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Motives to Take a Gamified Trip: An Interpretative Study Using Q Method

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Introduction

Tourism comprises "the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for less than a year for leisure, business and other purposes" (UNWTO 1994). The important role of experience makes tourism consumption different from other product consumption, and tourism is deemed as an experiential purchase (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). To add playful components to tourist experiences, several destination management organizations (DMOs) have applied game mechanics to destinations, such as storyline, rewards, and challenges, making destinations playing fields and offering enjoyable experiences. This application of game mechanics to a non-game context (i.e., destinations) is gamification (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, and Nacke 2011). Although destinations have diverse gamification practices in the recent 10 years, there is a lack of understanding of what constitutes gamified trips as well as tourists' motives to take such a trip. Knowing why tourists would like to engage in a gamified context can help designers create valuable games and offer more memorable experiences (Xu, Tian, Buhalis, Weber, and Zhang 2016). Therefore, this study aims to define gamified trips, identify tourists' motives to participate in a gamified trip, and propose a typology of players of gamified trips using Q method.

Literature review

The term gamified trip is derived from gamification, which was first coined by Nick Pelling in 2002 (Pelling 2011). Based on this concept, this research defined a gamified trip as the use of game mechanics (including full-fledged games) in a leisure trip to encourage engagement, improve knowledge of the destination, offer enjoyable tourism experiences, and/or support value creation. Gamified trips can be categorized into hunting-game trips (*Pokémon GO, TravelPlot Porto*) and challenge-game trips (*Stray Boots*).

This research adopted the Q method, which was designed and developed by William Stephenson in 1935. It explores subjectivity regarding attitudes, beliefs, and opinions and offers insights into their correlations (Coogan and Herrington 2011). The shared subjectivity indicates the generalized viewpoints that people have toward a phenomenon. The first step of using Q method is developing Q sorts, which include viewpoint statements derived from literature review and interviews. Second, respondents are asked to classify Q sorts into piles and then arrange the sorts within each pile based on the Q sort distribution table (Van Exel and De Graaf 2005). Some researchers also conduct follow-up interviews to further understand respondents' opinions (Ekinci and Riley 2001). In terms of sampling technique, it should be "a diverse non-random selection" and the sample size is typically between 20 and 100 (Fairweather and Swaffield 2002).

Data collection and data analysis

This research first reviewed literature related to motives to play a game as well as motives to take a trip. After in-depth interviews and two-round pilot studies, 34 motives to take a gamified trip were identified. The respondents were asked to watch videos of three gamified trips, assess their preferences for each trip, sort the 34 motive statements based on the Q sort distribution table (Figure 1), explain why they like or dislike a gamified trip, and provide demographic information. The final data set contains 100 respondents (40 Generation Zers, 40 Millennials, and 20 Generation Xers) who were interested in a gamified trip and 78 respondents who were not interested in such a trip.

Results and conclusions

People who often play computer or phone games tend to like a gamified trip. They preferred challenge-game trips compared to treasure-hunting trips. The majority of the interested respondents indicated that they liked interactive maps (62%), challenges or quests (60%), and rewards (55%). The two main reasons for discouraging players from taking a gamified trip included the cost of using mobile data and purchasing the game.

The PQMethod software was used to analyze 100 sorts completed by the respondents who were interested in gamified trips. According to the factor loading, correlation matrix, and the number of sorts loaded on each

factor, the six-factor categorization was the best among the several possible solutions. According to the top and bottom three motives of each factor, six types of players of gamified trips were found (Figure 2). Knowledge collectors (Factor A) are motivated by learning stories, cultures, and fun facts about the destination. However, they are not interested in badges and scoreboards. The majority of Generation Xers (53%) were knowledge collectors. Reward seekers (Factor B) are motivated by prizes and discounts. People prefer souvenirs to discounts or coupons. Reward seekers are indifferent about socializing or sharing their trip experiences on social media. About 21% of Millennials were in this category. Explorers (Factor C) are motivated by interacting with local people, having fun, and feeling a sense of achievements, but rewards (e.g. prizes and discounts) are not appealing to them. Curiosity seekers (Factor D) like scavenger hunts and surprises, but are not interested in competing with others, ranking on a scoreboard, or interacting with local people. Surprisingly, no respondents in the Generation X group belonged to this type of players. Sensation seekers (Factor E) like to feel excited and experience augmented reality. About 27% of Generation Zers were in this category, while fewer Generation Xers and Millennials were excitement experiencers. Flow experiencers (Factor F) prefer immersing themselves in a destination and escaping from boredom.

This research sheds light upon the concept and categorization of gamified trips, expands the use of Q method to examine travel motives, and proposes six types of players of gamified trips. It provides implications for DMOs on how to apply gamification to attract potential tourists and offer enjoyable tourist experiences for different segment markets. DMOs can use interactive maps, challenges or quests, and rewards to offer gamified experiences and enhance destination attractiveness. Most Generation Xers and Millennials want to acquire knowledge by taking a gamified trip, while Generation Zers' interests are diversified. In addition to learning about destinations, seeking curiosity and experiencing excitement are attractive to Generation Zers.

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The least importnat motives ←

The most importnat motives →

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
9	3	5	4	14	7	1
16	15	8	6	18	22	2
33	21	10	11	20	26	12
	31	17	13	24	30	
		23	19	25		
		32	27	29		
			28			
			34			

Figure 1. Q-sort distribution table (example of Factor A)
Note: Sorting pattern is 3, 4, 6, 8, 6, 4, 3
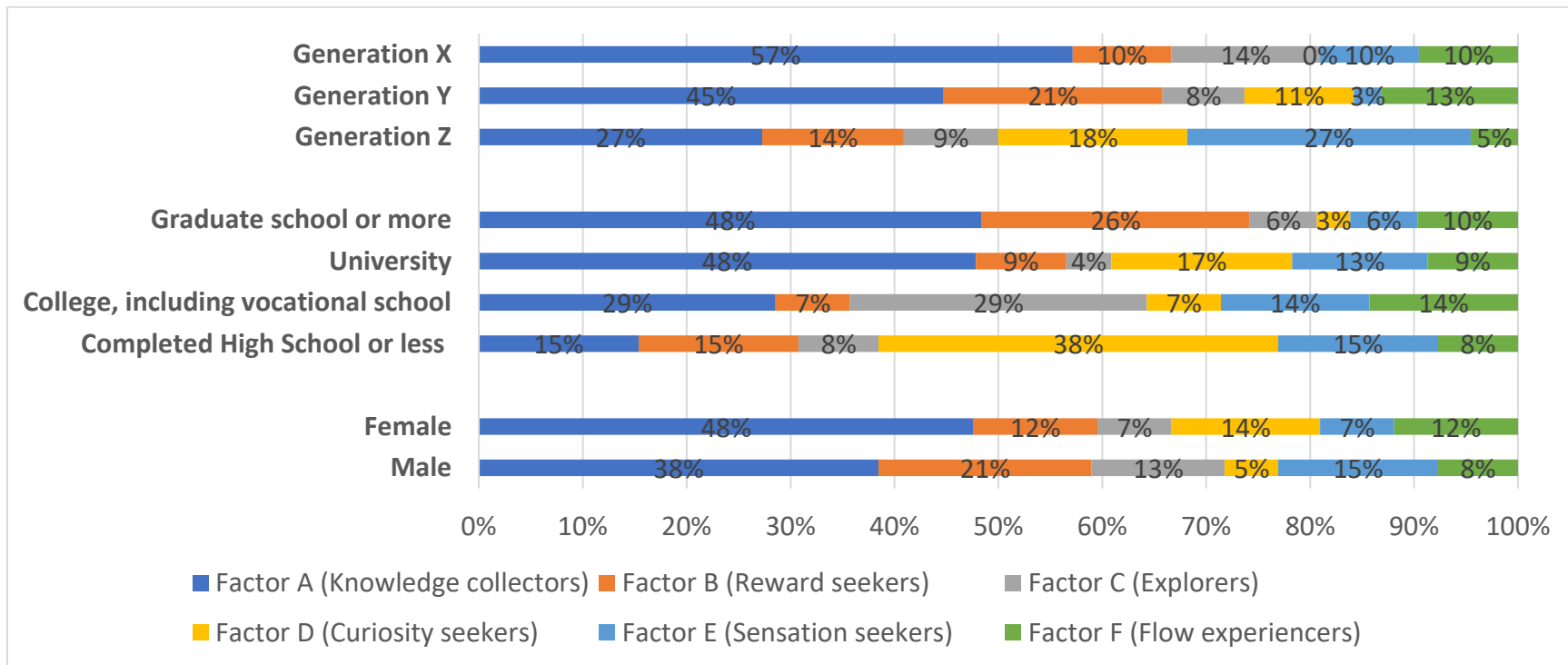
Figure 2. Six types of players of gamified trips and demographic information