

# Gamification and visitor engagement in smart exercise travel: A spatial approach

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## **Abstract**

Quantified travelers often use mobile exercise apps and gamified features to manage their physical activities while visiting destinations. This study empirically explores spatially varying relationships between four types of gamified experiences – curiosity, challenge, social recognition, and social reciprocity – and visitors' behavioral engagement in the context of exercise travel. We use novel data of gamified experiences and 3,787 exercise activities generated by 869 app users who visited a famous tourist island in 2015. Using aspatial and spatial analytical methods, this study finds that gamified experiences play a differential role in building the calorie burn and exercise time of tourist and resident visitors. Furthermore, the visitor gamification-engagement relationship varies across the type of gamified experience and the individual and clustered locations. These findings offer important implications integrating exercise app-based gamification with destination management and improving a geospatial visitor engagement, which extends our knowledge of smart tourism design.

**Keywords:** *Smart tourism design; Gamification; Visitor engagement*

**Track:** Tourism Marketing