


Chapter 9

Digital Gamification in the Tourism Industry

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ABSTRACT

In today's world where digital technology has become an indispensable part of human life, the use of digital platforms allows people to play various types of games to not only meet their personal needs, but also to keep people's minds away from the strenuous work tempo of daily life. The game is an action that allows people to socialize and gain different experiences and to have a pleasant time. It is limited by certain fixed rules for a purpose, including the outcome of winning and losing as a result of these rules. This action led to the emergence of a concept called gamification along with digitalizing technology. Gamification is the use of game elements, game design, and mechanics in the game environment that enable users to socialize and have fun in non-game environments. This chapter defines the concepts of game, gamification, and gamification in tourism, and examines the digital gamification applications in the tourism industry with certain parameters. Authors emphasize the relationship between tourism and gamification.

INTRODUCTION

Gamification activities make the process of introducing, marketing and teaching an idea, product or a

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service interactive, enabling people to enjoy this process. The main purpose of gamification is to ensure user's commitment to businesses by contributing to the creation of the impression that they are part of the story designed to attract the user's attention through the right content and stories. Gamification is a model that makes it possible to apply by adjusting regarding to the characteristics of the sectors in which the companies operate. Although it has been functional for many years in the fields of marketing, services and finance, it is frequently seen in the tourism industry mainly in recent years. The confirmation of this statement can be seen especially from the use and creation of gamification designs in various forms by airline companies, tourism agencies and accommodation enterprises.

Companies in tourism industry (airline companies, tourism agencies, accommodation businesses, etc.), have started to transfer their reservation systems to digital platforms. The mobile applications used by the companies that continue to provide services on these digital platforms have enabled the touristic consumers to access to the businesses and services these companies offer without the limitations of the time and the place. Companies use gamification models to provide a more convenient and fun way to reach their services for consumers. Allowing tourist consumers to collect points for each flight, accommodation choice or mobile check-in transaction through mobile application and earning various gifts that they can use in later transactions can be mentioned as one of the exemplary gamification models that businesses have applied.

The use of gamification model in tourism is not limited to touristic organizations. Gamification models are also utilized for the promotion and marketing of touristic destinations. Especially, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) applications are used to create a gamification model by transferring digital environments with various animations and modeling the historical, cultural and natural features in the destinations can help the tourists to fully experience the destination. To comprehend the idea better, a tourist visiting Berlin Wall visualizing the state of the wall before it was demolished on the screen of their smartphone, having instant access to information and videos about the story off the wall can be given as the example of the digitalization of destinations.

In this study; literature on game, gamification, gamification theories, elements and models, player's types, tourism and game, gamification in tourism marketing have been reviewed. As a result of the literature review, the relationship between tourism and gamification has been explained and sample gamification models in tourism industry have been included. In the last part of the study, based on literature review and sample gamification applications, a new model has been designed and suggestions for digital gamification studies in tourism have been presented.

BACKGROUND

Game

The concept of Game is a leisure activity that has taken place in our daily lives from the beginning of humanity to the present day and will continue as long as human beings exist. According to the information obtained from the archaeological excavations the people of Ancient Egypt, approximately 5000 years ago, played a game called "Senet" (Piccione, 1980). In another excavation, it was found that people living in Central Asia developed a game using bones of certain animals in 800 BC (Lovett et al., 1901: 280). Based on the findings of various excavations made through the history, it can be understood that games emerge in a different way in every culture and society (Akbulut, 2018: 96). Since the concept

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