



Explaining the Future of Cultural Valorization in Sports Organizations with the Approach of Implementing Gamification

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Abstract

This study aims to explain the future of cultural valorization in sports organizations with the approach of implementing gamification. The study was conducted in two parts. The first part was implemented with a qualitative approach and thematic analysis method. The participants included 15 experts familiar with Iranian sports organizations who were selected purposefully and criterion-based. Data collection continued through exploratory interviews until theoretical saturation. The validity and reliability of the data were confirmed using Holsti, Scott's p-value, Cohen's kappa, and Krappendorff's alpha. In the second part, the structural analysis method was used using MICMAC software to examine the interaction effects of variables. In this stage, the key drivers of cultural valorization with the approach of gamification in sports organizations were identified and prioritized. The results of the qualitative part identified 20 initial themes related to gamification in sports organizations. Structural-interpretive analysis showed that among the 20 drivers examined in the gamification model, four factors: motivation and reward based on gamification, competition design and levels

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of progress, culture building and promotion of indigenous values, and participatory leadership and management approaches had the greatest direct and indirect impact and at the same time had little dependence; therefore, they were identified as key drivers of the system. These factors play a driving role in the future structure of gamification and are considered the axis of digital and cultural transformation in sports organizations. Other factors such as training and development of human resources through games, moral and social values in sports, cultural contextualization in gamification design, and branding and cultural communication of sports are more subject to change. The four identified key drivers have a major driving role in the success of the cultural gamification system in sports organizations, and focusing on them is strategic and necessary.

Extended Abstract

Introduction

In today's competitive environment, organizations face significant challenges in attracting, motivating, and retaining a loyal audience. The rapid growth of digital technologies, particularly social networks and online games, has transformed human interaction patterns. Within this landscape, gamification emerges as an effective strategy to enhance motivation, engagement, and satisfaction by applying game mechanics in non-game settings.

The success of gamification, however, largely depends on its alignment with cultural and social contexts. Cultural values, as a core element of social identity, can shape its effectiveness. For instance, in collectivist societies, cooperative elements work better than competitive ones, while in individualistic cultures, personal rewards play a stronger role in motivation.

In Iran, where cultural values such as collectivism, morality, and national identity are deeply rooted, gamification design must reflect these principles. Ignoring them may cause resistance, reduce motivation, or even harm social identity. Despite its importance, little research has directly addressed the influence of cultural values on gamification in Iranian sports organizations. Thus, this study aims to propose a localized gamification model that fits cultural values while fostering participation, motivation, and audience loyalty.

Methods

This research aimed to explore the future of cultural value creation in sports organizations through the implementation of gamification. The study was conducted in two main phases. In the first phase, a qualitative method with a content analysis approach was applied. The participants consisted of experts familiar with Iranian sports organizations, selected purposefully and based on predefined criteria. In this stage, 15 in-depth interviews were carried out until theoretical saturation was reached, ensuring that no new concepts emerged. Data collection relied on an inductive approach, moving from parts to whole, while both exploratory interviews and systematic library research enriched the findings.

To ensure validity, several measures were considered, including the expertise of participants, the content validity of the interview framework, and inter-coder agreement in concept extraction. Interviews were conducted according to a pre-designed analytical framework, and to enhance internal validity, feedback was given to interviewees after each session. Furthermore, interim patterns derived from the data were shared with participants to capture any additional insights without influencing their responses during interviews. Reliability, defined in qualitative research as the stability and repeatability of results, was confirmed by continuing interviews until no new information appeared. After 15 interviews over six months, repetition of data signaled theoretical saturation.

The robustness of the qualitative findings was confirmed through four quantitative measures: Holsti coefficient (Percentage of Agreement, PAO = 0.855), Scott's pi coefficient (0.820), Cohen's kappa (0.746), and Krippendorff's alpha (0.710). All values fell within acceptable ranges, indicating strong validity and reliability of the data.

The second phase of the research focused on analyzing the interactions among the identified components, drawing upon experts' views. Beyond mapping relationships, this phase sought to determine the key drivers with the most significant influence on the future of cultural value creation in sports organizations through gamification. Structural analysis was performed using MICMAC software, which enabled classification of variables into influential drivers and dependent consequences. This approach revealed the structure of interrelationships and facilitated the design of a roadmap for cultural transformation in sports organizations. Ultimately, the study highlights gamification as a strategic tool for promoting sustainable cultural value in the sports sector.

Results

The results of the qualitative section identified 20 primary themes related to gamification in sports organizations. Structural-interpretive analysis showed that among the 20 drivers examined in the gamification model, four factors: gamification-based motivation and reward, competition design and levels of progress, culture building and promotion of indigenous values, and participatory leadership and management approaches, had the greatest direct and indirect impact and at the same time had little dependence; therefore, they were identified as key drivers of the system. These factors play a driving role in the future structure of gamification and are considered the axis of digital and cultural transformation in sports organizations. Other factors such as training and development of human resources through games, moral and social values in sports, cultural contextualization in gamified design, and branding and cultural communication of sports are more subject to change.

Conclusion

Accordingly, the design and implementation of game-like models in sports organizations should be based on a detailed contextual analysis, cultural needs assessment, and participatory design to ensure its acceptance, effectiveness,

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and sustainability. The four key drivers identified in this study, namely participatory leadership, structured motivation, indigenous culture, and competitive design, form the main foundations of this model and pave the way for transformation. Also, other components such as training, technology, and performance evaluation play a facilitating and supporting role in the implementation of the model.

Keywords: cultural values, gamification, foresight