

Gamification as a Driver of Online Customer Experience: Evidence from E-Commerce Users in Vietnam

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>Gamification, defined as the use of game-design elements in non-game contexts, has increasingly been integrated into e-commerce platforms to strengthen engagement and improve the customer journey. This study examines how five gamification-related factors - perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, rewards, convenience, and autonomy - influence customer experience in online shopping. Data were collected through an online survey of consumers in Da Nang, Vietnam. Of 350 returned questionnaires, 285 valid responses were analyzed using SPSS 20. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, construct dimensionality was examined through exploratory factor analysis, and the hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression. The results show that all five factors positively and significantly influence customer experience. The model explains 69.9% of the variance in customer experience. Based on standardized coefficients, rewards exert the strongest effect, followed by perceived ease of use and autonomy, perceived usefulness, and convenience. These findings indicate that gamified e-commerce experiences are most effective when they provide meaningful rewards, preserve user choice, minimize effort, and remain convenient across contexts. The study contributes empirical evidence from an under-researched emerging market and offers practical guidance for e-commerce managers designing customer-centered gamification features.</i> Keywords: gamification; e-commerce; customer experience; online shopping; consumer behavior.
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Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited. Citation: Pham, A. T. T., & Nguyen, H. T. (2026). Gamification as a driver of online customer experience: Evidence from e-commerce users in Vietnam. <i>UKR Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies</i>, 2(7), 117-127.	

1. Introduction

Gamification refers to the integration of game-design elements and mechanics into non-game applications, including websites, business systems, and online communities, to encourage participation and support desired user behaviors. By drawing on psychological and motivational principles, gamification can increase users' willingness to interact with a system, contribute content, and remain engaged over time.

The concept has become prominent in marketing, product design, and software development as firms seek new ways to maintain customer relationships. This trend is particularly relevant to e-commerce. Consumers now have access to numerous shopping channels, recommendation systems, social connections, and digital support tools; consequently, they increasingly expect online shopping to deliver not only functional value but also enjoyable and

memorable experiences. In response, retailers have incorporated points, badges, challenges, rewards, progress indicators, and other game-like features into online shopping processes.

Prior research has examined gamification in education (Armando M. Toda et al., 2018), banking (Hanan Yosry, 2021), and marketing (Natalia Szyzka, 2019), as well as its effects on loyalty, attitudes, and behavior. However, empirical evidence concerning the influence of gamification on customer experience in online shopping remains limited, especially in Vietnam. Gamification may provide an effective mechanism for attracting users, sustaining participation, and improving the perceived quality of the shopping journey (Tamana Mominzada et al., 2021). Accordingly, this study investigates the effects of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, rewards,

convenience, and autonomy on customer experience in gamified online shopping environments. It also develops practical implications for e-commerce firms operating in Vietnam.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Gamification

A widely cited definition describes gamification as "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (Deterding et al., 2011). Robson et al. (2015) similarly define it as the application of game features to settings that are not games. From a service-marketing perspective, Hamari and Huotari (2017) view gamification as the enhancement of a service through game-design elements, such as points and badges, to create gameful experiences and increase value for customers. They further conceptualize gamification as a service layer governed by rules, feedback, and interaction mechanisms that support users' value-creation processes.

In e-commerce, gamification can encourage content creation, repeat visits, product reviews, social sharing, questions and answers, and active participation. It can also increase enjoyment, strengthen purchase attitudes, stimulate brand interest, and support loyalty and positive word of mouth. Consequently, the intention to continue interacting with a platform may improve when game elements are meaningfully integrated into the shopping experience (Tamana Mominzada, Mohd Zaidi Abd Rozan, and Najim Ahmad Aziz, 2021).

2.2. Customer Experience

Customer experience has been conceptualized as the set of impressions, feelings, and intangible responses that arise from interactions between customers and service providers. Carbone and Haeckel (1994) describe it as the lasting impression formed through contact with a product or service and through the sensory information associated with a firm. Ding et al. (2011) characterize customer experience as an intangible asset generated by customer interactions within a service system in response to particular stimuli.

Rias et al. (2016) define customer-experience quality as the emotional journey associated with a product, service, or brand, whereas Holmlund et al. (2020) describe customer experience as the customer's response to an organization before, during, and after purchase or consumption, across channels and over time. Taken together, these definitions indicate that customer experience is multidimensional and encompasses customers' perceptions, emotions, sensory responses, and behavioral reactions throughout the shopping journey.

2.3. Hypothesis Development

2.3.1. Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness is a central determinant of technology acceptance and strongly influences users' behavioral intentions (Davis, 1989). It also affects the intention to use and effective use of e-commerce websites (Manuela Aparicio et al., 2021). A service is more enjoyable when users believe that it improves their effectiveness, thereby increasing their willingness to continue the experience (Hamari and Koivisto, 2015). On e-commerce platforms, usefulness may be reflected in features such as reputation systems and helpful product reviews (Alejandro Garcia-Jurado et al., 2021). Because customers increasingly expect gamified features to provide practical value rather than mere entertainment, perceived usefulness should enhance the overall shopping experience.

H1: The perceived usefulness of gamification in online shopping applications positively influences customer experience.

2.3.2. Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use is "the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system will be free of effort" (Davis, 1989). Technological systems perceived as less complex and easier to operate are more likely to be accepted by potential users (Davis et al., 1989). Ease of use influences attitudes and behavioral intentions and is also associated with customer satisfaction (Yang, Asaad, and Dwivedi, 2017). In e-commerce, a user-friendly interface includes clear navigation, visible steps, understandable commands, appropriate content and graphical layout, useful functions, and informative error messages. These features reduce cognitive effort and improve the quality of the user experience (Manuela Aparicio et al., 2021).

H2: The perceived ease of use of gamification in online shopping applications positively influences customer experience.

2.3.3. Rewards

Rewards are benefits provided to players after they complete assigned tasks. Together with challenges, rewards are among the most widely used gamification mechanisms (Tobon et al., 2020). Users may earn points, advance to higher levels, receive badges, or obtain coupons and other benefits. The effect of gamification on online consumer experience is often explained through reward mechanisms: consumers are more willing to participate when their effort produces a tangible or intangible return that can be converted into money, products, status, or recognition (J. Mark, 1975). Meder et al. (2018) further show that tangible rewards can stimulate more activity than intangible rewards.

Within online shopping environments, customers can exchange accumulated points for products, services, or coupons. When rewards are meaningful and attainable, customers are more likely to feel valued and to experience greater enjoyment. Rewards may also support intrinsic motivation when they help users satisfy psychological needs rather than merely control behavior.

H3: Rewards provided through gamification in online shopping applications positively influence customer experience.

2.3.4. Convenience

Convenience is a fundamental expectation throughout the customer journey. Brown (1990) identifies several dimensions of convenience, including service timing, place of use, ease of completing tasks, product adaptation, and direct service delivery. In online shopping, gamified features can increase interaction and attract customers when they are accessible, easy to initiate, and compatible with the shopping task. Users may participate at any time and from different locations, connect with other users, and progress through clearly structured activities. Such convenience can strengthen engagement and the intention to continue using the platform.

H4: The temporal, locational, and interaction convenience of gamification in online shopping applications positively influences customer experience.

2.3.5. Autonomy

Autonomy refers to an individual's capacity to make informed, self-directed decisions without undue pressure or control. Games can provide an environment in which users choose whether and how to participate, select strategies, and pursue goals according to their own preferences. When customers feel controlled or compelled, intrinsic motivation and enjoyment may decline (Antin and Churchill, 2011). By contrast, completing tasks, competing with others, and developing strategies can satisfy the psychological need for autonomy (Mitchell et al., 2020).

When external conditions support psychological needs, gamification can strengthen intrinsic motivation and enjoyment (Mitchell et al., 2020). Autonomy-enhancing features have also been linked to consumer enjoyment and online purchase intention (Yan Xu et al., 2020). Therefore, customer experience should improve when gamified shopping environments preserve meaningful choice and voluntary participation.

H5: Autonomy in gamified online shopping applications positively influences customer experience.

Based on the preceding arguments, the proposed model includes five gamification-related predictors - perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, rewards, convenience, and autonomy - and customer experience as the dependent variable.

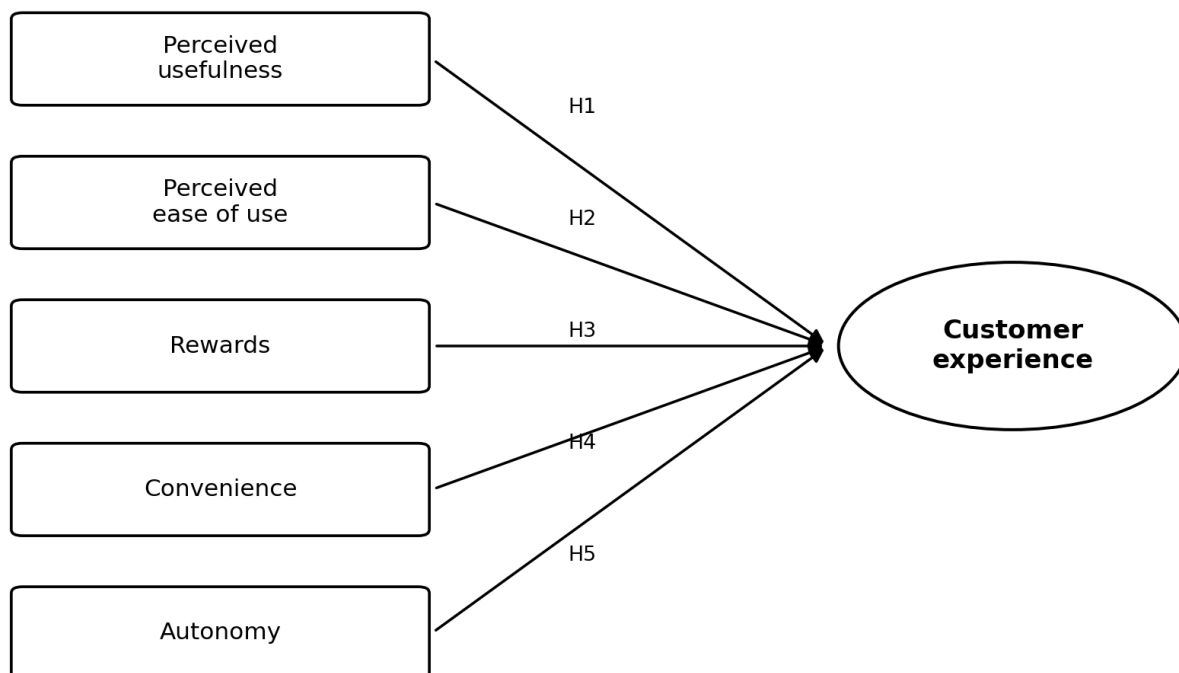


Figure 1. Proposed research model

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Sampling and Data Collection

The questionnaire contained 35 observed variables. Following the common rule of at least five observations per variable, the minimum required sample size was 175 (35 x 5). The survey was administered online through email and social-network channels, primarily Facebook, using convenience sampling. The target population comprised consumers living or working in Da Nang who had purchased products through online shopping platforms and had encountered or used gamified shopping features.

A total of 350 questionnaires were returned. After screening, 285 responses were retained for analysis.

Responses were excluded when participants did not meet the geographic or behavioral eligibility criteria, including those who did not shop online or had no experience with game-like features on shopping platforms. The final sample included male and female respondents across age and employment groups. Because convenience sampling was used, the sample should be interpreted as an empirical user sample rather than as a statistically representative sample of all consumers in Da Nang.

3.2. Measurement Instruments

The measurement items were adapted from previously published studies and assessed using a five-point Likert scale. The principal sources used to operationalize the five independent constructs are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Sources of measurement constructs

Code	Construct	Source
PU	Perceived usefulness	Davis (1989)
PEU	Perceived ease of use	Davis (1989)
RE	Rewards	J. Mark (1975)
CO	Convenience	Brown (1990)
AU	Autonomy	Antin and Churchill (2011)

3.3. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS 20. Scale reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and corrected item-total correlations. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was then applied to assess dimensionality. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine bivariate relationships, and multiple linear regression was used to test the five hypotheses and estimate the relative contribution of each predictor to customer experience.

4. Results

4.1. Respondent Profile

Among the 285 valid respondents, 66.3% were female and 33.7% were male. Most respondents were 20-29 years old (65.3%), followed by those aged 15-19 (19.3%), 30-39 (12.3%), and under 15 (3.2%). Students represented 46.3% of the sample, while 25.3% were employed full time, 20.7% worked part time, and 7.7% were unemployed or homemakers. Table 2 presents the detailed demographic distribution.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n = 285)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	96	33.7
	Female	189	66.3
Age	Under 15	9	3.2
	15-19	55	19.3
	20-29	186	65.3
	30-39	35	12.3
Employment status	Full-time employment	72	25.3
	Part-time employment	59	20.7
	Unemployed/homemaker	22	7.7
	Student	132	46.3

4.2. Reliability and Construct Validity

4.2.1. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .744 to .882, exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of .60 used in

this study. All corrected item-total correlations exceeded .30, and no item required removal at the reliability-assessment stage. The scales therefore demonstrated acceptable internal consistency and were retained for EFA. Detailed results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis

Item	Scale mean if item deleted	Scale variance if item deleted	Corrected item-total correlation	Alpha if item deleted
Perceived usefulness (PU) - Cronbach's alpha = .831 (N = 6)				
PU1	18.31	12.452	.642	.795
PU2	18.36	12.844	.615	.801
PU3	18.32	13.049	.579	.809
PU4	18.31	12.869	.622	.800
PU5	18.36	13.085	.561	.812
PU6	18.24	12.807	.593	.806
Perceived ease of use (PEU) - Cronbach's alpha = .882 (N = 6)				
PEU1	17.28	17.315	.710	.858
PEU2	17.32	17.639	.671	.865
PEU3	17.21	17.070	.702	.859
PEU4	17.33	16.984	.712	.858
PEU5	17.30	17.557	.684	.862
PEU6	17.20	17.606	.666	.865
Rewards (RE) - Cronbach's alpha = .780 (N = 7)				
RE1	21.66	12.240	.547	.744
RE2	21.70	11.909	.606	.731
RE3	22.05	12.709	.429	.768
RE4	21.75	12.172	.566	.740
RE5	21.84	12.727	.492	.755
RE6	22.08	13.497	.397	.772
RE7	21.74	12.769	.491	.755
Convenience (CO) - Cronbach's alpha = .767 (N = 4)				
CO1	10.67	3.969	.592	.698
CO2	10.73	4.013	.627	.678
CO3	11.00	4.246	.541	.725
CO4	10.88	4.504	.510	.740
Autonomy (AU) - Cronbach's alpha = .744 (N = 5)				
AU1	14.00	5.729	.488	.707
AU2	13.78	5.798	.514	.699
AU3	13.53	5.651	.474	.712
AU4	13.58	4.920	.588	.667
AU5	13.93	5.484	.484	.709
Customer experience (CX) - Cronbach's alpha = .836 (N = 7)				
CX1	22.07	13.639	.587	.814
CX2	22.15	13.741	.577	.816
CX3	21.73	13.656	.617	.809
CX4	21.67	13.948	.600	.812
CX5	21.58	13.723	.611	.810
CX6	21.87	13.677	.569	.817
CX7	22.05	14.332	.548	.820

4.2.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis of Independent Variables

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was .880, indicating adequate sampling suitability, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant (chi-square =

2,767.768, $df = 351$, $p < .001$). The EFA extracted five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00. Together, these factors explained 55.217% of the total variance. After two extraction rounds, RE6 was removed, while the remaining items loaded on their intended constructs with loadings above .50.

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's test for the independent variables

Statistic	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy	.880
Bartlett's test: Approx. chi-square	2,767.768
Bartlett's test: df	351
Bartlett's test: p	< .001

Table 5. Rotated component matrix for the independent variables

Item	PEU	PU	RE	AU	CO
PEU1	.781				
PEU3	.776				
PEU4	.765				
PEU5	.753				
PEU6	.748				
PEU2	.725				
PU2		.746			
PU1		.697			
PU6		.695			
PU4		.679			
PU5		.649			
PU3		.629			
RE2			.752		
RE4			.708		
RE1			.683		
RE7			.628		
RE3			.583		
RE5			.560		
AU4				.712	
AU2				.705	
AU1				.670	
AU5				.652	
AU3				.647	
CO2					.760
CO1					.753
CO4					.710
CO3					.664
Eigenvalue	7.165	2.614	1.912	1.665	1.551
Variance explained (%)	26.538	9.683	7.083	6.168	5.745
Cumulative variance (%)	26.538	36.221	43.304	49.472	55.217

Note: Principal component extraction with Varimax rotation. Loadings below .50 are suppressed.

4.2.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis of Customer Experience

For the customer-experience scale, the KMO value was .816 and Bartlett's test was significant (chi-square =

753.741, $df = 21$, $p < .001$). A single factor was extracted with an eigenvalue of 3.540, accounting for 50.576% of the variance. All factor loadings exceeded .50, confirming that the items were suitable for subsequent analysis.

Table 6. KMO and Bartlett's test for customer experience

Statistic	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy	.816
Bartlett's test: Approx. chi-square	753.741
Bartlett's test: df	21
Bartlett's test: p	< .001

Table 7. Factor loadings for customer experience

Item	Factor loading
CX3	.745
CX5	.740
CX4	.732
CX1	.703
CX2	.696
CX6	.691
CX7	.667
Eigenvalue	3.540
Variance explained (%)	50.576

4.3. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlations were used to assess the linear relationships among the study variables. All five independent variables were positively and significantly associated with customer experience ($p < .001$).

Correlations with customer experience ranged from .550 for autonomy to .617 for perceived usefulness. Correlations among the independent variables ranged from .251 to .499, suggesting that the constructs were related but empirically distinct. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Pearson correlation matrix

Variable	PU	PEU	RE	CO	AU	CX
PU	1	.499**	.392**	.354**	.331**	.617**
PEU	.499**	1	.283**	.280**	.251**	.570**
RE	.392**	.283**	1	.378**	.289**	.587**
CO	.354**	.280**	.378**	1	.354**	.559**
AU	.331**	.251**	.289**	.354**	1	.550**
CX	.617**	.570**	.587**	.559**	.550**	1

Note: $N = 285$. ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed); all reported correlations have $p < .001$.

4.4. Multiple Regression and Hypothesis Testing

The regression model was statistically significant, $F(5, 279) = 132.873$, $p < .001$, with $R = .839$ and $R\text{-squared} = .704$.

The adjusted $R\text{-squared}$ value of .699 indicates that the five

predictors jointly explained 69.9% of the variance in customer experience. The standard error of the estimate was .33537.

Table 9. Regression model summary

R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	Std. error of estimate	F	p
.839	.704	.699	.33537	132.873	< .001

Table 10. Analysis of variance for the regression model

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
Regression	74.724	5	14.945	132.873	< .001
Residual	31.381	279	.112		
Total	106.105	284			

All five predictors had positive and statistically significant coefficients. Variance-inflation factors ranged from 1.232 to 1.548, well below conventional thresholds, indicating that multicollinearity did not materially affect the model. Based on standardized coefficients, rewards had the

strongest effect on customer experience (beta = .272). Perceived ease of use and autonomy had equal standardized effects (beta = .258), followed by perceived usefulness (beta = .221) and convenience (beta = .215).

Table 11. Multiple regression coefficients

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	-.387	.162		-2.391	.017		
Perceived usefulness (PU)	.191	.035	.221	5.452	< .001	.646	1.548
Perceived ease of use (PEU)	.191	.028	.258	6.772	< .001	.731	1.367
Rewards (RE)	.271	.037	.272	7.302	< .001	.766	1.305
Convenience (CO)	.200	.035	.215	5.740	< .001	.759	1.318
Autonomy (AU)	.277	.039	.258	7.132	< .001	.811	1.232

Note: Dependent variable = customer experience (CX).

$$CX = -0.387 + 0.191PU + 0.191PEU + 0.271RE + 0.200CO + 0.277AU$$

The coefficient for perceived usefulness was positive and significant (B = .191, $p < .001$), supporting H1. Perceived ease of use also had a positive and significant effect (B = .191, $p < .001$), supporting H2. Rewards significantly improved customer experience (B = .271, $p < .001$),

supporting H3. Convenience had a positive effect (B = .200, $p < .001$), supporting H4. Finally, autonomy was positively associated with customer experience (B = .277, $p < .001$), supporting H5. Table 12 summarizes the hypothesis-testing results.

Table 12. Summary of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Proposed relationship	Beta	p	Result
H1	Perceived usefulness -> Customer experience	.221	< .001	Supported
H2	Perceived ease of use -> Customer experience	.258	< .001	Supported
H3	Rewards -> Customer experience	.272	< .001	Supported
H4	Convenience -> Customer experience	.215	< .001	Supported
H5	Autonomy -> Customer experience	.258	< .001	Supported

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1. Discussion of Findings

This study examined whether five gamification-related factors influence customer experience in online shopping. All hypotheses were supported, providing empirical support for the proposed model. The results indicate that gamification can improve customer experience when game elements deliver functional value, reduce effort, provide meaningful rewards, remain convenient to access, and preserve users' sense of choice. Rewards produced the strongest standardized effect. This finding is consistent with the view that consumers are more willing to engage when game activities provide clear and valued outcomes, including points, coupons, products, recognition, or progress. Nevertheless, rewards should not be designed solely as external controls. Their effectiveness is likely to be greater when they also reinforce competence, achievement, and enjoyment. Perceived ease of use and

autonomy showed equally strong standardized effects. This pattern suggests that a gamified shopping feature must be simple to understand while still allowing customers to make meaningful choices. A complex or compulsory game may undermine the experience even when rewards are available. Perceived usefulness and convenience also had significant positive effects, confirming that customers value game elements that support shopping objectives and can be accessed without disrupting the purchase journey. Overall, the findings support the argument that customer experience is enhanced when gamification satisfies both functional and psychological needs. The design of each game element therefore matters. Poorly aligned mechanics, excessive complexity, or coercive participation may reduce rather than improve customer experience.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

First, this study systematizes several gamification constructs that have been discussed separately in prior

research and tests them within a single customer-experience model. The results show that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, rewards, convenience, and autonomy jointly provide substantial explanatory power in an e-commerce setting. Second, the study integrates technology-acceptance considerations with psychological and game-design factors. Perceived usefulness and ease of use capture the functional quality of the platform, whereas rewards and autonomy reflect motivational processes, and convenience captures contextual accessibility. Their combined effects suggest that gamified customer experience cannot be explained by game mechanics alone. Third, the study contributes evidence from Vietnam, where empirical research on gamification and online customer experience remains limited. The proposed measurement structure offers a foundation for subsequent studies seeking to examine customer behavior in emerging e-commerce markets.

5.3. Practical Implications

For e-commerce managers and system designers, the results indicate that rewards should be visible, relevant, attainable, and clearly connected to customer effort. Points, coupons, badges, and progress mechanisms should provide benefits that customers recognize as meaningful rather than functioning as decorative additions. Gamified features should also be easy to locate and use. Instructions, progress indicators, rules, error messages, and redemption processes should be clear and consistent with the main shopping interface. The game layer should support, rather than interrupt, product discovery and purchase completion. Autonomy can be strengthened by allowing customers to opt in, select tasks, choose reward paths, control the frequency of notifications, and disengage without penalty. Convenience can be improved by ensuring that game activities work across devices and are available at appropriate times and locations. These design choices can increase enjoyment and establish stronger relationships between customers and platforms. More broadly, a well-designed digital shopping environment can influence customers' emotions and increase the likelihood of purchase, consistent with Kotler's (1973) argument regarding atmospherics. Firms can also strengthen trust by delivering consistent service quality, transparently explaining gamification rules, and honoring reward commitments.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the data were collected using convenience sampling in Da Nang; therefore, the findings may not generalize to other cities, regions, or consumer groups. Future research should use larger and more diverse probability-based samples and conduct cross-regional or cross-country comparisons.

Second, the study relied on self-reported, cross-sectional survey data. Some respondents may have provided incomplete or insufficiently considered answers, and common-method bias may be present. Longitudinal and experimental designs could clarify causal relationships and examine how customer responses change over time. Third, the sample focused on consumers who had already encountered gamified online shopping. These users may be more receptive to gamification than consumers who avoid or dislike game-like features. Future studies should compare different user segments and investigate potential boundary conditions, including age, gaming experience, shopping frequency, and platform type. Finally, the analysis was based on Cronbach's alpha, EFA, correlation, and multiple regression. Future research should apply confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling to assess measurement validity, indirect effects, and more complex relationships among gamification design, motivation, enjoyment, and behavioral outcomes.

6. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that gamification can significantly enhance customer experience in online shopping environments. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, rewards, convenience, and autonomy all contributed positively to customer experience, and the model explained a substantial proportion of its variance. Rewards produced the strongest standardized effect, while ease of use and autonomy were also influential. These results emphasize that successful e-commerce gamification requires more than adding isolated game mechanics: it requires a coherent design that combines functional value, usability, accessibility, meaningful incentives, and voluntary participation.

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