


Chapter 3

Enhancing Tourist Engagement With Gamification: Insights From Indian Cultural Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Gamification is reinventing tourist experiences through integrated interactive and reward-based mechanisms to increase visitor engagement. This book chapter discusses the status and prospects of gamification in energizing tourists at cultural and heritage sites in India. The study employs a survey-based methodology to understand tourists' knowledge, interests, and actions toward gamified experiences such as augmented reality (AR) tours, digital storytelling, interaction challenges, and loyalty-based exploration programs. Besides, this chapter delves into how gamification engages tourists' emotional attachment; gained learning outcomes, and repeat visit intentions. The research would provide findings valuable to the debate in developing new tourism strategies by analyzing the survey data collected from domestic and overseas tourists. These findings and insights would benefit policy-makers, heritage site managers, and marketers in tourism regarding how to design engaging and sustainable experiences for visitors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

From a type of passive tourism centered on sightseeing, the paradigm of tourism is now moving towards more interactive and immersive participations. One of the latest trends giving shape to this transition is gamification—the use of game mechanics and design elements in non-game contexts to in-turn motivate and bring behaviour change (Hsiao & Tang, 2021; Xu et al., 2013). Initially explored in diverse contexts, particularly education and marketing, gamification has become increasingly popular in tourism research and practice to enhance visitor engagement, to manipulate consumer behaviour, and to stimulate sustainable tourism (Pradhan et al., 2023; Rosmadi et al., 2024). By designating objectives, challenges, and rewards and by facilitating storytelling and digital interaction, gamification will revamp the tourist experience at cultural heritages, making it meaningful by engaging the audience and, hopefully, forging a stronger bond with the historical story (Lee, 2019; Riswanto et al., 2023).

The process of Gamification in cultural and heritage tourism is a potent means of enriching visitor experience, enhancing knowledge preservation, and stimulating engagement with cultural heritage (Silva et al., 2024). Elements of games, such as missions, treasure hunts and quizzes, and personalized walking routes, were found to be highly effective in deepening visitor immersion and learning (Hutson & Hutson, 2024; Lee, 2019; Thakur, 2024; Xu et al., 2013). Technological innovations such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality further increase the memorability of cultural tourism experiences, empowering tourists to interact more dynamically and engagingly with the historical narrative (Basheer et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2022). Nevertheless, while much praise has been bestowed on gamification in strengthening knowledge acquisition and engagement, others have noted excessive use could inhibit enjoyment and flow experience, thus requiring a careful balance (Anunpattana et al., 2021; Lee, 2019).

Gamification seems to be a concept for the Indian heritage tourism which can reconcile and bring together traditional conservation efforts to newer methods of engaging visitors. Indeed, India's highly extensive cultural heritage, with its large number of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites, old historical monuments, and native traditional values, is indeed fertile soil for gamified tourism experience. Gamification strategies for heritage tourism within India should focus on historical narratives, cultural authenticity, and ground for technological adaptability to enhance gamification interventions for the cultural experience rather than deterred. The combination of physical characteristics, historical significance, and cultural connections always affect customer satisfaction at heritage sites and could also be infused into gamified narratives and applications for digital tourism (Riswanto et al., 2023; Seyfi et al., 2019).

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