Gaming Tourism

Gaming turizam

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Abstract: *With the emergence of new technologies and the development of existing technology, the world is one step closer to digitalization every day. Most of the work is done by machines and a large number of jobs are done online. Gamification or the introduction of game elements can be found in almost any field of work. Specifically, in the field of tourism, gaming, as a recent phenomenon, has been used in all aspects of its presentation, such as in museums, at exhibitions, during city tours and other. The digitization of tourism has provided many people with experiences that greatly change their views on tourism. The offer for tourists is also undergoing a transformation, which is evident by the emergence of more and more gaming hotels, cafés and other hospitality establishments. Their popularity also comes due to the great accessibility of games, since most of them are held via the Internet.*

Keywords: *gamer, gamification, gaming, tourism*

Sažetak: *S pojavom novih tehnologija i razvojem postojeće tehnologije, svijet je svakim danom korak bliže digitalizaciji. Većinu posla obavljaju strojevi, a veliki broj poslova obavlja se online. Gamifikacija ili uvođenje elemenata računalnih igara može se pronaći u gotovo svakom području rada. Naime, u području turizma računalne igre koriste se u svim vidovima svoje prezentacije, kako u muzejima, tako i na izložbama ili tijekom obilaska gradova. Digitalizacija turizma mnogima je donijela iskustvo koje uvelike mijenja njihov pogled na turizam. Ponuda za turiste također doživljava preobrazbu, što je vidljivo iz sve većega broja gaming hotela, kafića i drugih ugostiteljskih objekata. Sve više tinejdžera i mlađih generacija uključuje se i putuje zbog računalnih igara. Njihova popularnost dolazi i zbog velike dostupnosti igara, budući da se većina njih održava putem interneta.*

Ključne riječi: *gamer, gamification, gaming, turizam*

1. Introduction

Gaming tourism is emerging as a new specific form of tourism tailored to a certain type of tourists as individuals, in order to meet their specific needs. In the last few years, gaming has become equally important, in some cases even more important than sports. The emergence and success of gaming tourism have changed many people's views on tourism and given some tourists better opportunities to spend their free time.

This paper seeks to analyse gaming tourism as a phenomenon, which implies describing the reason for its occurrence, its growth in the past few years, exploring the motives for which people engage in this form of tourism, exploring the connection with other types of tourism and ways in which

gamification in any form is involved in tourism and how its application to tourism activity can be better, more interesting and profitable, for which the descriptive method of research was used.

2. The implementation of gaming in tourism

The term gamification (in Croatian language it is used in the original form and adopted to the rules of Croatian language - gamifikacija) first appeared in 2008 and was popularised since 2010 (Deterding et al., 2011). The term implies the use of game design elements and game-like thinking methods in non-gaming contexts (Deterding et al., 2011).

Gamification has already been successfully used in many fields (marketing, healthcare, education) and is a tool with a lot of potential, which has long been implemented in tourism. Any activity that involves collecting points to be used for some kind of bonus or reward is a form of gamification. Sweepstakes[1] loyalty cards and educational quizzes also belong to this group. An example is restaurants that give free products for the achievements of virtual game players such as Foursquare[2] to improve brand recognition (Frey 2012).

The implementation of gamification in tourism is a good business opportunity for the development of tourism offer and an opportunity for tourists to have a valuable and unique experience. Tourism organisations can increase consumer involvement in value creation depending on how empowered they are to play a role in creating new products (Weber et al., 2013).

On the other hand, gamification also affects tourism professionals themselves. Involving employees in multiple activities improves their work experience, as well as their willingness to work. Therefore, the main goals of gamification are to increase the motivation of tourists and employees in order to achieve a change in behaviour when buying products and working efficiently, and to enable tourists and employees to participate in creating value, as well as creating a unique experience (Weber et al., 2013). From the first cases of using gamification to date, the offer and quality of gamified content in tourism have developed significantly, from using augmented reality and enhancing tourist experience for better destination navigation to digitally visiting real and unreal destinations from the comfort of your own home. Good examples of using gamification in tourism are quizzes about cities and destinations to tell stories more attractively, interactive games in museums and treasure hunts (https://medium.com/@kate_ojoo/tourism-gamification-examples-and-what-is-there-for-you-9e2f697830ae).

3. Gaming tourism

Juul (2003) defines a game as "a rule-based formal system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes demonstrate different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable." The key factor in describing games is the active involvement of players in activities that are different from everyday life, creating a completely new but artificial experience. Depending on the type of game, it can involve conflict or player cooperation and solving various challenges. There are various types of games that are divided into categories or genres. The term gaming refers to the practice or activity of playing games (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gaming). Picture 1 shows the most popular video game genres in the USA for the year 2020.

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[1] A form of gambling, in which all the stakes are divided among the winners.

[2] A website and mobile app used for searching information on events and facilities and their reviews in the user's current area.

Picture 1. *America's favourite video game genres in 2020*
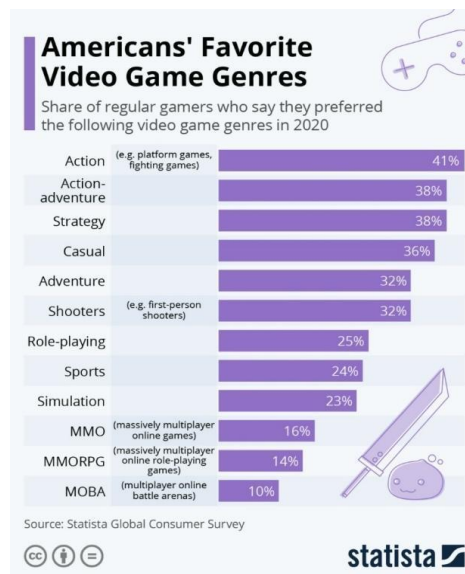
Tourism is a movement, a migration in which a person travels from a permanent place of residence to another place (with the intention of returning) for a minimum period of twenty-four hours to a maximum of six months solely for the purpose of quality leisure time or idleness and pleasure (https://tourismnotes.com/travel-tourism/).

Every tourist gets involved in travelling for a certain reason. For the most part, these reasons are subjective, related to the personality of the tourist himself and his personal interests and desires (Holloway, 1994). Among the individual factors of influence are hobbies and lifestyle, both of which may be related to playing games. Thus, the term gaming tourism refers to a specific form of tourism in which tourism supply and demand are motivated by gaming.

3.1. Digital gaming tourism

Digital tourism can be defined as digital support for the tourism experience before, during and after the tourist activity, and it is all about improving the tourist experience at each of these stages (Benyon et al., 2014). It focuses on a wide range of destinations and contexts, e.g. museums, gatherings, landscapes, zoos and theme parks.

Travel technology, as part of digital tourism, implies the application of information and communication technology (ICT) or information technology (IT) for providing information and support for hospitality, tourism and travelling (https://www.daytranslations.com/blog/digital-tourism-travel/). Digital tourism allows travellers to recreate exploring the real world, with parts of their journeys taking place in the digital world. It is the crossing of classic tourism and a video game (https://www.roughguides.com/articles/introduction-to-digital-tourism/). The transition from the real to the unreal world is the most important element of digital gaming tourism. Since it visually looks like the real world and yet takes place in a digital dimension, it looks like a game. This allows people to immerse in remote and inaccessible, or fictional and non-existent places in a way that goes beyond usual multimedia experiences (Cruz-Neira et al. 1993). Games that are made for gaming tourism do not expect players to think quickly and logically, but are fully dedicated to the experience they leave to their players (http://vectorpoem.com/tourism/).

3.2. Gaming hospitality facilities

There are hospitality establishments that are arranged for tourists who are motivated by games, such as gaming hotels and gaming cafés. Gaming hotels are special hotels for tourists who love holidays and games. These hotels are equipped with all necessary accessories and act as battle stations for gamers (https://woduels.com/en/news/gaming-hotels-train-like-a-pro-or-travel-like-a-true-gamer). One of the best examples of such hotels is the Arcade Hotel in Amsterdam, which is also the world's first gaming hotel. It is equipped with modern and retro game consoles, headphones and gaming chairs, and a fast internet connection so that online gaming is not an obstacle. The rooms are the usual size, but the Game Room is unique. It is a 270-square-foot room that features six gaming computers, each modern game console, and a virtual reality section (https://www.alltherooms.com/blog/best-hotels-for-gamers/).

In addition to gaming hotels, there are gaming cafés. Unlike the similar term internet café, gaming cafés are specifically designed for gamers. The difference is that the definition of an ordinary internet café is linked to a café that houses desktops or laptops, and where a certain amount can be paid for internet use (https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/internet-cafe). Like gaming hotels, gaming cafés are equipped to meet all the needs of gamers looking for rest, entertainment or the most ordinary cup of coffee. The best example of this would be the Alienware Internet Café in China. Despite its name, the café is ideal for gamers because it is equipped with top-notch gaming equipment and a viewing room where it is possible to watch other computer games while they take place. In addition, it is possible to order something to eat and drink. It has all the black walls and professional gaming chairs that suit the most serious gamers (https://www.trendhunter.com/trends/alienware-internet-cafe).

4. Conclusion

Gaming tourism is a new phenomenon that has managed to attract millions of tourists and viewers for a reason, whether it is passive inclusion in the form of watching some competitions or unconsciously engaging in games in tourism which improve their experience, or active adventurous inclusion, and conscious participation in gamified tourist content such as treasure hunting or fighting with other competitors and cooperating with teammates in large-scale video game competitions. It cannot be ignored how much the implementation of the game has improved ordinary tourism activities, different facilities and destinations, the tourism offer and even the tourist trip itself. These changes alongside the advancements in technology have not only opened the door for many new tourists who are interested in the topic, but have also improved the existing activities by introducing changes in the quality of life.

In addition, the emergence of digital tourism breaks the boundaries of reality and fiction with the possibility of visiting created worlds using virtual and augmented reality and brings the ability to add countless new improvements to existing destinations with products such as Google Glasses, which virtually enhance the human environment. Hotels, cafés and other hospitality facilities always adapt to various target groups, including gamers. Technology is improving, and with the development of the Internet the world has indeed become a global village.

This paper is just an introduction to further research into this new type of tourism. Future research in this specific area will show how well-known and popular gaming tourism is among the general population, which segment of the population mostly uses it, what are its possibilities and advantages, how it can affect the tourism in general and similar.

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