Chapter 2
Gamification and Social Media as Tools for Tourism Promotion

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ABSTRACT
The goal of this chapter is to present the application of gamification mechanism and social media tools in the promotion of tourism regions and enterprises as well as the promotion of tourism activity itself. The framework distinguishes between stimulus characteristics of the game (promotion mechanism) that lead to sociological responses toward the game (tourism brand) and actual buyers’ (tourists’) behaviour. Though the game-like mechanism has been applied in tourism for decades and some funware elements are well known among teens—they hardly deal with competition of computer games. Two popular systems of tourism badges in Poland are thus discussed in order to look for reasons of their falling popularity and teenagers’ resistance to participate in the systems. Mobile devices enable teens to combine playing and travelling. The development of mobile applications, integrating social gaming, and location-based technology has led to the growing interest in location-based social network marketing, particularly in tourism and hospitality. The chapter concludes with a proposal how to revitalize an old-school system of tourism badges through the modern gamification mechanism combined with social media tools.

INTRODUCTION
For the past decades we have been living in an era of great changes in the entire world, mostly brought about by technological advances - it is the era of mobile and instant communication. These improvements are reflected in every aspect of life, including consumption and purchase behaviour and, consequently, in marketing practices. One of the most recent marketing practices includes mass-market consumer software that takes inspiration from video games. Usually referred to as “gamification”, this trend refers to multiple existing concepts and research in game studies and human-computer interaction (HCI), such as serious games, advergames, alternate reality games or playful design.

The popularity of digital games is considered to be a driver in the adoption of gamification elements in many Internet pursuits. Another primary driver is the rapid uptake of social networks, now used by 70% of Internet users, where reward and status...
elements are implicitly and explicitly embedded in people’s interactions in their online communities’ engagement. Game elements and competition are interspersed throughout the platforms that have made social networks like Facebook and Twitter extremely popular.

Parallel with the growing popularity of computer games, teenagers get bored with other activities, not excluding tourism. The idea of tourism badges system – very popular in Poland for over 40 years - proved to be ineffective. The research of tourism badges popularity among teens carried in 12 Warsaw secondary schools shows that only 2% of 5,000 respondents are aware of the tourism badges system and only 96 persons actively participate in the system. In the same group of teens 89% occasionally play the digital games and 32% declared to be addicted to playing. Half of them start the day with logging into their favourite game and checking their rank position. There is no sense to fight the phenomena – it is better to use it. Especially, since the popularity of digital games and their ability to attract attention, has already aroused the interest of marketers.

Like any other consumers, tourists are exposed to an outstanding number of advertising messages every day. As the market has changed to adopt new advertising techniques and consumers’ input, marketing faces times of great challenges – and great opportunities. The travel industry has a fine history of leading the way with some highly disruptive innovations such as online review sites, online booking solutions, XML/API and local/community marketplace (Airbnb, Tripbod and Travelmob to name but a few). However the predominance of competition in the tourism market impedes cooperative solutions, as the most brilliant marketing ideas continue to strengthen the biggest players in the tourism market. The overwhelming amount of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with little financial resources stop the industry from a quick adoption of modern marketing techniques.

Cooperation is undoubtedly crucial to the successful marketing of tourism destinations and new technologies offer exciting new opportunities for cooperation among tourism suppliers. The problem of tourism promotion in Poland concerns both: the promotion of tourism regions and enterprises as well as the promotion of tourism activity among teenagers. That very special target group inclines to the adoption of new marketing instruments.

The goal of this chapter is to present the application of gamification and some social media tools (COBRAs, e-WOM) in the promotion of tourism. In the first part, the chapter reviews literature on gamification and offers an insight into the social media opportunity in the field of tourism promotion. In the second part some examples of gamification mechanism being applied in tourism so far are presented (hotel chains’ loyalty systems, airline “miles&more” programmes) together with some examples of funware elements well known among teens (scout badges, tourist badges). The section discusses the most popular systems of tourism badges in Poland and looks for the reasons of their falling popularity and young tourists’ resistance to participate in the system.

The complexity of tourism destination management and marketing is discussed in order to explain the indispensable role of tourism organisations in the process of tourism promotion.

The chapter concludes with a proposal how to revitalise the systems of tourism badges through the modern gamification mechanism combined with social media tools.

GAME-DESIGN THINKING: SHORT INTRODUCTION TO GAMIFICATION

The word “gamification” has emerged in recent years as a way to describe interactive online design that plays on people’s competitive instincts and often incorporates the use of rewards to drive action — these include virtual rewards such as points,