

METaverse EXPERIENCE AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN GAME-INDUCED TOURISM AND TOURIST MOTIVATION

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Abstract: This research investigates how game-induced tourism shapes tourist motivation and explores the extent to which metaverse experience functions as an intermediary mechanism within a game-based virtual environment. Drawing on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, game-induced tourism is conceptualized as the external stimulus, metaverse experience as the internal organism state, and tourist motivation as the resulting behavioral response. The study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional design in which survey data were gathered from 380 participants who had previously engaged with destination-oriented content through the ROBLOX platform. Sampling was carried out using purposive criteria to ensure respondent eligibility, and data were subjected to analysis via Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) implemented in SmartPLS 3. Findings reveal that game-induced tourism had a positive influence on tourist motivation. Game-induced tourism further demonstrates a strong effect on metaverse experience, while metaverse experience in turn positively and significantly affects tourist motivation. Mediation analysis confirms that metaverse experience significantly mediated the relationship between game-induced tourism and tourist motivation. These findings contribute to the digital tourism and media-induced tourism literature while offering practical insights for destination marketing organizations leveraging game-based metaverse platforms.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh game-induced tourism terhadap tourist motivation serta menguji peran mediasi metaverse experience dalam lingkungan metaverse berbasis game. Berlandaskan pendekatan Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R), game-induced tourism dikonseptualisasikan sebagai stimulus (S), metaverse experience sebagai organism (O), dan tourist motivation sebagai response (R). Penelitian ini mengadopsi metode kuantitatif cross-sectional dengan data yang diperoleh dari 380 responden yang memiliki pengalaman berinteraksi dengan konten destinasi wisata pada platform ROBLOX menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Data dianalisis menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) dan bantuan software SmartPLS 3. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan game-induced tourism memberi pengaruh positif yang signifikan kepada tourist motivation, game-induced signifikan terhadap metaverse experience, serta metaverse experience memengaruhi tourist motivation secara signifikan dan positif. Selain itu, metaverse experience juga terbukti memediasi hubungan antara game-induced tourism dan tourist motivation. Hasil penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam pengembangan literatur digital tourism dan media-induced tourism, serta memberikan implikasi praktis bagi destination marketing organizations dalam memanfaatkan platform metaverse berbasis game sebagai media promosi destinasi wisata.

Keywords: Game Induced Tourism; Metaverse Experience; ROBLOX; Tourist Motivation; Virtual Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Tourist motivation is considered as one of the main factors that influencing tourist behavior (Marques et al., 2025). It refers to a psychological process that emerges from individual's needs and desires which later develop into a drive to engage

in tourism activities (Luong, 2025; Mishra, 2025; Muhamad et al., 2026). One of the most widely adopted frameworks for explaining tourist motivation is the push-pull theory proposed by Dann (1981), which categorizes motivation into push factors and pull factors. Push factors refer to

internal psychological drivers, such as novelty-seeking, personal connection, and prestige, whereas pull factors are related to destination attributes including entertainment, attractiveness, and location appeal (Hamzah et al., 2016; Michael et al., 2020). As digital technologies increasingly transform how individuals experience and interact with destinations, understanding tourist motivation within virtual environments has become an important area of tourism research.

The tourism industry has altered due to advancement of digital technologies, especially in the way travelers looking for information, perceive destinations, and decision making (Bilan et al., 2024). Digital platforms such as social media, films, and games have an impact on shaping modern traveler's interests and destination choices (Dubois & Gibbs, 2018). This phenomenon has led to the concept of media-induced tourism, a form of tourism behavior influenced by information that obtained through various forms of media (Suzuki, 2011). Among these media, digital games have gained increasing attention because they are considered capable of providing users with more interactive, emotional, and immersive experiences compared to other forms of digital media (Rainoldi et al., 2022).

Game-induced tourism refers to tourism activities that arise from game-based experience which encourage them to visit destination represented in the games (Vintilă & Merciu, 2024). The concept was first introduced by (Dubois & Gibbs, 2018) who stated that games have a same role as film as medium that can motivate individuals to participate in tourism activities. Numerous contemporary digital games combine immersive design, interactivity, and narrative world-building with representations of real-world landscape, historical sites, and cultural elements (Rainoldi et al., 2022; Vintilă & Merciu, 2024). As a result, players may develop interest or curiosity toward these locations, encouraging them to seek additional information or consider visiting the destinations in the future (Şeren, 2025a; Sharma et al., 2023). Recent studies have explored how game experiences can influence tourist. Using a Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, Yin et al. (2024) confirmed that

game significantly increase tourists motive to visit real world destinations.

Among contemporary digital platforms, ROBLOX has emerged as one of the most relevant contexts for examining game-induced tourism. Unlike conventional games, ROBLOX has evolved into a metaverse platform (Park & Kim, 2022), that enables users to explore various virtual worlds including destination themed tourism experience. Recent reports indicate that ROBLOX has become part of daily lives of more than 151 million users worldwide during the third quarter of 2025 (ROBLOX Corporation, 2025). This make ROBLOX not only a leading platform but also a digital environment with great potential to shape user behavior and travel related motivation.

The distinctive characteristic of Roblox as a metaverse platform lies in its capacity to deliver rich metaverse experiences. Metaverse is an immersive three-dimensional virtual environment, processed through computational code, that enables avatar-based interaction and movement across physical and geographical boundaries (Ledesma Chaves et al., 2025). Within this environment, the metaverse experience refers to user interactions in immersive, interactive, and realistic digital worlds (Inmor et al., 2025). Unlike conventional digital platforms, metaverse environments facilitate avatar-based interaction, social communication, and place-oriented activities (Shin & Kang, 2024) that may resemble aspects of real-world tourism experiences. Platforms such as Roblox exemplify game-based metaverse environments by providing interactive virtual spaces where users can explore destination-themed settings, interact with other users, and participate in experiential activities, thereby strengthening their sense of presence and emotional involvement (Buhalis et al., 2025).

Despite the growing attention to game-induced tourism and metaverse experiences, empirical research that explicitly examines metaverse experience mediating effect on game-induced tourism and tourist motivation remains limited. Most existing studies have examined game-induced tourism and metaverse tourism technologies in isolation, and the majority remain anchored in film-induced tourism paradigms

(Dubois & Gibbs, 2018; Inmor et al., 2025; Jafar & Ahmad, 2024). However, the role of metaverse experience as a mediator that connecting game-induced tourism and tourist motivation has received limited attention in tourism research. This gap is theoretically important, as the S-O-R framework by Mehrabian & Russell (1974) provides a relevant perspective for explaining how game-induced tourism, as a stimulus, may influence metaverse experience as the organism, which subsequently affects tourist motivation as the response. Therefore, examining this mediating mechanism is important to better understand the motivational processes underlying digitally induced travel behavior.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines: (1) the direct effect of game-induced tourism on tourist motivation; (2) the effect of game-induced tourism on metaverse experience; (3) the effect of metaverse experience on tourist motivation; and (4) investigate the indirect effect of game-induced tourism on tourist motivation through metaverse experience, within the context of the Roblox platform. The findings are expected to provides insights to the emerging literature on game-induced tourism and digital tourism while providing practical implications for destination marketing organizations and tourism practitioners seeking to leverage game-based metaverse platforms as innovative and effective promotional media.

METHOD

Using a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, this study examined how game-induced tourism influences tourist motivation through the mediating role of metaverse experience. An online questionnaire was used to gather data from individuals who had experience engaging with destination-related content on Roblox. The study applied purposive sampling to select respondents who fulfilled the research criteria, resulting in 380 usable responses. All constructs were operationalized from prior literature and assessed using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Structural relationships among constructs were examined using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 3, a suitable technique to the theoretical development

orientation of this study and to models involving complex mediating pathways (Hair et al., 2021).

The research instrument consisted of three variable constructs: (1) Game-Induced Tourism (GIT), adapted from Rainoldi et al. (2022), encompassing five dimensions: game world dynamics (X1), level of immersion (X2), level of freedom (X3), connection to avatars (X4), and sense of realism (X5); (2) Metaverse Experience (MEX), adapted from Inmor et al. (2025), encompassing presence and telepresence (Z1), immersion (Z2), and interactivity and vividness (Z3); and (3) Tourist Motivation (TM), adapted from Michael et al. (2020) and Hamzah et al. (2016), operationalized through novelty (Y1), personal connection (Y2), prestige(Y3), entertainment (Y4), and location (Y5).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis was conducted using a two-stage method, including the outer model analysis and the structural model analysis. This procedure ensures that all constructs fulfilled the required validity and reliability standards before the structural relationships are tested. Accordingly, the next section presents the results of the outer model analysis and the structural model analysis.

Outer Model Analysis

To evaluate the outer model, this study first examined convergent validity, reliability, and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was analyzed using outer loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Referring to Hair et al. (2021), a construct demonstrates acceptable convergent validity if the indicator loadings surpass 0,70 and AVE values are higher than 0,50. However, indicators with loadings above 0,50 may still be retained provided that their inclusion does not adversely affect construct reliability or convergent validity. The GIT construct was initially measured using five indicators. During the measurement model evaluation, indicators X3 and X5 were excluded because their outer loading values were below 0,5, which is lower than the minimum acceptable threshold for indicator retention in PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2021). Following the removal of these indicators, the remaining items demonstrated adequate convergent validity and were retained

for further analysis. As presented in Tables 1 and 2, all retained measurement items meet the recommended threshold values, indicating satisfactory convergent validity.

Table 1. Outer Loading Results

	Outer Loading	Results
X1 ← GAME INDUCED TOURISM	0,619*	VALID
X2 ← GAME INDUCED TOURISM	0,808	VALID
X4 ← GAME INDUCED TOURISM	0,723	VALID
Y1 ← TOURIST MOTIVATION	0,775	VALID
Y2 ← TOURIST MOTIVATION	0,813	VALID
Y3 ← TOURIST MOTIVATION	0,749	VALID
Y4 ← TOURIST MOTIVATION	0,852	VALID
Y5 ← TOURIST MOTIVATION	0,829	VALID
Z1 ← METAVERSE EXPERIENCE	0,819	VALID
Z2 ← METAVERSE EXPERIENCE	0,790	VALID
Z3 ← METAVERSE EXPERIENCE	0,769	VALID

*Loading < 0.70 but retained as AVE > 0.50 (Hair et al., 2021). GIT3 and GIT5 excluded due to loadings below minimum threshold.

Source: Research Result, 2026.

Reliability was evaluated using Composite Reliability to evaluate the consistency of the measurement instruments. As reported in Table 2, all constructs demonstrate receivable reliability, indicated by Composite Reliability values higher than 0,70.

Table 2. CR and AVE Results

	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Game Induced Tourism	0,762	0,520
Metaverse Experience	0,835	0,628
Tourist Motivation	0,901	0,647

Source: Research Result, 2026

Discriminant validity was established through the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires each construct's square root of AVE to exceed its correlations with all other latent variables. As displayed in Table 3, this condition is satisfied for every construct.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Results

	GIT	MEX	TM
GIT	0,721		
MEX	0,616	0,793	
TM	0,383	0,456	0,804

Source: Research Result, 2026

Structural Model Analysis

The structural model was analyzed through the examination of path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), and their corresponding significance levels.

Table 4. R Square Values

Construct	R Square	Description
MEX	0,379	Moderate
TM	0,225	Weak-Moderate

Source: Research Result, 2026.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) measures the exogenous constructs capability to define the variance of the endogenous construct. As presented in Table 4, the value for metaverse experience (MEX) is 0,379, indicating that GIT explains 37,9% of its variance. Meanwhile, the value for tourist motivation (TM) is 0,225, suggesting that GIT and MEX jointly account for 22,5% of the variance in tourist motivation.

Table 5. F Square Values

	GIT	MEX	TM
GIT		0,611	0,022
MEX			0,101

Source: Research Result, 2026.

Effect sizes were further examined using the f^2 statistic. According to Cohen (2013) guidelines, the results in Table 5 reveal that GIT has a large effect size on MEX ($f^2 = 0,611$). Meanwhile, the effects on tourist motivation (TM) are relatively smaller, with MEX showing a small-to-medium effect ($f^2 = 0,101$) and GIT

demonstrating a weak or small effect size ($f^2 = 0,022$).

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P Values
GIT → TM	0,164	2,742	0,006
GIT → MEX	0,616	16,774	0,000
MEX → TM	0,355	5,875	0,000
GIT → MEX → TM	0,219	5,627	0,000

Source: Research Result, 2026.

Hypotheses are accepted when T-statistics exceed the 1.96 threshold and p-values fall below 0,05. As summarized in Table 6, all hypotheses are accepted. The results indicates that all path coefficients have T-statistics > 1,96 and p-values < 0,05, confirming statistically significant relationships across all hypothesized paths. The coexistence of a significant direct effect (H1: $\beta = 0,164$) and indirect effect (H4: $\beta = 0,219$) indicates partial mediation, with the indirect effect exceeding the direct effect, underscoring the critical amplifying role of metaverse experience. Figure 1 presents the structural model results with standardized path coefficients and their corresponding significance values.

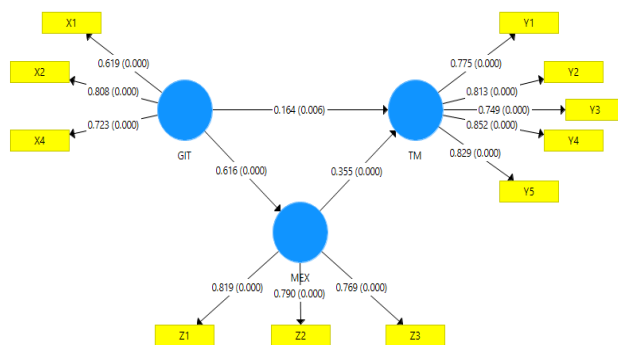


Figure 1. Structural Model

Discussion

This study examined the effect of game-induced tourism on tourist motivation with metaverse experience as a mediating variable, grounded in S-O-R Theory. All four hypotheses were supported, confirming that GIT significantly influences tourist motivation both

directly and indirectly through metaverse experience.

The significant positive direct effect of GIT on tourist motivation (H1: $\beta = 0.164$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that exposure to destination-related content through digital games stimulates individuals' motivation to visit real-world destinations. This aligns with prior studies (Şeren, 2025b; Yin et al., 2024) and reinforces the push-pull framework, confirming that game-based content activates push motivations such as novelty, prestige, and personal connection as well as pull motivations such as entertainment and location.

The strong positive effect of GIT on metaverse experience (H2: $\beta = 0.616$, $p < 0.005$) demonstrates that game-based destination exposure substantially enhances users' perceptions of immersion, interactivity, and presence. This is consistent with Zhang et al. (2025) and reflects the S-O-R mechanism wherein the stimulus (GIT) activates the internal organism state (MEX).

The significant effect of metaverse experience on tourist motivation (H3: $\beta = 0.355$, $p < 0.05$) confirms that immersive virtual environments effectively stimulate tourism-related motivation, consistent with Shin & Kang (2024) and Jiang (2025). The mediation analysis (H4: $\beta = 0.219$, $p < 0.05$) confirms partial mediation, with the indirect effect exceeding the direct effect. This finding extends digital tourism literature by empirically establishing metaverse experience as a key explanatory mechanism within an integrated S-O-R model.

From a practical perspective, the finding that MEX mediates the relationship between GIT and TM suggests that destination marketing organizations (DMO) should focus on creating interactive and immersive virtual experiences rather than merely reproducing destination visuals. Gamification features such as rewards, badges, or achievement systems could be integrated to encourage deeper engagement and potentially strengthen the connection between virtual exploration and real-world visit intentions. In addition, tourism stakeholders may consider collaborating with established ROBLOX creators who already possess active player communities, thereby reducing development cost while

enabling the incorporation of local cultural elements, landmarks, and tourism activities into existing virtual worlds. Finally, telepresence-oriented activities such as virtual cultural events, local games, or interactive destination exploration may further enhance immersion and participation, which were found to be important drivers of tourist motivation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

Conclusion

The obtained results imply that: (1) Game-induced tourism positively and significantly influences tourist motivation ($\beta = 0.164$, $p < 0.05$); (2) Game-induced tourism contributes positively and significantly to metaverse experience ($\beta = 0.616$, $p < 0.05$); (3) Metaverse experience contributes positively and significantly to tourist motivation ($\beta = 0.355$, $p < 0.05$); and (4) Metaverse experience significantly mediates the relationship between game-induced tourism and tourist motivation ($\beta = 0.219$, $p < 0.05$). These results confirm partial mediation, with the indirect effect exceeding the direct effect. This study extends previous digital tourism and media-induced tourism literature by providing the first empirical evidence of an integrated GIT–metaverse experience–tourist motivation model grounded in S-O-R Theory.

Recommendation

Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and tourism stakeholders are encouraged to leverage game-based metaverse platforms such as ROBLOX as innovative destination promotion channels. Emphasis should be placed on developing immersive and interactive virtual experience, integrating gamification features that encourage user engagement, and collaborating with established ROBLOX creators to expand audience reach and enhance content authenticity. Additionally, telepresence-oriented activities should be incorporated to provide users with more engaging virtual destination experiences, thereby strengthening tourism motivation and increasing the potential for future real-world visitation. Further research may expand current model by integrating additional variables to obtain a more comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon

under study such as destination image or visit intention, examine other metaverse platforms, and apply cross-cultural comparative analyses.

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