

# The **customer journey** reimagined with gamification

The evolution of the customer journey and the rise of gamified experiences



**playable**

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# The evolution of the customer journey and the rise of gamified experiences

The customer journey has changed. What used to be a linear, predictable path to purchase is now anything but that. Today it can be an unpredictable and bumpy ride, where the customer can drop in and out, sometimes unexpectedly, at any point.

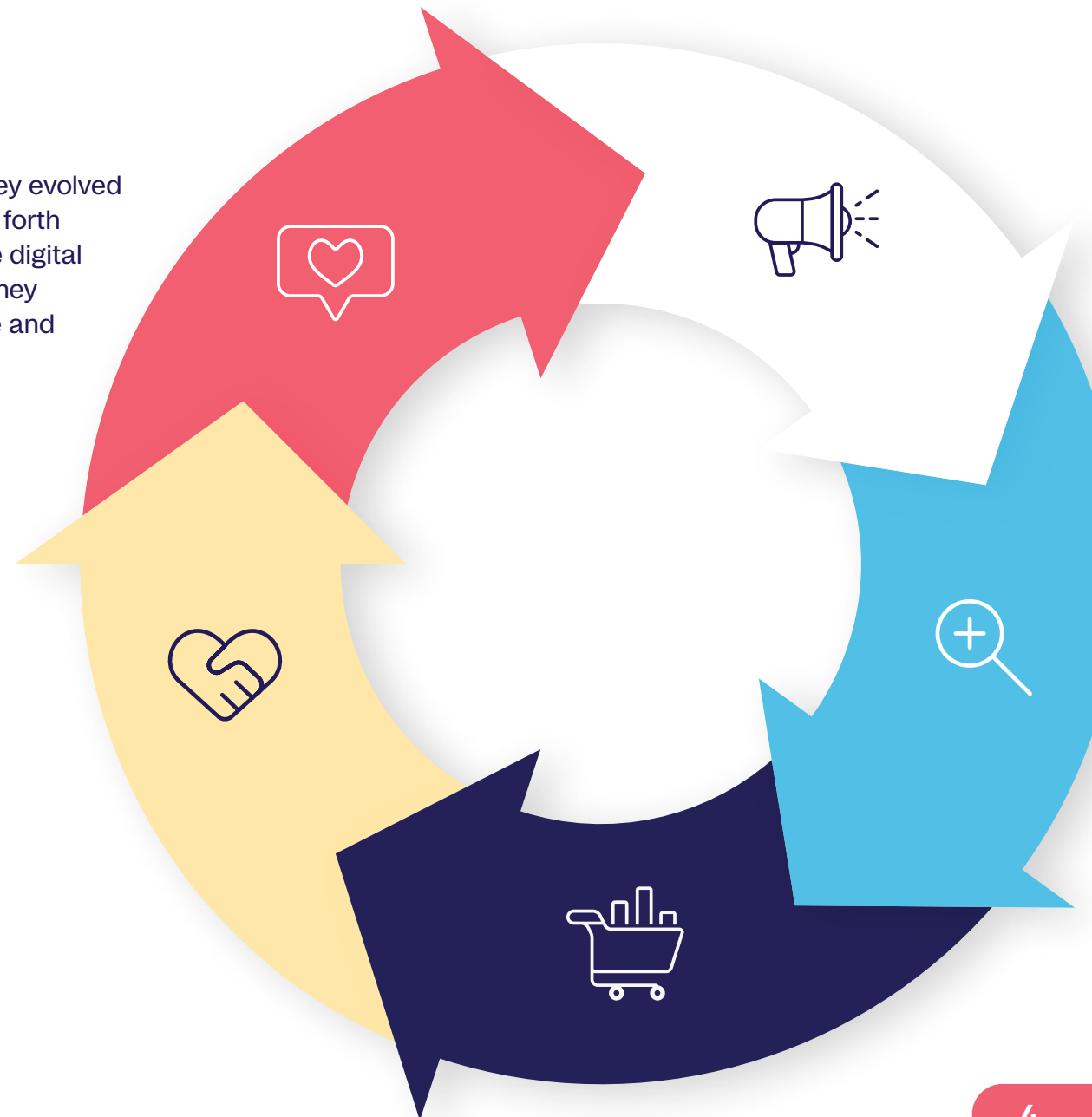
Being ready to engage and create powerful connections with potential customers at any point is key to winning their attention and maximising potential spend. Gamified experiences can help create the engagement your brand needs, drawing customers in and building brand relationships wherever and whenever they interact. Built on game mechanics that drive positive consumer behaviors, marketing gamification is not a gimmick but a proven marketing strategy that successfully boosts awareness, drives conversion and aids retention.



# Re-routing the modern customer journey

So how has what was previously a simple, linear customer journey evolved into something so complicated, where customers loop back and forth often unpredictably? There are several reasons, ranging from the digital empowerment of customers thanks to the number of channels they have at their disposal, to their reduced loyalty as they seek value and experience.

- ✓ **Awareness** - brand discovery, e.g., through search engines, social media or word-of-mouth.
- ✓ **Consideration** - research and comparison with information sought from reviews, website research or opinion on social media.
- ✓ **Conversion/purchase** - customers decide whether to buy, largely influenced by price and brand engagement.
- ✓ **Retention** - delivered through post-purchase support that keeps the customer coming back for more.
- ✓ **Advocacy/Loyalty** - building community and encouraging customers to share their experiences to encourage others to buy.



# Why the customer journey has become non-linear

## 1. A fluid customer engaging via multiple touchpoints

Digital empowerment of the customer is enabled by their access to multiple platforms, which also changes how people buy. In retail, for example, traditional stores are no longer the primary battleground. Instead, the now permanent shift to digital and social platforms transforms how consumers discover, evaluate, and engage with products and services. Potential customers move fluidly between all channels, sometimes with purchasing intent, other times simply for entertainment.

## 2. Information needs are changing

Customers are in control. As access to information increases thanks to digital empowerment they can research, compare and analyze products like never before, whenever and wherever suits them. They take greater control of the information-gathering stage, self-navigating rather than being driven by your brand. At the same time, they are growing increasingly resistant to traditional marketing methods, reluctant to share their own information unless there is a proven benefit for them.

## 3. Price sensitivity is high

Price fuels many consumer buying decisions. Although the big shocks of the beginning of the 'cost-of-living crisis' – which saw interest rates soar to double digits in many countries – are now over, living costs continue to rise. [More than half \(55%\)](#) of consumers globally are very concerned about the cost-of-living and price sensitivity is the top purchase consideration for 81%. Allegiance to brands is also declining, with [two-thirds \(66%\) of consumers and more than half \(53%\) of business buyers](#) stopping purchasing from a brand between 2024 and 2025.

## 4. Loyalty is declining

Brand loyalty is clearly declining and the haphazard customer journey that now exists makes building loyalty a challenge. It's no longer a case of simply nurturing from awareness to purchase. In the era of endless choice, customers can't afford to be loyal to a brand just for the sake of it. [A third \(33%\) of consumers](#) no longer consider brands a significant factor in their purchasing decisions and brand [loyalty is predicted to decline by 25%](#) in 2025.



## How do you capture customer attention?

Successful companies and brands **must identify all touchpoints** where their customers may interact with them and be ready to engage them when they do.

**A memorable experience** is vital to overcome the unpredictability of the customer. To deliver this, and to better capture customer attention, interactions need to be targeted and driven by customer data. Yet few are succeeding here, with **only a third (32%) of marketers** saying they are completely satisfied with how they use customer data to create relevant experiences.

# Gamification at each journey stage – framework and examples

According to Forrester, although brand loyalty is declining the value of loyalty programs (done well) is increasing. This comes as consumers look for brands that give traditional value through instant discounts or loyalty benefits, as well as an experience that goes beyond hunting for the cheapest price.

Gamification can help marketers do this, allowing them to improve engagement and differentiate loyalty programs, according to Gartner analyst Brad Jashinsky. Speaking recently, he said that **79% of loyalty program members** don't actively use all of the loyalty programs they belong to, but that gamification can help elevate loyalty programs "out of a sea of sameness".

"... more than two-thirds (68%) of brands using tactics such as quizzes and calculators to gain a better understanding of their customers and collect customer data"



As well as better engaging customers, gamified experiences help to guide the customer and the marketer on the new, non-linear customer journey. [Salesforce's latest State of Marketing report](#) talks about how “customers and prospects leave behind a trail of digital breadcrumbs” and how marketers deploy “a wide variety of tactics to collect clues for better audience understanding”. Interactive tools, such as gamification, play a key role in collecting these clues, with more than two-thirds (68%) of brands using tactics such as quizzes and calculators to gain a better understanding of their customers and collect customer data. Interactive tools, such as gamification, play a key role in collecting these clues, with [more than two-thirds \(68%\) of brands](#) using tactics such as quizzes and calculators to gain a better understanding of their customers and collect customer data

# Gamification use set to treble in five years

The power of gamification at all stages of the customer journey is indisputable. It's become a powerful strategy in its own right, used by market leaders and small businesses alike. The global gamification market is estimated to be **worth US\$29.11 billion in 2025**. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. The market is expected to grow at least threefold in the next five years, hitting \$92.51 billion by 2030.

Growth is accelerating as the possibilities of gamification and the chances of immersing your customers in engaging gamified experiences increases. The ability to tie into social networks also creates a powerful viral impact that drives engagement.

# Gamification in the different stages of the customer journey

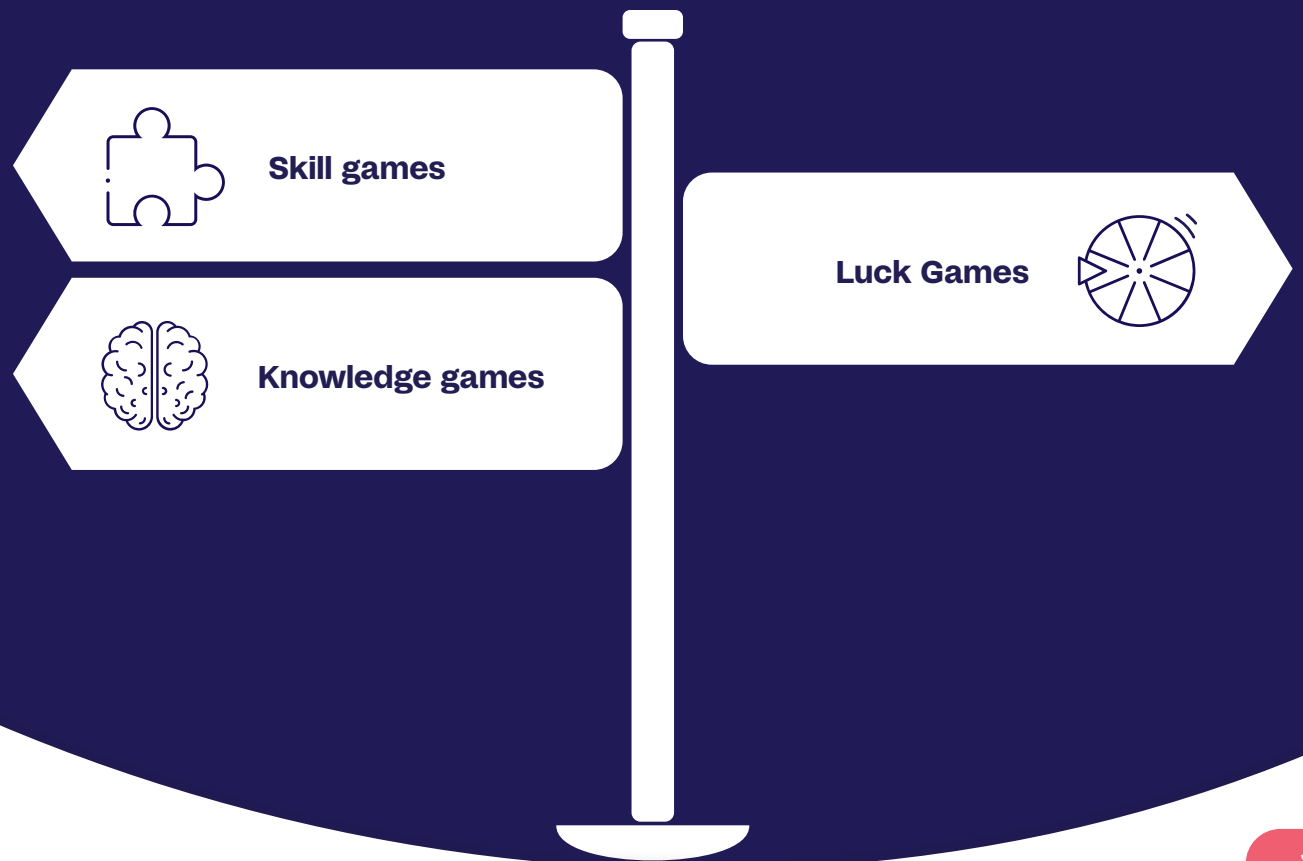
Successful marketing strategies engage customers, often through personalization, at all stages of the customer journey rather than just initial awareness or conversion to purchase. Successful gamification strategies do the same. Yet more than [4 in 10 \(43%\) of marketers](#) still take a fragmented approach rather than a lifecycle approach to personalization, despite the fact that

**74% of consumers expect better targeting**



# Gamification can be the fuel you need

To understand the role of gamification at each point of the new customer journey you must define the customer behaviors you want to prompt at that point. You can then implement the game types and game mechanics that will drive those behaviors.



There are three main game types:



**Skill games**

Reward focus and competition with memorable interaction.



**Luck games**

Give your audience a chance to win and create instant excitement.



**Knowledge games**

Challenge minds, spark curiosity & gain valuable insight.

Playable offers more than 40 game types within these categories

# The game types are driven by 5 main game mechanics:



A stimulating game that will keep players coming back for more.



Providing an experience to build an emotional connection with the brand.



Comparing performance to others through leaderboards and poll results.



Tapping into the human desire to compete and win.



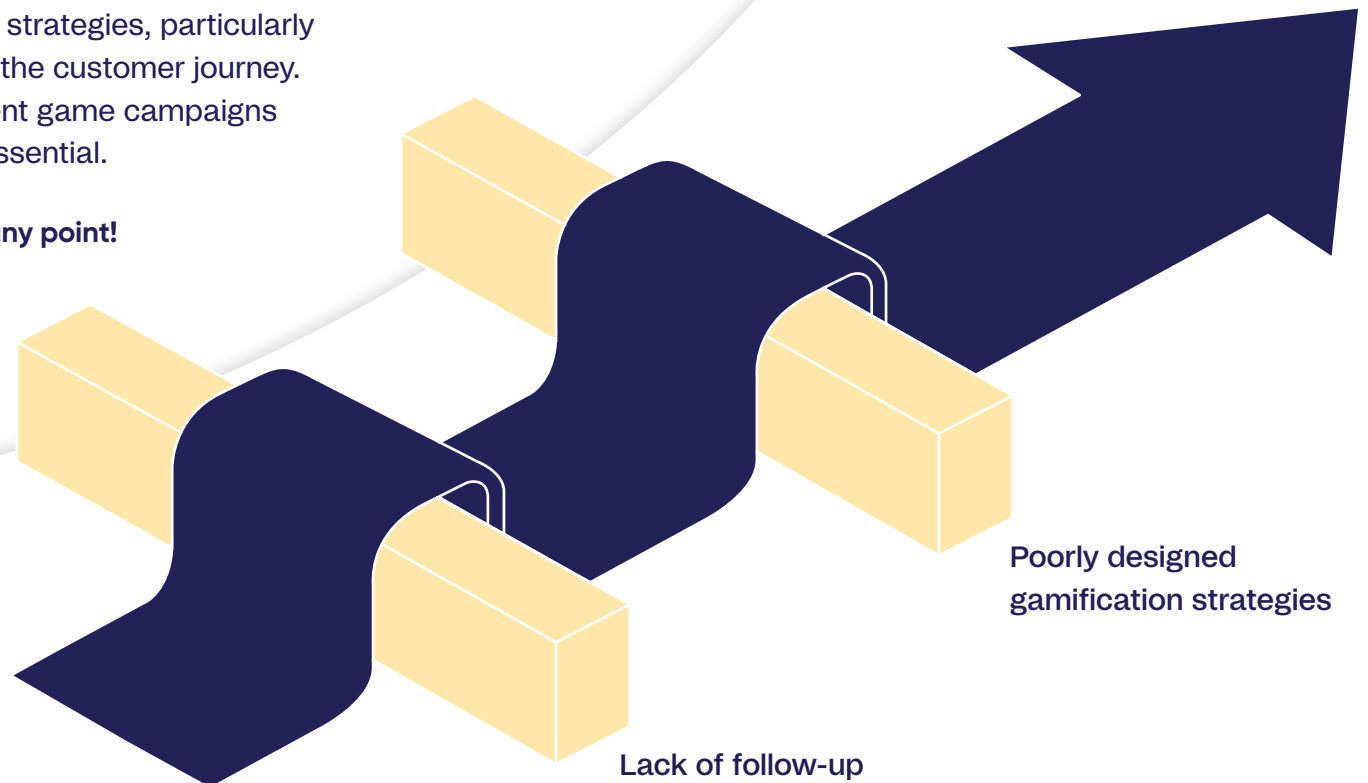
Varying from non-tangible rewards, such as the enjoyment of playing, to tangible physical prizes or discount vouchers.

# Where different game types and mechanics sit in the new customer journey

Basic loyalty programs might tempt the customer in with an initial heavy discount but fail to follow up and engage the customer further. The customer and their marketing permissions may have been acquired but there is no nurture, no relationship and therefore no real loyalty.

The same is true for poorly designed gamification strategies, particularly if they haven't taken into account the evolution in the customer journey. Aligning your gamification strategy and the different game campaigns and mechanics to the new non-linear journey is essential.

**Remember, your customers can join the journey at any point!**



# Awareness

Awareness used to be the first step in the customer journey. It was about introducing yourself to your potential customer. Today they are just as likely to discover you while sitting on the sofa browsing their mobile phone while watching TV. This stage becomes one of education, helping to succinctly inform them what your brand is about.



Quick, fun luck games can grab attention on social media or websites and encourage potential customers to leave their contact details - helping you turn visitors into leads.

# Example

A wheel of fortune game from [Nordic sex toy retailer Sinful](#) aimed to showcase the brand in a fun and playful manner. As well as being visually appealing and on brand it offered discounts or gifts as prizes. Conversion from browsers to customers worked well with more than **270,000 sessions played and more than 50,000 new marketing permissions gained.**

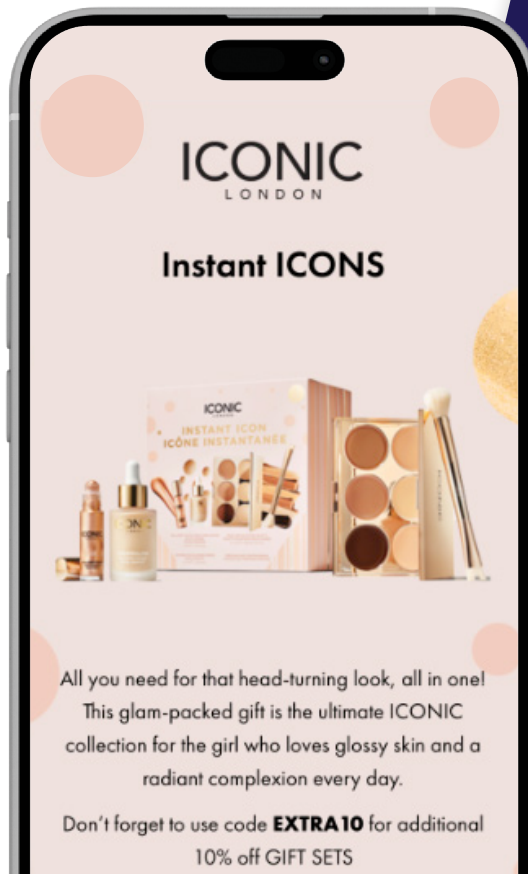
sinful



# Example

With a focus on **data enrichment and boosting sales** [make-up brand Iconic London](#) asked its customers to complete a personality test in order to provide **personalized product recommendations** based on their needs and budgets. The game would then suggest the best product for them, provide a discount to incentivize them to buy, and allow them to play again if customers weren't happy with the recommendation provided.

ICONIC  
LONDON



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# Consideration

In the consideration stage customers analyze what's on offer and what might best suit their needs, shortlisting potential purchases. But they may already know more about your products than traditionally, meaning your help must be genuinely useful.



Gamified experiences that work as product recommendation tools can help to slim down potential purchase options. Nudging them to buy by creating urgency, such as offering a voucher available for only 24 hours, or an exclusive first-look can also help move them further down the customer journey.

# Conversion

Prompting customers to convert and buy is the aim here. Note again that their research into your brand and products could have already been done elsewhere and this could be your first direct interaction with them. You will want to drive them to take a quick action.



Skill- or luck-based games that unlock a discount code or special offer can create an immediate sense of reward and nudge customers to buy. But integrating follow-up nurture flows post-awareness campaigns can also help those who didn't convert right away have another chance to purchase.

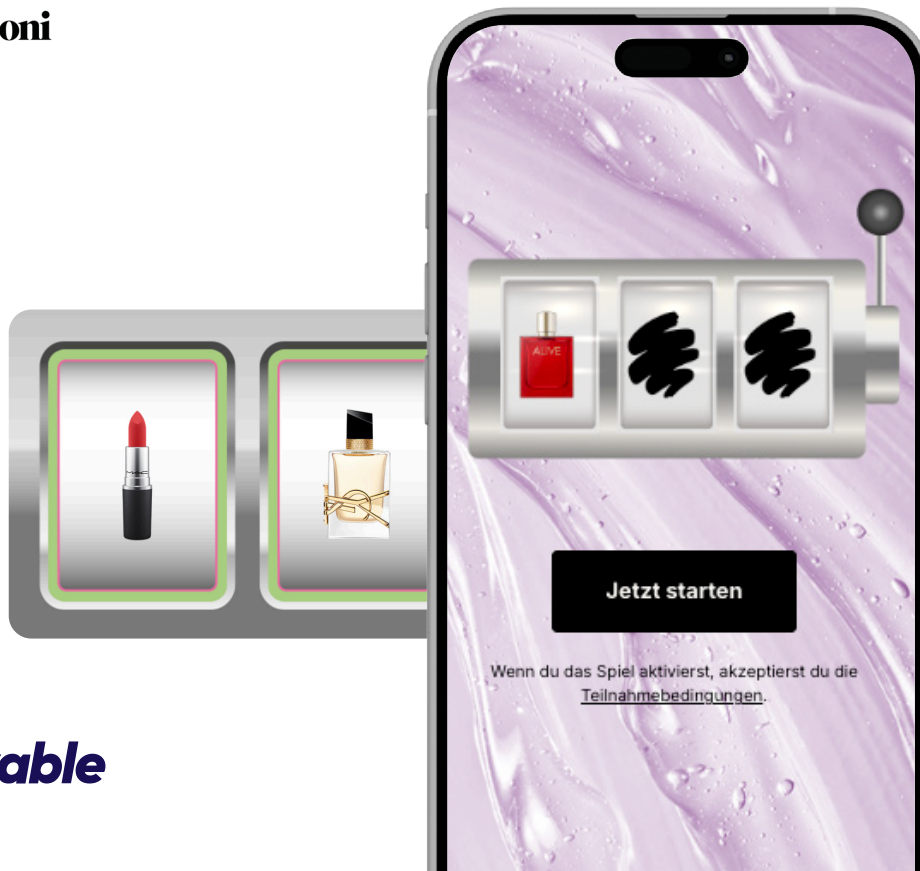


## Example

**Søstrene Grene used an advent calendar** campaign to collect new marketing leads. Even better, they prepared nurturing emails for participants in January. They found that these new leads – collected through a gamified campaign – were much more engaged compared to non-engaged leads from other sources. Open rates, click rates, and conversion rates were all higher, with an **exciting 15% of leads converting into customers.**

# Example

To boost customer retention, [beauty retailer Flaconi](#) tested whether gamifying their existing reactivation flow could improve engagement with inactive customers – a segment typically unresponsive to standard discounts. They added a **Slot Machine game** to their usual voucher email, keeping the same 10% offer but requiring customers to play to reveal it. The gamified email significantly outperformed the original, **achieving a 304% higher click-to-open rate, 314% higher click-through rate, and a 19% increase in sales.**



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# Retention

Retention is about keeping customers engaged after their first purchase and encouraging them to return. This can be achieved through personalized nurturing flows, targeted upselling or cross-selling, timely reminders, and relevant content that adds ongoing value. By focusing on these touchpoints, you increase repeat purchases, deepen engagement, and maximize the long-term revenue potential of each customer, turning one-time buyers into consistent, returning customers.



Gamifying existing flows, like reactivation emails for inactive customers, cart abandonment reminders, or post-purchase nurturing sequences, can make routine touchpoints more engaging. Examples include a skill game that lets customers “win” a discount for their next purchase or a personality quiz that gathers insights while offering tailored recommendations.

# Advocacy/ Loyalty

Word-of-mouth can be key to building your brand awareness, so encouraging both customer loyalty and advocacy is crucial. Loyalty can be nurtured through repeat engagement, rewards, or personalized experiences, while advocacy can take many forms, from building a sense of community to generating unprompted referrals, to social media interactions of likes, comments, and organic recommendations. As loyalty and advocacy grow, so does brand association and the long-term value of your customer base.



Social or community-driven games, such as a skill game with a leaderboard or a knowledge quiz where customers can compete and share results, encourage friendly competition, spark engagement, and generate organic recommendations, strengthening both loyalty and word-of-mouth advocacy.

## Example

[Danish insurance company Alka used a gamified advent calendar](#) with daily games and prizes to engage customers. An A/B test with 20,000 customers who didn't receive the campaign showed that, after 3 and 6 months, **their churn rate was significantly higher for those who didn't receive the calendar**. This demonstrates how gamified, ongoing engagement can strengthen loyalty and drive long-term advocacy.

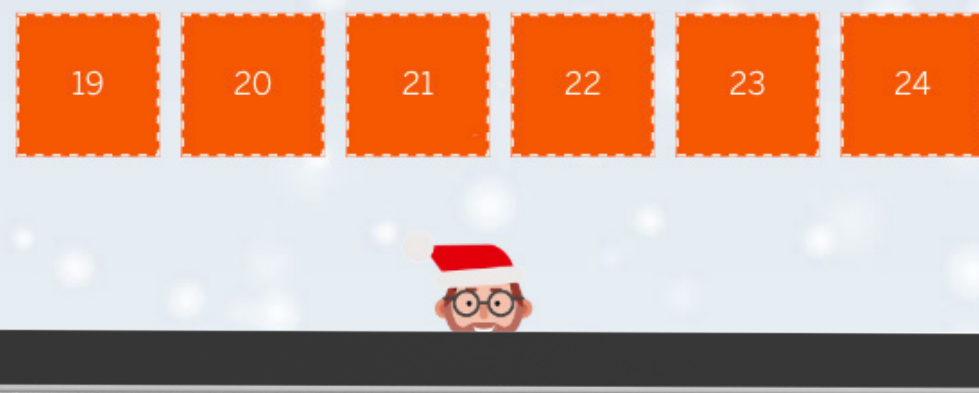
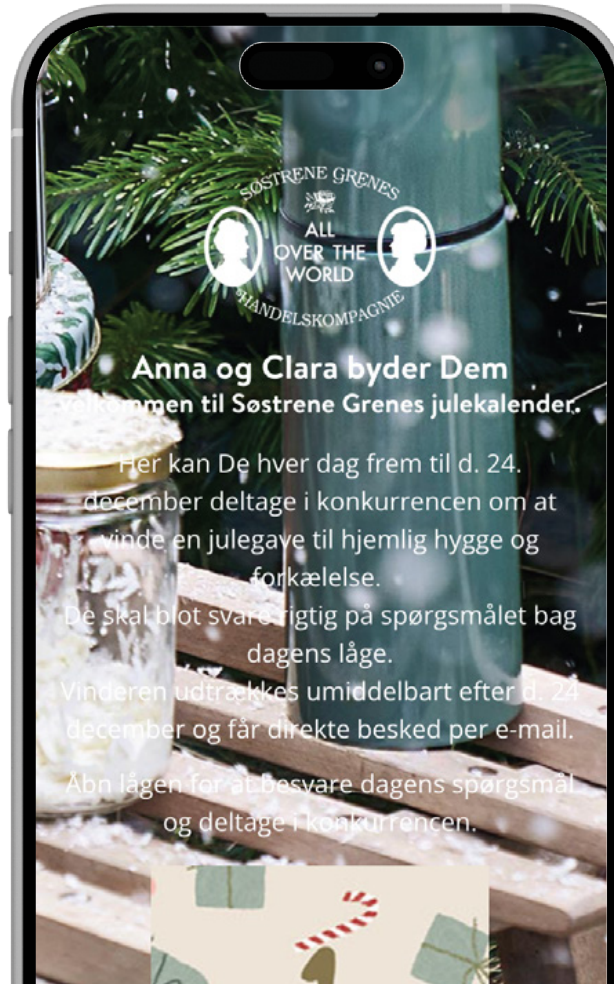


"When customers engage with our Christmas Calendar, they are far less likely to churn. We proved this through an A/B test where 20,000 customers didn't receive the campaign, and after 3 and 6 months their churn rate was significantly higher. That result alone shows the direct impact gamification has on retention!"

Mathias Lykke, Head  
of Digital Sales at  
Alka Insurance

alka

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"In the month following a playable campaign, participants are much more engaged. We see higher open rates, click rates, and conversion rates also. Converting 15% of the leads into customers is exciting. That is something very hard to re-create using any other marketing activities."

Mikkel Skov Søgaard,  
CRM Specialist at  
Søstre Grene





# Enhancing customer journeys with gamification: a strategic framework

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The benefits of gamification at all stages of the customer journey are evident. But how do you actually integrate it into your marketing plan so that your interactive experiences reach customers at the right moment and in the most effective way to drive real impact?

Before building large-scale gamified campaigns, the most effective approach is to enhance existing flows and test impact. By starting with proven journeys, you can measure uplift and optimize before scaling.

# 1. Map your high-value touchpoints

Start with the data. Where do your customers engage most? Where do they drop off? Where could small nudges translate into big gains? Gamification is most effective when it's placed where it can influence behavior, not just where it is convenient to deploy.

Examples:

- ✓ Product pages or key decision points
- ✓ Checkout or cart abandonment moments
- ✓ Onboarding or app activation flows
- ✓ Loyalty milestones or reward triggers
- ✓ Seasonal campaigns or launches

**Tip:** Think beyond standalone games. Gamification is most effective when it is embedded into a broader journey or campaign flow, not treated as a one-off activation.



## 2. Select two to three touchpoints for an initial test

Focus your first experiments on touchpoints with the greatest potential for impact, capturing early wins to guide future campaigns.

**Tip:** Integrate with proven journeys. Embedding games into flows that are already working makes it easier to measure uplift and demonstrate results.

## 3. Define the behaviors you want to nudge

For each selected touchpoint, clarify the exact behavior or outcome you want to influence.

Examples:

- ✓ Reducing cart abandonment
- ✓ Encouraging repeat purchases
- ✓ Drive app downloads
- ✓ Increasing loyalty points accumulation

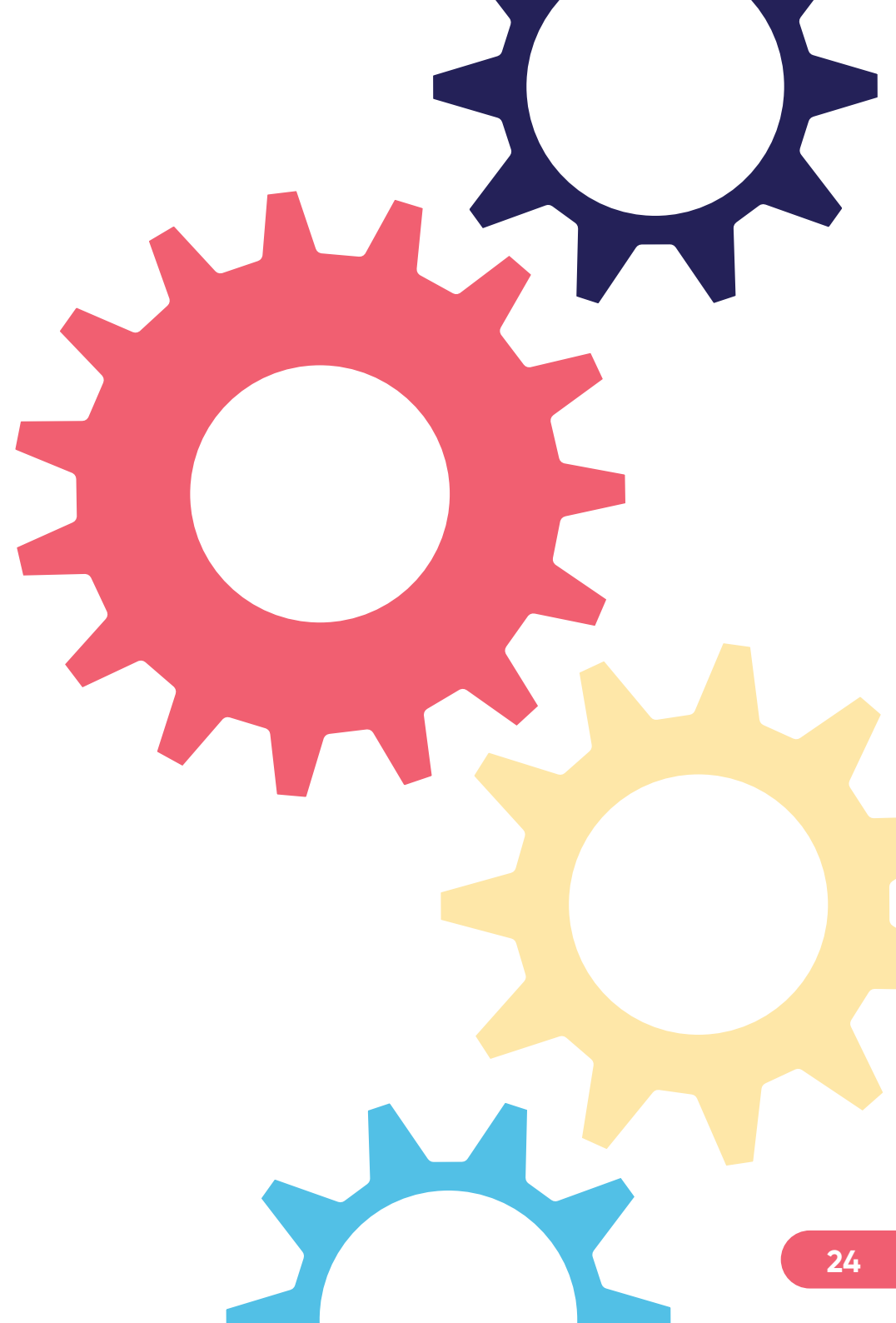
**Tip:** Design with intent – Ask yourself: “What customer behaviour are we trying to drive with this game”? Clear objectives lead to better UX & results.

## 4. Choose the right game types

Select game mechanics that align with the behaviors you want to drive.

Examples:

- ✓ **Reducing cart abandonment** - A luck game delivered via email or an exit-intent pop-up to offer a discount, free shipping, or bonus reward, nudging customers to complete their purchase.
- ✓ **Encouraging repeat purchases** - Add a skill or luck-based game into your nurturing flows, such as three months post-purchase, to reward returning customers and reinforce engagement.
- ✓ **Drive app downloads** - Launch a game that can only be played on your app, like a skill-based challenge, or offer higher prizes for players who participate through the app.
- ✓ **Increasing loyalty points accumulation** - Create games that unlock only using loyalty points, offering VIP rewards or exclusive experiences, encouraging customers to engage more with your loyalty program



## 5. Think of extra features to amplify impact

Consider additional elements that can push the needle further.

Examples:

- ✓ Social sharing or referral mechanics to increase reach
- ✓ Leaderboards to encourage friendly competition
- ✓ Using videos or GIF in your promotion strategy to really highlight the game and prizes
- ✓ Limited-time rewards or limited total daily participations to drive urgency

**Tip:** Plan for traffic. A game cannot be effective if no one finds it. Build a promotion strategy so customers can discover and engage with the experience.

## 6. Design with intent: create the right flow

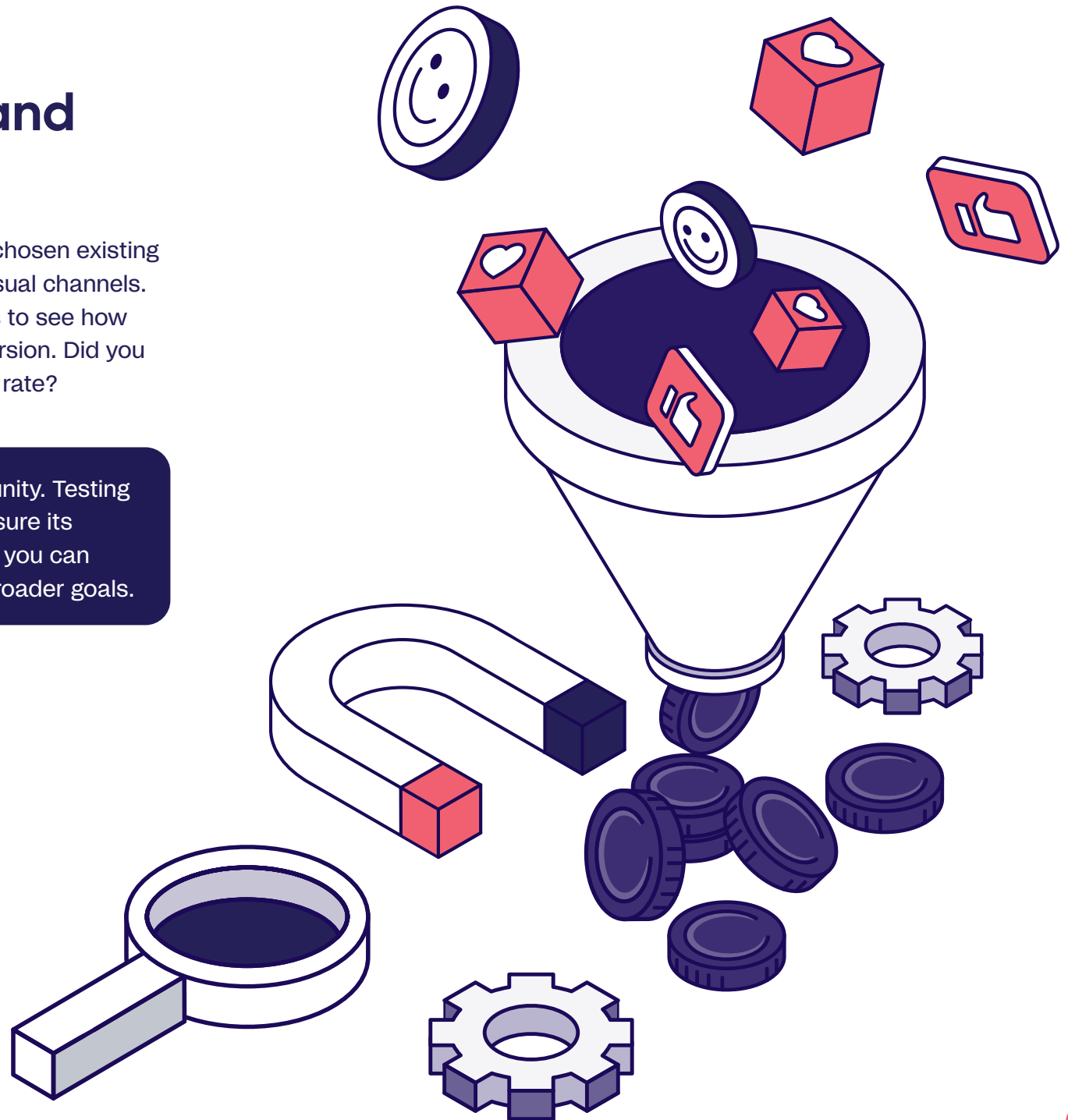
Map the full experience to ensure the game enhances the existing journey seamlessly. Consider triggers, timing, and context.

**Tip:** Every interaction should feel purposeful. Align rewards, messaging, and touchpoints to reinforce the desired behavior and make participation intuitive.

## 7. Launch, promote, and evaluate impact

Activate your gamified experiences within the chosen existing touchpoints and promote them through your usual channels. Track performance against your original results to see how gamification enhances engagement and conversion. Did you get more app downloads? A higher email open rate?

**Tip:** View each activation as a learning opportunity. Testing gamification in proven journeys helps you measure its true impact. Once you've established success, you can confidently expand to larger campaigns with broader goals.



# Conclusion

The new customer journey represents a more challenging customer, one who is driven by interaction and rewards and who demands a personalized, memorable experience.

Gamification can achieve this wherever the start and end point of that customer journey may be. Yet many brands fail to use it as a strategy to enhance the entire customer journey, focusing instead only on acquisition or marketing permissions, while forgetting to link with other nudging tactics.

When mapped intentionally to each journey stage, gamification boosts KPIs including activation rates, repeat visits, time on site, and social media effectiveness which means its true power lies also in engagement, retention and loyalty.

**Gamification accelerates your own company's journey to success.** In a market that's set to treble in five years alone can you afford not to join the ride?

## Get in touch

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