

From Classroom to Game Room: A Case Study on Gamification in Hospitality Education in Nepal”

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ABSTRACT

In the hospitality industry, changes that take place in this industry are pretty fast, Traditional classroom instructional strategies, commonly fail to equip students well in working in an industry that is fast-paced and focused on customer interaction. The case study is based on how gamification in teaching activities can be implemented and makes teaching more fruitful in a hospitality management institute in Nepal.

The study aims at targeting the location of the introduction of game-like characteristics like role playing exercises, point-based rewards, interactive problems and some simulation based instruction to the chosen hospitality courses. Student surveys as well as interviews of the instructors and classroom observations (conducted during one semester) were used to collect the data.

The results indicate that those gamified methods made the learning process more interactive and interesting as such, students were more motivated and developed soft skills via teamwork, communication, and critical thinking. The teachers also had more active classroom environment and student responsiveness. Nevertheless, some obstacles are also depicted in the study, such as poor availability of digital tools and the necessity to introduce more faculty training.

On the whole, the case shows that a wise application of the principles of gamification can become a helpful means of reorganizing the field of hospitality education to meet the needs of the actual workplace more closely.

Key words: Hospitality education, gamification, engagement, students, Nepal, experiential learning, teaching innovation, case study

1. INTRODUCTION

Hospitality industry constitutes one of the most vibrant sectors where the nature of customers, their dynamic preferences and adaptability to technological change is continuously changing the aspect of work demand. For this, graduates of hospitality studied not only in terms of technical competence but are also anticipated to be adaptive, be able to solve problems, and possess good interpersonal skills. Nonetheless, very often, the traditional classroom model, which is highly reliant on lectures, rote learning, and examinations fails to equip students with the means to adapt to such a rapid and service-minded environment. Such a discrepancy between college-delivered instructional methods and employment requirements has encouraged teaching professionals to consider new methods of teaching.

One such promising method is gamification which is the application of game elements that are beyond a game environment. Gamification aims to enhance education by including simulated challenges, point-based rewards, role playing and a better sense of participation in the learning process. The study indicates that the world over, gamification has the potential to optimize student engagement, boost be remember technique that will keep ideas and concepts in mind, and enrich students with the kind of soft skills they require to develop in life, like group work, communication, and critical thinking. However, disheartening, there is still potential in the premise that in spite of these promising results, its application in hospitality education in Nepal has received insufficient attention.

The present study tries to fill this gap by considering the application of gamification in hospitality management institute in Nepal. It examines the creative use of game-inspired strategies that are capable of changing classroom experiences to become more interactive and student central. Specifically, the study considers the reaction to gamified teaching method by the students and the instructors, the perceived advantages in the area of the learning results and classroom management, as well as the perceived challenges to the more extensive use of the technique.

In the presentation of this case study, the paper seeks to bring to the light the possibilities and the pitfalls of gamification as a pedagogical tool. Finally, the results are relevant to existing debates concerning the

reformation of Nepalese hospitality education to be increasingly consistent with the needs of modern labor market and enrich the experiences of the students to ensure learning becomes more relevant.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Gamification in Education

Gamification, defined as the integration of game-like elements into non-game settings, has gained wide recognition in the field of education. Common strategies include point systems, leaderboards, badges, storytelling, and role-play exercises (Deterding et al., 2011). These elements are designed to increase engagement by making learning interactive and rewarding. Unlike traditional lecture-based methods, gamified approaches focus on active participation, instant feedback, and learner autonomy, which can improve both motivation and knowledge retention (Dominguez et al., 2013).

2.2. Application in Higher Education

In recent years, universities worldwide have adopted gamification across disciplines such as business, engineering, and healthcare. Studies suggest that gamification can help students remain focused, reduce dropout rates, and foster critical thinking (Subhash & Cudney, 2018). Importantly, the approach shifts students from passive listeners to active contributors in the learning process. Instructors also benefit, as gamified classrooms often create more dynamic interactions, allowing teachers to act as facilitators rather than information providers.

2.3. Gamification in Hospitality and Tourism Education

The hospitality and tourism sector places high value on skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and customer service. Traditional academic methods frequently fail to replicate the complexity of real service environments. Gamification has therefore been used internationally to create more practical, scenario-based learning. For example, role-play activities allow students to practice guest interactions, while simulations replicate hotel operations or crisis management situations (Rivera & Garden, 2020). Research indicates that these methods enhance soft skills, encourage problem-solving under pressure, and provide students with a safe space to learn from mistakes before entering the workplace.

2.4. Gaps in the Nepalese Context

While gamification has shown positive results globally, its adoption in Nepalese higher education, particularly in hospitality management, remains limited. Most institutes in Nepal still rely heavily on traditional lectures and written assessments. A few have introduced case studies and internships, but structured gamified methods are rarely reported. The lack of faculty training, limited access to digital tools, and policy inertia are among the barriers to innovation (Shrestha, 2021). This gap underlines the importance of exploring how gamification can be implemented effectively within Nepal's educational landscape.

2.5. Summary

The literature demonstrates that gamification has the potential to enrich learning experiences, enhance engagement, and better prepare students for industry demands. However, its role in Nepalese hospitality education remains under-researched. This study seeks to address that gap by providing empirical insights into how gamified approaches can transform classroom practices and contribute to producing graduates who are more aligned with the realities of the hospitality industry.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research used a case study design because it enabled the researcher to take a deeper examination of how gamification could be utilized as a whole in a hospitality management institute in Nepal. Case study is selected as it enables written expression of the actual classroom practices and will facilitate the draw out of the actual experiences of the students as well as the orientations of the faculty members.

3.2 Setting and Participants

The research was carried out in three hospitality management institutes in Nepal:

- **Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM)** – a government-owned institution with a structured curriculum and strong industry linkage.
- **Silver Mountain School of Hotel Management** – a private institute with international collaborations and more exposure to global practices.
- **Veda Technical Academy** – an emerging institution focusing on technical and vocational approaches to hospitality education.

Two groups of participants were there:

Students: A total of 100 undergraduate students across the institutions who were taking courses related to hospitality where participated in the study.

Faculty Members: 15 teaching faculty members, 5 faculty from each institutions were chosen among the people who taught fundamental hospitality topics.

This variety of participants gave an equal measurement of both the experiences of the learners and the teachers with gamification.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were gathered over the course of one academic semester using three complementary methods:

Student Surveys

- Structured questionnaires were distributed to students at the end of the semester.
- The surveys captured student perceptions of engagement, motivation, skill development, and overall satisfaction with gamified teaching methods.

Instructor Interviews

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participating faculty members.
- These interviews explored their experiences of implementing gamification, perceived benefits, and the challenges they encountered.

Classroom Observations

- Non-participant observations were conducted during selected class sessions.
- The observations focused on student participation, interaction patterns, and the overall classroom atmosphere when gamified activities were introduced.

3.4 Data Analysis

The research had a mix of the quantitative and qualitative methods.

Descriptive statistics was used in interpreting the survey results in order to determine trends and patterns in the responses of students.

The transcripts of the interviews and the notes of my observations were analyzed in the framework of thematic analysis to outline the most frequent themes like motivation, collaboration in a team, communication and classroom spirit.

The mixed-methods approach enhanced the validity of the research study in where both quantitative trends and anecdotal information could be considered.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Each of the institutions involved was given ethical clearance to participate before commencement of data collection. All the participants were duly informed about their participation and a consent was obtained. The anonymity and confidentiality was ensured by giving the students and faculty codes. The filed information was kept in confidentiality and utilized solely with research endeavors.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the results of this research, gamification remains in its early phases when applied to Nepalese education in hospitality. Although the chosen three institutes, NATHM, Silver Mountain, and Veda Technical Academy have tried to apply some game-like approaches, the general usage of gamification is not high. Only some of these strategies were used at each of the institutions, with the pattern being role-plays, use of points as rewards, and small group work. Less developed technology like computer-based simulations, educational games, or reward programs have not been entirely utilized.

4.1 Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM)

A few of the role-plays and scenario-like activities were established at NATHM. Such activities were helpful to students as they allowed practicing communication with guests and collaboration. The limited space of the curriculum structure is however, because it is government regulated with little or no flexibility when

it comes to engaging in a broader gamified process. Teaching staff also showed interest in teaching devices that are more creative but noted policy limitations and lack of support by the institutions as the main challenges.

4.2 Silver Mountain School of Hotel Management

Silver Mountain recorded high adoption in comparison to the other two institutions. It has started experimenting with classrooms challenges and point-based tasks that can be interactive with international partners. Both teachers and students said that such activities made them participate and engage more. Nonetheless, here too, gamification was not implemented as a method of curriculum on a large scale but in little segments of the curriculum. These obstacles were primarily associated with the price of digital materials and the deficiency of faculty training in the development of comprehensive gamified modules.

4.3 Veda Technical Academy

Veda Technical Academy brought in gamification in a small scale. These activities incorporated: quizzes in the classroom, competition among the groups and, role-play in special cases. The activities assisted in dispelling the boredom in the classrooms and a participation in learning was facilitated. Nevertheless, when it comes to gamification it was piecemeal and relied on the initiative of the individual teacher. Faculty members own up that more formal training and faculty support would be needed to broaden its use.

4.4 Cross-Institutional Insights

Generally, across the three institutes, it can be argued that gamification remains a teaching tool that has not been fully adopted to any degree but merely tested on a small scale. The potential presence of benefits postulated on the basis of the observed results (e.g., increased student motivation, the enhanced level of classroom engagement, and the partial development of soft skills) suggests that gamification can play a significant role in the future of hospitality education in Nepal.

4.5 DISCUSSION

The findings reinforce global research which shows that gamification enhances student engagement and skill development (Domínguez et al., 2013; Subhash & Cudney, 2018). But nothing can be better explained than experimental and partial adoption as the present scenario in Nepal. Silver Mountain has a comparatively higher degree of development given that it has been subjected to global exposure, NATHM is still hampered by policy frameworks and Veda is in an initial yet promising stage where gamification is being coupled with SWOT analysis of students so as to personalize the learning experience. This points to the idea that gamification is yet to become a widely used approach in the field, but it has strong potential in the teaching practice of hospitality in Nepal. With effective faculty development, technological investment, and favorable policies in the institution, more gamification tools may be allowed featuring classroom learning to suit the industrial requirements.

4.6 Tables And Figures

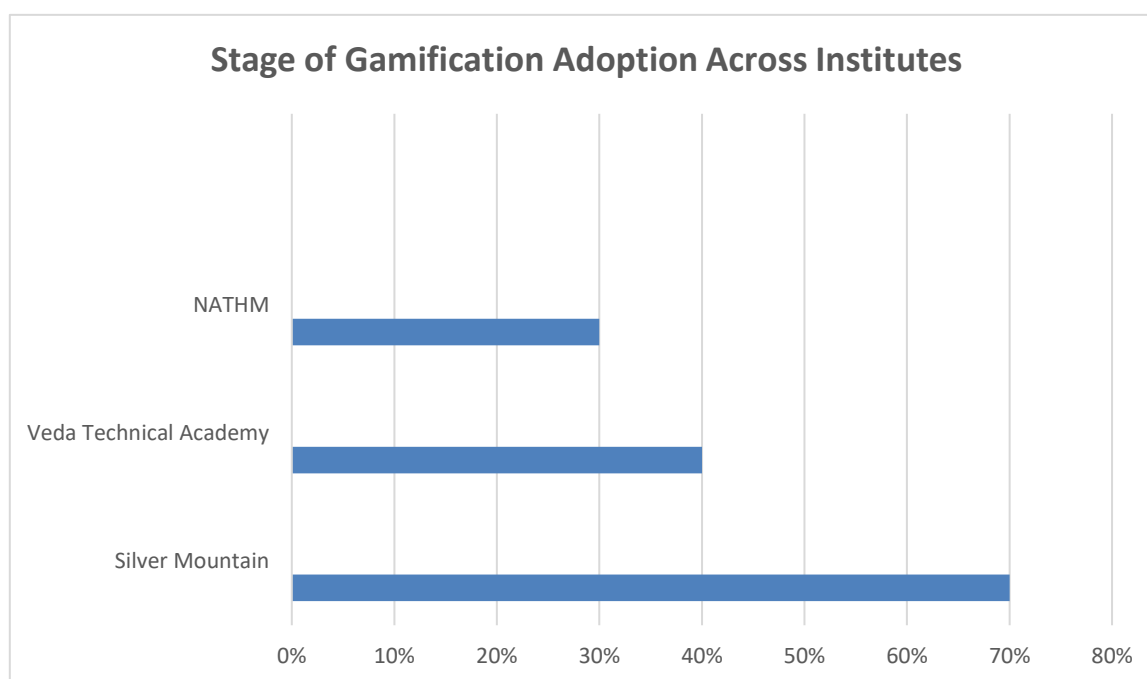
Table 1: Gamification Methods Applied in the Three Institutes

Institute	Gamification Methods Implemented	Level of Implementation	Key Observations
NATHM	Role-playing, scenario-based exercises	Limited	Curriculum rigidity limits broader adoption
Silver Mountain	Role-playing, point-based challenges, interactive problem-solving	Moderate	High engagement; cost of digital tools is a challenge
Veda Technical Academy	Role-playing, group competitions, SWOT analysis	Undergoing process	Personalized learning; soft skills development; resource/training constraint

Table 2: Key Benefits and Challenges of Gamification Across Institutes

Aspect	Benefits	Challenges
Student Motivation	Increased interest and participation	Partial adoption; activities optional
Soft Skills	Improved teamwork, communication, problem-solving	Limited exposure to advanced tools/simulations
Faculty Perspective	More active classrooms	Lack of training; policy restrictions
Institutional Factors	Encourages innovation	Cost and resource constraints; policy rigidity

Figure 1: Stage of Gamification Adoption Across Institutes



CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research paper looked into the introduction of gamification in hospitality education in three academic establishments in Nepal, namely NATHM, Silver Mountain and Veda Technical Academy. The results display that although few gamified techniques (role-playing, group competitions, and point-based activities) have been tried, utilization is done in a scattered manner. More innovative methods, such as digital simulations, well-designed reward systems, or whole gamified modules have not been exhausted. And these drawbacks were accompanied by the fact that the benefits they observed were remarkable across all three cases. Students described an increase in motivation, more active learning process and developed collaboration properties, communication and thinking skills. Teaching faculty observed a more active classroom with an increased level of engagement among students than what exists in traditional lecture classes. As demonstrated at Veda, SWOT analysis can apply towards aligning gamified activity with student profile to further demonstrate how these ways of thinking can help to tailor learning to be more individualized and meaningful.

Concurrently, the following issues are identified as the critical themes of the study: policy constraints at educational establishments like NATHM, financial barriers to the implementation of digital tools at the institutes like Silver Mountain, and systematic faculty training and resource creation at Veda. Such obstacles explain why gamification is not a common activity in Nepal in hospitality education yet.

Practical Implications

For Institutions: Learning institutions would be encouraged to train their faculty in the process of the gamification design and application so that has to stop being an isolated activity and instead turn into a structured pedagogical practice.

For Policymakers: Greater flexibility in curriculum design, particularly in public institutions, is needed to allow for innovative teaching methods like gamification.

For Industry Linkage: Hotels and tourism related organizations may play a role in partnering to contribute resources to simulations and real-world, case-based gamifying to ensure closer correlation with the requirements of the workplace.

For Students: Incorporating tools like SWOT analysis alongside gamification can help students understand their strengths and weaknesses, which makes learning more personalized and career-focused.

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