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Revitalizing Marketing Strategy through Gamification: A Case Study of Talabat Food Ordering Company in Erbil City, Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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ABSTRACT:
This study investigates the impact of gamification on the marketing strategy of Talabat, a food ordering company in Erbil City, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The study involved a quantitative survey conducted online in both Kurdish and English and was administered to participants aged 18 to 45 years who regularly used Talabat's services for just one week. A sample of 98 responses was collected using a random sampling technique. Data analysis was conducted using version 26 of SPSS by applying various statistical methods to study the impact of gamification on the marketing strategy and test the hypotheses. The results confirm that the impact of gamification on Talabat's marketing strategy is high and emphasize the importance of in-game interaction strategies, player motivations, and feedback systems. The effectiveness of these elements varies based on context and implementation. This study has added great value to the knowledge about how gamification significantly intervenes in modern marketing strategies, especially for service-based industries.

Keywords: Gamification, Marketing Strategy, Talabat, Erbil City, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

1. INTRODUCTION

Businesses nowadays are trying to find newer ways to bring in customers and retain them in the ever-competitive marketplace. One of the innovative approaches gaining momentum over the last few years has been gamification [1]. Gamification is a marketing strategy that involves taking elements and forms typically found in game design and applying them to contexts where games do not exist. This has attracted the attention of many marketers worldwide because it can help increase consumer engagement, loyalty, and ultimately sales [2]. This can be achieved by integrating point systems, rewards, challenges, and leaderboards into marketing campaigns [3]. The use of gamification is so appealing because it revolves around basic human needs for competition, achievement, and social interaction. In other words, research has shown that gamified activities tend to motivate customers in various ways, making purchases, sharing content about entities, and spending time on the firm's digital platforms [4]. In turn, it may lead to a more brand-loyal customer due to his or her feeling of competence and connection to the brand [5].

Moreover, gamification can be used to help businesses in terms of data capture. For instance, by engaging consumers through the ergonomic elements involved, there will be a database on usage, information on the preferences enlisted, and the levels of interest involved to refine marketing strategies to be used in the prediction of trends for the future as well [6]. Nevertheless, the gamification process is considered particularly reliable in design and execution, as it has created a compelling user experience. For example, poorly executed gamification leads to consumer fatigue, disinterest, and, in some cases, the development of developing negative attitudes toward the brand itself [7]. This thus creates the need for

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the business to understand the psychological measures during the gamification process and then the mechanics the same to suit its audience. It can thus be said that gamification in marketing refers to incorporating game mechanics to enhance conversion rates. The challenge and reward are some of the other fundamental pointers that have resulted in increased consumer involvement, awareness, and loyalty toward the brands. This study will explore the impact of gamification on marketing strategy, examining its benefits, potential pitfalls, and best practices for successful implementation. Through a comprehensive analysis, this study aims to deliver understandings into how gamification can be influenced to create more engaging and effective marketing campaigns.

This research is of great scientific and practical importance. First, it contributes to the prevailing form of knowledge by filling the literature gap related to the impact of gamification on marketing strategy in specific regional contexts. Its contributions are quite useful for businesses involved in online food delivery, so it is essential to make a careful decision on how to integrate this gamification method into their marketing strategies. Ultimately, understanding the dynamics of gamification in marketing will stimulate innovation, improve customer engagement, and foster the advance of more effective and accurate marketing approaches in the city of Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and beyond.

1.1 EXPANSION AND A GROWTH DRIVER OF TALABAT IN ERBIL

According to Talabat [8], the forerunner in online food ordering in the Middle East, this company was founded in 2004 in Kuwait, and since 2016, it has been a part of Delivery Hero. Talabat operates in 9 countries in the Middle East and entered Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, in the spring of 2021 due to the growing demand from the city for food delivery and Q-commerce services. It has partnered with more than 3,000 restaurants and boosted the economy in Erbil by providing riders with an opportunity to create an income and smoothing out the way business is run locally. The company enhances user engagement through gamification features on its application that offer rewards and incentives, making customers more loyal and satisfied [9].

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In today's fast-moving marketing environment, every business seeks the next innovation to engage and retain consumers. The gamification practice of using game design features in non-game settings offers a new channel that marketers can leverage to captivate and motivate their target audience. In the context of Talabat's desire to improve its market presence and customer loyalty, it becomes essential to understand how gamification strategies may influence consumer behavior in this particular cultural and competitive environment. Consequently, the problem is rooted in the limited understanding of diverse ways gamification strategies at Talabat influence consumer behavior and marketing performance in the context of Erbil City, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Although evidence of gamification efficiency already exists worldwide, comprehensive studies about its application in localization have not been widely materialized so far, especially for firms like Talabat. This leads to knowledge of the gaps that have effects on cultural and regional information, which could be implicative of gamification performance affecting customer engagement and loyalty performance and, in effect, driving marketing performance within a strong competitive food delivery market such as Erbil. Talabat has the potential to enhance customer loyalty, improve user engagement, and drive sustainable business growth by implementing gamification features such as rewards, challenges, and interactive elements. This study seeks to address the gap in locally conducted research and provide insights into the role of gamification in enhancing Talabat’s marketing strategy in Erbil.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between gamification and marketing strategy, with a specific emphasis on understanding how gamification impacts the marketing strategy efforts of the Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City. The study will also aim to evaluate which specific dimension of gamification has the most impact on marketing strategy.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What is the relationship between gamification and marketing strategy in the context of the Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City?

The first research question examines the relationship between gamification techniques and marketing strategies within the Talabat food ordering company. This research question will establish whether the usage of gamification dimensions, such as customer engagement, rewards systems, and motivation of players, can be quantified in terms of enhancement to the efficiency of the Talabat marketing strategy in a competitive food delivery industry. This question is based on the belief that gamification is a medium to increase customer engagement, loyalty towards, and perception of one's brand, thereby essentially making the company's marketing more effective [10],[11]. This understanding is required to evolve broader literature on how gamification affects strategic marketing decisions in service-based industries [12].

RQ2: How does gamification impact the marketing strategy efforts of the Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City?

Precisely in which ways does gamification impact the marketing strategy of Talabat, the food ordering company is what the second research question will attempt to find out. This research question will show how various elements of gamification such as rewards, feedback systems, and competition, impact the ability of Talabat to attract customers, retain customers, and also the engagement level of customers. The present study proposes to establish whether gamification is indeed a potent instrument in marketing toward increasing customer engagement, ensuring brand loyalty, and achieving differentiation from competitors [13]. How these gamification mechanisms eventually influence Talabat's marketing effort may provide important strategic insights on how the company can make use of such techniques to enhance its market situation and customer experience [14].

1.5 HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

In accordance with the first research question, Hypothesis One tries to establish a measurable relationship between gamification and marketing strategy. Literature preceding this asserts that gamification, when applied appropriately, might affect customer behavior and marketing performance [15]. Conclusively, it can be hypothesized that in this competitive environment of food ordering, the addition of gamification to marketing tools results in better engagement and customer loyalty, hence improving the overall performance of marketing [16]. The main and sub-hypotheses from the discussion above are developed based on the assumption that gamification elements provide advanced means of engaging customers, thus influencing the effectiveness of marketing activities within Talabat food ordering company.

H1: There is a significant correlation between the gamification and Marketing Strategy of the Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

H1a: *There is a significant correlation between engagement strategies and marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).*

H1b: *There is a significant correlation between player motivation and the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).*

H1c: *There is a significant correlation between the feedback system and the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).*

Based on the second research question, the second hypothesis is that gamification would have a significant impact on influencing Talabat's marketing strategy. Previous literature has shown that gamification can result in increasing customer engagement and can affect consumer behavior in meaningful ways too [17]. It is also hypothesized that, in this context, Talabat will enjoy a positive adjustment of the main marketing metrics, such as customer retention, brand awareness, and overall satisfaction, by implementing gamification into its marketing strategy [18]. The following are the main and sub-hypotheses based on the fact that gamification is a creative and interactive marketing approach that may increase competitiveness for Talabat in the food delivery market of Erbil City.

H2: Gamification has a significant impact on the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

H2a: *Engagement strategy has a significant impact on the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).*

H2b: *Player motivation has a significant impact on the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).*

H2c: *Feedback system has a significant impact on the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).*

1.6 CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE STUDY

The study model is developed in support of research objectives and hypotheses. This model helps to discover and analyze how the variables related to a particular collection studied in this study are related and affected. Breaking down this conceptual framework, as shown in Figure (1) below, can guide a systematic approach to solving research problems, including achieving objectives and reflecting the nature of correlation and regression between two variables.

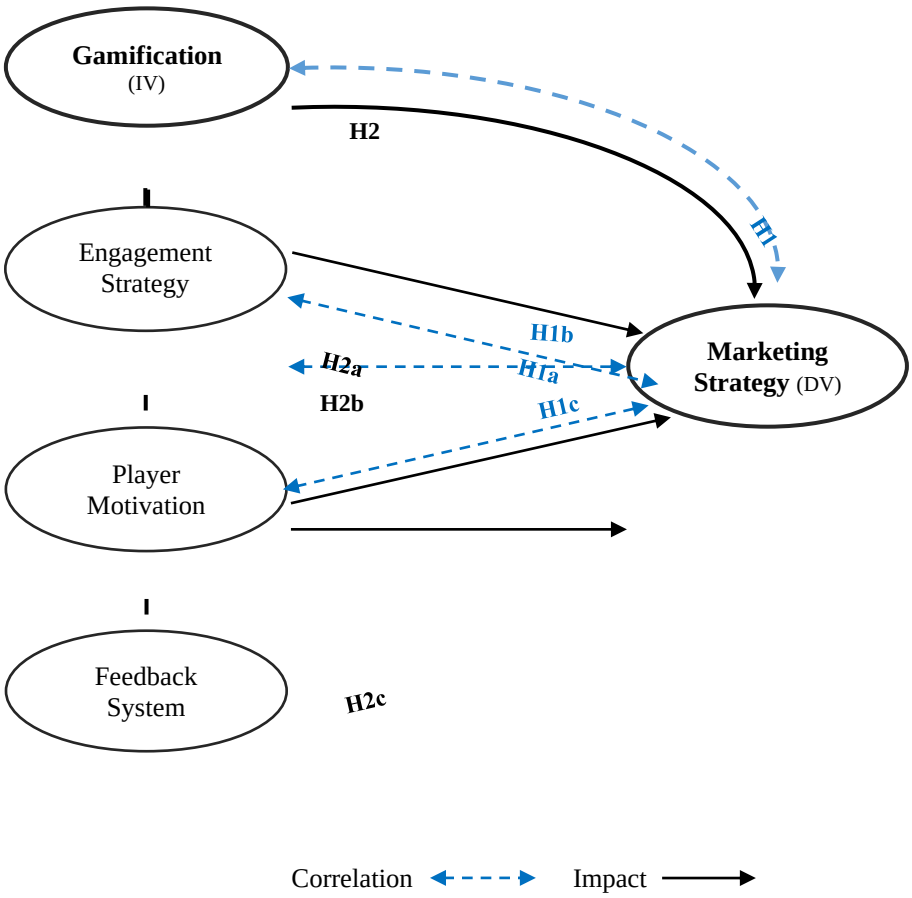

FIGURE 1. Proposed Conceptual Model of the Study. (***Source.*** *Primary Data*)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 GAMIFICATION

Gamification refers to one of the most potent strategies in online marketing with which a majority of researchers and practitioners are enthralled. In such a novel approach, game elements and mechanisms in domains usually unrelated to gaming are used to create user engagement and influence behavior. In a nutshell, gamification refers to the act of taking play and the competitive spirit and trying to apply it elsewhere to create more engaging experiences for users [19]. On that note, Hitchens and Tulloch [20] define gamification as the process of enabling greater user engagement with play and passion in games, whereby players engage in artificial conflict with underlying measurable objectives. It goes beyond just injecting fun into humdrum exercises; it involves a purposeful redesign of job approaches to realize an enjoyable experience congruent with dominant business aspirations [21]. The concept of gamified services goes back even further in the digital media, first being documented under the name "funware" [22]; their definition follows this line by focusing on all attempts in the direction of augmenting services with gameful experience to help their users in creating value.

This move towards experiential gamification underlines a business's potential to use game design elements to improve customer meetings satisfaction, and loyalty. In addition, according to Zichermann [23], regarded as the leading expert on the subject of gamification, he was one of its early proponents, defining it as an art and science of revolving your customer's everyday connections into games that assist your business drives [24]. The gamification perspective illustrates the colossal potential of influencing a wide range of customer behaviors and attitudes within industries [25]. Since companies are in constant pursuit of seeking novel methods of bettering customer engagement and loyalty, contemporary businesses use gamification techniques that add game-style rewards and challenges to the business way of marketing strategies [26]. That is an effective way of enhancing user involvement, raising brand awareness, and keeping customers loyal. Whereas gamification is increasingly applied in marketing practice, literature on gamification remains rather scarce and anecdotal. In fact, according to Kalogiannakis et al. [27], even though gamification has become a widely recognized practice, much of the current knowledge is based on practical applications rather than rigorous academic studies. Examples of companies such as Bunchball and Badgeville that develop stages for incorporating game basics into a

website demonstrate that gamification raises conversion rates and increases user engagement [28]. Moreover, customer engagement has played an increasingly important role in today's digital environment; therefore, gamification has also become increasingly appealing for businesses.

A survey of more than 70% of companies in Forbes Global 2000 by Park and Bae [29], quoted in Kaur et al. [30], listed using gamification as a tool for marketing and retaining customers. With time and effective money, consumers are getting ever choosier. Companies are under pressure to find innovative ways to capture their attention. Gamification could be an important solution to change ordinary interactions into fun and rewarding experiences [31]. Therefore, a very valuable approach for businesses would be to enhance engagement with users and drive desired behaviors toward online marketing. Creating an immersive environment with game elements and mechanics would help organizations in developing experiences that are appealing to the audiences. It would result in increased brand loyalty and increased customer satisfaction. Further research is still needed to examine long-term effects, but at least the current success indicates a promising future for the application of gamification in marketing strategies.

2.1.1 DIMENSIONS OF GAMIFICATION

Dimensions of gamification have been greatly discussed along with user experience and behavioral psychology, which go into the minute details that form one's interaction with the elements of gamification. Traditionally set into the inspiration of game design, the dimensions show nuances that explain the users' engagement and experiences within gamified environments. It therefore becomes necessary to deconstruct these dimensions to understand the internal dynamics between users and elements of gamification to explain precisely how such dynamics influence attitude and behavior within the gamified context. Against the above background, this study explores dimensions at the core of the gamification landscape.

2.1.1.1 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Engagement strategy is a crucial dimension of gamification, focused on game-like elements that engage the user. To maintain user interaction and loyalty, the latest investigations underline the specific efficiency of these strategies in enhancing user engagement. For example, Bitrián-Arcas [32] found out that participation and motivation increased considerably in online platforms having points, badges, and leaderboards. Another good case is where Hassan et al. [33], in their studies, demonstrated that personalized challenges and rewards appealing to preferences and goals long-term could dispose users to long-term engagement. This suggests that in a well-designed way, gamification strategies can drive satisfaction and retention to high levels by invoking a myriad of motivations from their users, both intrinsic and extrinsic. As firms keep on exploring more on gamification, the inclusion of tailor-made engagement strategies becomes more critical for optimizing user experiences and achieving desired outcomes [34].

2.1.1.2 PLAYER MOTIVATION

Player motivation addresses concerns that address the underlying motivational reasons that drive people to gamification systems. Recent studies also stress the importance of understanding both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in developing effective gamification. On this note, a study by John et al. [35] establishes that intrinsic motivators in wanting mastery and autonomy enhance user experience and perfection in the gamified environment. On the other hand, extrinsic motivators such as rewards and competition may only provide temporal effectiveness and are not able to maintain long-term participation [36]. Furthermore, Xiao and Hew [37] added that both motivators need to be balanced due to different user preferences, which may call for a personalized gamification approach to achieve the best results in player motivation and retention. With this, there is a need to understand what motivational factors are. It will help a lot in developing gamification strategies that work with users and guarantee efficient and engaging participation.

2.1.1.3 FEEDBACK SYSTEM

The feedback system may be considered another important dimension of gamification and often involves real-time responses to the users' activity that can steer further actions to improve engagement. Effective feedback mechanisms involve points, badges, progress bars, and notifications that are conjunctions meant to reinforce positive behaviors to maintain the user's motivation [38]. Immediate feedback in gamified environments, according to Al-Hafdi and Alhalafawy [39], strongly enhances user motivation due to already-reached achievements and the stimulation of progress. On the other hand, personalized feedback, relevant to a person's performance and aimed at certain set targets, would result in an improvement in learning outcomes and overall satisfaction, as has been revealed by Leung et al. [40]. These findings have elevated the fact that a well-organized feedback mechanism is necessary for sustaining user interest and motivating people to behave in desired ways. Indeed, through continuous information about their progress, the feedback system stands out as an important component of gamification strategies in most industries today [41].

2.2 MARKETING STRATEGY

Marketing strategy is an important area of study that deals with the orderly or systematic planning, construction, and execution of all the functions in marketing according to what would have been predetermined as general business

objectives. It shall then be long-term oriented toward customer value, concurrently with businesses sustaining competitive advantages [42]. The evolution of the idea of marketing strategy over the last few years has been worsened by several factors, including technological advancements, customers' changing behavior, and great respect for digital channels, which target electronic food ordering applications [43]. According to Malicha [44], marketing strategy is generally the scheme by which organizations quote, predict, and meet customers' needs at a profit. These activities range from market analysis, segmentation, targeting, positioning, and strategic use of the marketing mix such as product, price, place, and promotion. This means that strategic marketing should be targeted at aligning the marketing efforts within the framework of the overall business strategy of the company; hence, marketing activities will be seen to add value to a business by assisting in the accomplishment of long-term goals of the company [45]. In this regard, Yaiprasert and Hidayanto [46] define marketing strategy within the context of food delivery services as an integrated approach that streamlines customer data, effective tactics around digital marketing, and operational efficiency zeroed in on a smooth, engaging experience for the user. Other than this, Huang and Rust [47] described marketing strategy as a structured method employed to leverage digital channels effectively and analytics towards the construction of personalized marketing campaigns that best reach the target audience; it is a customer-oriented practice and utilizes technology for better engagement and satisfaction. From the viewpoint of digital platforms and electronic applications, strategic marketing has now widened its scope to digital marketing strategies that aim at engaging consumers through digital channels. This also involves mobile apps, social media, and e-commerce platforms, the three key web-based channels in current strategic marketing efforts, particularly for food delivery services today [48].

Various recent studies have synthesized strategic marketing and its electronic applications, especially in the food delivery industry. For instance, Sneha et al. [49] have reviewed how the strategic marketing function will be different in food delivery due to digital transformation. With mobile apps and data analytics integrated into their processes, firms can create more customized and effective marketing strategies. These strategies will not only help improve customer engagement but also enhance overall operations efficiency and customer satisfaction [50]. Another study by Stocchi et al. [51] also discussed strategic issues of marketing in the competitive landscape regarding food delivery applications. The authors noted that those companies that can leverage strategic marketing in their digital platforms can better distinguish themselves from competitors. The significance of using customer data has also been expressed in the literature concerning strategic marketing in the context of electronic applications. Huang and Rust [52] argue that big data and AI-driven analytics in strategic marketing allow food delivery companies to obtain deeper insights into customer preferences and behaviors. All this empowers the respective management to formulate their offering and marketing strategies much better by further increasing customer loyalty and enhancing the customer lifetime value. It, therefore, follows that strategic marketing is one of the most essential business frameworks to be applied, probably more so in the digital age when electronic applications are at the heart of consumer-interacting experiences. The integration of strategic marketing with the newly available digital tools and data analytics provides opportunities to develop superior customer engagements, operational efficiencies, and competitive advantages.

2.2.1 DIMENSIONS OF MARKETING STRATEGY

At the core of the marketing strategy dimensions, as classically conceived in strategic management and marketing literature, are the strategic frameworks and components that shape a brand's perception and power in the marketplace. These dimensions, based on the provided infrastructure, are the light that ensures the illumination of many faces of a brand's strategy. They expose the way customers perceive a brand and how this perception evolves across touchpoints, to understand how strategic choices affect attitudes and behaviors. Those are the key core elements underpinning a good marketing strategy framework. This paper is an analysis of core elements that form the base for a good marketing strategy.

2.2.1.1 PRODUCT POSITIONING

Product positioning is such an important marketing strategy that comprises the process of creating an identity or image in the minds of targeted customers. This will spotlight unique features, advantages, or value propositions that a product or a company will provide, leading to differentiation from apparent competitors, and targeting a certain segment of consumers [53]. Effective positioning would have an impact on consumer perception of their basic needs and desires, make one loyal to a brand, and give marketers a competitive advantage. A line of recent research states that product positioning should be continuously updated in line with changes in consumer expectations that can be influenced by digital capabilities for experience personalization [54]. Product positioning also succeeds when strategies are adjusted for changes in market conditions to maintain relevance and resonance with the target audience [55]. Indeed, effective product positioning is one of the significant determining factors in the success or failure of marketing efforts, as most markets continue to be filled with similar competitors offering similar products.

2.2.1.2 PRICING STRATEGIES

Pricing strategies represent one of the most important constituents of marketing, which can directly affect consumer behavior, market positioning, and overall profitability of the business [56]. Pricing strategies effectively set prices by considering various factors that include costs of production, competitive landscape, customer demand, and perceived value [57]. Since there are numerous approaches to pricing cost-plus pricing strategy, value-based pricing, penetration

pricing, and premium pricing companies would select an approach that best fits specific conditions of the market and their businesses. Current research is relevant to the growing prominence of dynamic pricing in an increasingly digital market. It thus enables an organization to dynamically and provisionally change prices based on in-depth data analytics, consumer behavior, and market trends, which maximizes all possible channels for revenue opportunity [58]. Moreover, consumer perceptions of price fairness also began to be observed; it was shown that perceived transparent and consistent pricing practices would finally improve customer trust and loyalty [59].

2.2.1.3 MARKET SEGMENTATION

Market segmentation is one of the marketing strategies well known in instances where a target market has to be divided into distinct subsets of consumers with some common needs, characteristics, or behaviors. The identification and focusing of these groups by companies plays a vital role in enabling such companies to adapt their products, services, and marketing exertions better to encounter the special requirements of these groups; hence, it leads to effective and efficient marketing [60]. Additionally, the role of personalized marketing, according to Edgerly and Thorson [61], targets a very important aspect of elaborative market segmentation using data analytics and consumer insight. Companies are more interested in psychographic and behavioral segmentation, which is the greater way to build highly targeted campaigns relating to particular chunks of the audience as explained in Hafez [62]. Moreover, market segmentation helps businesses optimize the use of resources because marketing activities will be more focused on those areas that most likely yield the best return [63].

3. METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative research method to explore the impact of gamification on marketing strategies among users of the Talabat delivery app in Erbil, Kurdistan, Iraq. The quantitative method enables the collection of data on large scales with subsequent stringent statistical analyses and provides accurate insights concerning the elements within the app that might relate to marketing effectiveness.

3.1 SAMPLE SIZE AND DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected through online questionnaires, which were made available online for one week. The questionnaires were provided in both Kurdish and English to facilitate easy access by respondents. The target population included individuals aged between 18 and 45 years who normally use Talabat services. Through simple random sampling, a total of 98 valid responses were gathered, ensuring a higher level of generalizability for the findings. The present study targets general trends and the inter-relationships between gamification and marketing strategies among Talabat users in Erbil rather than precise estimates. Thus, the sample size obtained gives a sufficient basis for meaningful insight, balancing the need for timely data collection. Informed agreement was taken from all the participants, and wherever required, separation of confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents was ensured throughout. Personal information was managed securely under ethical consideration processes.

3.2 DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26, in which several statistical procedures were employed to analyze the relationship among variables and test the hypothesized results of the present study. For the majority, the study currently examined the correlations and regression analyses to test the hypotheses of the study based on the association of variables. This provided a strong framework through which interpretations of the observed impacts of gamification on marketing strategies at Talabat were made toward data-driven conclusions.

4. RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 RELIABILITY MEASUREMENT

The questionnaire of this study has been deeply analyzed from the perspective of its reliability. Reliability represents the consistency of the results obtained by the same questionnaire when re-applied under similar conditions. Accordingly, the coefficients of the correlations between the items in this questionnaire are computed, and then Cronbach's alpha method is used to analyze the reliability of the questionnaire. Table 1 demonstrates that Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable. The results reflected that the highest Cronbach's alpha for the general gamification variable was (0.835), so it is highly reliable. In more detailed terms, the Engagement Strategies dimension of the Gamification variable was the highest in terms of reliability, at (0.850). The lowest degree of reliability corresponded to the Product Positioning dimension from the Marketing Strategy variable, which had a score of (0.820). Overall, for all 24 items in the questionnaire, the reliability coefficient was a robust (0.830), meaning a very high internal consistency across the entire questionnaire.

Table 1. Reliability measurement through Cronbach's alpha method

Variables	Dimensions	Number of Questions	Reliability Value
Gamification	Engagement Strategies	4	0.850
	Player Motivation	4	0.831
	Feedback Systems	4	0.825
Gamification		12	0.835
Marketing Strategy	Product Positioning	4	0.820
	Pricing Strategies	4	0.833
	Market Segmentation	4	0.826
Marketing Strategy		12	0.826
Overall Questionnaire		**24**	**0.930**

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The demographic data of the participants was collected based on the research area from different aspects and the results are summarized in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The data indicates a significant gender disparity, with females representing 72.45% of the total frequency, compared to 27.55% for males. This suggests that females are more predominant or active in the context being studied. This distribution may highlight gender dynamics in the study area, including social roles, engagement preferences, or the effects of gender-specific programs.

Table 2. Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	27	27.55%
Female	71	72.45%
Overall	98	100%

In addition, the data shows a clear concentration in the (18 - 23) age group, which accounts for nearly half of the total frequency at 47.96%. This suggests that individuals within this age range are the most prevalent or active in the studied context. The frequency decreases significantly as the age groups progress, with the (24 - 29) age group representing 21.43%, followed by 14.29% for the (30 - 35) age group. The lower frequencies in the (from 36 - 40) and (45 Years Old) categories 9.18% and 7.14%, respectively indicate that older individuals are less represented or engaged. Given their higher participation rates, these findings highlight the importance of focusing strategies on younger age groups. The drop in engagement among older individuals suggests the need for customized approaches for this demographic or further investigation into the factors driving this trend.

Table 3. Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
From 18 - 23	47	47.96%
From 24 - 29	21	21.43%
From 30 - 35	14	14.29%
From 36 - 40	9	9.18%
45 Years Old	7	7.14%
Overall	98	100%

The data reveals that the (2 Years) group has the highest frequency, representing 36.73% of the total, indicating that this age group has a significant presence or impact within the dataset. The (1 Year) group follows with 24.49%, while (3 Years) and (6 Months) account for 21.43% and 17.35%, respectively. This distribution suggests that the frequency of occurrences generally increases with age up to the 2-year mark, after which it declines slightly.

Table 4. Talabat App usage Duration.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
6 Monthes	17	17.35%
1 Year	24	24.49%
2 Years	36	36.73%
3 Years	21	21.43%
Overall	98	100%

4.3 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

To evaluate the first hypothesis, H1, and its sub-hypotheses ranging from H1a to H1c, the Pearson correlation method was conducted. The first hypothesis is ***"There is a significant correlation between the Gamification and Marketing Strategy of the Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City (α≤ 0.05)".*** The results from SPSS 26 are grouped into tabular form in Table 5.

Table 5. The correlation between Gamification and Marketing Strategy.

Correlation	**Marketing Strategy**	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gamification	0.675**	0
**. Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).		
N=98		

The correlation analysis between gamification and marketing strategy results, as presented in Table 5, proved a significant positive relation with the correlation coefficient r = 0.675, thus showing a strong relationship. It would therefore imply that gamification, as part of involved marketing strategies, will make them more effective, possibly leading to increased consumer engagement and better overall marketing success. As a result, main hypothesis **H1** is accepted which indicates that, there is a significant correlation between the Gamification and Marketing Strategy of the Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City (α≤ 0.05). Consequently, the results presented that gamification has a strong relationship with marketing strategy.Therefore, this has been supported in other researches lately undertaken in the field, which proves that gamification positively influences all levels of marketing and consumer behavior. For instance, Gökmerdan Önder [64] pointed out that gamified mobile applications could significantly increase consumer participation. Similarly, Agrawal and Punwatkar [65], add that gamification in marketing can lead to high outcomes as concerns the purchasing intention of the consumers.

However, this does not mean that the high provision of gamification has much to do with the marketing strategy. On the contrary, gamification may not be the reason for the marketing strategy and therefore there is a possible connection that may need further investigation. A correlation factor may be found to prove the existence of a causal factor between these two factors. In this regard, Table 6 shows the relationship between the dimensions of gamification and marketing strategy.

Table 6. The correlation between gamification dimensions and marketing strategy value.

Correlations	**Marketing Strategy**	**p-value**
Engagement Strategies	0.657**	0.000
Player Motivation	0.562 **	0.000
Feedback System	0.625**	0.000
**. Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).		
Pearson Correlation		
N=98		

Table 6 presents the findings of the analysis conducted to explore the relationship between Gamification dimensions and Marketing Strategy. The results of this investigation reveal three important findings.

The engagement strategy is significantly associated with marketing strategy, r=0.657, p<0.01, hence H1a was accepted; this finding indicates that the gamification aspects of marketing, for example, Talabat food delivery company's branded and company's user-generated content and engagement strategies on the social media platforms in Erbil City has a strong relationship with marketing strategy. Thus, it is proven by Vinerean and Opreana's [66] study and Zeqiri et al.

[67] that powerful social media engagement strategies such as user-generated content greatly increase marketing effectiveness and brand loyalty, which goes in accordance with the findings of this study. There is a strong correlation of player motivation with the marketing strategy, having $r = 0.562$, $p < 0.01$; thus, H1b is accepted. This infers that motivational strategy, improved performance due to background, and increased motivation with behavior changes all correlate positively with marketing strategy. This is also validated by research findings of Akram et al. [68] and Xiao et al. [69], who identify that the player's motivation such as elevated performance and behavioral change impacts the level of success of marketing strategies. Therefore, they emphasize motivation as the key to customer attraction and the success of overall marketing policies. The feedback system is meaningfully correlated to the marketing strategy ($r=0.625$, $p<0.01$), hence, H1c is accepted, and the result specifies that the feedback system of Talabat food delivery company's marketing strategy related to gamification mechanisms of an effective communication manner that sufficiently deals with the ethical issues and improvements in service quality, where the value coefficient 0.625 indicates significance at 0.01 level. Furthermore, the inclusion of a feedback system in the gamified marketing strategy enhances the quality of communication and service to a large extent, which results in an improvement in user engagement and marketing outcomes as well [70],[71]. These findings serve as further evidence to validate the observed positive link between feedback systems and marketing strategies.

4.5 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

4.5.1 ASSESSMENT OF RESIDUAL NORMALITY FOR REGRESSION MODEL VALIDITY

Figures 2 and 3 show some of the diagnostic plots used to evaluate the normality of residuals of the regression model for marketing strategy as the dependent variable. Figure 2 displays a histogram of standardized residuals; this is a roughly bell-shaped distribution, with residuals strictly following the line of a normal distribution curve indicated by a mean close to zero at (8.40E-16) and a standard deviation close to one at (0.995). This attests that the assumption of normality is most likely met.

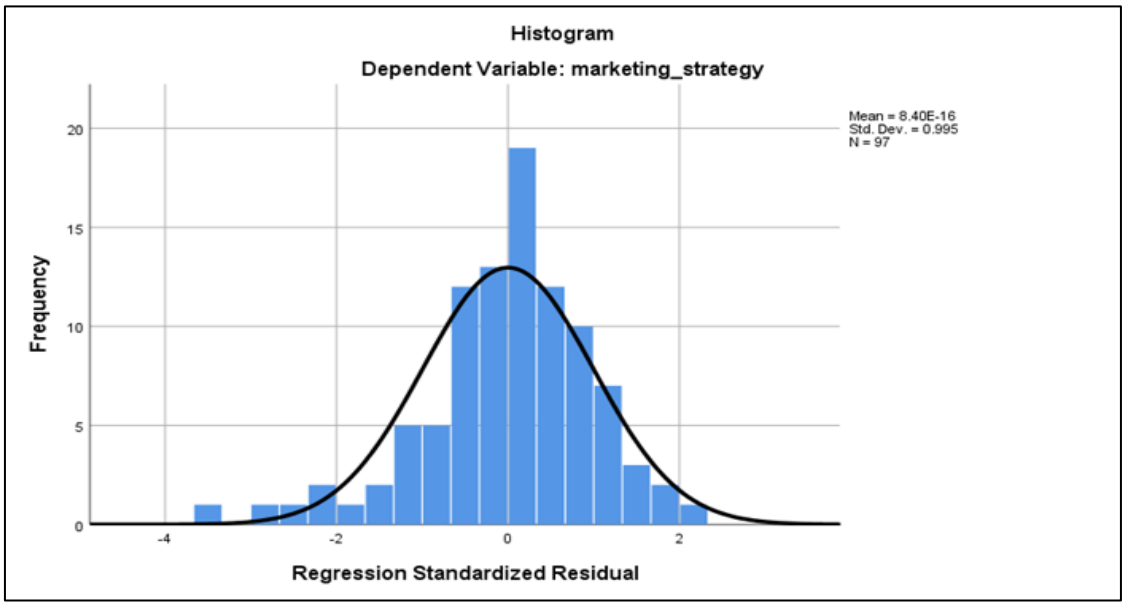

FIGURE 2. Histogram of standardized residuals for marketing strategy regression model.

Figure 3 in shows the normal P-P plot, where most points lie close to the diagonal line, indicating that the residuals are almost normally distributed. Together, these further validate the model assumptions for the regression model and boost one's confidence in the model results.

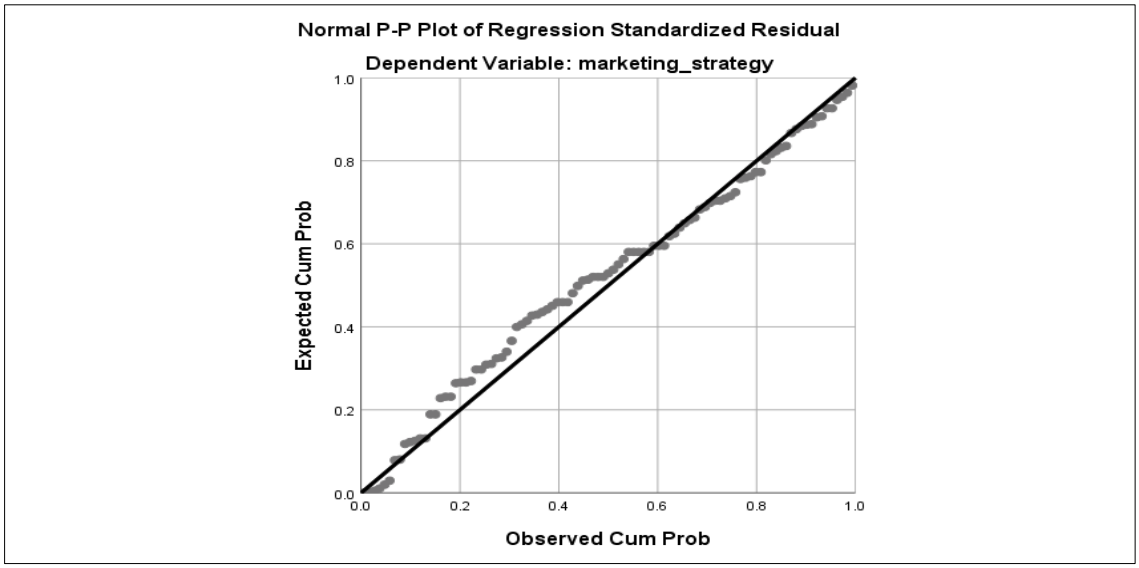

FIGURE 3. Normal P-P Plot of standardized residuals for marketing strategy regression model.

4.5.2 REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The second main hypothesis H2 and related sub-hypotheses H2a to H2c are used to confirm or reject with simple linear regression. As the second main hypothesis states that ***"Gamification has a significant impact on the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City (α≤ 0.05)".*** Table (7) shows the results of the analysis.

Table 7. Simple Linear Regression between Gamification and Marketing Strategy.

Gamification	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	R^2	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)			
	0.782	0.087	0.675	8.905	0.455	0.00
Dependent Variable: **Marketing Strategy**						

From Table 7, the R-Square (R^2) for Gamification is 0.455, and it would therefore mean that 45.5% of Gamification value changes are explained through changes in marketing strategy. In contrast, the remainder of the change in values can be explained by other factors not referred to within this study's model. For the Beta, the standardized coefficient is 0.675, a rather strong positive relation between gamification and marketing strategy. By taking this unstandardized coefficient B, which is 0.782, it means if one unit of gamification increases, 0.782 units of Marketing Strategy are expected to increase.

The t-value of 8.905 further supports the significance of this relationship. Therefore, the second main hypothesis **H2** is accepted, states that gamification has a significant impact on the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City. These findings collectively suggest that gamification plays an important role in enhancing Talabat's marketing strategy, although other factors not included in the model also play a role in the overall strategy. These results are in total agreement with the findings of Hofacker et al. [5], who found that gamification pervasively enhances consumer engagement and marketing impact. Hamari et al. [72] did an exhaustive review of empirical studies and reported that generally, gamification leads to better marketing outcomes. The findings of both studies, therefore, carried forward the idea that gamification can form an influential tool as part of modern marketing strategies; this was confirmed by the results in the Talabat case in the city of Erbil. Although this finding is consistent with Bittner and Schipper's [73] study, which found that gamification increases consumer response to product advertising, it is different in context and application. Their study focused on the area of product advertising, while this study focuses on gamification in a broader marketing strategy for the service-based industry. Despite these contextual differences, the process by which gamification increases user engagement and thus marketing success is similar across settings.

H2a: ***Engagement strategy has a significant impact on the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City (α≤ 0.05).***

Table 8. Simple Linear Regression between Engagement strategy and Marketing Strategy.

Engagement strategy	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	R^2	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)			
Marketing Strategy	0.485	0.095	0.464	5.099	0.215	0.000

Table 8 presents the results of a simple linear regression for the impact of Engagement Strategy on Marketing Strategy. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.485) means that for every increase in Engagement Strategy by one unit, Marketing Strategy improves by 0.485 units. It is positive and directly affects it. Also, this is guaranteed by its standardized coefficient, beta = 0.464, which shows a moderate positive effect of engagement strategy on marketing strategy. A t-value of 5.099 and a p-value of 0.000 suggest the effect is significant with a great amount of confidence taken into consideration. This is far less than 0.05, and thus it has definitely proved the null hypothesis wrong, showing evidence of a meaningful relationship with each other. The R^2 value of 0.215 indicates that by the Engagement Strategy, 21.5% of the variance in Marketing Strategy can be explained. That would imply an immense, though not full, role of the Engagement Strategy in shaping marketing outcomes. As it has been revealed, Engagement Strategy is an important variable; however, the R^2 value also implies other variables influencing the efficiency of Marketing Strategy. To sum up, the analysis provides the probability that Engagement Strategy has a significant and fairly substantial positive effect on Marketing Strategy. Additional research could be done to uncover other factors that may increase the robustness of this model. This result is supported by previous studies such as Sailer et al. [74], who proved with sufficient evidence that gamified engagement strategies are important drivers of effective user behavior and marketing performance. Along the same line, Robson et al. [75] revealed that such strategies drive marketing success to great significance, further confirming this study's results.

H2b: ***Player motivation has a significant impact on the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City (α≤ 0.05).***

Table 9. Simple Linear Regression between Player Motivation and Marketing Strategy.

Player Motivation	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	R^2	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)			
Marketing Strategy	0.497	0.095	0.562	6.622	0.316	0.00

Table 9 presents the results of a simple linear regression analysis that was carried out to determine the impact of Player Motivation on Marketing Strategy. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.497) implies that with every unit increase in Player Motivation, Marketing Strategy increases by 0.497 units. From the standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.562), it can be observed that there is a fairly strong positive influence of Player Motivation on Marketing Strategy. This effect has been proven to be significant, as the t-value of 6.622 was also verified by the p-value at 0.00, which is considerably less than the traditional significance level of $\alpha < 0.05$. The value of R^2 is 0.316, which means that Player Motivation explains 31.6% of Marketing Strategy. That is, while Player Motivation strongly influences Marketing Strategy, the remaining variance is explained by other factors. The results generally indicated that the player motivation variable was important in determining the effectiveness of marketing strategy, though other moderators may require further investigation. This finding is consistent with Yang et al. [76], who established that motivational factors significantly improve the effectiveness of gamified marketing strategies. Similarly, Jaskari and Syrjälä [77] proved that player motivation is a figured-out fact behind the success of gamification in any marketing context.

H2c: ***Feedback system has a significant impact on the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil City (α≤ 0.05).***

Table 10. Simple Linear Regression between Feedback System and Marketing Strategy.

Feedback System	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	R^2	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)			
Marketing Strategy	0.576	0.074	0.625	7.798	0.390	0.00

With the result presented in Table 10, it is shown that the simple linear regression analysis confirmed significantly that the Feedback System impacts Marketing Strategy positively. The unstandardized coefficient arrived at (B = 0.576) reflects that for every unit the Feedback System increases, the Marketing Strategy increases just over half of a unit (.576 unit), thus being directly and meaningfully influenced. The standardized coefficient-Beta of 0.625 further makes this effect stronger, as it explains a significant amount of variation in Marketing Strategy.

The t-value, in turn, comes out to 7.798 with an accompanying p-value of 0.00, which further strengthens this observation toward being at statistical significance much below conventional thresholds. Moreover, with an R^2 value of 0.390, it can be said that about 39% of the variance in Marketing Strategy is described by the Feedback System, which testifies to the high correlation of the latter without excluding the possible influence of more variables. Together, these results emphasize the role of an effective feedback system as a lever to achieve better results for marketing strategies. The results of this study share similarities with those drawn by Hofacker et al. [5], who were able to demonstrate that feedback systems in gamification are key to improving marketing-related results. In a related finding, Elshoubashy et al. [78] noted that feedback is the core motivator of gamification and thus mediates why it works as a marketing instrument.

Figure (4) illustrates how gamification and its main elements impact marketing strategy. Engagement strategy, feedback system, and player motivations are indeed very important in the development of a marketing strategy. These results stress the importance of carefully embedding gamified elements to improve marketing outcomes. The findings of the study also indicate that the important elements of gamification such as engagement strategies, player motivation, and feedback systems are among the elements that primarily affect the marketing strategy of Talabat food ordering company in Erbil city. The overall impact of gamification on marketing strategy is thus delineated by the integration of those specific elements into an overall more dynamic and successful approach.

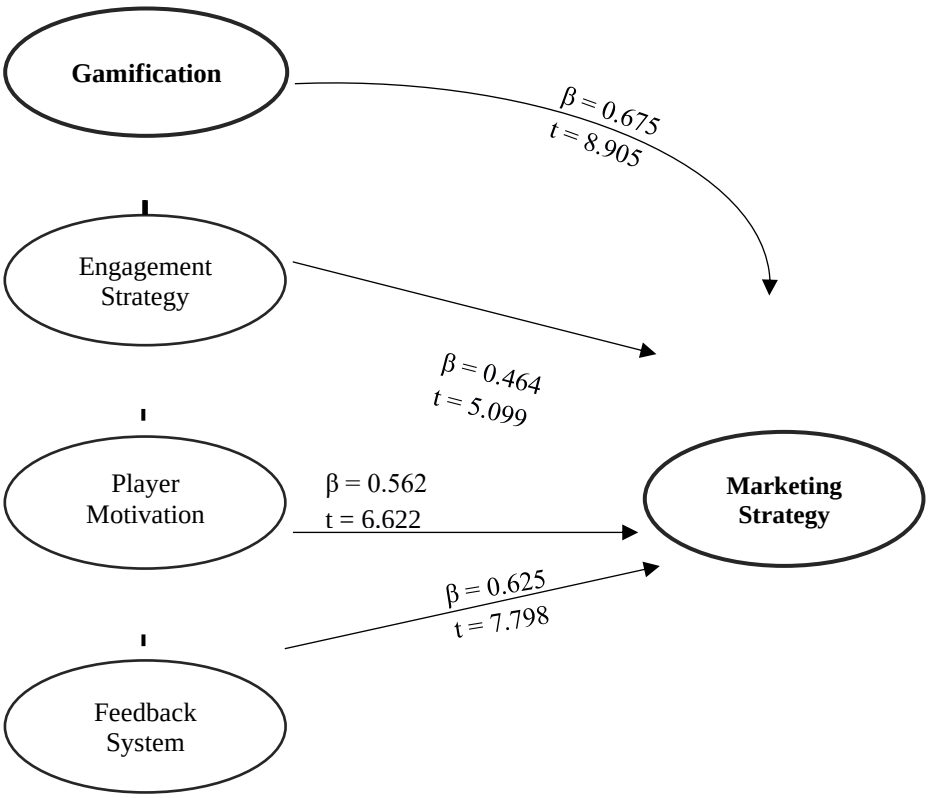

FIGURE 4. Path Analysis of Gamification and its Dimensions' Impact on Marketing Strategy

All these elements uniquely contribute to increasing the overall effectiveness of a marketing strategy. Besides, evidence does exist that supports the notion that a gamification framework in marketing strategies coherently translates to significant performance. Engagement strategies on their part will attract and retain the interest of the customers; player motivation drives deeper interaction and loyalty while feedback systems ensure ongoing involvement and customer satisfaction. The three put together work in a very powerful way to amplify marketing efforts; if anything, gamification proves that it is no more than an innovative means that forms part of modern marketing techniques.

6. CONCLUSION

The study examines how gamification has revitalized the marketing strategy of Talabat, a food ordering company in Erbil City, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The main result of the study indicates that gamification has a substantial impact on marketing strategy. Results also show that while some elements of gamification, such as engagement strategies, player motivation, and feedback systems, are all key elements, their effectiveness depends on the context and the way they are implemented. Engagement strategies work well in gaining and maintaining customer interest. Player motivation deepens user engagement and fosters greater dedication. On the other hand, feedback systems help maintain a continuous level of customer engagement that gives a marketing strategy a significant role in overall success. These findings emphasize the importance of well-designed gamification components as part of a key tool in modern marketing practices. The study highlighted that strategic application in this regard would enhance the customer experience while giving a competitive advantage to Talabat to strengthen its position in the dynamic food delivery market of Erbil City. Therefore, the research provides valuable knowledge for managers and leaders in the service-based industry to invest and work on gamification elements optimization for their respective marketing strategies. In light of rising competition within markets, together with the alteration of customer demands, instigating gamification for effective engagement and motivation will be a distinctive capability for holding market leadership and ensuring long-term business success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Talabat should enhance its marketing strategy by focusing on engagement, player motivation, and feedback systems. These elements are crucial for boosting customer interaction and loyalty. In Erbil City, it's vital to adapt these strategies to local cultural preferences. Continuous feedback analysis will help keep gamification efforts relevant and impactful over time.

LIMITATIONS

This study faced several limitations that may affect the generalizability of the study findings. Using a sample size of 98 respondents may not represent the much larger population of Talabat users when it comes to the scope of insights that can be drawn. Additionally, considering that the geographic base of this study extends only to Erbil City, the applicability of the findings to other cities that bear cultural and economic dimensions different from those of the city being considered at hand is reduced, hence reducing general relevance.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Future research could be used to extend this study's geographic scope to other cities or regions in order to better understand the impacts of gamification across different cultural and economic contexts. Future research should be conducted with an increased sample size to enable more accurate estimation of associations and better generalization of findings. In addition, comparisons within different industrial contexts would give a descriptive insight into how gamification strategies may work better or less effectively in a given sector.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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