

From Play to Place: Examining How Gamification Shapes Tourist Experiences, Destination Attitudes, and Visit Intentions

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Abstract

This study examines how perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and gamification-based motivation shape gamified tourist experiences, destination attitudes, and visit/revisit intentions. Drawing upon an extended technology acceptance model framework, a 32-item questionnaire—adapted from Ting et al. (2025)—was assessed using a synthetic dataset of 390 simulated observations. Reliability, validity, structural relationships, explanatory power, effect sizes, and mediation were examined using partial least squares structural equation modelling. Perceived ease of use, enjoyment, and motivation positively influenced gamified tourist experience, with motivation emerging as the strongest predictor. Gamified tourist experience positively affected destination attitude and visit/revisit intention, while destination attitude also strengthened behavioural intention and partially mediated the experience-intention relationship. The model explained 42.8% of the variance in gamified tourist experience, 32.0% in destination attitude, and 33.2% in visit/revisit intention. The findings suggest that effective tourism gamification should combine usability with curiosity, exploration, learning, immersion, interaction, and achievement. Because the analysis uses simulated data, the findings represent model-validation results rather than evidence from actual tourists.

Keywords: Gamification; Tourist Experience; Destination Attitude; Visit Intention; Tourism Technology; Perceived Enjoyment; Tourist Motivation; Digital Tourism

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1. Introduction

The contemporary tourism industry is undergoing a significant digital transformation. Mobile technologies, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, virtual environments, location-based services, social media, and interactive platforms have altered the manner in which tourists search for information, plan travel, experience destinations, and share memories (Pai et al., 2021; Ting et al., 2025). Within this broader digital transformation, gamification has emerged as a particularly promising mechanism for enhancing tourist engagement (Sesliokuyucu & Cobanoglu, 2025). Gamification incorporates game-like elements such as rewards, challenges, and competition in non-game contexts to stimulate participation and engagement, and its potential extends beyond entertainment to environmental education and sustainable tourism (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025).

Gamification refers broadly to the application of game-like elements and principles in non-game contexts (Sesliokuyucu & Cobanoglu, 2025). In tourism, these elements may include points, badges, challenges, rewards, levels, leaderboards, missions,

quizzes, digital treasure hunts, interactive storytelling, location-based tasks, augmented reality, and achievement systems. Such mechanisms can transform relatively passive tourism consumption into a more interactive process in which tourists actively participate in exploring and interpreting destinations (Ting et al., 2025). Recent research has demonstrated that gamification can enhance the immersive quality of tourism experiences by activating arousal needs and game-like perceptions among tourists (Zhang et al., 2025), while digital affordances and gamification can create meaningful tourism experiences that strengthen urban brand identity (Liang & Hsu, 2025).

The relevance of gamification to tourism is particularly significant because tourism is fundamentally experiential (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Tourists do not merely consume physical products or services; they participate in experiences that involve emotional, cognitive, sensory, social, and behavioural dimensions. A destination visit may therefore be enhanced when tourists are encouraged to explore unfamiliar locations, solve challenges, discover cultural stories, interact with local environments, and receive recognition for completing tourism-related activities. The experiential dimension of tourism has

been widely studied across diverse contexts, including wellness tourism (Sthapit et al., 2025), wildlife tourism (Sthapit et al., 2024a), gastronomy tourism (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2024), and cultural heritage tourism (Li et al., 2024), each underscoring the importance of meaningful and memorable engagement.

Despite this potential, the effectiveness of gamification cannot be assumed merely because a tourism application contains game elements. A poorly designed gamified experience may fail to engage tourists if it is difficult to use, insufficiently enjoyable, irrelevant to the destination, or unable to stimulate meaningful motivation (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025; Ting et al., 2025). Furthermore, an overabundance of rewards or excessive competitiveness can diminish intrinsic motivation and reduce educational effectiveness (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025). Consequently, it is important to understand the mechanisms through which gamification contributes to tourism outcomes.

Existing technology and tourism research has frequently examined behavioural acceptance variables such as ease of use, enjoyment, attitudes, and behavioural intentions (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). However, a significant theoretical gap remains regarding the central role of the tourist experience itself. A tourism game or gamified application may be easy to access and enjoyable, yet its ultimate value lies in whether it transforms the tourist's engagement with the destination into an experience perceived as meaningful, memorable, immersive, and engaging. The construct of memorable tourism experiences has been extensively developed across various domains, including local food consumption (Sthapit et al.,

2019; Badu-Baiden & Kim, 2022), forest recreation (Yu et al., 2019), and dark tourism (Batumalai & Kocourek, 2025), yet its connection to gamification remains underexplored. Furthermore, while Ting et al. (2025) examined how mobile gamification influences visit intention through attitude, and the stimulus-organism-response model has been applied to analyse how gamified digital environments influence user behaviour (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025), the specific pathway through which gamification-related perceptions and motivation shape the tourist experience, and subsequently destination attitudes and visit intentions, has not been adequately tested.

This study addresses this issue by positioning gamified tourist experience as the central mechanism linking gamification-related characteristics with destination-related behavioural outcomes. Specifically, the study examines whether perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and gamification-based motivation contribute to a positive gamified tourist experience, and whether such experiences shape destination attitudes and intentions to visit, further explore, or revisit the destination. The study makes three primary contributions: first, it integrates technology-related perceptions and motivational factors within an experiential tourism framework; second, it positions gamified tourist experience as a central explanatory construct rather than treating gamification simply as a technological intervention; and third, it examines the sequential mechanism through which gamified experiences influence destination attitudes and behavioural intentions, drawing on self-determination theory (Yeh et al., 2025) and the technology acceptance model (Ting et al., 2025).

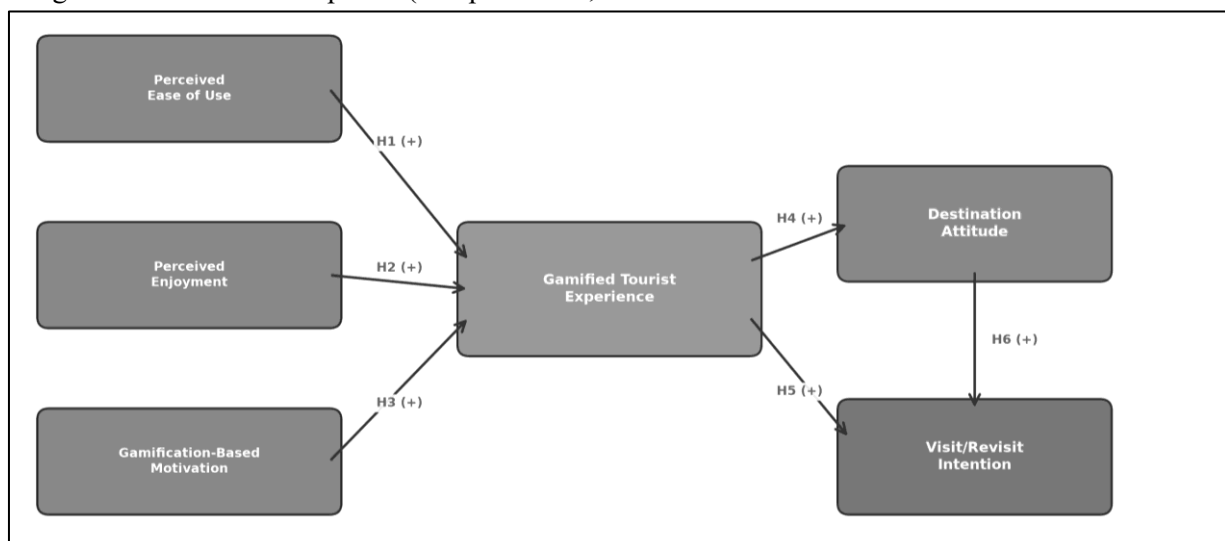


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Gamification in Tourism

Gamification has increasingly attracted attention across marketing, education, health, organisational management, and digital services (Sesliokuyucu & Cobanoglu, 2025). In tourism, gamification promotes interaction with the environment and understanding of cultural and natural heritage through interactive routes, digital rewards, and mobile applications (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025). Within tourism, gamification can take multiple forms: mobile applications can encourage tourists to complete destination-based challenges, heritage sites can incorporate interactive storytelling and digital quests, and museums can use quizzes, points, badges, and augmented reality to increase visitor engagement, as demonstrated by research showing that gamification in virtual reality museums enhances both hedonic and eudaimonic experiences in cultural heritage learning (Sangamuang et al., 2025).

This shift from passive observation to active participation is particularly important in contemporary experience-based tourism, where tourists increasingly seek authenticity, engagement, personalisation, novelty, and memorable experiences (Pratminingsih et al., 2025; Li et al., 2024). Gamification can provide an organisational structure through which destination exploration becomes more interactive and participatory, creating meaningful tourism experiences through digital affordances (Liang & Hsu, 2025). The application of gamification has been explored across diverse tourism contexts, including entertainment tourism in integrated resorts (Luo & Fan, 2023; Luo et al., 2021), gastronomy tourism (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2024; Sthapit, 2017), wildlife tourism (Sthapit et al., 2024a), halal tourism (Sthapit et al., 2024b), forest recreation (Yu et al., 2019), historical bazaars (Kodas & Subasi, 2024), sport events (Polyakova et al., 2025), and dark tourism (Batumalai & Kocourek, 2025). Cultural experience tourist motives have also been found to exhibit dimensionality across cultures (Kay, 2009).

However, the presence of game elements alone does not guarantee a positive tourism outcome, as their effectiveness depends upon how tourists perceive and experience the gamified system (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025). Ting et al. (2025) found that motivation to play tourism mobile games exerted a greater effect on attitude and visit intention than perceived ease of play, while perceived enjoyment had a negligible influence. Therefore, the present study focuses on three important antecedents: perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and gamification-based motivation.

2.2 Perceived Ease of Use and Gamified Tourist Experience

Perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which an individual believes that using a technology or system requires relatively little effort (Davis, 1989). Within gamified tourism, ease of use may involve the ability to access a tourism application, understand the rules, navigate the platform, participate in activities, and complete challenges without unnecessary difficulty. Ting et al. (2025) contextualised this construct as perceived ease of play, finding that it positively influenced attitude towards visiting the game destination. Ease of use is particularly relevant because tourism experiences frequently occur in unfamiliar environments where tourists may already be managing transportation, time constraints, language differences, and destination uncertainty. Research on smart tourism technology experience has similarly demonstrated that perceived ease of use significantly influences revisit intention (Pai et al., 2021).

H1: Perceived ease of use positively influences gamified tourist experience.

2.3 Perceived Enjoyment and Gamified Tourist Experience

Enjoyment represents the intrinsic pleasure derived from participating in an activity. In gamified contexts, enjoyment is particularly important because the primary purpose of game-like design is frequently to make an activity more engaging, entertaining, and psychologically rewarding (Sesliokuyucu & Cobanoglu, 2025). Tourism is inherently associated with leisure, recreation, novelty, and pleasure, and research on hedonism in entertainment destinations has confirmed that hedonic experiences significantly influence tourist experience and revisit intention (Luo et al., 2021). The hedonic dimension of gamified experiences has been identified as a key outcome in virtual reality museums, where it enhances cultural heritage learning alongside eudaimonic experiences (Sangamuang et al., 2025). Furthermore, perceived coolness has been identified as a significant factor influencing behavioural intention in creative tourism experiences (Pratminingsih et al., 2025). Notably, Ting et al. (2025) found that perceived enjoyment had a negligible effect on both attitude and visit intention, highlighting the need for further investigation.

H2: Perceived enjoyment positively influences gamified tourist experience.

2.4 Gamification-Based Motivation and Gamified Tourist Experience

Motivation represents one of the central mechanisms underlying gamification. Self-determination theory, one of the most frequently used frameworks in gamification research, posits that

individuals are motivated by the need to fulfil three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Yeh et al., 2025). In a gamified tourism environment, motivation can emerge from multiple sources. Curiosity may encourage tourists to discover unfamiliar locations, and the role of arousal need and gamification in shaping immersive tourism experiences has been empirically demonstrated (Zhang et al., 2025). Exploration may motivate individuals to move beyond conventional attractions, while the interplay of familiarity and novelty in aesthetic appreciation has been shown to influence engagement with intangible cultural heritage (Li et al., 2024). Social interaction, virtual immersion, learning, and achievement can each provide additional motivational impetus. Ting et al. (2025) identified six motivational elements—curiosity, exploration, socialisation, virtual experiences, learning, and achievement—as significant drivers of attitude and visit intention in the context of tourism mobile games. Cultural experience tourist motives have been shown to exhibit multiple dimensions across cultures (Kay, 2009).

H3: Gamification-based motivation positively influences gamified tourist experience.

2.5 Gamified Tourist Experience

The tourist experience is a central concept in tourism research because the primary value of tourism consumption lies in the experiences created before, during, and after travel (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The construct of memorable tourism experiences has been extensively developed and validated across diverse contexts, including local food experiences (Sthapit et al., 2019), wellness tourism (Sthapit et al., 2025), and wildlife tourism (Sthapit et al., 2024a). Research on the Egyptian Spice Bazaar in Istanbul has further demonstrated that tourists' memorable tourism experiences are shaped by cultural, sensory, and social interactions at the destination (Kodas & Subasi, 2024). Within the present study, gamified tourist experience refers to the extent to which gamification makes destination engagement more engaging, interactive, memorable, immersive, exciting, and meaningful. Gamification can transform a destination from a physical environment to be observed into an interactive environment to be explored (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025), and the creation of meaningful tourism experiences through digital affordances has been shown to enhance urban brand identity (Liang & Hsu, 2025).

2.6 Gamified Tourist Experience and Destination Attitude

Destination attitude represents an individual's overall favourable or unfavourable evaluation of a tourism destination, involving cognitive beliefs and emotional responses developed through direct or

indirect experiences. Research on memorable halal tourism experiences has demonstrated that positive tourism experiences significantly influence place attachment (Sthapit et al., 2024b), while cross-cultural analyses of dark tourism experiences have revealed how destination perceptions vary across national contexts (Batumalai & Kocourek, 2025). The role of sustainability and organic certified elements in wellness tourism further highlights how destination-specific attributes shape tourist attitudes (Vaisanen & Lahdesmaki, 2025).

H4: Gamified tourist experience positively influences destination attitude.

2.7 Gamified Tourist Experience and Visit/Revisit Intention

Behavioural intention refers to an individual's willingness or plan to perform a particular behaviour in the future (Ajzen, 1991). Positive tourism experiences frequently contribute to favourable behavioural outcomes, and research on smart tourism technology has confirmed that perceived technology experience significantly influences revisit intention (Pai et al., 2021). In entertainment destinations, hedonic experiences have been shown to significantly predict revisit intention (Luo et al., 2021), and event service quality has been found to predict memorable tourism experiences in the context of participatory sport events (Polyakova et al., 2025).

H5: Gamified tourist experience positively influences visit/revisit intention.

2.8 Destination Attitude and Visit/Revisit Intention

Destination attitude is expected to influence behavioural intention because individuals are generally more likely to act favourably towards destinations that they evaluate positively (Ajzen, 1991). In tourism, a favourable attitude towards a destination may increase willingness to visit, revisit, recommend, or explore additional destination offerings. Ting et al. (2025) demonstrated that attitude towards visiting the game destination positively influenced intention to visit, and that attitude partially mediated the relationship between perceived ease of play and visit intention.

H6: Destination attitude positively influences visit/revisit intention.

The study further proposes that destination attitude mediates the relationship between gamified tourist experience and visit/revisit intention.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted quantitative research design using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to examine the proposed

relationships among gamification-related perceptions, motivation, tourist experience, destination attitude, and behavioural intention. PLS-SEM was selected as a causal-predictive approach particularly suitable for studies containing formative constructs and prediction-oriented objectives (Ting et al., 2025). The conceptual model was developed by integrating the technology acceptance model (Ting et al., 2025) with experiential tourism perspectives and self-determination theory (Yeh et al., 2025). A synthetic dataset comprising 390 simulated responses was used to evaluate the measurement instrument and the proposed structural relationships. The present analysis should be interpreted as a simulation-based model assessment rather than an empirical field investigation, and its purpose is to evaluate the statistical behaviour and internal coherence of the proposed conceptual framework prior to future data collection from actual tourists.

3.2 Measurement Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of 32 measurement items distributed across six constructs. The measurement scales were adapted from Ting et al. (2025), who developed items for perceived ease of play, perceived enjoyment, motivation to play, attitude, and intention to visit in the context of tourism mobile gamification. In the present study, perceived ease of use was measured using five items assessing ease of learning, accessing, understanding, and participating in gamified tourism activities. Perceived enjoyment was measured using five items examining whether the gamified tourism experience was interesting, enjoyable, entertaining, and suitable for leisure participation. Gamification-based motivation was measured using six items capturing the motivational dimensions identified by Ting et al. (2025): curiosity, exploration, socialisation, virtual experience, learning, and achievement. Gamified tourist experience was measured using six items assessing engagement, involvement, memorability, overall enhancement, immersion, excitement, and meaningfulness. Destination attitude was measured using five items examining favourable perceptions and positive feelings towards the destination. Visit/revisit intention was measured using five items examining intentions to visit, revisit, further explore, recommend, and participate in additional tourism activities. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.3 Sample

The dataset consisted of 390 simulated respondent observations, sufficient for evaluating the proposed

multivariate relationships and meeting the sample size requirements for PLS-SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2022; Ting et al., 2025). The sample profile represented respondents with diverse demographic characteristics, with the largest proportion belonging to the 18-25 and 26-35 age groups. Undergraduate and postgraduate respondents constituted the majority of the sample, representing students, employed individuals, self-employed individuals, business owners, tourism professionals, and other occupational categories.

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted following the two-stage PLS-SEM procedure recommended by Hair et al. (2022): assessment of the measurement model followed by assessment of the structural model. The measurement model was evaluated for internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability), convergent validity (indicator loadings and average variance extracted), and discriminant validity (heterotrait-monotrait ratio; Henseler et al., 2015). The structural model was assessed using standardised path coefficients, significance values via bootstrapping (5,000 resamples), explanatory power (R^2), and effect sizes (f^2). Mediation analysis was conducted following the approach recommended by Ting et al. (2025) to examine whether destination attitude mediated the relationship between gamified tourist experience and visit/revisit intention.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Data Screening and Descriptive Assessment

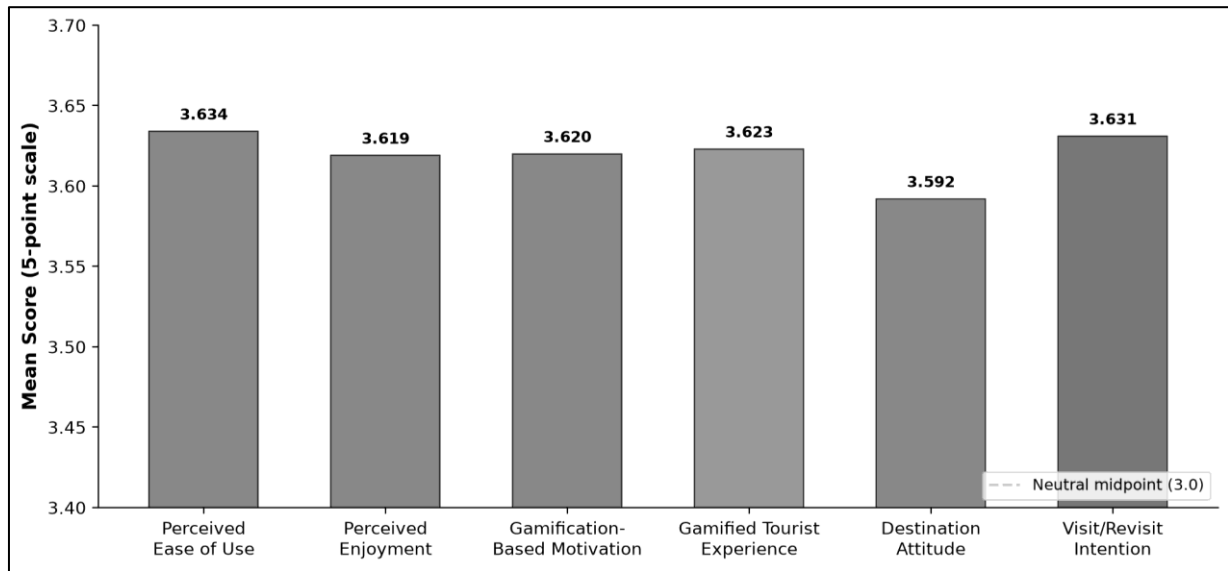
All 390 observations were retained for analysis with no missing values or duplicate records. The mean scores of all constructs were above the neutral midpoint, indicating generally positive perceptions of gamified tourism. Perceived ease of use had a mean of 3.634 (SD = 0.902), perceived enjoyment 3.619 (SD = 0.918), gamification-based motivation 3.620 (SD = 0.936), gamified tourist experience 3.623 (SD = 0.912), destination attitude 3.592 (SD = 0.925), and visit/revisit intention 3.631 (SD = 0.908).

4.2 Reliability and Convergent Validity

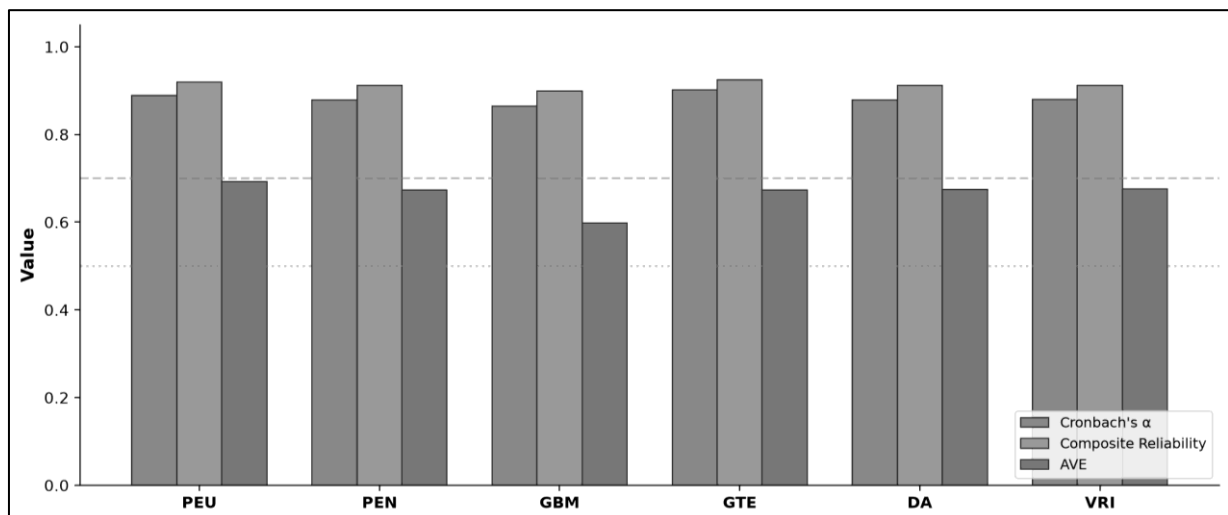
The measurement constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.865 to 0.902, composite reliability from 0.899 to 0.925, and average variance extracted from 0.598 to 0.693, all exceeding recommended thresholds (Hair et al., 2022). All measurement indicators demonstrated loadings exceeding 0.708, supporting indicator reliability.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	SD
Perceived Ease of Use	3.634	0.902
Perceived Enjoyment	3.619	0.918
Gamification-Based Motivation	3.620	0.936
Gamified Tourist Experience	3.623	0.912
Destination Attitude	3.592	0.925
Visit/Revisit Intention	3.631	0.908

**Figure 2. Construct Mean Scores****Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity**

Construct	α	CR	AVE
Perceived Ease of Use	0.889	0.919	0.693
Perceived Enjoyment	0.879	0.912	0.673
Gamification-Based Motivation	0.865	0.899	0.598
Gamified Tourist Experience	0.902	0.925	0.673
Destination Attitude	0.879	0.912	0.674
Visit/Revisit Intention	0.880	0.912	0.676

**Figure 3. Reliability and Convergent Validity Indicators**

4.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was examined using the HTMT criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). All values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85. The highest HTMT value was observed between gamification-based motivation and gamified tourist experience (0.660), followed by gamified tourist experience and destination attitude (0.635), indicating that the constructs remain empirically distinct. This approach is consistent with the discriminant validity assessment employed by Ting et al. (2025).

4.4 Structural Relationships

H1 examined whether perceived ease of use influenced gamified tourist experience. The relationship was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.135$, $t = 3.207$, $p = .001$), supporting H1 and consistent with Ting et al. (2025), who found that perceived ease of play significantly influenced attitude. H2 examined the effect of perceived enjoyment, which was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.292$, $t = 6.377$, $p < .001$), supporting H2. Notably, while Ting et al. (2025) found perceived enjoyment to have a negligible effect on attitude, the present study positions enjoyment as influencing the gamified tourist experience rather than attitude directly, yielding a significant positive relationship. This finding aligns with research on hedonic experiences in entertainment destinations (Luo et al., 2021) and cultural heritage learning (Sangamuang et al., 2025).

H3 examined gamification-based motivation, which demonstrated the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.380$, $t = 8.157$, $p < .001$), supporting H3. This finding is consistent with Ting et al. (2025), who found motivation to be the strongest predictor of both

attitude and visit intention, and with self-determination theory (Yeh et al., 2025) and research on arousal need in immersive tourism (Zhang et al., 2025). The three antecedents jointly explained 42.8% of the variance in gamified tourist experience.

H4 examined the influence of gamified tourist experience on destination attitude ($\beta = 0.565$, $t = 13.499$, $p < .001$), supporting H4 and consistent with research on place attachment in halal tourism (Sthapit et al., 2024b) and cross-cultural destination perceptions (Batumalai & Kocourek, 2025). H5 examined whether gamified tourist experience influenced visit/revisit intention ($\beta = 0.281$, $t = 5.577$, $p < .001$), supporting H5. H6 examined destination attitude's effect on visit/revisit intention ($\beta = 0.369$, $t = 7.317$, $p < .001$), supporting H6, consistent with Ting et al. (2025).

4.5 Explanatory Power and Effect Sizes

The model demonstrated moderate explanatory power: antecedents explained 42.8% of variance in gamified tourist experience, gamified tourist experience explained 32.0% of destination attitude, and both jointly explained 33.2% of visit/revisit intention. Effect-size analysis showed gamification-based motivation had the largest contribution ($f^2 = 0.172$), followed by perceived enjoyment ($f^2 = 0.105$) and perceived ease of use ($f^2 = 0.027$). These results reinforce that psychological engagement is more influential than technological convenience alone, consistent with the findings of Ting et al. (2025) and the broader gamification literature (Sesliokuyucu & Cobanoglu, 2025; Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025).

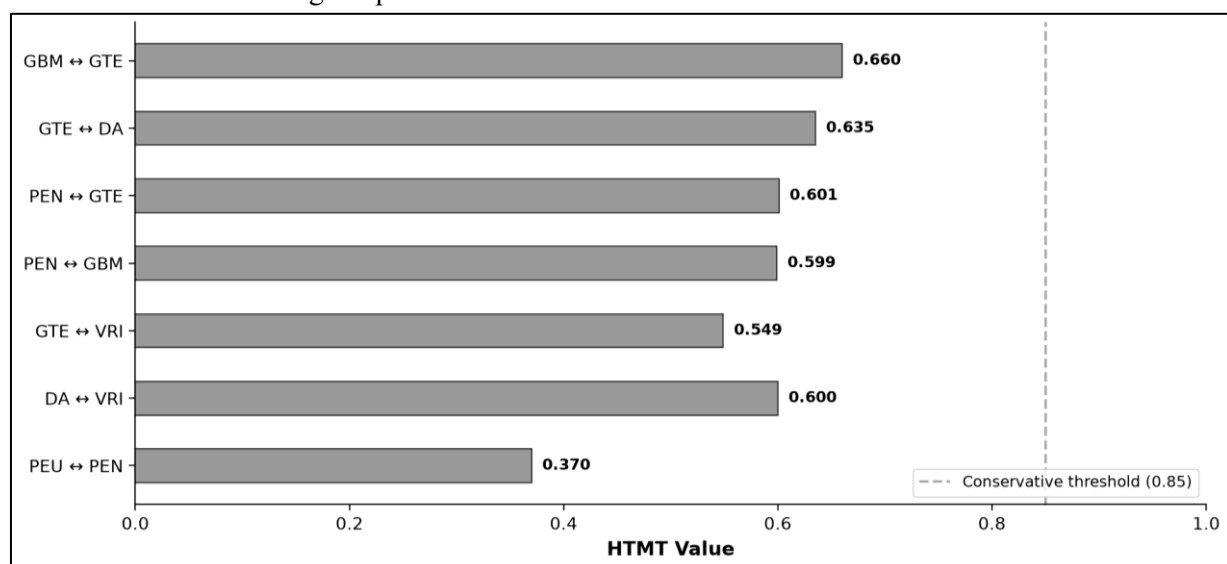
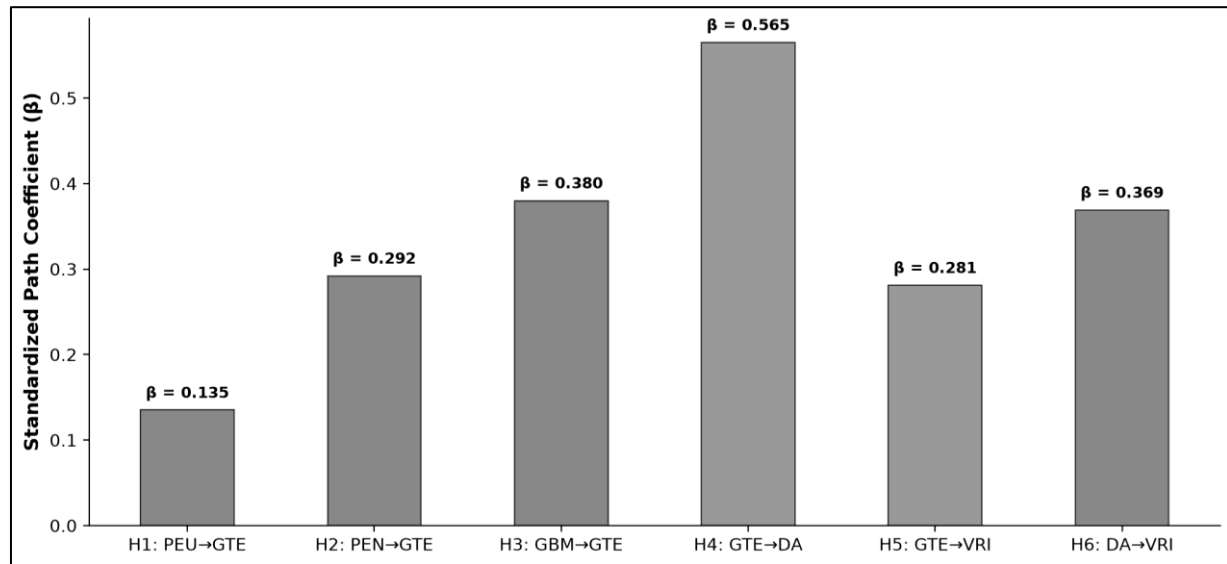


Figure 4. HTMT Discriminant Validity Assessment

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results

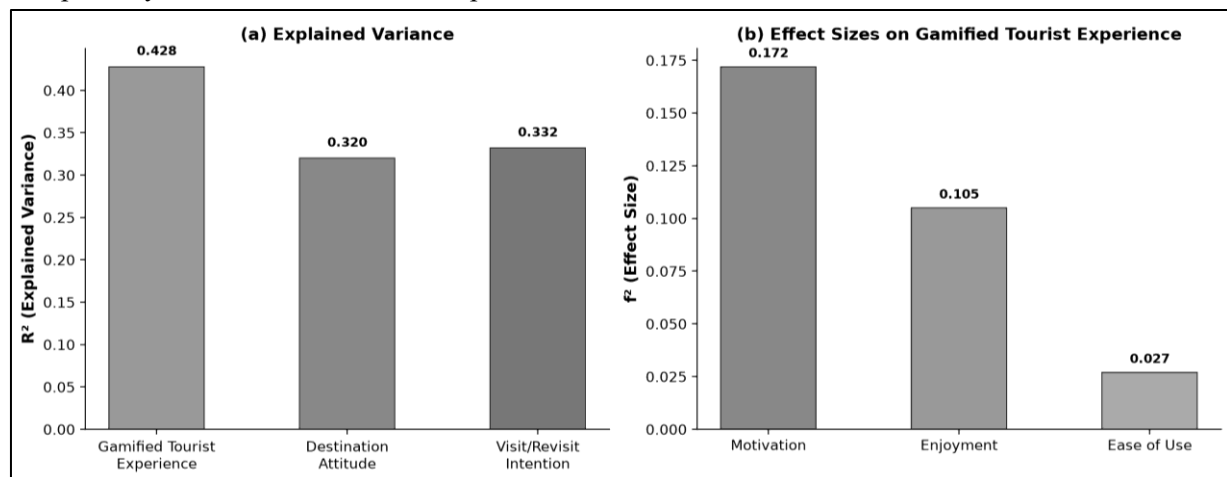
Hypothesis	Path	β	t	p	Result
H1	PEU $\rightarrow$ GTE	0.135	3.207	.001	Supported
H2	PEN $\rightarrow$ GTE	0.292	6.377	< .001	Supported
H3	GBM $\rightarrow$ GTE	0.380	8.157	< .001	Supported
H4	GTE $\rightarrow$ DA	0.565	13.499	< .001	Supported
H5	GTE $\rightarrow$ VRI	0.281	5.577	< .001	Supported
H6	DA $\rightarrow$ VRI	0.369	7.317	< .001	Supported

**Figure 5. Structural Path Coefficients**

4.6 Mediation Analysis

Destination attitude was examined as a mediating mechanism between gamified tourist experience and visit/revisit intention. The indirect effect was positive and significant (indirect effect = 0.202, 95% CI [0.144, 0.262]). Because the direct relationship remained significant, destination attitude demonstrated partial mediation. This finding is consistent with Ting et al. (2025), who found that attitude partially mediated the relationship between

perceived ease of play and visit intention. The results indicate that gamified experiences influence behavioural intention through two mechanisms: directly increasing willingness to visit or revisit, and indirectly by improving destination attitudes which subsequently strengthen behavioural intentions. This dual mechanism is consistent with research on memorable tourism experiences across diverse contexts (Sthapit et al., 2025; Polyakova et al., 2025).

**Figure 6. Explained Variance and Effect Sizes**

5. Discussion

The findings provide support for the proposition that gamification should be understood not simply as a technological feature but as an experiential mechanism (Sesliokuyucu & Cobanoglu, 2025; Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025). Perceived ease of use positively influenced gamified tourist experience, though its effect was relatively small, suggesting that technological usability represents a necessary but insufficient condition for successful tourism gamification (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025). This finding parallels Ting et al. (2025), who found that perceived ease of play

had a significant but smaller effect on attitude compared to motivation.

Enjoyment demonstrated a stronger effect on gamified tourist experience than ease of use. Notably, while Ting et al. (2025) found perceived enjoyment to have a negligible effect on attitude and visit intention, the present study reveals that enjoyment significantly influences the gamified tourist experience construct. This suggests that enjoyment may operate through the experiential dimension rather than directly on attitude, consistent with the experiential nature of tourism and with research on hedonic experiences in entertainment destinations (Luo et al., 2021) and cultural heritage learning (Sangamuang et al., 2025).

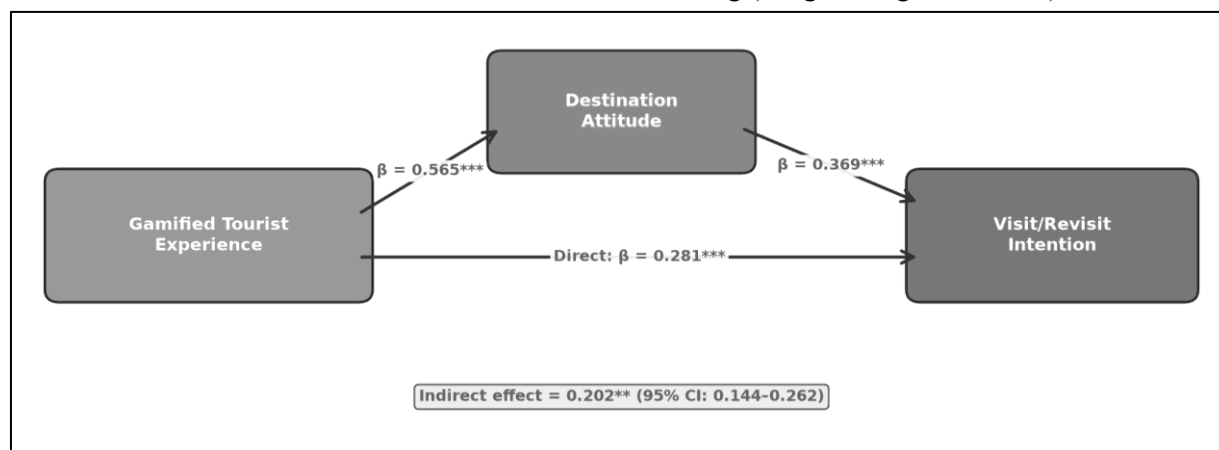


Figure 7. Mediation Model

The most influential antecedent was gamification-based motivation, suggesting that successful gamification depends substantially on its capacity to provide psychological reasons to engage. This aligns with self-determination theory, which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as fundamental psychological needs (Yeh et al., 2025), and with research on arousal need in immersive tourism (Zhang et al., 2025). This finding directly parallels Ting et al. (2025), who found motivation to be the strongest predictor of both attitude and visit intention. Curiosity can motivate tourists to discover unfamiliar attractions, exploration can encourage movement beyond conventional tourism routes, and learning can transform destination information into an active discovery process, as evidenced by research on familiarity and novelty in aesthetic appreciation of intangible cultural heritage (Li et al., 2024). These findings indicate that gamification design should focus on creating meaningful motivations rather than merely adding superficial game mechanics (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025).

The strongest relationship was between gamified tourist experience and destination attitude, consistent with research demonstrating that memorable tourism experiences influence place attachment (Sthapit et al., 2024b), wellness tourism experiences shape enjoyable

outcomes (Sthapit et al., 2025), and gastronomy tourism experiences connect tourists with local culture (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2024). The mediation analysis revealed that destination attitude partially mediated the experience-intention relationship, supporting a sequential experiential mechanism: Gamification Antecedents → Gamified Tourist Experience → Destination Attitude → Behavioural Intention. This mechanism extends the mediating role of attitude identified by Ting et al. (2025) and represents the central theoretical contribution of the study.

6. Theoretical Implications

First, the study extends tourism gamification research by positioning tourist experience as the central explanatory mechanism, connecting technology adoption and behavioural intention through the experiential dimension of tourism (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025). While Ting et al. (2025) demonstrated the importance of attitude as a mediator between TAM constructs and visit intention, the present study introduces gamified tourist experience as an additional explanatory layer, responding to calls for expanding the TAM to include context-specific considerations. Second, the findings distinguish between technological and psychological drivers: the stronger effects of enjoyment and

motivation suggest that tourism gamification should be conceptualised through motivational frameworks such as self-determination theory (Yeh et al., 2025) and experiential paradigms recognising both hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions (Sangamuang et al., 2025). Third, the study demonstrates the importance of destination attitude as an intervening mechanism, complementing research on place attachment (Sthapit et al., 2024b) and cross-cultural destination perceptions (Batumalai & Kocourek, 2025). Fourth, the multidimensional conceptualisation of motivation is consistent with research on cultural experience tourist motives (Kay, 2009), arousal need in immersive tourism (Zhang et al., 2025), and novelty-seeking in creative tourism (Pratminingsih et al., 2025).

7. Managerial Implications

First, destination managers should design gamification around meaningful tourism objectives rather than technological fashion, avoiding the risk of gamified greenwashing when dynamics are applied superficially (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025). Heritage destinations can create interactive challenges encouraging visitors to learn about historical events, while cultural destinations can develop missions encouraging interaction with local traditions and intangible cultural heritage (Li et al., 2024). Second, gamified systems should prioritise simplicity, as ease of use remained statistically significant despite its smaller effect (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003), consistent with the findings of Ting et al. (2025).

Third, destination designers should focus on motivational mechanisms that stimulate curiosity and encourage exploration, drawing on documented examples such as the Egyptian Spice Bazaar (Kodas & Subasi, 2024), gastronomy experiences (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2024), and educational challenges fostering environmental awareness (Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025). The six motivational elements identified by Ting et al. (2025)—curiosity, exploration, socialisation, virtual experiences, learning, and achievement—provide a practical framework for game design. Fourth, achievement mechanisms should connect to meaningful rewards (Sesliokuyucu & Cobanoglu, 2025). Fifth, gamification should be integrated with destination identity, exemplified by research on servicescape and perceived coolness in creative tourism (Pratminingsih et al., 2025) and digital affordances enhancing urban brand identity (Liang & Hsu, 2025). Finally, destination managers should recognise that gamified experiences can influence destination attitudes and should consider gamification as part of the broader destination branding strategy, with potential to promote sustainable tourism

behaviours (Vaisanen & Lahdesmaki, 2025; Sanchez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Sanchez, 2025).

8. Conclusion

This study examined the role of gamification in shaping tourist experiences, destination attitudes, and visit/revisit intentions. The findings demonstrate that perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and gamification-based motivation positively influence gamified tourist experience, with motivation emerging as the strongest predictor, consistent with Ting et al. (2025). Gamified tourist experience plays a central role in shaping destination outcomes, significantly improving destination attitudes and directly influencing visit/revisit intentions. Destination attitude partially mediates the experience-intention relationship. The study proposes that the value of gamification lies not simply in making tourism activities entertaining but in transforming the nature of tourists' engagement with destinations, consistent with findings across diverse tourism contexts including wellness tourism (Sthapit et al., 2025), gastronomy tourism (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2024), wildlife tourism (Sthapit et al., 2024a), and cultural heritage tourism (Li et al., 2024). The central conclusion is that tourism gamification should move beyond the simple application of points, badges, and rewards; its strategic value lies in its capacity to transform tourists from passive observers into active participants in the destination experience.

9. Limitations and Future Research

The study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. Most importantly, the analysis was conducted using a synthetic dataset, and the numerical findings cannot be interpreted as empirical evidence of actual tourist behaviour. Future research must test the proposed model using primary data collected from tourists who have participated in genuine gamified tourism experiences, following the empirical approach employed by Ting et al. (2025). Second, future studies should examine specific forms of tourism gamification, as different modalities may produce distinct experiential outcomes (Sangamuang et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2025). Third, future research could examine destination-specific contexts, as gamification may operate differently across heritage, cultural, urban, and adventure tourism (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2024; Sthapit et al., 2025; Batumalai & Kocourek, 2025; Yu et al., 2019). Fourth, longitudinal research could examine whether gamified experiences influence actual revisit behaviour. Fifth, future studies could incorporate additional constructs such as immersion, flow, authenticity, memorability, co-creation, and perceived value (Sthapit et al., 2019; Kodas & Subasi, 2024; Liang & Hsu, 2025). Finally, comparative research could examine whether the effects of gamification differ across demographic

groups, technological familiarity, and cultural contexts (Batumalai & Kocourek, 2025; Kay, 2009; Ting et al., 2025).

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