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Gaming and Gamification in Tourism



10 Ways to Make Tourism MorePlayful

Best Practice Report

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About Us



Introduction

Gaming is an often-underestimated activity that is said to only appeal to pubescent boys, who isolate themselves playing video games on X-Box, Nintendo Wii or desktop computers for hours or even days. Indeed, games are a powerful industry comprising a market share of $93 billion in 2013 and an estimated growth to $222 billion by 2015.

Most recently, the image of games experienced a change with the transition from online video games to pervasive gaming, with the advent of mobile technologies and the accompanied opportunity to play games everywhere. Mobile games are the fastest growing game segment almost doubling its revenue between 2013 and 2015 from $13 to $22 billion. These advancements of mobile technologies have motivated game designers to create innovative gameplay for diverse purposes and multiple contexts, such as travel and tourism.

Beside the progress in the mobile game market, games mechanics and game design thinking has lately been used in non-gaming contexts – also known as gamification. This novel development has the power to change people's motivation and behaviour, develop skills and drive innovation.

Whereas some tourism players are still concerned with their social media strategy, others have already moved on to implement gaming into their marketing strategy, to engage customers and employees in new ways and to create a culture of playfulness and fun. Recent technological advancements initialise current developments that are attested by research in positive psychology and behaviour sciences. There is a shift from an information to a ludic society.

This report presents ten best practices for pre, during and after traveling that pioneered the application of games and gamification concepts, to create innovative products and services for the travel and tourism industry.

Location Based Games

Location-Based Augmented Reality Games

Playing on-site in the tourism destination with a smartphone will be one of the major developments in the next few years. Although already available in some cities such as London, Berlin, Barcelona and Stockholm, advances in mobile technologies enable game experiences out of the tourist's pocket with these little game apps.

Location-based games take visitors on individual and interactive walks through the place being visited. Tourists might stroll with Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon on a literature walk through the town, discover the sounds of Stockholm (Stockholm Sounds) or meet a border policeman in Berlin (Tripventure) talking about the former divided city. Exciting scavenger hunts are possible anywhere and the local characters tell the history of the place and give background information. Location-based games bring history alive and create playful interactions between the visitor and the tourist destination.

Technology such as Augmented Reality provides interactive features to the gameplay by augmenting virtual game characters and game elements for the player.



Augmented Reality Game 'Fall of the Wall (Berlin)' | ©Sprylab | tripventure.net
Please find a video to Location-based Augmented Reality Games from Tripventure.

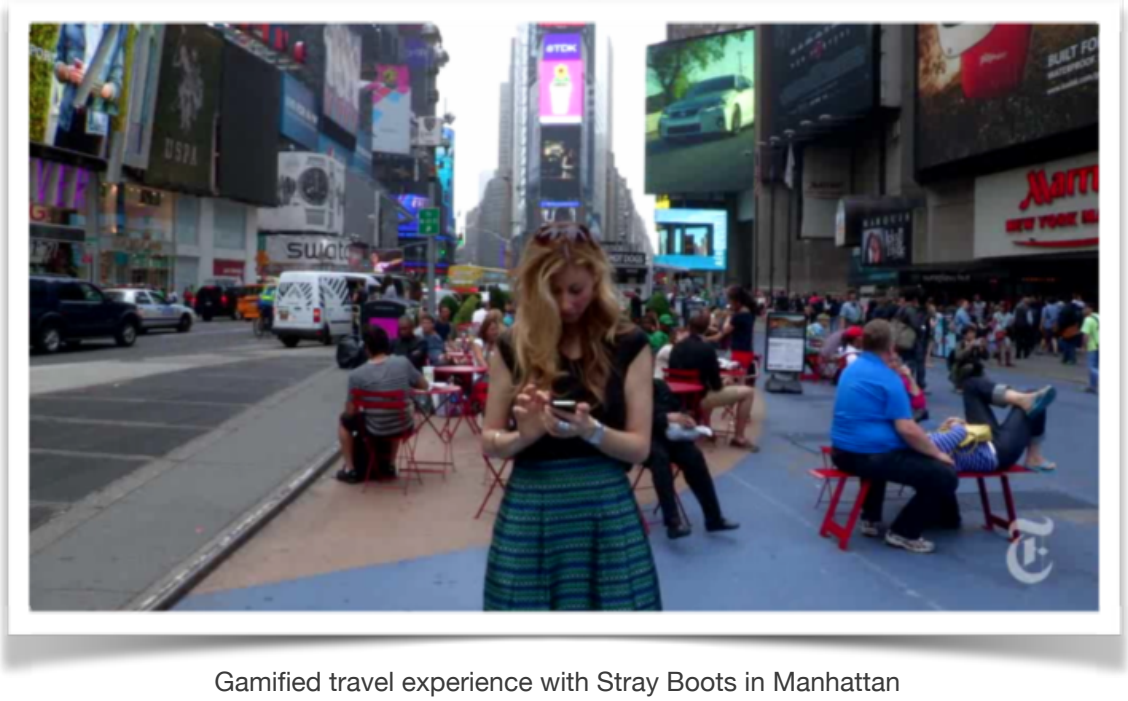
Gamified Tour Guides

Gamified Travel Tours for Urban and Rural Environments

Ordinary mobile tour guides become more gameful with the integration of game elements, which is currently fashionable with apps such as Foursquare. While visiting a city, players check into their favourite café and collect points and badges online to redeem them for vouchers or discount on their purchase.

Similar approaches have been used to gamify a tour guide for New York, which is also available for more than a dozen US cities as well as London. The visitor is exploring the city on a scavenger hunt adventure which runs on a mobile app. These gamified walking tours may be themed differently, as they are limited to altered locations. Gamified walking themes may range from criminal investigations or literature walks to unravel destinations' secrets. With some gamified applications, visitors are even able to create their own tours. The aim of these tours is to discover hidden spots of a (un-)known place and compete with other players.

Watch a video how gamified travel apps work for tourist guides.



Gamified travel experience with Stray Boots in Manhattan
(©New York Times)

For everyone who likes a bit more nature but cannot forego their smartphone, mountain experiences becomes much of a game with hiking and cycling apps which use the gaming aspect to compete with other activity fans. More about gamified hiking adventures can be found on this website: www.drallo.ch/

Gaming in Theme Parks

Augmented Playful Experiences in Adventure Parks

Adventure parks are great places to implement games, as they are already playgrounds on their own for young and adult visitors; the all seek entertaining and playful experiences in these parks

The World Disney Company started early in using Augmented Reality for visitor guidance and enhancing park attractions. However, the next level is implementing games by using the park's own theme to tell stories and create more engaging experiences.

The Dutch Theme Park Efteling created an AR game experience for its visitors to play on smartphones. The mobile app includes an interactive game called the "Fairy and the Safe", in which players have to collect as many coins as possible while escaping from the witch, who is after your virtual coins when you run into her. In the interactive audio fairy tale children can teach the witch to save money so that she doesn't have to steal it anymore.



Efteling Game App "Fairy and the Safe" (©Efteling)
Watch the video from the Game App online.

Gaming in Cultural Heritage

Gamified Immersive Experiences in Cultural Heritage

Gaming in cultural heritage sites creates an immersive experience for visitors to connect through missions and quests with the past history. There is strong scientific evidence that playing evokes the feeling of being present in previous times and with the people who lived back then.

Cultural heritage sites increasingly use new forms of learning, drawing on the concepts of serious gaming (games with a purpose) and gamification. These advancements are more efficient and effective over traditional learning methods in terms of developing social interaction and remembering historical facts. These games open up new opportunities to transfer education and culture through gameplay and thus enhance the visitor experience.

The technology of mobile location-based gaming provides a new format of heritage experience by linking ordinary exhibition and interactive gameplay as a digression to the past. The introduced game is placed at Wartburg Castle, Germany touching on the history of the location and addressing families and groups.



Ghost Game Wartburg Castle, Germany
(©Christopher Falke, Bauhaus University Weimar)

Transmedia Story Telling

Gamification in Transmedia Storytelling

For Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) it is important to engage visitors before, during and after the travel. As gaming is multifaceted, it can be combined with other techniques such as transmedia storytelling, which uses social media platforms and other interactive networks to create a narrative and deliver a story. Participants can alter the game story at any time and according to their own ideas.

Players are so intensively involved within the storyboard, creating their individual stories in real time while they are still at home or on-site at the destination. Game designers guide the players to their next plot-based challenges and simultaneously interact with the players. Different media platforms are used to best transfer the story via videos, pictures and interactions.

Travel Plot Porto is an excellent example of transmedia storytelling, in which an English tourist is on a mission to save the Port Wine. In order to succeed he will have to solve different challenges to find a hidden treasure.



Travel Plot Porto (© Soraia Ferreira)

Please find the video of Travel Plot Porto

Gamified Restaurant Experience

Gamified Restaurant Experience

The fast-food chain McDonald's had used gamification long before the term has been invented and without any technology support. Their well-known game, which is based on the classic Monopoly, tracks back to 1987. The application is entirely offline, in which customers collect stickers of Monopoly streets by purchasing a product. The aim is to collect streets of the same colour to be eligible for a price. The impulse purchases seem to work for a long time now, which earns McDonald's 5.6% increase in sales.

One recent game uses current technology such as mobile phones to interact with digital billboards to get free food from the nearest restaurant. The Pick n' Play game was rolled out in Sweden with a great success. Player's didn't need to download any app, as it was sufficient to use their GPS to ensure they are in the game area. While the customer is happy to get a free burger, McDonald's intention is to increase sales with this approach. Which customer only wants a burger without chips and a coke? The little extra purchase is what the chain is after.

Besides, McDonald's launched a crowdsourcing campaign in Canada, in which customers were asked to create their own storyline with the burgers, warps and nuggets as movie stars. The best stories are featured into a super short film, which is used as advertisement for the restaurant chain. Participants receive free movie tickets as rewards for their participation.



McDonald's 140 Character Film Contest (©McDonald's)

Watch the movie of the campaign.

Gamification in Hospitality

Application of Gamification in Hospitality

Gamification can be applied in hospitality in two different ways; employer motivation and customer engagement. When applied correctly, gamification is an efficient way to drive a desired outcome. However, it might also lead to the opposite, as shown with the Disneyland Hotel laundry worker example. Leaderboards were installed to measure employees' productivity, but the scoreboards lead to fierce competition amongst the housekeeping staff and workers felt that they were being controlled by their managers.

Gamification should support the company culture and individual approaches need to be established in order to facilitate a playful and motivated environment. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has a major impact on the success of gamification.

A Hotel in Germany applied game elements to engage their guests in a charitable act. Theming the historical connections of the hotel as a residence of knights and kings, the guests get awarded for their loyalty. After 21 overnight stays the hotel customers receive a letter in which they are invited to be ennobled by the king. In order to become ennobled and to enter the next stage of the game, the player is asked to make a charitable donation. The certificate is then handed over to the hotel, who upgrades the player.

The participation in the gamification event was amazing, as more than a quarter of guests participated and raised several thousand Euros. But also the hotel guests were awarded with feeling needed and being a part of a higher mission – eventually more engaged with the hotel.



Gamified Hotel Experience Hotel Prinz Luitpold-Bad, Bavaria (©Armin Gross)

Gamified Flying Experience

Application of Gamification in the Aviation Industry

Applying game elements in a context other than gaming roots in the travel industry. In the early 1980s, American Airlines introduced its frequently flyer programme to increase brand loyalty. Thanks to the ubiquity of smartphones, big data and new forms of communication, these advancements will continue to influence our future travel style.

Airlines such as KLM or Virgin America brush up their longstanding loyalty programmes by integrating social networks.

KLM launched the Meet & Seat feature for passengers to find out who else is on the flight and connect with them via their Facebook, Google+ or LinkedIn profiles. The value for the passengers in sharing their personal details with other customers is to find interesting people or passengers that attend the same event at the destination.

View the video of KLM Meet & Seat.



KLM Meet & Seat Campaign (©KLM)

Virgin America *Seat-to-Seat Delivery Feature* launched the first social network for meeting and collaborating over the clouds. The idea is to facilitate connecting people, who want to treat a companion or break the ice for a conversation by sending a drink or snack. The amorous communication, which also delivers text messages to the other passenger works over the built-in touch screen entertainment system of the plane. Sir Richard Branson himself introduces this feature with a 'Guide to Getting Lucky' Video.

Virtual Cultural Heritage

Experiencing Virtual Cultural Heritage Online

Games are versatile in their application but we can also learn from game design in other contexts such as virtual travelling. Google is showing how virtual travelling can look by integrating the Trans-Siberian Railway into Google Earth. But can Desktop traveling truly replace real travel experience? There may be several reasons supporting that travel experiences cannot be substituted by virtual experiences. However, for some people, virtual travels might be the only way to experience foreign countries, endangered species and protected cultural heritage.

The massive influence from computer games in creating virtual cultural heritage experiences is still a niche area, although with huge potential. Within these virtual worlds, travellers learn about people, the cultural setting and artefacts from ancient times. The technology allows travellers to time travel, and gives them autonomy to create their individual experience in the form of dialogues with virtual characters, observe foreign rituals and engage in ancient daily life.The advancements of game design support the developments of virtual cultural heritage travelling, which might be an eligible opportunity especially for people with accessibility issues. But equally it might establish itself as a mitigation tactic for protecting the legacy of cultural heritage sites from the negative impact of mass tourism.

Virtual Romans is a project that virtually constructs part of Roman Leicester from the 3rd century. The visitor can explore 3D models from Roman buildings either in the Leicester Arts and Museum or as a location-based virtual application for smartphones.



Virtual Romans Leicester (©Nick Higgert, 2013)

Virtual Travel

Gamified Virtual Travel Experience

Games for tourism applications are also available for those who want to experience the world from the secure distance of their couch, or are yet indecisive about where to go and would like to try out different travelling styles and destinations in advance.

Expedia.com, the world's largest online travel agency, launched a travel Around the World in 100 Days game in June last year. The game was created to increase the awareness of Expedia's loyalty program and engage with customers. Players can earn real-world Expedia Reward points and redeem them on their travel bookings.

Derived from the chosen travel persona from the online game, customers receive personalised travel offers and learn more about interesting destinations around the world.



Expedia's Around the World in 100 Days (game.expedia.com)

Other great virtual travel games are Smile Land from the Tourism Board of Thailand (www.smilelandgame.com), Holmenkollen Ski Jump (www.visitnorway.com/holmenkollen) and the social media game Ireland Town (apps.facebook.com/irelandtown)

ABOUT



Jessika Weber | PhD Researcher | Bournemouth University

Jessika began her studies as a PhD researcher at Bournemouth University in 2012 investigating the game experience of tourists for location-based Augmented Reality Games applied in urban environments. Her research project bridges mobile Human-Computer Interaction and tourism. The outcome of the project will inform mobile game design for Augmented Reality Games and demonstrates how the tourist experience can be enhanced with the application of interactive technologies. Before her studies at Bournemouth, Jessika was an Online Marketing Manager for one of the leading companies in eTourism in Germany. She holds a Master degree in Administration from the University of Applied Sciences in Salzburg where she wrote her dissertation on the application of NFC for mobile destination cards and is a management expert in which she holds a German Degree from the University of Applied Sciences in Schmalkalden.

THE DIGITAL TOURISM THINK TANK REPORTS AND BEST PRACTICE

The Digital Tourism Think Tank is am initiative, which aims to provide a platform for knowledge exchange, best practice, events and workshops and benchmarking for the tourism industry.

The Think Tank is designed specifically to support the work of CEOs, Marketing Managers and e-Marketing Managers working in DMOs, who are responsible for creating engaging and inspiring digital campaigns.

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