

**GAMIFICATION AS A CATALYST FOR BRAND ENGAGEMENT AMONG YOUTHS
IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA: A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON STRATEGIC
MARKETING OUTCOMES**

ONYEOKORO, C. Sunday, Ph.D

Department of Marketing, Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences
Abia State University, Uturu
+2348038757394

&

OBASI, C. Daniel

Department of Marketing, Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences
Abia State University, Uturu
+2348169100885

Abstract

In today's digitally driven marketplace, gamification has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing consumer engagement. The purpose of this study is to examine how gamification acts as a catalyst for brand engagement among youths in Southeast Nigeria, exploring the socio-cultural factors that influence strategic marketing outcomes. Grounded in consumer engagement theory, the research adopts a mixed-method approach, utilising simple random sampling to survey 380 Indomie Noodles consumers aged 18–35 across five Southeastern Nigerian states, complemented by in-depth interviews with marketing professionals. Findings reveal that socio-cultural factors—particularly peer influence, collectivism, and traditional values—play a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of gamified marketing. Notably, family orientation exhibited a negative yet significant impact, indicating potential resistance to gamification among family-centric individuals. Among various gamification elements, rewards, leaderboards, and progress tracking significantly enhanced brand engagement, while competitions, badges, and challenges showed no notable effect. The study recommends that marketers align gamification strategies with cultural values, emphasizing communal motivators over individualistic or competitive features. Prioritizing tangible incentives and progress-based elements is essential for sustaining user interaction and maximizing brand loyalty.

Keywords: Gamification, Brand Engagement, Youths, Socio-Cultural, Strategic Marketing.

Introduction

In today's fast-evolving digital marketing landscape, brands are increasingly adopting innovative strategies to enhance consumer engagement, especially among youths who are highly active online and drawn to interactive content. One such strategy gaining momentum is gamification—the use of game-like elements in non-game contexts to influence consumer behaviour (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). Initially used in other domains, gamification has become a

vital marketing tool, aligning well with younger audiences' preferences for entertainment, rewards, and immersive experiences (Hamari *et al.*, 2014).

Brand engagement is the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural connection between consumers and brands, it said to be crucial for fostering loyalty (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Gen Z consumers, who dominate the youth population in Southeast Nigeria, are particularly responsive to engaging and playful content (Hollebeek, 2011). With rising digital connectivity, mobile device usage, and social media participation, this region presents fertile ground for gamified marketing strategies. Furthermore, cultural factors such as peer influence and communal values enhance the effectiveness of such campaigns (Huotari & Hamari, 2017; Nnabuihe, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Reaching and retaining young consumers has become a major challenge in digital marketing. Traditional methods are often ineffective with this demographic, driving brands to adopt more interactive strategies. Among these, gamification has emerged as a promising approach to boost brand interaction and emotional connection. Despite its growing global relevance, limited research exists on how gamification drives brand engagement among Nigerian youths, particularly in Southeast Nigeria. This gap is noteworthy considering the region's increasing smartphone penetration, interest in mobile gaming, and strong social media presence. Moreover, the role of sociocultural factors such as collectivism, peer pressure, respect for tradition, and family ties remains underexplored. Existing studies tend to focus on Western and Asian contexts, overlooking the unique cultural landscape of Southeast Nigeria. There is also a lack of empirical evidence on which gamification elements like rewards, competitions, leaderboards, or progress tracking most effectively foster brand loyalty and advocacy among local youths. This study, therefore, investigates gamification as a catalyst for brand engagement among youths in Southeast Nigeria, from a socio-cultural perspective on strategic marketing outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine gamification as a catalyst for brand engagement among youths in Southeast Nigeria: A socio-cultural perspective on strategic marketing outcomes. The specific objectives were as follows:

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1. To find out the gamification elements (rewards, competitions, interactive experiences, leaderboards, badges, progress tracking, and challenges) that most significantly influence brand engagement among young consumers in Southeast Nigeria.
2. To identify cultural factors such as peer influence, collectivism, community ties, family orientation, respect for authority, traditional values, and social identity that affect the effectiveness of gamified marketing strategies in Southeast Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

The variables under investigation are reviewed conceptually and theoretically to harness the perceived gaps that the study aimed to fill. The concepts are discussed below.

Gamification

Gamification, a term introduced by Nick Pelling in 2002, refers to the use of game-design elements in non-game contexts to boost engagement, motivation, and interaction (Deterring *et al.*, 2011). By leveraging the fun, competition, and psychological rewards of games, it has been applied across various sectors including marketing, education, health, and corporate training (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011). Key gamification elements include points, badges, leaderboards, levels, storytelling, rewards, feedback, competition, and progress tracking (Werbach & Hunter, 2012; Hamari *et al.*, 2014). These features aim to drive achievement and sustain user interest. Gamification can be categorized in multiple ways. Online gamification occurs in digital environments, while offline gamification uses physical settings like classrooms or in-person training (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Another distinction is between structural gamification, which overlays game elements onto existing content (Kapp, 2012), and content gamification, which embeds game-like narratives and challenges into the content itself for deeper engagement (Landers, 2014). Palmer *et al.* (2012) outline four key components of gamification: (1) progress paths through challenges and stories, (2) feedback and rewards, (3) social interaction via competition and collaboration, and (4) engaging user interfaces.

In marketing, gamification is widely used to strengthen brand engagement, especially among younger, tech-savvy consumers (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). It transforms brand interactions into emotionally engaging experiences by tapping into intrinsic motivators such as autonomy,

competence, and social connection (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). These dynamics promote user satisfaction, social sharing, and brand advocacy (Hamari & Koivisto, 2015). However, the success of gamification is influenced by cultural and demographic factors. In collectivist cultures like Nigeria, social identity, peer influence, and community values play a significant role in how gamified content is received (Hofstede, 2011; Huotari & Hamari, 2017). Hence, culturally tailored gamification strategies are essential for meaningful engagement.

Brand Engagement

Brand engagement refers to the intensity of a consumer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural investment in brand interactions (Brodie *et al.*, 2011). It is a multidimensional construct encompassing how consumers think about, feel connected to, and act toward a brand across various touchpoints. Engagement is increasingly recognized as a key driver of sustainable brand-consumer relationships, particularly in digital environments where interactive experiences shape perceptions and behaviours (Hollebeek, 2011). Emotional connection is central to brand engagement. According to Hollebeek *et al.* (2014), emotionally engaged consumers are more likely to develop affective bonds with a brand, translating into higher levels of satisfaction, trust, and emotional loyalty. Such emotional ties often result from personalized and meaningful interactions that make consumers feel valued and understood. Brand loyalty is another core outcome of engagement. Engaged consumers are not only more likely to continue purchasing a brand's products or services but also to resist switching to competitors (Bowden, 2009). Loyalty is both attitudinal and behavioural, and gamified strategies that foster ongoing interaction can significantly strengthen it (Hamari & Koivisto, 2015). Advocacy, the highest level of engagement, occurs when consumers voluntarily promote a brand to others. Engaged consumers become brand ambassadors, spreading positive word-of-mouth and influencing peer decisions (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010). This is particularly relevant in social and digital platforms, where peer influence and community interaction are amplified. Overall, brand engagement when rooted in emotional connection and sustained through loyalty can transform passive consumers into active advocates, creating long-term brand equity.

Socio-Cultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors refer to the shared beliefs, values, customs, traditions, and social behaviours that influence consumer attitudes and decision-making within a specific cultural or social group (Kotler & Keller, 2016). These factors shape how individuals perceive marketing strategies, including gamified approaches, and determine the extent to which they engage with brands. In Nigerian, socio-cultural norms such as collectivism, peer influence, family orientation, respect for authority, and traditional values significantly affect consumer behaviour (Nworah, 2017). For instance, collectivist societies tend to prioritize group acceptance and shared experiences, making social-oriented gamification elements like team challenges or peer leaderboards more effective (Hofstede, 2001).

Peer influence plays a critical role among youths, who often align their preferences with those of their social circles. As such, gamified marketing campaigns that incorporate social sharing or peer rewards are more likely to resonate (Ajzen, 1991). Similarly, traditional and family values can either support or inhibit gamified marketing adoption, depending on the perceived appropriateness and cultural sensitivity of the game mechanics used. Respect for authority and societal hierarchies may influence how young consumers in Nigeria interact with brand messaging embedded in gamification, especially when endorsed by community leaders or influencers. However, overly competitive elements might clash with communal values, reducing their effectiveness (Eze & Nwankwo, 2019). Understanding these socio-cultural dimensions is essential for brands aiming to deploy effective gamified marketing strategies in culturally nuanced country like Nigeria. Marketers must align game mechanics with local values to foster meaningful engagement and avoid cultural dissonance.

Demographic Factor (Youths)

Youths are generally referred to as those between the ages of 15 and 35, make up a sizable demographic group that has a substantial impact on social, cultural, and economic development worldwide (UNFPA, 2014). The demographic characteristics of youth, including age, education, income, and employment status, are critical in shaping consumption patterns, political participation, and social behaviour (Kagitcibasi, 2013). In the context of consumer behaviour,

youths are recognized as a dynamic market segment due to their openness to innovation, peer influence, and brand sensitivity (Solomon, 2018).

In Nigeria, youths play a central role in influencing market trends, particularly in technology, fashion, and entertainment. Studies such as Nwachukwu and Nwankwo (2014) highlight how Nigerian youths drive product preferences through digital platforms and peer influence. For instance, the rapid adoption of mobile banking and online shopping among university students in Lagos and Enugu showcases their role in shaping consumption patterns. According to Adebayo and Olamide (2016), Nigerian youths also influence family purchasing decisions, especially in urban areas. Politically, youth demographics significantly impact electoral participation and activism, as seen in the #EndSARS movement (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2020). However, high unemployment and limited access to quality education (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020) hinder their full economic potential. Understanding these dynamics is vital for effective youth-targeted policies and marketing strategies.

Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy is a vital framework organizations employ to create value, engage customers, and secure competitive advantage (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Traditional approaches often emphasize the 4Ps—product, price, place, and promotion to shape consumer behaviour (Armstrong *et al.*, 2018). However, as digital environments evolve, marketers increasingly adopt marketing strategy and innovative techniques such as “Gamification” to boost customer engagement and foster loyalty, fueled by rising smartphone penetration, widespread use of social media, and increasing interest in mobile gaming, which together provide an ideal environment for gamification.

Gamification, as a marketing strategy, boosts customer participation and strengthens brand connection by integrating interactive elements like challenges, points, badges, and leaderboards, making brand experiences more engaging and rewarding (Huotari & Hamari, 2017). According to Hamari *et al.* (2014), gamification strengthens emotional bonds, increases brand recall, and increases consumer involvement. For example, gamified challenges are used in Nike's fitness app to boost user engagement and brand loyalty (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). The

integration of gamification into marketing strategies aligns closely with experiential marketing principles, which prioritize creating memorable and immersive consumer experiences (Schmitt, 1999). Moreover, gamification facilitates data-driven marketing by providing real-time feedback and enabling personalized customer journeys (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011).

Literature Review

Abdelhalim (2024) examined the impact of gamification on brand engagement and loyalty during brand events. A sample of 50 recipients was surveyed regarding Temmys Egypt's use of gamification. Statistical tools included descriptive and analytical methods. Findings showed that gamification enhances audience interaction and fosters emotional attachment. This leads to increased brand awareness and loyalty. The study emphasizes the importance of innovative engagement strategies in evolving brand event experiences.

Shoubashy, Abdel-Azim, and Abd ElKader, Khalifa (2020) investigated the effect of gamification on brand engagement in a pilot study targeting users of a gamification website. Data were collected to examine the relationship between user experience, game elements, and motivations. Statistical tools measured utilitarian and hedonic outcomes. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between gamified UX design and brand engagement, with player personality emerging as a key moderating factor. Punwatkar and Verghese (2025) investigated the impact of gamification on customer engagement, brand loyalty, and purchase intent in Durg and Raipur, Chhattisgarh, using a sample of 300+ individuals. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed. Findings revealed that gamification significantly influences customer engagement, which affects brand loyalty and purchase intentions. The study highlights gamification as a vital marketing tool capable of shaping consumer behaviour and enhancing brand connection. Komal, Prasun, Surya, Aradhana, and Ramakrishnan (2022) studied the impact of gamification on user engagement on OTT platforms using eye-tracking data from 52 respondents aged 23–35. Conducted in a marketing and behavioural lab, the study employed regression analysis to examine Attention to Gamification (AG), Reward Satisfaction (RS), and User Engagement (UE). Findings revealed RS mediated the AG–UE relationship, highlighting gamification's role in enhancing engagement with OTT content.

Nannan and Juho (2020) examined the effect of gamification on brand engagement and equity in online brand communities. A sample of 824 consumers was studied using regression analysis. Findings revealed that achievement and social interaction features positively influenced emotional, cognitive, and social brand engagement, while immersion features impacted social engagement only. Brand engagement was positively linked to brand equity, confirming gamification as an effective strategy for enhancing brand management. Nipun and Sujith (2023) conducted a conceptual review on gamification as a platform for brand engagement in marketing. Using a literature review of recent empirical and theoretical studies, key gamification components were identified: mechanics & aesthetics, self-benefits, self-interaction, and self-achievement. A conceptual model was proposed to explain how these elements influence brand engagement. The study emphasizes gamification's evolving role as a strategic tool for engaging diverse target audiences in marketing.

Hsi-Peng and Hui-Chen (2020) explored the impact of gamification on user engagement for sustainable development using a case study of 411 Nike Run Club app users. The study applied Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on the MDA framework. Findings indicated that self-challenge influences self-benefit, fun, and social interaction, with fun being the key driver of brand attitude and sustained use. The study highlights gamification's strategic role in app-based brand sustainability.

Paruthi, Nagina, and Gupta (2023) examined the effect of consumer brand engagement on brand-related outcomes in gamified mobile apps. A conceptual model based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was proposed, incorporating perceived usefulness and ease of use. The study measured engagement through attention, affection, participation, and social connection. Findings revealed that gamified marketing boosts brand engagement, positively influencing users' behavioural intention and brand loyalty within mobile app environments.

ElShoubashy (2023) carried out an empirical study on gamification's effect on brand engagement using a gamified UX framework. A survey was conducted following an experiment where participants engaged with game elements. Statistical tools measured relationships between user experience, motivations, and brand attitude. Findings revealed a significant positive

relationship, with player personality as a moderating factor. Results concluded that gamified experiences enhance customer attitude and lead to stronger brand engagement.

This study explores gamification as a catalyst for brand engagement among youths in Southeast Nigeria, drawing on several relevant theories. Central to the study is the Customer Engagement Theory, conceptualized by Brodie, Hollebeck, Jurić, and Ilić in 2011. This theory provides a robust framework for understanding how interactive and co-creative brand experiences foster engagement. It defines customer engagement as a psychological state composed of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions, influenced by the quality of brand interactions. Youths, being highly responsive to digital experiences, are particularly susceptible to engagement when brands employ gamified strategies. Elements such as points, rewards, challenges, and leaderboards create immersive environments that stimulate sustained brand interaction. Gamified experiences fulfill entertainment and social needs while fostering brand advocacy and loyalty. Grounded in Customer Engagement Theory, these interactive dynamics deepen connections between youths and brands, aligning with strategic marketing goals in Southeast Nigeria. Thus, gamification emerges as a powerful tool for building enduring brand relationships among digitally-savvy Nigerian youth.

METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to examine gamification as a catalyst for brand engagement among youths in Southeast Nigeria, with a socio-cultural perspective on strategic marketing outcomes. The quantitative component enabled measurable analysis of cultural factors influencing gamified marketing effectiveness and identified the most impactful gamification elements. The target population included Indomie noodle consumers aged 18–35 across ten Southeast Nigerian cities: Aba, Umuahia, Owerri, Orlu, Enugu, Agbani, Abakaliki, Afikpo, Onitsha, and Nnewi. Indomie Nigeria, under Dufil Prima Foods, has utilized gamification in campaigns such as Indomie Campus Battle and Indomie Fan Club, though public documentation is limited. A sample of 380 respondents was selected using simple random sampling, with 38 participants from each city. Data was collected via a self-developed instrument titled “Youth Gamified Marketing Engagement Survey,” designed to assess youths’ interaction

with gamified strategies and brand engagement. Content validity was established through expert reviews by three marketing and consumer behaviour specialists (Polit & Beck, 2012), ensuring item clarity and relevance. A pilot test with 30 respondents confirmed internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, indicating high reliability. Out of 380 questionnaires distributed, 330 were returned, yielding an 86% response rate, considered acceptable in social science research (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Multiple Regression Analysis was used to assess the influence of gamification and socio-cultural variables on brand engagement. The study's high validity, strong reliability, robust response rate, and analytical rigor support the generalisability of its findings.

Results

Data analysis and result presentation for the study and discussions are covered in this section. In order to create a more logical and insightful picture from the data obtained through structured copies of questionnaire, the field results were structured using descriptive statistics (frequency distribution tables and percentages) and inferential statistics (Multiple Regressions Analysis statistical tool). The total participant number was 330 users, who performed the whole playing tasks and answered all the questionnaire.

Objective One: To find out the gamification elements (rewards, competitions, interactive experiences, leaderboards, badges, progress tracking, and challenges) that most significantly influence brand engagement (emotional connection, brand loyalty, and advocacy) among young consumers in Southeast Nigeria.

Measuring Construct

$$BE = F (GE) \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

$$GE = F (RW, COM, ITE, LB, BG, PT, CH) \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

Thus, translating the above function to its linear form, we have;

$$GE = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1RW + \alpha_2COM + \alpha_3ITE + \alpha_4LB + \alpha_5BG + \alpha_6PT + \alpha_7CH + \mu \dots\dots\dots(3)$$

Where;

BE = Brand Engagement, GE = Gamification elements, RW = Rewards, COM = Competitions, ITE = Interactive experiences, LB = Leaderboards, BG = Badges, PT = Progress tracking, CH =

Challenges, μ = Error Term, $\alpha_0, \alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_4, \alpha_5, \alpha_6, \alpha_7$ are parameters of the model. Theoretical expectation model based on the literature review are as follows;

$$\alpha_0 > 0, \alpha_1 > 0, \alpha_2 > 0, \alpha_3 > 0, \alpha_4 > 0, \alpha_5 > 0, \alpha_6 > 0, \alpha_7 > 0.$$

Table 1a: Measurement instruments

Construct	Variables	5-point Likert scales					Weighted Mean
		SA	A	U	D	SD	
Independent Variables							
	Gamification Elements (GE)	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	
RW	Rewards	296 90%	29 9%	1 0%	2 1%	2 1%	4.86
COM	Competitions	197 60%	126 37%	2 1%	3 1%	2 1%	4.55
ITE	Interactive experiences	159 48%	161 49%	2 1%	5 2%	3 1%	4.42
LB	Leaderboards	201 61%	116 35%	4 1%	2 1%	7 2%	4.52
BG	Badges	138 41%	182 55%	1 0%	1 0%	8 2%	4.34
PT	Progress tracking	195 59%	127 38%	3 1%	2 1%	3 1%	4.54
CH	Challenges	168 51%	151 46%	5 2%	3 1%	3 1%	4.45
Dependent Variable							
BE	Brand engagement (emotion connection, brand loyalty, ar advocacy)	214 64%	107 32%	1 0%	4 1%	4 1%	4.58

Table 1b: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 (Constant)	.048	.128		.374	.708
Rewards	.136	.034	.096	4.026	.000
Competitions	-.019	.112	-.017	-.170	.865
Interactive experiences	.071	.076	.070	.933	.351
Leaderboards	.557	.050	.612	11.193	.000
Badges	.027	.045	.029	.610	.543
Progress tracking	.345	.113	.324	3.042	.003
Challenges	-.125	.069	-.121	-1.807	.072

a. Dependent Variable: Brand engagement

Table 1c: Summary

S/N	Gamification Elements (GE)	t	Sig.	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1.	Rewards	4.026	.000	4.86	Rewards has a positive and significant impact. This gamification element worked really well. Young people strongly agreed that it was useful and effective, and the results clearly show that it made a big positive difference.
2.	Competitions	-.170	.865	4.55	Competitions has a negative and no significant. The data doesn't show clear proof that this feature had an effect, but young people still liked it and thought it was useful.
3.	Interactive experiences	.933	.351	4.42	Interactive experiences has a positive and no significant impact. The numbers don't clearly prove it made a difference, but most young people still somewhat agreed that it was helpful. It means the effect isn't confirmed by strict statistics, but young people still generally saw it in a good light.
4.	Leaderboards	11.193	.000	4.52	Leaderboards has a positive and significant impact. The results clearly show that leaderboards had a strong, positive impact — young people found them really motivating and important. It means leaderboards definitely worked well and made a noticeable difference.
5.	Badges	.610	.543	4.34	Badges has a positive and no significant impact. The data doesn't prove that badges had an effect, but people still liked them and thought they were a good feature. So while there's no strong evidence they made a difference, participants generally had a positive opinion about badges.
6.	Progress tracking	3.042	.003	4.54	Progress tracking has a positive and significant impact. Progress tracking clearly made a difference — the data proves it helped, and young people really liked and appreciated it. In simple terms, it worked well and users found it very useful.

7.	Challenges	-1.807	.072	4.45	Challenges has a negative and no significant impact. The results almost showed a real effect, but not quite. Still, people generally thought challenges were helpful and worthwhile. So, while it didn't fully pass the scientific test, most young people saw value in using challenges.
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Objective Two: To identify cultural factors such as peer influence, collectivism, community ties, family orientation, respect for authority, traditional values, and social identity affect the effectiveness of gamified marketing strategies in Southeast Nigeria.

Measuring Construct

$$GMS = F(CF) \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

$$CF = F(PI, CO, CT, FO, RA, TV, SI) \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Thus, translating the above function to its linear form, we have;

$$CF = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1PI + \alpha_2CO + \alpha_3CT + \alpha_4FO + \alpha_5RA + \alpha_6TV + \alpha_7SI + \mu \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

Where; GMS = Gamified Marketing Strategy, CU = Customer factor, PI = Peer influence, CO = Collectivism, CT = Community ties, FO = Family orientation, RA = Respect for authority, TV = Traditional values, SI = Social identity, μ = Error Term, $\alpha_0, \alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_4, \alpha_5, \alpha_6, \alpha_7$ are parameters of the model. Theoretical expectation model based on the literature review are as follows;

$$\alpha_0 > 0, \alpha_1 > 0, \alpha_2 > 0, \alpha_3 > 0, \alpha_4 >, \alpha_5 >, \alpha_6 >, \alpha_7 > 0.$$

Table 2a: Measurement instruments

Construct	Variables	5-point Likert scales					Weighted Mean
		SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	
PI	Peer influence	273	51	2	1	3	4.79
		83%	15%	1%	0%	1%	
CO	Collectivism	178	140	2	4	6	4.45
		54%	42%	1%	1%	2%	
CT	Community ties	122	199	1	5	3	4.31
		35%	62%	0%	2%	1%	
FO	Family orientation	193	133	1	2	1	4.56
		59%	41%	0%	1%	0%	
RA	Respect for authority	155	164	4	5	2	4.41

TV	Traditional values	47%	49%	1%	2%	1%	4.65
		228	95	2	2	3	
SI	Social identity	69%	28%	1%	1%	1%	4.59
		207	117	3	1	2	
Dependent Variable							
GMS	Gamified marketing strategies	252	70	2	4	2	4.71
		76%	21%	1%	1%	1%	

Table 2b: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	.184	.116		1.594	.112
	Peer influence	.482	.038	.444	12.794	.000
	Collectivism	.133	.044	.164	3.019	.003
	Community ties	.009	.038	.009	.230	.818
	Family orientation	-.190	.057	-.181	-3.324	.001
	Respect for authority	.001	.052	.002	.027	.978
	Traditional values	.448	.051	.463	8.712	.000
	Social identity	.082	.067	.080	1.224	.222

Dependent Variable: Gamified marketing strategies

Table 2c: Summary

S/N	Cultural factors	t	Sig.	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1.	Peer influence	12.794	.000	4.79	Peer influence has a positive and significant impact. A lot of people strongly agreed that this factor (like peer influence) really matters. The results clearly show that it has a big impact on how young people respond to gamified marketing—things like games, challenges, or rewards used by brands to get attention. In short, this factor plays a major role in getting youths engaged.
2.	Collectivism	3.019	.003	4.45	Collectivism has a positive and significant impact. The results show that this factor really matters. It means that young people in Southeast Nigeria are more likely to enjoy and connect with brands that involve group activities, teamwork, or anything that makes them feel part of a community. They respond better when marketing feels social, not just individual.

3.	Community ties	.230	.818	4.31	Community ties has a positive and no significant impact. Even though some people agreed with this factor, the results show that it doesn't have a strong or clear effect on how youths connect with brands. In other words, it's not a big reason why young people get involved with gamified marketing, at least not on its own.
4.	Family orientation	-3.324	.001	4.56	Family orientation has a negative and significant impact. Even though many people agree that family is important, the study shows that strong family values might actually reduce how much young people get involved with fun, game-like brand promotions. This means that when young people are raised in families with very traditional or strict values, they might be less likely to engage with playful or modern marketing, even if others their age enjoy it.
5.	Respect for authority	.027	.978	4.41	Respect for authority has a positive and no significant impact. People agreed that the factor is important, but it doesn't actually make much difference in how young people connect with or respond to brands. So, even though it sounds good, it doesn't have a real impact on their engagement with gamified marketing.
6.	Traditional values	8.712	.000	4.65	Traditional values has a positive and significant impact. This factor (traditional values) really matters and has a clear effect. It means that when brands use games or fun activities that respect or reflect local culture and traditions, young people are more likely to join in and stay interested. So, traditional values actually help make gamified marketing more effective.
7.	Social identity	1.224	.222	4.59	Social identity has positive and no significant impact. Many people agreed that this factor is important, but when we look closely at the numbers, it doesn't clearly affect how young people engage with brands. So, even though it sounds important, it doesn't have a strong or proven effect in this study.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined gamification as a catalyst for brand engagement among youths in Southeast Nigeria, focusing on the socio-cultural influences shaping strategic marketing outcomes. The findings provide nuanced insights into how cultural variables interact with gamification tools to influence consumer behaviour.

Key results show that peer influence, collectivism, and traditional values positively and significantly affect gamified marketing, aligning with Abdelhalim (2024), who emphasized emotional and social engagement as key to brand interaction. In collectivist societies, social norms and peer approval strongly guide consumer decisions, validating the role of these cultural factors. Contrastingly, family orientation had a negative and significant influence, suggesting that individuals with strong family-centered values may be less responsive to gamification, possibly due to generational gaps or perceptions of gamified tools as frivolous. Community ties, respect for authority, and social identity, although positively linked with gamification, were not statistically significant, indicating their limited predictive power. This partly supports Shoubashy *et al.* (2020), who argued that user characteristics and motivations moderate gamification outcomes.

In assessing specific gamification elements, rewards/motivation, leaderboards, and progress tracking significantly enhanced brand engagement. These findings confirm those of Punwatkar and Verghese (2025) and Hsi-Peng and Hui-Chen (2020), who noted that goal-driven features foster deeper user engagement through intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. However, competitions, interactive experiences, and challenges had no significant effect, with competitions and challenges showing negative directional impacts. This suggests that in collectivist or harmony-valuing cultures, overly competitive features may deter engagement—a view supported by Nannan and Juho (2020), who advocated for emotionally engaging over competitive strategies. Badges also showed no significant impact, resonating with Paruthi *et al.* (2023), who cautioned that such visual elements lack motivational depth unless linked to meaningful benefits. Overall, the findings reinforce the importance of culturally sensitive, user-centric gamification design.

They align with Nipun and Sujith (2023) and ElShoubashy (2023), who emphasized intrinsic motivation and socio-cultural alignment in enhancing brand engagement.

Conclusion

This study examined gamification as a catalyst for brand engagement among youths in southeast Nigeria: A socio-cultural perspective on strategic marketing outcomes. The findings revealed that certain cultural dimensions such as peer influence, collectivism, and traditional values significantly contribute to the effectiveness of gamified marketing, while family orientation showed a negative but significant influence, highlighting potential resistance to gamified marketing among family-centered individuals.

Furthermore, the study established that specific gamification tools particularly rewards, leaderboards, and progress tracking have a significant positive impact on brand engagement. However, elements like competitions, badges, and challenges did not yield significant effects, suggesting that not all gamification features resonate equally with users.

Overall, the research underscores the importance of culturally-informed and strategically-designed gamification frameworks in marketing. Successful implementation depends on aligning game elements with the target audience's cultural context, motivational triggers, and behavioural preferences.

Recommendations

1. Marketers should tailor gamification efforts to align with cultural attributes such as collectivism and peer influence, which positively impact gamified marketing acceptance. Avoid overemphasis on individualistic or overly competitive elements in collectivist societies.
2. Given their non-significant or negative impact, competitions and challenges should be used sparingly or redesigned to emphasize collaboration rather than rivalry, especially in culturally conservative or harmony-oriented markets.
3. Game elements that provide tangible or perceived rewards, such as motivation mechanisms, leaderboards, and progress tracking, should be prioritized to boost engagement and sustain user interaction with the brand.

4. Since badges had no significant impact, marketers should enhance their value by integrating them into broader reward systems or attaching meaningful privileges or recognition to their acquisition.
5. Leverage peer endorsement, referrals, and community-driven campaigns to amplify the reach and acceptance of gamified initiatives, as peer influence was found to significantly support gamified marketing strategies.
6. Developers and marketers should understand and address the reservations held by family-oriented consumers, possibly by integrating educational or family-friendly narratives that harmonize gamification with traditional values.
7. Continuously assess and refine gamification strategies using user feedback and performance data to ensure relevance, resonance, and alignment with evolving consumer expectations.

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