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Title of the paper: Gamification of Traditional Bulgarian Woodcarving as a Cultural Heritage Tourism Product

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Overview

- Traditional Bulgarian woodcarving = vital cultural heritage
- Challenges: modernization, artisan decline, weak tourist integration
- Gamification = innovative tool for:
 - Visitor engagement
 - Knowledge preservation
 - Sustainable economic opportunities



Policy and context

- Bulgarian Crafts Act & Cultural Heritage Law provide framework
- Strategies (Tourism 2014–2030, Bulgaria 2030) support integration of innovation
- Craft chambers face weak institutional support & limited funding



Digital Presence & Challenges

- Only 16% of Regional Craft Chambers have websites
- 37% active on Facebook;
- most rely on voluntary work
- Lack of digital skills → barrier to wider visibility



Research goal

- Explore gamification in Bulgarian woodcarving tourism
- Objectives:
 - Enhance visitor experiences
 - Preserve and promote skills
 - Support artisans & tourism sector
 - Identify challenges & solutions



Methodology

- Mixed-methods approach:
- Desk research
- Field observations (Gabrovo, Veliko Tarnovo, Montana, Sofia)7 semi-structured artisan interviews
- Focus: artisans' practices, tourism engagement, gamification potential



Key findings (1)

- Woodcarving highly valued, but gamification unknown
- Main tourist engagement = workshops, markets, exhibitions
- Products: Small souvenirs most suitable
- Authenticity valued, but mass tourism → preference for affordable items
- Digital marketing = weak (only 1 artisan active online)



Key findings (2)

- Challenges:
- Limited workshop capacity & space
- Weak institutional support & funding
- Few collaborations with tourism providers
- Low awareness of gamification tools



Potential for Gamification

- Interactive storytelling
- Skill-based challenges
- AR craft guides
- Virtual apprenticeships
- Benefits: attracts younger audiences, boosts visibility, strengthens craft education



Conclusion

- Woodcarving = strong cultural tourism potential
- Gamification largely absent in practice
- Barriers: digital skills, funding, institutional support, collaboration gaps
- Need: training, partnerships, sustainable gamification models



Recommendations

- Foster artisan–tourism collaborations
- Build artisans’ digital & marketing skills
- Secure institutional support & funding
- Pilot gamified workshops & AR experiences
- Broader research → larger sample & diverse regions