts like Google reviews? Because I don't think they really have a reward, I mean they are just like TripAdvisor. So, what I'm trying to find out from you is, do you think your findings will apply to that?

Researcher

That's a very good question. So, what I'm planning to do now as you know, we're doing the focus group discussions and the main reason why I'm doing so is to come out with general insights about a typical example, which is TripAdvisor. So, TripAdvisor has been chosen not because it's TripAdvisor, but because it is a typical example that has been prevalently spotted in the literature. So it is like an indicator, let's say, but just responding to your question, I assume that users' behaviour across all comparable platforms should be the same. So, for people having a passive behaviour towards TripAdvisor, especially if they are regular users, I can't see any reason why they would act differently in other peer platforms, right?

Participant.1

OK thank you.

Participant.3

And basically, again like, I mean, for me it seems like money is always the easiest incentive, but it's always the one that is always lacking, which makes me wonder, does it really take too much to implement such stuff?

Researcher

I think it's not about taking too much time, maybe it's about taking too much money, isn't it?

Participant.3

Yeah, yeah.

Researcher

But I think that there should always be a smart way to add this up in a way that the company as you just said can treat contributors as sort of shareholders. You know, they are the ones running the business, so there should be some kind of financial return. Otherwise, they may feel like they are not really being compensated as you are suggesting.

Participant.3

Yeah, I mean like even a small percentage of the actual reward would make us feel better, even though for them as a company it would still be negligible or kind of free in a sense, because I'm pretty sure they're making millions and so on. And you know when you spare like a hundred pounds, it's like spending a penny so I don't see why it might be such a big issue. I mean, I know they want to maximize their profit and so on, but at one point this becomes counter intuitive and counterproductive. And you know sometimes when you just put money in the business, you reinvest in it to make your production grow. So yeah.

Researcher

Yeah. Actually, I have been regularly visiting the forum in the platform and seeing what people are saying and one of the main themes that has been regularly raised there was about the lack of financial returns. So, all people are asking the same question, like OK, I've now reached that level or got this badge, but I can't really see what I am going to get out of it. So, this theme is being really discussed and viral across the community of TripAdvisor. And yeah, if this matter keeps being neglected, then this could probably become counterproductive on the long run as you just said.

Participant.3

Don't they have like a poll system where they can ask?

Researcher

Yeah, they can do it indeed, but a question just came into my mind right now. If things get more tangible and people start getting financial return, don't you think that lots of fake accounts will then just pop out and start commenting in order to get incentives?

Participant.3

But we mentioned that it should be like a milestone, so it's not about writing one review. We're saying it needs time to build up in order to enable users to access the really significant rewards, because obviously your first level will be something like, you know, ridiculous. But in order to show that there are financial incentives on the way, it's going to be like a ladder, maybe exponential linear, I'm not sure. There should be different levels that you want to seek to reach the top and get rewarded, rather than opening the floor for hundreds of accounts and rewarding them on the lowest levels.

Researcher

I see. I think just going on what you just said, the Helpful Vote badge, the one I just introduced you to in my introduction would be very important in this regard. So, I think what could be done here is that people with the highest Helpful badges, meaning higher level of endorsement from others could be more incentivized in a sense, right? This would preserve the accuracy of the reviews, and people will not be incentivized unless they get enough Helpful badges from other members in the community, reflecting how much reliable their comments are. So, there could always be a way to prevent fake accounts or spammers to step in and take advantage of the financial rewards.

Participant.3

You can have restriction to the account in a sense, like you won't get any incentive unless you've been on the platform for maybe a month or you've done so many reviews or so many stuff like that, in order to deter people who might just be creating an account and spamming stuff.

Researcher

Yeah, I think Participant.1 summarized some of the potential solutions here in the chat box: offering wider recognition, increasing awareness, including tangible rewards such as trips to top rated places. Yeah, and do you feel like if all these are implemented you will start contributing?

Participant.1

Of course, I mean if there is a proper reward in place, well, I don't see a reason that would stop me. So, this will become like your second job.

Researcher

Well by the way, some people perceive crowdsourcing companies who offer tangible things, or let's say financial return as kind of a part time job. I have a couple of examples in mind, but yeah, some people are dedicating lots of time and effort when it comes to financial return, and they are perceiving it as a part time job. For instance, you know Giffgaff the mobile network operator? Do you know that the more you disseminate SIM cards to your friends and relatives and whoever you know, the more you get rewarded? So, if now you ordered let's say 5 SIM cards from Giffgaff, once those five cards are activated, you will then get ten pounds or 5 pounds on each, so you can just imagine if you manage to spread let's say one hundred SIMs in a month and you make sure they are activated then you will get hundreds of pounds out of it.

Participant.3

So, it's a referral system.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant.5

Yeah, the pyramid system.

Researcher

Yeah. So yeah, it's like a career. Participant.7, any idea to add up? any comment or any thought?

Participant.7

No, I think I agree with everything everyone has said.

Participant.4

Yeah, I also agree because I feel like if you solve the issue by making tangible rewards, maybe that's the common popular view here. If you do make that change, this will make the best outcome in my opinion.

Researcher

OK, but regarding tangible rewards, won't you prefer flexible ones like let's say payback points which you can manage it the way you want? What if the tangible return is limited to something specific, let's say having a free night in a hotel or having a free meal at a restaurant. Do you think this would motivate you enough?

Participant.7

Yeah, I think that's even a good idea as well, because I feel like people that are using the app or looking for things like that, if they are given these things, they're like OK, that's a better connection with the company, because they feel like they're getting a reward directly from the company rather than something that is outside of TripAdvisor, or just money back. It's an experience.

Researcher

Yeah possibly, I think a discount voucher for a specific restaurant and hotel will not cost the platform anyway, because the ones sponsoring this could be the third parties themselves, you know, restaurants, hotels, and private destinations. So, maybe TripAdvisor won't pay for it, they can just be the mediators, they can mediate the relationship between us and the third parties.

Participant.7

Yes.

Participant.3

Or the other way of doing it would be for TripAdvisor to create their own currency which you can actually use in order to pay your trips or hotels or whatever, in a sense which you can accumulate it by writing reviews, posting pictures, videos or whatever. So, you know that's again a sort of financial incentive which they can also use in order to promote their products.

Researcher

OK, and do you feel like if TripAdvisor adds up a feature asking you to share a content or let's say the web page link itself on your own social media accounts in return of getting rewarded, would you do it?

Participant.3

Yeah, I mean it's an Ad. All the big platforms use the same concept, like YouTube when it shows you an Ad., they are getting paid for it, so why would that be any different? So, if you're into having Ads. on your social page, then yeah, obviously If it's relatable, I would say yes.

Researcher

OK. So, I'm just trying to write up the main points here. I think we're almost done, but just making sure that I have all the main points picked up.

By the way, what is your take on the idea that TripAdvisor, for instance, could follow suit of what Wikipedia has done before in asking their visitors to donate in a way, because when doing so they are letting the platform survive, so basically addressing people's emotions. What do you think if TripAdvisor sends us kind of notifications and asks us to contribute because otherwise, the benefit we are getting out of the platform will no more be there. What do you think about the idea of addressing our emotions as disengaged users and asking us to take part in the platform?

Participant.1

I think that's quite illogical; I mean Wikipedia is quite different than TripAdvisor, we are the real contributors, TripAdvisor functions because of us. So, if there's anyone who deserves a return, be tangible or intangible or any form, then it's us. So, to me that sounds very vague.

Participant.3

Can I ask how is it actually different than Wikipedia? Because in both cases we are the contributors, we are making the page exists. We are sharing information using our time, but it's just a different kind of information, and you don't get rewarded or paid for putting information on Wikipedia either, so why would it be different? Wikipedia asks you for donation every now and then, how is it different than TripAdvisor?

Participant.1

Because in terms of Wikipedia, a very limited number of people actually write the content. I know many people can change it, but in terms of TripAdvisor, we have a huge amount of traffic. For example, I was reading on Google I think some time ago that there's about thirty to forty million visits per month there. Imagine if let's suppose two percent of those visitors contributed to the platform, that's a huge number.

Researcher

Yeah maybe, I think when it comes to Wikipedia, the number of contributors is very different.

The gap is very big, whereas in TripAdvisor maybe, as you just said, traffic is much higher. But anyway, I just gave the example of Wikipedia to revert to the idea of addressing people's emotion and motivating them to take part. But I reckon all these techniques might only target a small minority of people, yet when it comes to the big chunk, you know the big segment, I am not sure if it works. As many of you mentioned today, the majority is probably looking for tangible rewards, for easier and fairer access

to the system, and to get a wider recognition to build on in the future, like releasing their own blogs or so.

So yeah, just summarizing what we have discussed in this session. Awareness is very important, because lots of us, although being regular users didn't really know enough about the gamification system.

Tangible rewards, regardless of what type of it as we shared lots of examples, is a key motivational factor to consider.

When it comes to extending the intrinsic motivations, I think the main point that you've raised here was about getting a wider recognition from the platform. Participant.1 you were the one emphasizing the most on that point, would you like to provide more details about it?

Participant.1

Well yeah, I meant, for example, if in TripAdvisor let's suppose I have a good number of points, let's say five hundred or something, then I would like my name to be featured, maybe on Facebook or Instagram or something of that nature, stating you know that this particular individual regularly contributes to our work, and this is how he does it. I mean there is no financial gain for me, but that recognition itself is quite motivating.

Researcher

Is it just because it addresses your self-esteem or because you feel like it will help you in building kind of future blogs or so?

Participant.1

I mean there is a correlation to that as well. You can end up starting something like that as well, but for me it's a form of intrinsic motivation and I will be motivated by that, and I think many people will be, because recognition is something quite dear to many people.

Researcher

I see, and another intrinsic motivation we've mentioned is maybe by keeping on renovating the gamification system, so that we always have new missions. As Participant.3 said, maybe through regularly issuing new seasons in a way that everyone will have their scores reset and will have the same chances in getting into the system, competing, and reaching high levels.

We also discussed the idea of goodness or let's say the fact of addressing peoples' emotions such as the example of Wikipedia, but some of you said that's not going to really work.

So yeah, I think all these ideas should be combined altogether and deeply explored so that crowdsourcing companies would start taking it into consideration. Because as you know, competition nowadays is very high and the barriers to entry are very low, so maybe in a short period of time the rivals of either TripAdvisor or any similar crowdsourcing company could just pop out of the blue and start attracting lots of their current users, just because maybe implementing some of the ideas we've just shared, right?

Participant.3

Yeah.

Researcher

OK then, if no one has anything to add here, then we can just end it up here. Thank you very much everyone. This was my third focus group and there has been lots of very insightful information that I will use together with the previous ones in building up my research. I hope to come out with some insightful conclusions that would be of use for both my research and for crowdsourcing companies as well, so that to ultimately reach out some sort of a win-win situation for those companies and for us as users.

We never know, if things go forward as intended, then this could probably lead to a more productive and efficient global crowdsourced economy, as crowdsourcing companies are rapidly emerging nowadays and targeting everyone in the world, so let's hope thing evolve in that direction.

Oh, and one last thing to let you know before we end the session. If you'd like to get the management report which reflects the summary of the key research results, you can just tell me here, or you can drop me an email. But I have to let you know that this might take a bit of time because we're talking about something that will be released by the end of the research, which will take maybe one to two years. But anyway, you can always contact me to ask about it and I'll be very happy to share it with you once ready.

So yeah, that's it for today, thank you very much everyone!

Participant.5

Thank you.

Participant.4

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Participant.7

Thank you.

Participant.1

Thanks.

Researcher

Thank you everyone.

Participant.3

Thank you.

Appendix 2a. Participant information sheet of the cross-sectional survey



Exploring the setbacks and potentials of gamification in promoting brand value co-creation.

Participant Information Sheet

Invitation

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study.

Before you decide if you would like to participate, take time to read the following information carefully and, if you wish, discuss it with others such as your family, friends or colleagues.

Please ask a member of the research team, whose contact details can be found at the end of this information sheet, if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information before you make your decision.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the reasons and potential solutions for the inefficacy of game design elements (e.g., points, badges, levels, leader-boards, interactive threads) in persuading a large segment of online users to engage in value co-creation activities (e.g., posting, rating, voting, reviewing).

Why have I been chosen?

You are being invited to take part in this study because:

You are:

- A regular visitor of TripAdvisor but have never engaged in the platform.
- Resident in the United Kingdom.
- Aged between 18 and 40.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be invited to participate in a survey on the Qualtrics survey software. You will be invited to answer questions exploring the reasons and potential solutions for your disengagement in the TripCollective programme on the TripAdvisor platform.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

If you do decide to participate, you will be asked to agree on a consent form. You would still be free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You will help in researching the reasons and potential solutions for users' disengagement in gamified co-creative platforms.

What are the possible risks and burdens of taking part?

N/A

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study may be published in scientific journals and/or presented at conferences. If the results of the study are published, your identity will remain confidential.

The results of the study will also be used in the PhD thesis of Mohamad Amir Merhabi

Expenses and payments

N/A

Who is funding the research?

This study is being funded by the research team

Who is organising this study and acting as data controller for the study?

Aston University is organizing this study and acting as data controller for the study. You can find out more about how we use your information in Appendix A.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study was given a favorable ethical opinion by the Research Ethics Committee of Aston Business School.

What if I have a concern about my participation in the study?

If you have any concerns about your participation in this study, please speak to the research team and they will do their best to answer your questions. Contact details can be found at the end of this information sheet.

If the research team are unable to address your concerns or you wish to make a

complaint about how the study is being conducted you should contact the Aston University Research Integrity Office at research_governance@aston.ac.uk or telephone 0121 204 3000.

Research Team

- Name: Mohamad Amir Merhabi
- Contact number: xxxxxxxxx
- Email address: 180208656@aston.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. If you have any questions regarding the study, please don't hesitate to ask one of the research team.

Aston University takes its obligations under data and privacy law seriously and complies with the Data Protection Act 2018 (“DPA”) and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 as retained in UK law by the Data Protection, Privacy and Electronic Communications (Amendments etc) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (“the UK GDPR”).

Aston University is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study. Aston University will process your personal data in order to register you as a participant and to manage your participation in the study. It will process your personal data on the grounds that it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(e)). Aston University may process special categories of data about you which includes details about your health. Aston University will process this data on the grounds that it is necessary for statistical or research purposes (GDPR Article 9(2)(j)). Aston University will keep identifiable information about you for 6 years after the study has finished.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally identifiable information possible.

You can find out more about how we use your information at <https://www.aston.ac.uk/about/statutes-ordinances-regulations/publication-scheme/policies-regulations/data-protection> or by contacting our Data Protection Officer at dp_officer@aston.ac.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter. If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO).

When you agree to take part in a research study, the information about you may be provided to researchers running other research studies in this organisation and in other organisations. These organisations may be universities, NHS organisations or companies involved in health and care research in this country or abroad.

This information will not identify you and will not be combined with other information in a way that could identify you. The information will only be used for the purpose of research, and cannot be used to contact you.

Appendix 2b. Copy of the survey draft

SURVEY

This survey is part of a research investigating the reasons and potential solutions for users' disengagement in gamified co-creative platforms.

The approximate time to complete this survey is 4 – 5 min (plus 2 min. video watch).

Consent Form

Please read the [Participant Information Sheet](#) and tick the box below to confirm the following statements before undertaking the survey.

I confirm that :

- I am aged between 18 and 40, live in the United Kingdom, and regularly visit TripAdvisor but have never posted in the platform.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving reason.
- I agree to take part in this survey.

TripCollective Overview

Before you start the survey, please [click here](#) to watch a brief overview of the TripCollective programme developed by TripAdvisor (2 min. watch).

After you finish watching the video, please revert back to this page and click "Next Page".

Q1**Your level of familiarity with the TripCollective programme.**

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I haven't heard of the TripCollective programme before.	<input type="radio"/>						
I wasn't aware of what "TripCollective" stands for.	<input type="radio"/>						
I am not familiar with the TripCollective programme.	<input type="radio"/>						
I didn't have a clear understanding of what a person would go through when participating in the TripCollective programme.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q2**Your perception of the outcome you would get out of participating in the TripCollective programme.**

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The TripCollective programme is not fair in rewarding me considering the amount of effort that I have to put forth.	<input type="radio"/>						
The TripCollective programme is not fair in rewarding me considering the activities assigned to me as a contributor.	<input type="radio"/>						
The TripCollective programme is not fair in rewarding me considering the time and effort associated with my potential contributions.	<input type="radio"/>						
The rewards of the TripCollective programme are not fair considering the achievements that I could do.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q3

Your perceived usefulness of participating in the TripCollective programme.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think that participating in the Trip-Collective programme is not useful.	<input type="radio"/>						
I think that participating in the Trip-Collective programme would not be beneficial to me.	<input type="radio"/>						
I think that participating in the Trip-Collective programme is not valuable.	<input type="radio"/>						
Overall, participating in the Trip-Collective programme will not be advantageous.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q4

Your perception of the procedure you would go through if you participate in the TripCollective programme.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The progression procedure in the Trip-Collective programme is not fair.	<input type="radio"/>						
The process of evaluating my contributions in the TripCollective programme is not fair (e.g., Helpful Votes granted by others).	<input type="radio"/>						
I don't have a fair opportunity for input into the TripCollective programme's rules and policies.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q5**The effort you expect to exert if you participate in the TripCollective programme.**

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think it is not easy for me to accomplish achievements in the TripCollective programme.	<input type="radio"/>						
I believe that progressing in the TripCollective programme is not easy for me.	<input type="radio"/>						
As a TripAdvisor user, the TripCollective programme does not look clear and understandable.	<input type="radio"/>						
I don't find it easy to progress in the TripCollective programme throughout my usual trips.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q6**Your overall attitude towards participating in the TripCollective programme.**

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think that participating in the TripCollective programme is not a good idea.	<input type="radio"/>						
I have negative perceptions about participating in the TripCollective programme.	<input type="radio"/>						
I am not in favour of the idea of participating in the TripCollective programme.	<input type="radio"/>						
Participating in the TripCollective programme does not appeal to me.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q7

Your perception of the potential implementation of new measures in the TripCollective programme.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I will be more inclined to participate in the TripCollective programme if tangible rewards are included (e.g., discount vouchers, payback points).	<input type="radio"/>						
I will be more inclined to participate in the TripCollective programme if my achievements could build a strong reputation among TripAdvisor's global audience and business clients (e.g., promoting winners on TripAdvisor's website and social media pages).	<input type="radio"/>						
I will be more inclined to participate in the TripCollective programme if progressing across levels becomes easier (e.g., less points required per level).	<input type="radio"/>						
I will be more inclined to participate in the TripCollective programme if the scores of all existing members are reset to zero (e.g., regularly releasing new game seasons).	<input type="radio"/>						

Q8

18 to 25

26 to 40

What age group do you belong to?

Q9

Male

Female

Other

Prefer not to say

What is your gender?

Q10

Employed

Self-employed

Unemployed

Student

Other

What is your current employment status?

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

Your participation is highly valued and will help researching the reasons and potential solutions for online users' disengagement in gamified co-creative platforms.