# The Marketing Gamification Guide for **Retail**

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# Introduction

Consumer buying behavior has undergone a dramatic transformation in recent years. With heightened competition, rising prices, and financial uncertainty, consumers are more wary of spending. In fact, [64% of retail executives](#) expect inflation-weary consumers to continue purchasing fewer goods and 50% expect consumers to prioritize price over brand loyalty.

This means that brands must try different strategies to engage with and convert potential customers. Research shows that retailers are increasingly focused on performance-driven paid media, with [almost 60% of retailers](#) listing it as their number one focus. But when consumers are bombarded with advertising on social media, TV ads, billboards, in-store marketing, and the radio, what can you do to cut through the noise?

To reach customers effectively, you need to understand them. When we do, we can enact a more targeted and therefore cost-effective strategy that boosts sales, fosters customer loyalty, and drives awareness.

But capturing that data is another challenge. How do you persuade an increasingly data-savvy consumer to part with valuable zero-party data? In our research, we found that [41% of consumers are willing to share data](#) in exchange for an incentive such as better personalized experiences or exclusive discounts. That's where gamification comes in.

Gamification can capture the attention of your customers, encourage them to engage and help to keep your brand top of mind. By incentivizing target customers to part with their data, you can use it to create personalized experiences and enhanced marketing strategies that drive sales and encourage customer loyalty.

In this guide to gamification for retailers, you'll learn why gamification will help you meet your marketing goals, plus practical tips on getting started and examples from successful brand campaigns to inspire you.

# The psychology of marketing gamification: why it's so effective

## The science behind the power of play

Play naturally triggers our bodies to release feel-good DOSE hormones – dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin and endorphins. These hormones boost happiness and leave us with positive, memorable experiences – which is exactly what we want customers to feel when interacting with our brand!

## Let's break them down

These feel-good hormones are instrumental in influencing audience behaviors, and driving the marketing goals of **brand recognition, awareness, attention, memorability** – all key factors for achieving the resultsa retail marketers strive for.

### Serotonin

Key to good moods, serotonin gives us that feeling of fun and positivity.

### Endorphins

Released in both stressful and fun experiences, endorphins helps us persevere to win, increasing focus and attention and an overall sense of well-being.
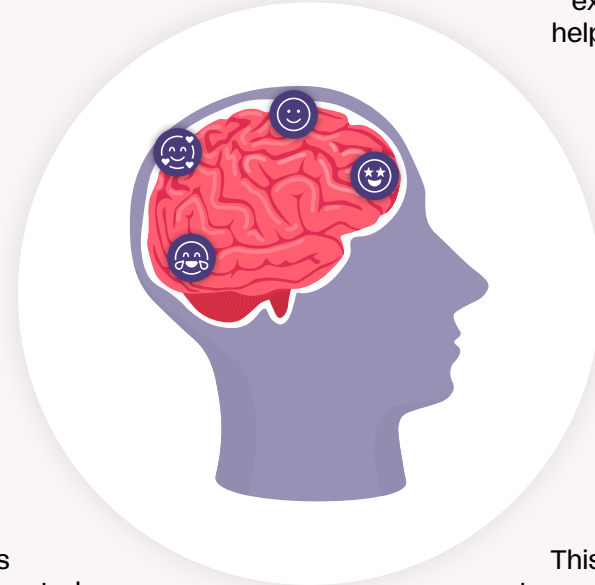
### Dopamine

The center of happiness in the brain, dopamine controls focus, attention, learning, and memory. It boosts our sense of wanting to achieve.

### Oxytocin

This hormone contributes to our sense of togetherness and bonding. Shared play experiences encourage empathy, collaboration, and mutual recognition.

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## Play helps with focus and attention

When we play games, we enter an alert state where we're fully present and immersed. This 'first screen attention' derived from play, unlike more passive forms of content such as sponsored ads or TV ads, encourages active decision-making and problem-solving, keeping our brains stimulated and increasing focus.

This is crucial for retail marketers who not only want to gain attention for their brand but also keep it. In an increasingly distracted world, gamified experiences help your customers absorb information about your products or brand, increasing the chances of them purchasing.

## Play creates memorable experiences

Brand memorability is essential in a crowded marketplace; be that in the inbox, social media platforms or the high street. Your brand should stand out, and gamification can help to make that a reality.

Think about the last time you were immersed in a game you enjoyed. The chances are you can remember specific details about the experience – the challenge, the reward, the feeling of accomplishment. This is what makes gamification such a powerful tool for marketing!

By creating memorable experiences, you can influence future engagement, behaviours and even purchasing decisions.

## We're hardwired to play (and win)

Play is one of the most natural human instincts. We've seen it in every culture since the dawn of time. While we used to compete for survival, we now compete, play sports and enjoy games as entertainment.

The desire to play is compelled by a sense of reward – feeling good, fulfilled, winning a tangible reward, or even learning something new. Not only does winning feel good, it can also help us learn and grow. It helps us feel connected through shared experiences with others.

# How does gamification work for retail marketing?

The psychology of play, including the joy in competition, a desire to win, learn and grow are things that retail marketers can tap into to encourage audiences to interact with a brand, share zero-party data, and eventually become repeat customers.

Let's take a closer look at the game elements that drive customers to take action.

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# 1 Use rewards as an incentive

Whether the immediate gratification of winning a prize or a sense of earning rewards or perks as a loyal customer, gamification taps into this intrinsic desire to be rewarded for our efforts.

Rewards can be either tangible or intangible, and both are effective tools to encourage engagement.

## Tangible rewards:

These can include monetary rewards such as cash or discounts or physical prizes. Discounts or loyalty points give an instant sense of gratification and can help to drive further sales, encouraging repeat business and loyal customers.

## Intangible rewards:

This could include fun experiences, increased knowledge, or assistance in the shopping process (e.g. find your ideal product).

Even the game itself can be a reward. Have you ever spent hours trying to defeat a game leader? Remember how it felt when you finally did it!

Another reward could be better and more personalized marketing offers. In fact, according to a survey from Deloitte, 44% of loyalty program members said that they like to receive personalized rewards based on previous purchases.

This also gives a specific reward for customers sharing zero-party data.

## Did you know?

- A YouGov report found that more than half (51%) of respondents preferred winning a voucher over being given one.

- A report by YouGov found that 41% of consumers are happy to share zero-party data in return for a better, more personalized brand experience.

## 2 Challenge participants

You might think that the last thing customers want when shopping is to be challenged. But that's not true! A well-designed challenge helps to make the game experience more immersive, engaging, and also makes the reward all the more appreciated.

If a game is too easy, players quickly lose interest. If it's too hard, you get the same results.

But if you hit the right balance, you unlock a sense of accomplishment and motivation that encourages players to continue engaging with your brand (and hopefully go on to become customers).

# 3 Encourage mirroring

We're all wired to compare ourselves with our peers. Mirroring gives us a sense of belonging to a community and taps into that human need for social connection.

How you score in a particular game won't mean much unless it's compared with other players in a leaderboard or poll results.

People want to know: Where do I fit in? Am I similar to others?

It doesn't even have to be competitive. For example, personality tests and polls that reveal how other people answer are exciting to see. We love that sense of validation and connection with others but we also like to see if we're different.

## Pro tip

Encourage players to share the game or results with others to expose more people to your brand.

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## 4 Provide a fun experience

With so much competition in the retail market, you can't afford for your marketing to be boring. Uninspiring doesn't captivate, or grab attention and prompt people to buy. Fun is powerful. Remember those feel-good hormones we mentioned earlier?

**In Playable's YouGov research, we found that...**

**56%** of consumers are more likely to click a gamified ad over a normal static one

**36%** said that fun and seamless branded games positively influence how they feel about a brand

By creating positive experiences with your brand, you encourage customers to interact with you more and increase the likelihood that they'll make a purchase.

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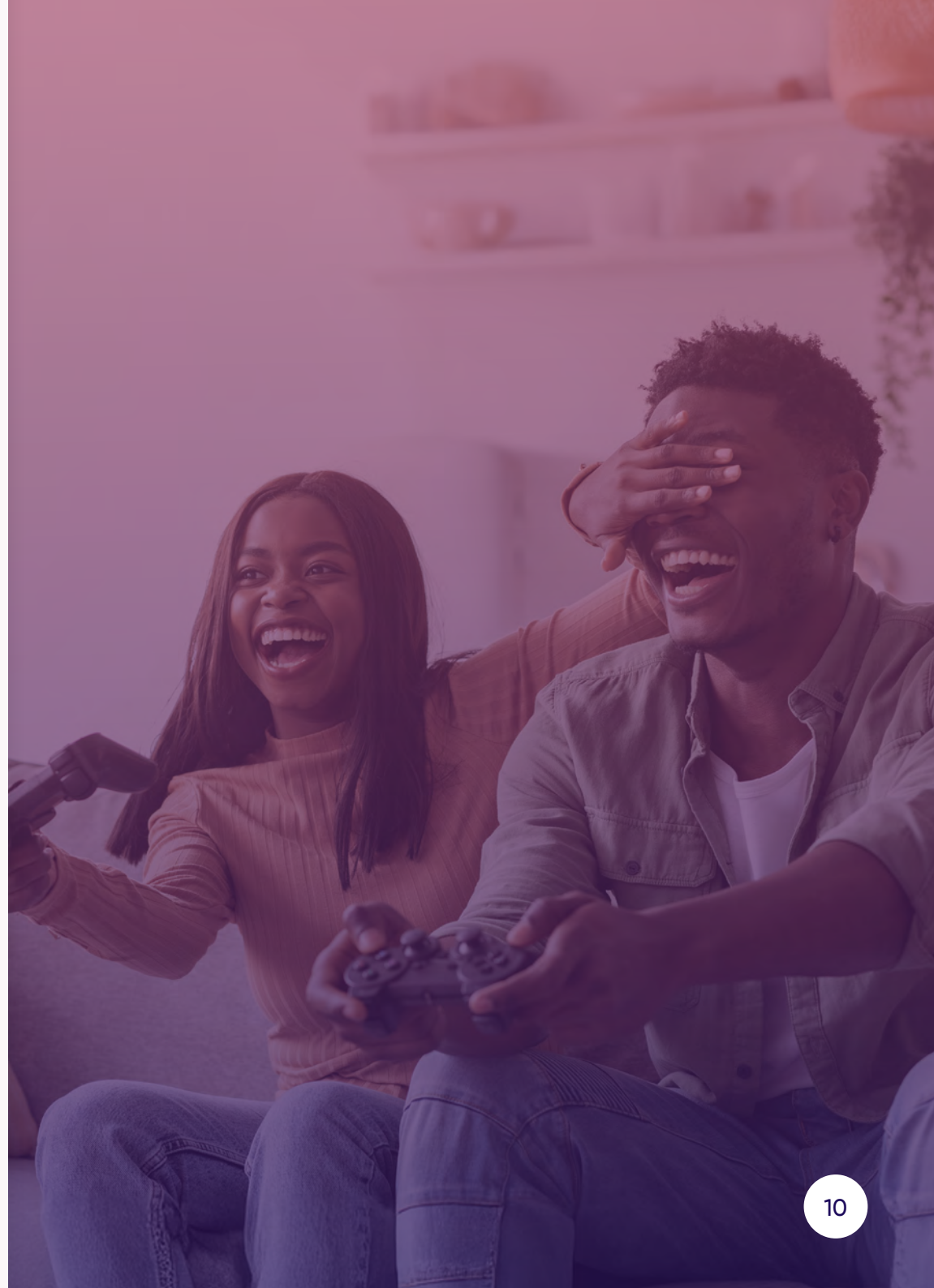
## 5 Give participants a chance to compete

It's in our nature to compete, going way back to hunter-gather times when we had to compete to survive. There's a good reason why sports have been popular for thousands of years.

Even if you're not the most competitive person, there's no greater sense of achievement than winning.

We compared gamification campaigns with and without a leaderboard and found that adding a competitive element had a great positive effect.

### Here's what the data says
**Games with leaderboards and scoring elements**

- The number of times participants played a game **increased by 184%**

- The length of time spent engaging with the campaign **increased by 120%**

- Making your games competitive also makes the reward customers get so much more satisfying.

These game elements make your campaigns more effective on two levels. They enhance the experience customers get interacting with your brand.
But they also help marketers learn more about customers – information which helps you fine-tune your marketing strategy.

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# How marketing gamification drives results in retail

Now we know exactly how marketing gamification can be effective, let's look at why you should prioritize it as part of your marketing strategy.

### Help shoppers choose:

Gamified campaigns such as personality tests or product selectors can help customers narrow down shopping options, providing an additional sense of value that will encourage shoppers to make a purchase.

**Example:** *An online cosmetics brand could use a personality test to help customers find their shade to make the shopping experience easier and encourage purchases.*

## Goal: Increase sales

If you're looking for concrete ways to increase sales, a gamification marketing campaign can help in several areas. Here's how:

### Combat price sensitivity:

Use gamified campaigns where participants can win discount codes or free samples to increase sales and repeat purchases.

### Reduce cart abandonment:

Engaging game mechanics like luck games can be triggered during cart abandonment to encourage people to reconsider making the purchase.

### Stand out during busy seasons:

Gamified experiences can help your brand stand out during busy shopping events like Christmas or Black Friday.

## Goal: Attract and engage shoppers

Gamified campaigns naturally stand out on social media, in emails, on websites, and even at physical stores or events.

Attention is just one step though. Gamification also encourages acustomers to actively engage with the brand. A static paid ad on social media can be incredibly eye-catching but it doesn't prompt active engagement quite like an interactive game can.

### Pro tip

Add in a clear incentive and people are far more likely to engage with it.

# Goal: Collect customer data

Consumers increasingly expect personalized experiences when shopping with brands they've interacted with before – and for that to happen, we need to collect customer data.

With gamified experiences like personality tests, you can gather zero-party data about customers' preferences, behaviors, and birth dates. Use this to produce personalized and seamless experiences that your customers love.

## Pro tip

### How to use gamification to collect and use birthday data:

- *Use a luck game and ask participants to enter their birth date*

- *Make the incentive clear e.g. win a prize or get personalized offers*

- *Send an email with a discount code on birthdays to reward loyal customers*

The result? Long-term engagement and remarketing opportunities that drive sales, build customer loyalty, and increase satisfaction!

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# Goal: Boost brand loyalty

A key part of your long-term strategy should be to cultivate customer loyalty. But that loyalty needs to be earned.

Use gamified campaigns to gain new app users, sign up people to your loyalty program, or offer incentives to shop again. The chance to win ongoing rewards will keep people coming back for more.

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Cultivating customer loyalty should be a key part of your long-term strategy, but that loyalty needs to be earned.

Gamified campaigns can help you achieve this by:

- Attracting new app users - or repeated app usage

- Encouraging loyalty program sign-ups

- Offering incentives for repeat purchases

The chance to earn or win ongoing rewards will keep customers coming back for more.

Additionally, consider launching exclusive website or in-app campaigns for loyalty members to highlight the value of your program. Engaging loyalty members in this way will:

- Reinforce their commitment,

- Encourage future shopping,

- And ultimately, help your brand foster lasting loyalty.

# How to get started with marketing gamification in retail

Ready to get started with gamification in your marketing strategy?

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## 1 Get to know your audience

Understanding your audience's behaviors, preferences, and demographics will help you build the most relevant gamified experiences that resonate with them. Using insights from your CRM, shopper behaviors, and ecommerce or in-store sales data, you can define audience segments and develop a targeted approach to get started with gamification.

Once you're up and running, game types like personality tests, quizzes, and surveys provide valuable data to help you further build knowledge of your target audience. With these insights, you can create more targeted experiences and offers aligned with their preferences.

## 2 Establish your goals

What are the KPIs that are most relevant or important – increasing sales? Conversions? Increasing app usage? Your primary goal should align with your wider marketing strategy.

Gamification is uniquely placed to make KPIs easy to measure and achieve. You can align core gamification KPIs with your marketing objectives to ensure you're setting up for success; for example, look at the number of game plays, registration rates, or game repetitions.

### Did you know?

Google's original plans to deprecate third-party cookies meant marketers were encouraged to collect more first-party data in 2024. The focus will now shift from collecting data to using it effectively in 2025.

### Did you know?

You can use gamification in retail for many different purposes such as driving online sales, reducing cart abandonment, and driving in-store traffic.

# **3** Choose a gamification platform

Gamification platforms like Playable allow you to create customized gamified campaigns without the need for coding know-how. This makes it the most cost-efficient way to build gamified campaigns at scale rather than using developers to build each one from scratch.

Find a platform that's user-friendly for your audience and team with customization features, in-built analytics, and integration with your existing systems.

## What type of games work best for retail?

Many game concepts work well; based on our platform data, knowledge games are the most popular game types in the retail industry, followed by luck games.

## 4 Promote it

Promote your gamified campaigns wherever you meet your audience, and with relevance to your objectives; Paid social media ads, integration it with your website so shoppers can see it front and center, or displaying QR codes in physical stores or events to direct customers to your game.

You'll also want to decide whether this is an always-on or seasonal or promotional campaign. Seasonal campaigns can help you stand out and encourage shoppers to choose your brand during busy periods like Christmas or the summer.

Always-on campaigns are great for customer loyalty, for example, in-app games and rewards and regular gamified experiences. You could even use them as a feature to help people shop, for example, use a personality test for a style or product finder.

### Did you know?

Playable online campaigns are easily displayed as an iFrame or a webview. For offline promotion, use our integrated QR generator both for on-screen display or high-quality printing.

## 5 Measure results

Coming full circle, to understand the effectiveness of your gamification strategy, you need to think back to your original goals..

Gamification platforms with reporting features will let you track user interactions and conversions – data which you can feed into your CRM and marketing systems to make full use of it.

Integrating your gamification platform with your analytics tool stack will help you measure the results of your gamification campaigns, such as:

- redeemed discount codes
- basket size
- sales figures
- impressions
- clicks
- conversions

## Did you know?

The Playable platform includes a real-time dashboard and analytics to enable you to monitor campaign visits, registrations, engagement insights, conversion rates, drop-offs by flow page, and more.

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# How top retail brands use gamification

Gamified experiences are the perfect companion for retail marketing strategies. We've worked with several great brands to create seasonal and always-on campaigns with interactive experiences that their customers love.

Let's take a look at some examples...
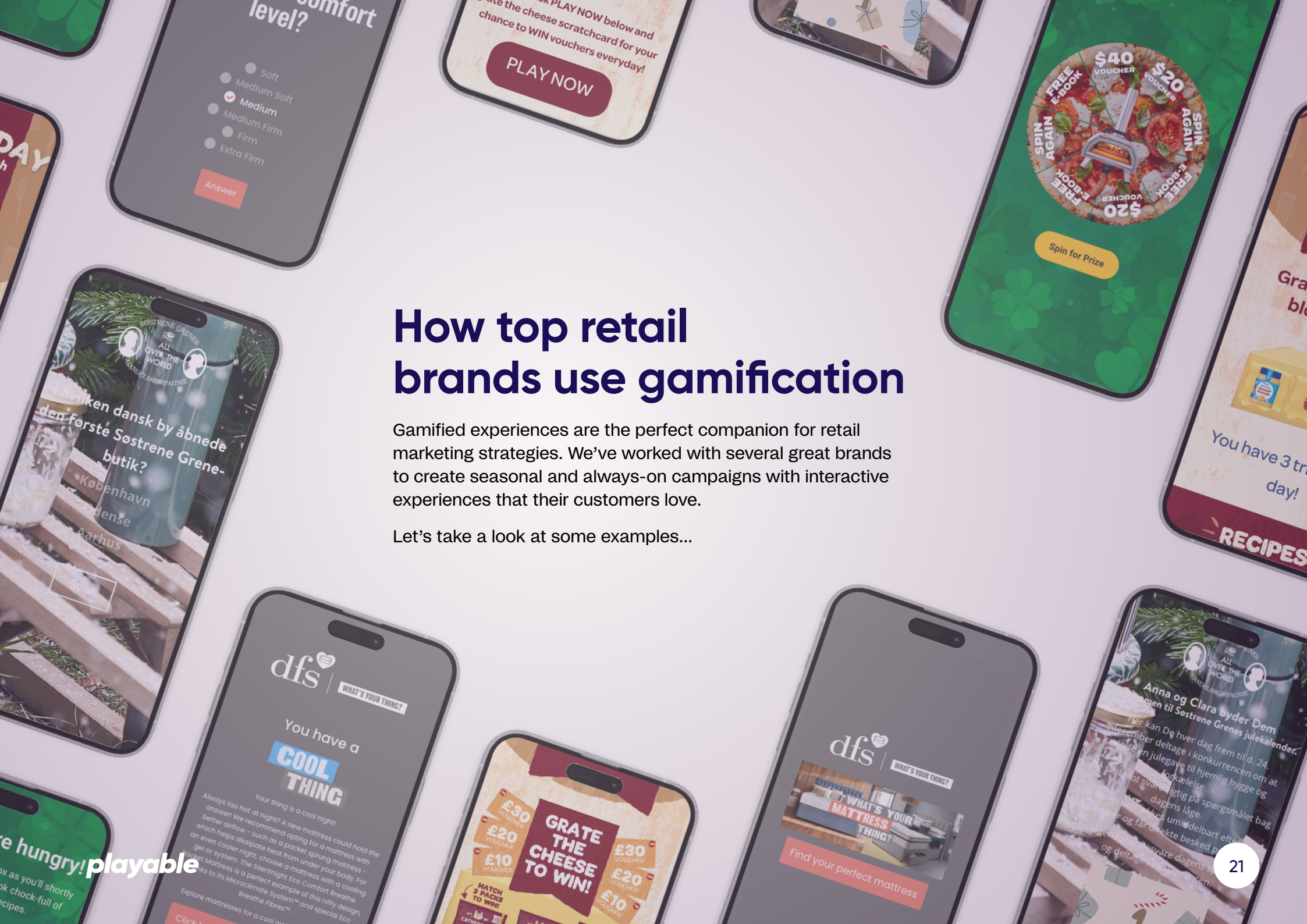
# Søstrene Grene



Søstrene Grene teamed up with Playable to create an engaging Christmas calendar for customers to promote its unique brand of home accessories, decor and gifts.

Participants could unlock a daily quiz question themed around the Søstrene Grene brand – adding an element of storytelling that reflects the narrative of the brand.
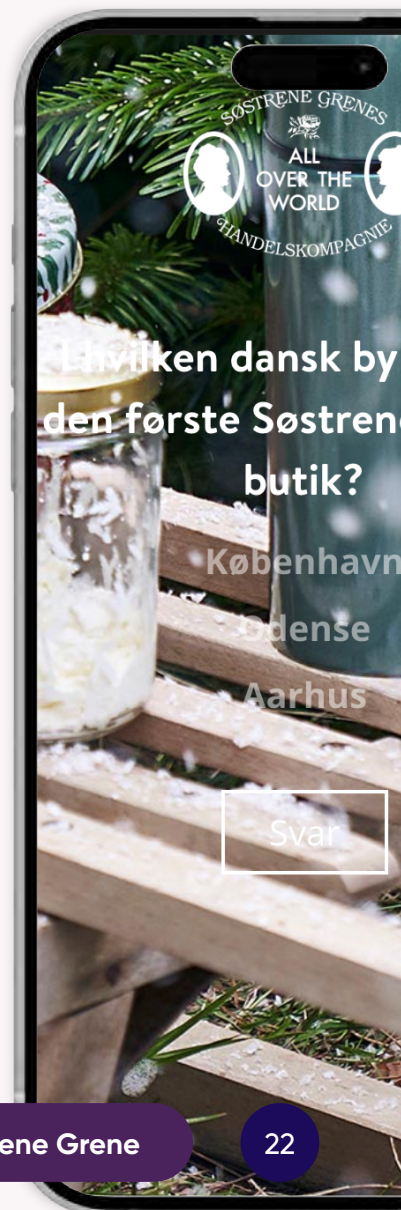
## Results:

**69,78%**
of visitors registered

**44,585**
subscribers to the newsletter

**263,239**
registrations
(44,585 unique registrations)

**15%**
of subscribers became customers

**4226,4**
hours spent with Søstrene Grene

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Read our case study on Søstrene Grene

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# DFS

DFS saw great success with the use of personality tests, including "What's Your Thing?" and the Mattress Picker, both of which revealed key customer insights on buying behaviors and preferences, while enhancing the shopping experience.
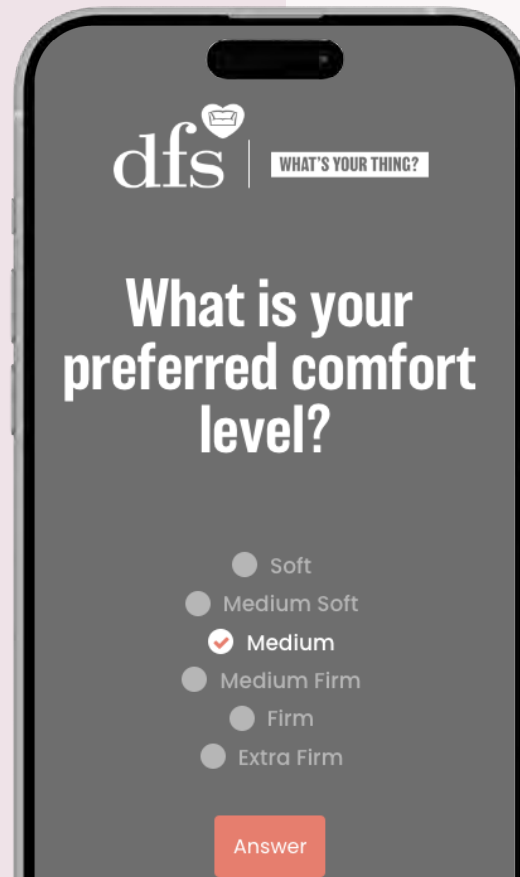
## "What's Your Thing?"

"What's Your Thing?" invited users to answer questions about their sofa style, fabrics, and color preferences. This enabled DFS to categorize participants into style profiles before directing them to sofas that best matched their tastes.

### Results:

**5.5%**
conversion rate

**190**
purchases

**19%**
of revenue generated

## The Mattress Picker

The Mattress Picker was another personality test that asked participants to reveal their preferences for mattresses including size, comfort level, and need for special features like back support. Based on the responses, shoppers were given personalized recommendations to help them find a mattress for their needs:

### Results:

**Over 28k**
sessions

**Over £250**
revenue per registration within 4 weeks of completing the quiz

**Over 900**
orders placed from shoppers who took part in the personality test

**Read about our work with DFS**

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# Ooni

Ooni partnered with Playable on two key campaigns, a Valentine's Day personality test and a St. Patrick's wheel of fortune game.

## St. Patrick's Day

To celebrate St. Patrick's Day, participants could spin the wheel for a chance to win prizes, which included discount vouchers of 20€ and 40€ off an Ooni pizza oven, and a free recipe ebook as the consolation prize.

Adding a unique spin to the game, the wheel was designed to look like a pizza, with an Ooni oven in the center, putting the product at the heart of the experience.
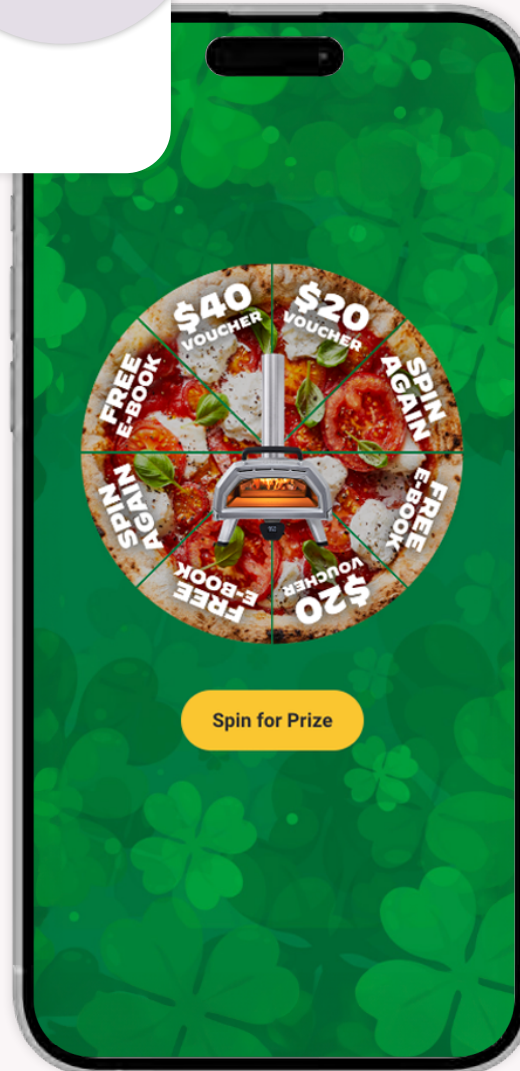
**Results:**

### 20% lower
cost-per-lead than company benchmark on non-gamified lead generation campaigns

### 5.02% CTR
on Meta paid ads for the US, and 2,53% for Ireland (The average CTR on Meta is estimated to be 0,90%)

### 2 minutes 56 seconds
is the average time a participant spent with the brand per session.

### 148 hours
of engagement with the brand in total

**Read more about Ooni's success story**

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# Kop & Kande



Kop & Kande teamed up with Stelton,
a Danish tableware designer to develop a digital
'Christmas Calendar' to increase awareness of Stelton's
products online and Kop & Kande's physical stores.



**Learn more about Kop & Kande's Christmas campaign**

# Christmas Calendar

The Christmas Calendar was a try-your-luck game, where players could win one of 2,400 prizes donated by Stelton. Running for 24 days in December, players could sign up to receive a daily email, inviting them to open that day's calendar door to see if they had won a prize.

## Results:

**394,645**
Total sessions

**15,000**
New email subscribers

**294,276**
Unique registrations

**17.85%**
Revenue increase on winners

**491%**
Increase in brand page visits

**92.43%**
Click-to-open rate

**74.6%**
Conversion rate

# Spar UK



## Rubicon collaboration

To get customers in the summer mood, SPAR UK teamed up with Rubicon, an exotic fruit drinks company. A landing page was created with an interactive slot machine game where participants got the chance to win exclusive Rubicon merchandise.

### Results:

**21%**
email open rate
(The goal was 20%)

**13K+**
new email sign ups
(The goal was 5K)

**10%**
engagement rate on paid ads
(The goal was 5%)

**1.5K+**
clicks on recipe links

**23K+**
unique registrations
(The goal was 20K)

# Grate the Cheese

For Pancake Day 2023, SPAR UK partnered with a popular cheese brand, Cathedral City. The goal was to raise online engagement, gather new marketing permissions, and drive footfall to stores, while also promoting Cathedral City's products.

The game "Grate the Cheese" featured scratchcards where participants "grated the cheese" to win daily vouchers.



### Results:

**22.6%**
email open rate
(The goal was 20%)

**9.9K+**
new email sign ups
(The goal was 5K)

**8%**
engagement rate on paid ads
(The goal was 5%)

**2.3K+**
clicks on recipe links

**30.5K+**
unique registrations
(The goal was 30K)

**Read more about SPAR UK's seasonal campaigns**

# So, is gamification right for your retail brand?

Gamification provides more than just a fun experience for your customers. It's a highly strategic way to build awareness, prompt engagement, and boost sales.

By encouraging your potential customers to actively interact with your brand, you move each customer one step closer to making a purchase.

Building a gamified experience with a platform like Playable enables you to design it to fit your brand personality and provide a truly unique experience that turns game participants into loyal customers. Using the zero-party data you collect through gamified campaigns also helps you to foster that loyalty long term with future marketing strategies that remind customers why they purchased from you in the first place.

Ready to see your gamified campaign come to life?

**Get in touch today for a demo of the platform in action!**

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# About Playable

## The marketing gamification platform

Playable is the gamification platform for marketers. Combining the power of play with the fundamentals of gamification, we unlock playable marketing; using interactivity to engage for extraordinary results.

Our flexible Saas platform allows marketers to create, tailor and deploy marketing gamification campaigns that deliver results at every touchpoint. Powering the playable marketing of 650+ brands globally, 15 games are played every second from our platform.

Founded in 2017 in Denmark, our expert teams in Aarhus, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Helsinki and London inspire game-changing marketing every day.

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# Get in touch

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