From City Streets to Countryside Trails: B2B Motivations for Gamified Travel Experiences

Kaupunkikaduilta maaseutupoluille: B2B-ostomotiivit pelillistetyissä matkailukokemuksissa

Abstract

Rapid advancements in digital platforms have created new opportunities for gamification in the growing B2B tourism market, particularly within corporate and institutional tourism settings such as destination management organisations, event planners, and municipal tourism offices. However, research in this area remains limited. This study focuses on understanding the motivations for gamified travel tour investments among B2B customers. It aims to uncover the reasons behind their engagement with new service providers, as well as whether motivations from gaming and tourism spending overlap.

A purposive sample of two gamified travel tour operators' customer databases provided the sample population from which nine semi-structured interviews were drawn. A qualitative approach was employed, and the data were analysed thematically to identify key patterns. Results indicate a significant B2B market opportunity for gamified travel tours, confirming that all study participants preferred these over traditional options. Purchase motivations were rational, including price, location, and usefulness; however, emotional drivers, such as team building, engagement, and learning, also played a significant role in the decision-making process.

The findings are significant as they provide direction to service providers on how to balance marketing functional service advantages with the use of engaging and interactive elements. Other cultural and geographic contexts, as well as urban-rural comparisons, could broaden the scope of gamified applications in future studies.

Keywords: gamification, gamified travel experiences, purchase motivation, B2B sales

Tiivistelmä

B2B-matkailumarkkinan kasvu ja digitaalisten alustojen nopea kehitys ovat luoneet uusia mahdollisuuksia pelillistämiselle. Aihetta on kuitenkin tutkittu vielä hyvin vähän yrityskontekstissa. Tämä tutkimus selvitti, mikä motivoi B2B-asiakkaita sijoittamaan pelillistettyihin matkailukierroksiin, ja tutki yhtäläisyyksiä matkailijoiden ostomotiivien ja pelimotiivien välillä.

Laadullisessa tutkimuksessa haastateltiin yhdeksää yritysedustajaa kahden pelillistettyjä matkailukierroksia tarjoavan yrityksen asiakasrekistereistä. Tulokset osoittivat, että kaikilla haastatelluilla oli selkeä preferenssi pelillistettyihin kierroksiin tavallisiin verrattuna. Ostopäätöksiä ohjasivat pääosin rationaaliset tekijät, kuten hinta, sijainti ja hyödynnettävyys, mutta myös emotionaaliset motiivit, erityisesti tiimityön, sitoutumisen ja oppimisen edistäminen, olivat tärkeitä.

Tulokset tarjoavat palveluntarjoajille käytännön ohjeita markkinointiin ja palvelukehitykseen. Jatkossa

tutkimusta tulisi laajentaa kattamaan erilaisia pelillistämisen muotoja, kulttuurisia ja maantieteellisiä konteksteja, kaupunki–maaseutu -ympäristöjen eroja sekä rationaalisten ja emotionaalisten motiivien syvällisempään tarkasteluun.

Avainsanat: pelillistäminen, matkailu, ostomotivaatio, ostomotiivi, pelimotivaatio, B2B myynti

Introduction

The application of gamification is drastically reshaping the tourism sector in the early twenty-first century. Gamification is defined as the use of game characteristics in non-game settings to improve engagement, value, or productivity (Deterding et al., 2011; Huotari & Hamari, 2012). Recently, advances in digital platforms have enabled broader changes in the provision of tourism services, products, and experiences. As a case in point, service and destination providers can now offer a more interactive, personalised, and immersive form of tourism. The New York Times Rosenbloom (2013) brought mainstream attention to the application of gamification in tourism by describing the growing popularity of gamified city tours. The global phenomenon Pokémon Go in 2016 not only blurred the line between the real and virtual worlds but also proved the commercial value of gamified tourism. It also changed consumer attitudes towards engagement with location-based products (Nieva, 2016).

The global COVID-19 outbreak heightened the pre-existing demand for self-guided mobile tours, as travellers sought individualised, flexible, and socially distanced options (Quinby, 2020). This created space for a new stream of gamified tour entrepreneurs, including Level Adventures, Cluetivity, Questo, and Mystery City, who now serve B2C and B2B markets. The latter group includes potential clients such as municipalities, destination management organisations (DMOs), event organisers, museums, national parks, and even schools, entities eager to explore innovative methods to enhance visitor engagement, enrich learning experiences, and promote meaningful interactions.

While the body of literature on the gamification of tourism is growing, scholarship is skewed towards marketing, consumer behaviour, and engagement (Sigala, 2015; Xu et al., 2014). This does not do justice to the B2B perspective. The B2B side of the tourism industry is experiencing rapid growth, driven by new digital technologies, a shift toward sustainable tourism, and an increasing demand for experiential products and services (Wang et al., 2025; Visit Finland, 2021; Wirtz & Kowalski, 2023). Broader market developments reinforce these dynamics: the global B2B travel market is projected to grow from 30.5 billion USD in 2024 to over 180 billion USD by 2035, reflecting expanding investments in digital and experience-based solutions across corporate and event travel (Dhapte, 2025). In this space, understanding purchasing motivations is important for developing practical sales approaches, particularly in B2B sales, which tend to be complex, involving several layers of coordination with multiple stakeholders, alongside organisational competing priorities and the need for a unified strategic rationale (Rogers, 2007; Nyadzayo et al., 2018).

Recent studies have highlighted that the B2B customer journeys within the tourism sector, particularly during the initial phases of the decision-making process, remain largely uncharted

(Purmonen et al., 2023; Witell et al., 2020; Zolkiewski et al., 2017). Purmonen et al. (2023) emphasise that the B2B buying process is "nested in both previous and subsequent events," capturing ongoing and new relationships, thus considering it a process rather than a singular event. As Witell et al. (2020) argue, the value of co-creation, in which clients and providers actively design offerings to meet strategic objectives, is equally important. Zolkiewski et al. (2017) emphasise the complexity of relationships within the B2B context where multiple participants with different interests, and at times contradictory interests, and stakeholders are involved. In addition to this, Lilien (2016) states that B2B fields are in the shadow of B2C marketing, which underscores the importance of adapting services for specific sectors, such as tourism, which is fundamentally service-oriented and experience-driven.

Examining the phenomenon of gamified travel tours as a form of GPS-enabled mobile gaming in corporate or institutional settings helps to fill the qualitative gap in the tourism and gamification literature from a business-to-business (B2B) perspective (Costa et al., 2017; Bozkurt & Durak, 2018; Xu et al., 2016). The study aims to understand the drivers of investment decisions, determine whether B2B purchase incentives align with gaming incentives, and assess the potential of gamified tourism services in Finland.

Table 1. Research gaps

Research gap	The gap in this research	Justification by other researchers/resources
	Gamified tourism service providers must understand the purchase motivations of B2B customers to tailor their sales strategies accordingly. This study provides practical significance as the results are helpful for the tourism industry and gamified travel tour providers.	It is reported that there is a surge in the B2B tourism market, particularly in the use of applications across various services (Wang et al., 2025; Wirtz & Kowalski, 2023).
Theoretical	More studies, especially in tourism marketing management, need to discuss the B2B customer perspective. Thus, this study provides new knowledge and theoretical significance to the tourism field.	Scholars agree that there is only a poor understanding of B2B buying motivations, thus they encourage future research about B2B customer journeys (Purmonen et al., 2023; Witell et al., 2020; Zolkiewski et al., 2017).
		Lilien (2016) concludes that B2B research receives less attention than B2C academic studies.
Methodological	Studies on the phenomenal benefits of versatile research methodologies provide diverse insights. Especially when studying customer behaviour.	According to Bozkurt and Durak (2018), there is an imbalance among research methodologies studying gamification, the primary methods being conceptual or quantitative. Thus, they encourage conducting more qualitative studies to explore the participants' and buyers' points of view. Diverse research methodologies prevent the drawing of narrow conclusions (Khan et al., 2023).

In this regard, the gaps (Table 1) in this study address the lack of researched B2B purchasing drivers for gamified tourism services, especially in the initial stages of the decision-making process, by answering the research question "*What are the purchase motivations of B2B customers for gamified tourism services in the early stages of the decision-making process?*". With the rise of gamification in tourism and the growing importance of business-to-business (B2B) business tourism, little research has examined how organisational buyers perceive, assess, and decide to purchase such services. This lack of understanding hampers providers of tourism services in formulating targeted sales approaches and in strategically positioning gamified services in the B2B marketplace.

In this way, gamified travel tours are perceived as more than leisure products; instead, they are innovation-inspired, strategically advanced offerings that can dramatically change and foster engagement, enabling destination development and promoting sustainable growth in the B2B tourism industry. While this study focuses on gamified travel tours as real-world mobile experiences, it does not extend to metaverse-based or virtual-event gamification (see, e.g., Filimonay et al., 2024; Ashton et al., 2024).

Literature review

B2B Purchase Motivations

Business-to-business (B2B) activities involve purchasing transactions between two or more organisations, as opposed to individual consumers (Ojasalo & Ojasalo, 2010). In contrast to B2C sales, B2B sales involve more sophisticated company-specific buyers, multiple buyers rather than a single seller, articles of a more considerable quantity but not various orders, and a more institutionalised order process (Hänninen et al., 2021). The B2B tourism market has experienced growth, partly driven by the adoption of hybrid work and the innovations of nomadic professionals (Festin et al., 2023).

Also included is the extensive segment of MICE tourism, which encompasses meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions, and is growing in both the global and Finnish markets (Business Oulu, 2023; CBI, 2021). Incentive travel, which aims to reward and motivate a company's employees, has demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing productivity, loyalty, and team performance (Fenich et al., 2015; Getman et al., 2024).

The effectiveness of B2B tourism sales is closely tied to sales management systems informed by an understanding of customer motivations (Mathus, 2008; Rogers, 2007). The acceleration of globalisation, advancements in technology, and growing competition all necessitate a shift in sales strategies to prioritise customer value co-creation (Tuzunkan, 2018).

Webster and Wind (1972) view B2B purchasing as a process that unfolds over multiple stages as opposed to a single occurrence. Words such as "problem" and "solution" have been attached to the events in the process creating models that range from a 3 stage model (pre-purchase, purchase, post-purchase) to a 5 stage model which includes problem recognition, information search, solution evaluation and selection, purchase, and post-purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Wu et al., 2024).

Supported by digital communication channels, inside sales—a type of remote selling—has emerged as the go-to sales channel, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic (Wu et al., 2024). According to Wu et al. (2024) in their Buyer's Intention to Purchase (BIP) model, purchase intentions are influenced by factors like seller trust, connection flexibility, willingness to appoint, and contact willingness. While motivation has been noted to factor in all stages of the purchasing cycle, it appears to be the most impactful in the phases of need recognition, information search, and evaluation.

Purchase Motivations in Tourism

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs remains a seminal model for understanding motivations in the tourism industry (Chalakova, 2018). The fulfilment of needs in tourism begins with basic service requirements, such as ensuring safety, and progresses to more advanced requirements, including social interaction, esteem, and self-actualisation.

Cohen's (1972) tourist typology, Dann's (1977) push–pull theory, Crompton's (1979) socio-psychological travel motivations, and Iso-Ahola's (1982) approach–avoidance model are also notable (Yousaf et al., 2018). While these models have some relevance to the motivations for B2C tourism, they are less clear in addressing the B2B context.

Rational motivations, such as cost and attendee efficiency, save costs, while emotional factors create trust and enhance a firm's reputation (e.g. Małecka et al., 2024; Cater & Cater, 2009). Casidy et al. (2022) divide motives into rational and situational, as well as instrumental and intrinsic. Organisational buying motives have also been detailed by Chitwood (2011) in 6 motives: some centred around gain, loss, convenience, security, ownership, and emotional satisfaction.

Rogers (1986) distinguishes five types of buyers—innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards—based on their adoption patterns for new products and services in his diffusion of innovation model. Adoption encompasses five constituent parts: awareness, persuasion, decision, implementation, and continuation, which are analogous to the stages of a marketing funnel (Singer, 2016). Since the application of gamification in the tourism sector is still in its infancy (Xu et al., 2016; Pasca et al., 2021), the model is beneficial for evaluating the B2B readiness of participants in the tourism sector who must adapt to the use of gamified services.

Gamification

Deterding et al. (2011) and Huotari & Hamari (2016) define gamification as the application of game elements, such as points, challenges, and reward systems, within non-game environments to enhance user engagement. Gamification as a socio-technological phenomenon draws attention to the aspects of value co-creation, user engagement, and user satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Werbach & Hunter, 2015).

As a dimension of the experience economy, gamification also emphasises consumer attention to personalised interaction (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Konu, 2016). Xu et al. (2016) distinguish two categories of gamification in tourism: location-based games and social games. Location-based games, such as gamified walking tours, merge the physical and digital realms, allowing users to engage more deeply with their surroundings (Gentes et al., 2010). Well-structured gamified services in tourism can also encourage sustainable tourism practices (Negrusa et al., 2015; Ali,

2020).

According to Weber (2014), gamified travel tours include mobile storytelling, competition, and exploration. These tours can uncover hidden areas, promote social interaction with locals, and cater to independent, young, and tech-savvy travellers. Travel tours can be designed as gamified experiences and offered in real-time as mobile technologies advance (Xu et al., 2016).

Knowledge of gaming motivations helps in the design and marketing of gamified tourism services (Xu et al, 2016). Among the most widely known are: Bartle's (1996) player types, Ryan and Deci's (2000) intrinsic–extrinsic motivation theory, Hamari and Koivisto's (2015) utilitarian–hedonic–social model, and Chou's (2015) Octalysis framework. For this study, Hamari and Koivisto's (2015) model is most applicable due to its focus on gamified services in tourism, which incorporates utilitarian (usefulness, ease of use) and hedonic (enjoyment, playfulness) as well as social (recognition, influence) motivations in secondary business purchasing.

Theory Synthesis

The intertwining of B2B purchase motivations, gaming motivations, and patterns of innovation adoption occurs within the scope of gamified tourism services. Krijestorac et al. (2021) state that B2B purchases tend to be more rational; however, emotional and social factors also influence the purchase (Figure 1).
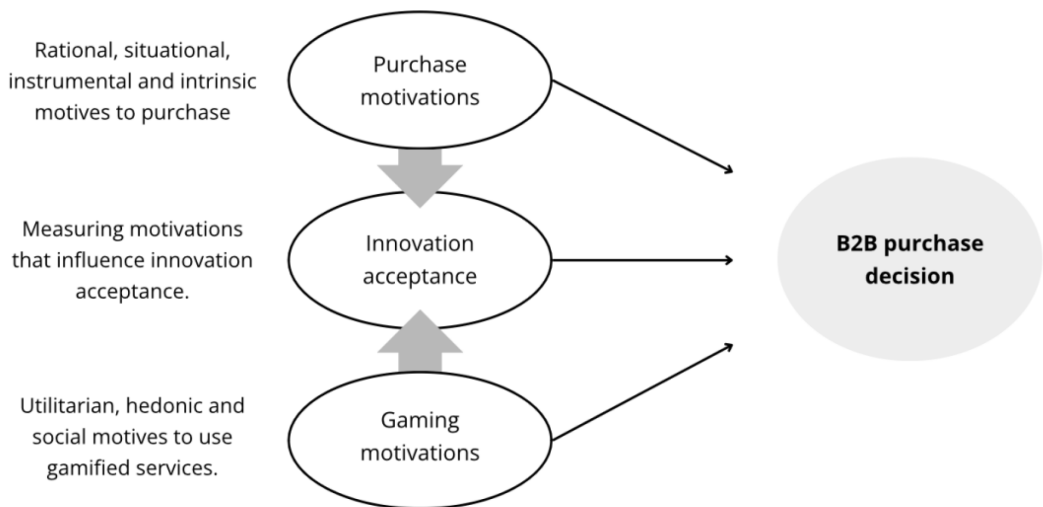

Figure 1. The connection between purchase and gaming motivations and innovation acceptance in the context of this research

Furthermore, gamification offers utilitarian, hedonic, and social benefits (Hamari & Koivisto, 2015) that align with the purchaser's motives. Rogers' (1986) innovation diffusion model provides additional temporal and behavioural dimensions to understanding the adoption of new tourism

services by business customers (Figure 1). From this perspective, it is possible to understand more effectively how B2B gamified tourism services can be tailored to meet the motivations of B2B buyers, thus enhancing strategic marketing and sales in the emerging niche.

Methodology

Research Approach and Method

This research employs a qualitative method, which is particularly useful for examining social phenomena and answering "how" and "why" questions (Tenny et al., 2022). Quantitative approaches, which rely on hypothesis testing using numerical data and statistical analysis, are not applicable here, as qualitative approaches are more effective for gathering and understanding perceptions, actions, and constructs crucial to understanding B2B purchase drivers for gamified tourism services. This decision is also supported by the call made by Bozkurt and Durak (2018) for more qualitative research in gamification that captures the dual roles of the participants and the buyers.

Data collection was conducted using semi-structured, one-on-one thematic interviews, which strike a balance between flexibility and question sequencing and phrasing, yielding rich insights in an orderly manner (Ritchie et al., 2003; George, 2022). The structure facilitates an equilibrium between pre-established themes and the need to ask unplanned, additional questions, making the discussion more free-flowing, which builds warmth and trust (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Sampling

A purposive sampling method was employed to focus on representatives from public and private organisations with decision-making responsibilities. Using the author's professional contacts, participant leads were found through the customer lists of two providers of gamified travel tours. From 58 email invites issued to businesses that had shown interest in the gamified travel tours, seven interviews were obtained. Two additional participants were recruited through professional connections, bringing the total to nine interviews. The organisations varied in size (small, medium, large) and industry sector, as well as their prior experience with gamified travel tours.

Table 2. Interviewees

ID	Organization	Size	Industry area	Has purchased a GTT?
I1	Private	Medium	Social services	Yes
I2	Public	Large	Tourism / DMO	No
I3	Private	Small	IT	Yes
I4	Private	Medium	Trade union	Yes
I5	Public	Large	Public administration	Yes
I6	Private	Medium	Education	No
I7	Private	Small	Tourism / Events	Yes
I8	Private	Large	HR & Consulting	Yes
I9	Private	Small	Renovation	Yes

Although the interview sample is relatively small, all participants represented decision-makers or expert informants in tourism, events, or destination management. Given their specialised insight, the number of interviews was deemed sufficient for achieving thematic saturation in this

exploratory study. This limited sample size is acknowledged as a methodological constraint.

Interview Design and Procedure

The interview guide was structured around the study's three main research questions:

- *Why do B2B customers choose to buy from a new tourism service provider?*
- *What motivates B2B customers to invest in gamified travel tours?*
- *How do B2B buying motivations align with gaming motivations?*

Thus, three thematic areas structured the conversation: (1) the acceptance of new providers of tourism services, (2) gamification, and (3) purchase motivations. With participants from the study based in different geographical locations, the interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams in October 2024 and lasted between 17 and 32 minutes. All the interviews were captured, automatically transcribed, and in Finnish to allow for free expression. Participants were briefed before the study about the use of recordings and assured of confidentiality. All participants provided informed consent.

Data Analysis

The dataset was analysed applying Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis: (1) familiarisation, (2) coding, (3) generating initial themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) refining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Understanding the dataset required revisiting it multiple times, deepening understanding, coding, and grouping recurrent topics into thematic categories. These included the acceptance of a new tourism service provider, the rational and emotional motivations for purchase, and the purpose of gamification. (See Table 2.)

Table 3. Data analysis summary of the themes

Theme	Answers the question of	Key codes
Acceptance of a new tourism service provider	How likely, how often and why the business buys from a new service provider, according to the interviewee?	Innovation acceptance: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, laggards
Rational purchase motivations	What rational motivations lead to a B2B purchase decision, according to the interviewee?	Usefulness: price, location, need
		Ease of use: professionally made, ready to use
Emotional purchase motivations	What emotional motivations lead to a B2B purchase decision, according to the interviewee?	Enjoyment & playfulness: fun, friendly competition, engagement, immersion
		Recognition: novelty
		Social Influence: endorsements, recommendations, reviews
Purpose of gamification	What is the purpose and/or intended use of gamified travel tours for a business, according to the interviewee?	Team building, immersion, engaging, additional value, fun, memorable, purposeful

Findings

The interview data yielded four key themes: (1) acceptance of a new tourism service provider, (2) rational purchase motivations, (3) emotional purchase motivations, and (4) the purpose of gamification. All interviews featured these themes, which encapsulate the reasons B2B customers opted to adopt gamified tourism services.

Acceptance of a new tourism service provider

From the interviews, respondents were classified using Rogers' (1986) innovation adoption model. The early and late majority were the largest groups, while each of the other categories, innovators, early adopters, and laggards, was represented by a single respondent. Private organisations dominated the earlier adoption categories, characterised by a willingness to engage with new experiences and flexible purchasing. In contrast, public organisations tended to have rigid procurement processes and low acceptance of innovation, placing them in the later adoption categories.

Purchase Motivations

The interviews revealed a complex framework of B2B purchasing motivators for gamified tourism services, which were categorised into rational and emotional drivers (Table 3). Emotions underpinning the purchase of gamified tourism products tend to carry more weight, even though rational motives dominate the overall decision-making process in B2B tourism purchases.

Table 4. Summary of the findings about purchase motivations

Purchase motivation	Gaming motivation	Findings of this research	Nr of resp.	Interviewees
Rational	Usefulness	Price	9	I1: "It all depends on the budget and what is available." I2: "Price would be a major factor. We have a limited budget, so that is probably the most important consideration." I6: "Of course, price is a big factor. In the public sector, the budget dictates most decisions."
		Location	8	I1: "After we decide what we would like to do as a team, we consider the distance, so that everyone has a reasonable travel time." I3: "The biggest factor is location. The transportation there is easy and convenient for everyone." I4: "Ultimately, it is usually a matter of locking down the timing and location first. Location plays a big role in deciding what activities are possible."
		Need	4	I5: "Ah, yes, purchase decisions are need-driven. It is rare for us to choose a provider based on something other than a need." I4: "There are two ways: either a need arises internally, and we start exploring what is available, or sometimes a team member manages to pitch something that sparks interest, and from there it develops." I8: "It is a mix of both. Sometimes we already know what we want, and other times we go with whatever is easiest."

	Ease-of-use	Ease-of-use	6	I2: "Even if we can do something ourselves, it is always better to work with a professional. It is important that there is a solid concept and that it is logical." 54 I4: "In my case, it also means that I do not always feel the need to create something new myself. There is often a wish to try something independently, but a professionally organised service is much better." I9: "A new service or a product is also easier to present to the team when it looks clean and professional, so you do not have to explain as much."
Emotional	Enjoyment	Fun	7	I9: "It is when there is a certain appeal to a product that makes people want to use it. " It is because it is fun and enjoyable." I2: "If there is a game element involved in a city tour, I think it could work as an engaging and fun activity." I5: "Gaming—It is always fun—or at least, I think it is!" I7: "Gamification seems like the more fun option
	Playfulness	Engagement	6	I5: "Engagement and the fact that it is different from the usual." I4: "It is about making something more fun and engaging, so people do not zone out." I8: "It has been shown that when you engage in something, especially if it is gamified, you tend to remember it better… it can help with team bonding. It is fun and it makes the experience more memorable." I9: "There has to be an element of engagement and something that keeps you hooked. Gamification often makes the experience more immersive and fun"
	Recognition	Novelty	1	I9: "Price is a big factor. Then there is also the duration of the experience and how unique and new the activity is. If it is something we have not tried before, that would make it even more appealing."
	Social Influence	Endorsmeents	5	I8: "It depends on the location, the price, and possibly the endorsements. For example, if it is recommended to us through an endorsement from another service provider who has worked with the activity provider before." I2: "Ideally, they should have a track record showing how it's worked in the past, including some data on how much it has been used."

Among the rational motivations, pricing was cited by all respondents as the single most important factor. For many individuals, the first step in making a purchase is determining their budget, which then restricts or enables specific service options. Such a cost-focused mindset was common to both public and private bodies, illustrating a no-nonsense attitude to spending taxpayer or shareholder money. Following that was location, which was lauded for reducing travel time, saving costs, and improving logistical ease. Most respondents stressed that the associated proximity and accessibility often dictate service viability. Need was another powerful motivator, especially in public organisations, where purchases tend to be more reactive to a clearly defined problem. Conversely, private organisations were more adaptable, opportunistically contracting providers whenever attractive deals were offered. Ease of use was critical, with respondents highlighting the operational benefits of well-designed, professional services that, once initiated,

require no substantial additional effort to implement.

The emotional reasons surfaced strongly when respondents provided feedback about the gamified tourism services. Fun emerged as a salient theme in the interviews conducted, as it can elevate the tourism experience into engaging, memorable, and social activities. It was also associated with enhancing corporate culture, improving employee morale, and strengthening intra-team relationships. Engagement was described as the essence of the gamified experience, with considerations made to its ability to create immersion, knowledge retention, and social interactions amongst participants. The use of endorsements was cited as an important trust signal, where other organisations' recommendations and demonstrable success data were valued far more than consumer reviews. Novelty was mentioned by one interviewee, who particularly described it as salient to innovators who view unfamiliar and distinctive experiences as a means of energising and differentiating routine team tasks.

The data presented shows that logical elements, such as pricing, geography, and business operational effectiveness, still hold weight in B2B buying decisions. However, emotional and experiential factors, particularly those related to recreation, assimilation, and originality, are particularly impactful when evaluating the appeal of gamified tourism services. Therefore, B2B sales marketing must incorporate both functional and experiential elements, with an emphasis on integrated, effortless, and cost-effective solutions that are budget-friendly, as well as underscoring the social, creative, and memorable shared experience value added that Go Beyond deals offer. Table 3 provides a comprehensive illustration of these motivations, along with detailed quotes from interviewees that support the analysis.

Purpose of Gamification

Every interviewee was aware of gamification, defining it as the incorporation of game components — such as points, leaderboards, and rewards —into non-game contexts. Most recognised its relevance to improving engagement and motivation, while a few emphasised its use in training, education, and customer loyalty programs. A few participants had firsthand experience with gamified tourism activities. These included city tours, escape rooms, and strategy workshops, where gamification principles were applied, and participants appreciated the potential of gamification to enhance learning, productivity, and memory.

The primary intention behind acquiring tourism services within a corporate framework was identified as providing recreation days, such as team-building activities, incentive travel, or other well-being activities aimed at enhancing employee satisfaction and workplace morale. Gamified tourism services were considered especially useful for overcoming monotony and re-energising teams, and, in some instances, were used as icebreakers for clients or as educational exercises.

To build team spirit. It is all about challenging ourselves and seeing how we behave in different situations. (I9)

In response to a question about whether team members preferred gamified or traditional travel tours, a clear majority opted for the former. This decision was affected by the team's atmosphere, age composition, time availability, and the event's purpose.

Respondents remained very positive about the potential of gamification in tourism, expecting

it to continue evolving and enable increasingly immersive, engaging, and tailored activities. Several, however, stressed the importance of ensuring that gamification does not overshadow real, tangible experiences. Overall, participants believed that gamification has excellent potential as an incubator for innovation in animating tourism, especially in social connection, engagement, and memorability.

Interestingly, sustainability was not explicitly mentioned as a motivation. This omission suggests that the potential of gamification for promoting sustainable practices remains underexplored in B2B contexts.

Discussion and Conclusions

This research analysed B2B clients' purchase motivations for travel tours featuring gamification elements, with a particular focus on new service provider selection, investment motivations for gamified experiences, and the connections between these motivations and established gaming motivations. The results support the finding that B2B decision-making is dominated by rational, purposeful logic, with the most critical factors being price, location, and service usefulness. Emotional factors, such as fun, engagement, and social influence, are secondary, although they become more important in gamified tourism offerings.

The application of Rogers' 1986 Diffusion of Innovation model reveals that private-sector organisations tend to adopt gamified tourism services earlier than public-sector organisations, which often have slower, more rigid procurement processes. The study also revealed strong parallels between the B2B purchase motivations and the gaming motivations described by Hamari and Koivisto (2015), as all six gaming motivations were captured in the interview data.

This research confirmed that, in B2B contexts, the purchase of gamified tourism services is primarily driven by rational factors. Strategic design of emotional factors, however, has the potential to significantly augment purchase. If service providers enhance their marketing approaches to incorporate both sets of motivations, gamified experiences could be more effectively positioned as valuable tools for engagement, learning, and team development in corporate settings.

Contributions   and   Implications

This research aimed to understand the underlying motivations of business-to-business customers for investing in gamified travel tours. Specifically, it examined the reasons behind their selection of new service providers and sought possible correlations between motivational factors for purchasing and gaming. Although team building and incentive travel emerged strongly, the findings also indicate that motivations for purchase extend beyond these to include education, corporate training, and client relationship building. The results suggest that gamification in the B2B tourism sector has significant growth potential.

Table 5. Contribution of the study

Contribution	Justifications of the research gap	Findings of this study
Practical	It is reported that there is a surge in the B2B tourism market, especially in The use of applications in various services (Wirtz & Kowalski, 2023).	Providing valuable insights for gamified tourism service providers about what B2B purchase motivations they should consider when developing marketing strategies. The emphasis should be on practicalities and on showcasing the engaging, fun aspects of gamified experiences.
	Small and medium-sized tourism businesses have identified a need for help in developing their marketing and sales competencies, as well as guidance on collaboration, networking, and new business model skills (MEAE, 2022, 2023).	
Theoretical	Scholars agree that there is a poor understanding of B2B buying motivations; thus, they encourage future research on B2B customer journeys (Purmonen et al., 2023; Witell et al., 2020; Zolkiewski et al., 2017).	Confirming previous studies that B2B buying motivations tend to be indeed more rational than emotional. However, it is also identified that tourist gaming motivations correlate with the B2B purchase motivations for gamified travel tours.
	Lilien (2016) concludes that B2B research receives less attention than B2C academic studies.	
Methodological	According to Bozkurt and Durak (2018), there is an imbalance in the research methodologies used to study gamification, with the primary methods being conceptual or quantitative. Thus, they encourage conducting more qualitative studies to explore the participants' and buyers' points of view.	Providing a new perspective for business studies by researching B2B purchase motivations through a qualitative study, with one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Resulting in very personal and authentic responses that lead to versatile conclusions.
	Diverse research methodologies prevent the drawing of narrow conclusions (Khan et al., 2023).	

Rational motives, price, location, and usefulness were found to be the dominant factors in B2B purchasing decisions for gamified tours. Emotional aspects such as fun, engagement, social influence, and the team-building potential of the tours were secondary. These findings support prior research by Krijestorac et al. (2021), which found that rational and emotional motivations dominate in B2B purchasing. These results also support Hamari and Koivisto's (2015) six motivations for gaming, all of which were identified in the dataset used in this study. The qualitative method, comprising nine semi-structured interviews, also provided rich, personal illustrations of the decision-making processes and addressed the methodological gap in gamification research noted by Bozkurt and Durak (2018).

From a practical standpoint, the research suggests that service providers should design combined rational-emotional marketing strategies. Along with service readiness, the service should also incorporate experiential elements such as playfulness, competition, and immersion. For public organisations, which are traditionally slower than private organisations in adopting

innovations, social proof is crucial. Therefore, testimonials and endorsements need to be strategically employed to engage more cautious adopters. (See Table 4.) For practical implementation, DMOs and tourism operators could integrate gamification into existing loyalty or training programs, use digital leaderboards to encourage collaboration, or design storytelling-based quests for incentive travel. Such approaches connect functional goals (cost-effectiveness, logistics) with emotional engagement (fun, creativity, teamwork).

From a theoretical perspective, this research builds upon the work of Purmonen et al. (2023), Witell et al. (2020), Zolkiewski et al. (2017), and Lilien (2016), which is scarce in the literature on B2B buying motivations. It does so by applying consumer gaming motivation frameworks to B2B tourism contexts. Methodologically, this study addresses a gap in the literature stemming from an overabundance of quantitative and conceptual approaches to gamification. (See Table 4.)

The study establishes that the B2B market for gamified tourism services has considerable potential. All interviewed organisations preferred gamified tours to regular ones. There is also an impetus for marketers to emphasise rational buying motives while encouraging the gamification of services to appeal to all segments of the organisation by highlighting the engagement, learning, and relationship-building benefits of gamified services.

Beyond these contributions, the findings also offer an initial perspective on how experiences, technology, and responsibility intersect in B2B tourism. The motivations identified in this study, usefulness, locality, ease of implementation, memorability, and team cohesion, reflect qualities that are central to technology-mediated, co-created experiences. Although responsibility and sustainability were not explicitly presented as purchasing criteria, the preference for local, ready-to-use, mobile, gamified tours suggests that these experiences can serve as lower-impact alternatives to more resource-intensive corporate travel solutions. Thus, the study contributes conceptually to emerging discussions on how digitally supported experiential services may be positioned within responsible and sustainable business tourism.

Evaluation of the study

This research enhances our understanding of the reasons behind purchasing gamified travel tours in a business-to-business (B2B) setting, although it has several limitations. From a methodological standpoint, qualitative one-on-one interviews muddled the organisational and individual levels, making it challenging to disentangle personal and corporate motivations. Moreover, purposive sampling may have introduced a positive bias, as all interviewees had previously expressed interest in gamified travel tours.

The lack of cultural diversity, especially the focus on participants from within Finnish industries, also limited the scope and applicability of the research findings to other contexts. Furthermore, the concentration on gamified travel tours may have missed motivations pertinent to different categories of gamified tourism.

Focusing on motives categorised as rational also represents another limitation. Drivers of the purchasing decision, such as enjoyment or social influence, received insufficient attention. This may arise from the B2B purchasing approach or the interview structure failing to prompt deeper

consideration of experiential factors. Also, the reliance on self-reported data from organisations already interested in gamification introduces a potential bias.

Future research

Further work on B2B buying behaviour and gamification within tourism should consider areas such as augmented reality experiences, gamified hospitality, and virtual cultural tours beyond traditional travel tours (Weber, 2014). This would allow for a more comprehensive comparison and evaluation of their influence on B2B buying behaviour and purchasing decisions.

Moreover, a more diverse setting is essential as purchasing behaviour is linked to cultural values (Krijestorac et al., 2021). Variation between Western and Eastern countries is a suggested gap for cross-country comparisons. From a methodological perspective, the addition of case studies (Gerring, 2004) and qualitative interviews, along with quantitative and mixed-method approaches, would strengthen the findings.

Research should also explore the differences between rural and urban markets. Businesses in urban areas prioritise innovation and convenience, while those in rural areas value authenticity and sustainability. Furthermore, examining emotional and psychological factors as non-rational purchase motivations expands our understanding of B2B decision-making and helps meet both functional and experiential needs.

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