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VIRTUAL REALITY: AN INNOVATIVE TOOL IN TOURISM EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

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Abstract

This study developed a theoretical framework to fill the gap in research on the relationship between VR and experiential marketing. Based on a stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory combined with the quantitative research method, the research process surveyed 296 international and domestic tourists in Vietnam. The results revealed significant impacts of telepresence and authentic experience on cognitive and affective responses, indicating that those variables are essential factors in VR tourism. The study also gave managerial implications to help tourism enterprises plan appropriate experiential marketing strategies to attract young travelers and propose solutions for companies to boost the tourists' intention of visiting the destination shown in the VR travel advertisements.

Keywords: *virtual reality, tourism marketing, experiential marketing, stimulus-organism-response theory, telepresence, authentic experience, visit intention, sustainability.*

1. Introduction

Industrial 4.0 has revolutionized the concept of experiences, from simple and raw commodities to services and intangibility. The rise of technology has changed the traditional view of consumption habits (Özkan & Yilmaz, 2017a). Experiences are being viewed as the pinnacle of providing value to customers. Today, consumers seek memorable and personal experiences over anything else. Inevitably, Experiential Marketing is a variation of Marketing involving multiple senses that help many enterprises create a memorable and emotional connection with their consumers. As a results, tourism organizations are transitioning away from traditional interruptive marketing strategies and focusing on experiential marketing, which is now seen as a more contemporary orientation (Muwandeniya & Eranda, 2022).

Moreover, the report from The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2022) states that 75% of tourists now able to use the Internet, and universality has been reached in high- and upper-middle-income economies. Technology products such as the internet, instant messaging, smartphones, and tablet computers are popular, influencing tourists' behavior. Besides, tourist nowadays prioritize pleasure and safety, they believe travel is essential to people's lives (Sheivachman, 2017). According to Kim et al. (2022), tourists increasingly prefer contactless service and new technology, particularly virtual reality (VR), for their transformative experiences (S. Kim et al., 2022). 84% of customers worldwide are interested in using VR or augmented reality (AR) for travel experiences, and 42% believe these technologies will shape tourism in the future (Han et al., 2018).

Hence, tourism enterprises should utilize new VR technology to gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Munasinghe et al., n.d.). With the emergence of the metaverse, VR has become increasingly popular for tourism experiential marketing. VR technology has the potential to provide consumers with a realistic and immersive preview of a travel experience, aid in trip planning and decision-making, and promote destinations (Munasinghe et al., n.d.). In other words, virtual reality experiential marketing is one of the most critical developments in information and communication technology (ICT) that is expected to impact 's travel intention today significantly. Recent innovations like VR platforms, smart devices, and content creation tools allow VR to evolve. As a result, VR technologies now have limitless potential for mass virtual visits to actual tourism destinations, allowing tourists to have telepresence and authentic experiences (Hyun & O'Keefe, 2012; M. J. Kim et al., 2020; Muwandeniya & Eranda, 2022). The roles of such technologies in the tourism and hospitality industries, as well as their management and marketing, have been described in the literature as capable of demonstrating their intricate abilities to simulate real-life situations and contexts, occasionally being touted as a replacement for actual travel, making it a potent tool for meeting the needs of tourists (Choirisa, 2022).

However, this novel technology is still in its early stages, and there is limited empirical research comparing the use of VR in tourism experiential marketing to other more traditional visual media (Griffin et al., 2017). Researchers did not consider the importance of presence as a powerful stimulus in shaping audience behavior and influencing the VR experience (Lips, 2021). In addition, research on the links between VR terms (telepresence, authentic experience) and the experiential marketing dimensions still needs to be explored, as does how reacts to VR travel advertisements. This research gap creates difficulties for travel organizations to understand , the dominant market consumers. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of how VR experiential marketing can affect 's travel intentions must be studied urgently.

To bridge this research gap, this work investigates the most critical factors that elicited tourists to visit a destination after viewing its VR experiential marketing.

Based on the SOR model, this study develops and tests a theoretical framework comprising a stimulus (telepresence, authentic experience), process (cognitive and affective response), and output (visit intention) and explains the relationships between the five experiential marketing dimensions (SENSE, FEEL, THINK, ACTION, RELATE) and VR experience.

Specifically, this study aims to: (1) validate the relationships between VR tourism and experiential marketing dimension, (2) identify the factors that affect the visit intention of to travel after viewing VR tourism experiential marketing, (3) evaluate how strongly these factors impact the tourists' visit intention, and (4) recommends managerial implications for global tourism organizations to attract more travelers.

Applying to the Vietnam context, the findings will show how VR tourism advertisements with a high sense of presence prompted many tourists to visit intention. This effect was mediated by cognition and affection. The result offers valuable insight to help Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and travel companies design VR tourism commercials to promote attractions for potential tourists and increase visitation.

To achieve these objectives, a quantitative methodology has been chosen as the most appropriate for this study. The questionnaire-based survey asked 305 tourists, who live and work in Vietnam, about their travel behavior after viewing VR tourism experiential advertisements. Next, the factors that affect the visit intention of tourists after viewing VR tourism products will be explored. Finally, the study's conclusion will be presented, including recommendations for global tourism enterprises. Before conducting the survey, a theoretical review of consumer behavior and tourism marketing using VR was conducted by consulting recent publications.

2. Literature review and Hypothesis development

2.1. Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework helps understand how visitors respond to virtual reality stimuli. It reveals that environmental factors affect consumers' cognitive and affective processes, leading to behavioral responses. The SOR model incorporates affective and cognitive intermediary layers, allowing researchers to create models incorporating these layers. It is used in tourism to predict tourists' behavior in VR tourism, including specific stimuli and emotional measures (M. J. Kim et al., 2020). Recently, the SOR theory has been used to explain the psychological process of virtual tourism experiences (An et al., 2021; Muwandeniya & Eranda, 2022; Wu & Lai, 2022). Their findings suggested that the sense and quality of the information in virtual tours induce flow, leading to satisfaction and intention to visit. Thus, this model is effective in explaining the relationships between stimuli, processes, and responses in VR tourism.

2.2. Experiential marketing and its five dimensions

Experiential marketing is a marketing strategy focusing on consumer engagement through brand experiences, creating emotional connections and fostering loyalty, enhancing brand value and loyalty. Modern customers are interested in the functional value of products and services provided by businesses and values such as pleasant feelings and unforgettable memories, leading to experiential marketing development (Sülük & Aydin, 2019). This field is driven by the goal of creating "holistic experiences" (Schmitt, 1999a) and is characterized by digital experiences and new technological tools such as VR. It is still emerging and will become the dominant marketing tool of the future, along with the evolution of marketing science and technological advancements.

Schmitt (1999) categorizes experiential marketing into different dimensions to effectively engage customers with one brand. According to Smith, Experiential Marketing involves managing 5 dimensions, including sensory experiences (SENSE), affective experiences (FEEL), creative cognitive experiences (THINK), physical experiences, behaviors, and lifestyles (ACT), and social-identity experiences related to a reference group or culture (RELATE). Those dimensions are defined as below:

SENSE (Sensory experience) marketing targets these senses with the goal of producing sensory experiences through sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

FEEL (Emotional experience) marketing appeals to clients' feelings and emotions to create affective experiences ranging from modestly good moods associated with a brand.

THINK (Thinking experience) marketing engages clients creatively by appealing to their intelligence to generate cognitive, problem-solving experiences.

ACT (Action experience) marketing encourages customers to explore alternative ways of doing things.

RELATE (Associative experience) marketing encompasses SENSE, FEEL, THINK, and ACT marketing, allowing individuals to relate to something outside their private state.

2.3. Virtual reality (VR) in tourism experiential marketing

VR is a 3D environment that enables users to interact with one or more senses. It is increasingly used in tourism and hospitality areas, such as theme parks, cruises, museums, and destination marketing. VR has the potential to significantly impact the tourism industry by offering compelling experiences and eliciting perceptions of telepresence tours (Guttentag, 2010; Xin et al., 2021; Yung et al., 2021; Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). Furthermore, VR experiential marketing, or Virtual Experiential Marketing, involves

customers trying and experiencing a brand firsthand or virtually, creating emotional bonds and allowing brands to differentiate their products or services. This technology significantly impact the tourism industry, such as enhance customer experience, removing barriers, education, guidance, and fragile sites (Guttentag, 2010), enhancing entertainment (Healy et al., 2016), and the ability to broaden global interaction (Huang et al., 2013). In the context of VR tourism, the study investigates telepresence and authentic experience to validate that these factors impact to visit the destination shown in VR experiential advertisement.

Telepresence in VR

Telepresence, or virtual presence, is a technique used to create a sense of physical presence at a remote location using necessary multimedia such as sound, vision, and touch. Especially, it is defined as the subjective experience of being in one place or environment, even when one is physically situated in another. The word “telepresence” refers to the sensation of “being there,” which allows buyers to “try before they buy” (Willems et al., 2019)

Authenticity in VR

Authentic experience in VR tourism is an essential factor in visitors' approval of VR tourism as a substitute for a genuine experience (Cohen, 1992). Studies have shown that VR tourism environments are not entirely unrealistic (Sherman & Craig, 2019; Vishwakarma et al., 2020b). Thus, physical and sensory involvement is essential to experiencing authenticity. The present research investigates the influence of authentic experience as a stimulus in VR tourism on potential consumers' behavior by applying an extended SOR model. Authenticity is a new consumer sensibility that involves perceptions of the extent to which novel, original, exceptional, and unique experiences, services, or products are genuine.

2.4. Relationship between the variables of this study and experiential marketing dimension

Telepresence and Sensory experience

Telepresence is a medium in which transducers, such as video cameras and microphones, substitute for the corresponding senses of the participant (Sherman & Craig, 2019). It is a useful application in VR tourism, allowing the tourist to remotely see, hear, and interact like you are present in a remote destination.

Telepresence connects with tourists through the senses of sight and sound to create a unique, enjoyable, and memorable sensory experience. The visual senses focus on simulating the local attractions and food; the auditory senses include the background music and audio tour guide. The most crucial idea of telepresence is that narrated videos provide an overview of the proposed trip by placing the visitor at the target destination, using virtual reality headsets, integrated websites, and social networks.

According to its uses, telepresence matches the sensory experience (SENSE) in the experiential marketing dimension.

Relationship between telepresence and cognitive, affective responses

In association with the literature above, telepresence in VR tourism allows tourists to experience VR travel advertisements with all their human senses (Muwandeniya & Eranda, 2022; Tian, 2022). Focusing on this research's objective, most s prefer streaming services to traditional cable and have access to snackable entertainment on their phones and PCs. Consequently, once they use VR travel advertisements to review the destination prior to travel, they want to experience playfulness, relaxation, and ease of stress. Besides, s, also known as digital natives, expect to experience things that can represent their lifestyle and help them to find their ideal selves.

Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- **Hypothesis 1: Telepresence (SENSE) positively effects on cognitive response (H1).**

- **Hypothesis 2: Telepresence (SENSE) positively effects on affective response (H2).**

Authentic experience and thinking experience

In the authentic experience, VR travel advertisement inspires tourists to think about the destination by providing them with tourism knowledge, such as an automatic narration service to help visitors actively learn the information content, contributing to improving the tour quality. Through reflection and spontaneous learning, tourists can deepen their understanding of the destination's history, tradition, and culture. They can also develop an emotional bond with the destination shown in VR tourism.

According to its uses, authentic experience matches the thinking experience (THINK) in the experiential marketing dimension.

Relationship between authentic experience and cognitive, affective responses

Authenticity is a genuine experience for VR tourists (Thị Thu Hà et al., 2021). Through authenticity, tourists can learn about the destination simulated in virtual reality technology. Also, VR travel advertisements and its joyful experience can inspire tourist to think about the destination. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- **Hypothesis 3: Authentic experience has positively effects on cognitive response (H3).**
- **Hypothesis 4: Authentic experience positively effects on affective response (H4).**

Cognitive response and action experience

This study investigates the cognitive response to tourism-related VR experiences with the concepts of benefits, usefulness, and advantages. The findings show that VR travel advertisements use interactive digital experiences and gamification to engage tourists visiting destinations and turn them into prospective customers. This experience may change or enrich the tourists' lifestyle, allowing them to have another option to visit their desired location. Furthermore, as an industry with strong social attributes, VR tourism provides tourists with a high sense to interact with other people.

Therefore, cognitive response matches the thinking experience (THINK) in the experiential marketing dimension.

Relationship between cognitive response and affective response

In the context of emotion and adoption, cognitive response influences affective response, as demonstrated by Lazarus (1991) and the SOR framework (W. G. Kim & Moon, 2009). Based on deep insight into s' emotional needs (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Özkan & Yilmaz, 2017b), VR travel advertisements must provide the appropriate stimulus to integrate emotional elements into the consumption scenario. embraces change and prefers interacting with others while viewing VR travel advertisements. They will feel relaxed and enjoy getting together. Moreover, action experience in experiential marketing indicates that the brand encourages customers to naturally join in activities that may transform or enrich their lives. For this reason, hypothesis 5 (H5) is proposed as follows:

- **Hypothesis 5: Cognitive response positively effects on affective response (H5).**

Affective response and emotional, associative experience

Since its inception, VR tourism offers a unique way for visitors to explore remote areas. Based on deep insight into customers' emotional needs, VR travel advertisements provide the stimulus to integrate emotional experiences into virtual consumption. Virtual tourists ease the stress, feel relaxed and joyful during and after viewing the VR tourism products. Since the affective response is an emotional response to a situation, it matches with the emotional experience (FEEL) in the experiential marketing dimension.

The associative experience (RELATE) is the combination of other experiential marketing dimensions. The activities provided in VR tourism create a sense of belonging for a tourist. This sense of belonging is a feeling of connection to a cultural or tourist destination (Rajesh & Srivastava, n.d.; Schmitt, 1999b; Wu & Lai, 2022; Yu, 2019).

Moreover, tourists use VR tourism products not only to visit their desired destination, but also to reflect their identity, and lifestyle.

Therefore, affective response matches the associative experience (RELATE) in the experiential marketing dimension.

Relationship between cognitive, affective responses and visit intention

Attitude can be defined as a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively to a given idea, item, person, or situation, as well as how a person observes and judges something or someone. As mentioned above, cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses are the three aspects of cognitive responses to an object (Vargas-Sánchez & Plaza-Mejía, 2016). Additionally, visit intention is measured by targeting the behavioral intention to visit a destination in the future, which has been validated in previous studies (Chung et al., 2015; Hyun & O’Keefe, 2012; Vishwakarma et al., 2020b). Because of common exposure to different forms of technology in s’ personal lives, they must feel satisfied with the overall consumption of VR tourism products. This VR consumption must make them think that visiting this simulated destination is a wise decision. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- **Hypothesis 6: Cognitive response positively effects on visit intention (H6).**
- **Hypothesis 7: Affective response positively effects on visit intention (H7).**

3. Methodology

3.1. Research model

Based on the hypothesis’s development, the author proposes a research model as follow:

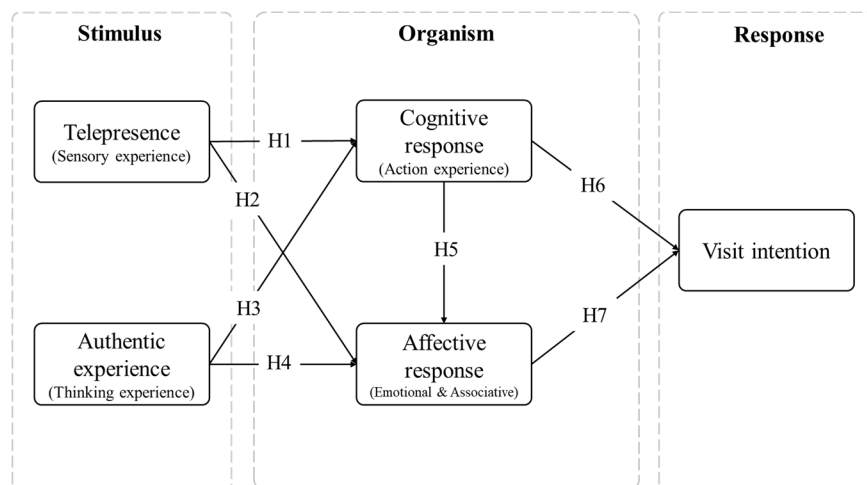


Figure 1. Research model

Source: own development (2023)

3.2. Research design

A qualitative research method was conducted through a group discussion with several who experienced the VR tourism products packages in Vietnam. In-depth interviews were conducted with tourists in Vietnam to understand their experience throughout the VR experiential marketing and the factors that made them visit the destination after VR consumption.

In total, 14 potential interviewees were approached, and 2 refused the request. As a result, 12 interviews were conducted to explore the VR tourists' experiences and the factors influencing tourists to travel after viewing the destination. All the interviewees experienced VR travel advertisements. Data were collected from January to March 2023 through online personal interviews via Zalo voice call, email, Facebook survey, Google meeting platform and face-to-face interviews. The duration of each interview was 20 minutes on average.

Three critical questions used in the interviews are listed as follows:

- Does the quality of the VR travel advertisement meet your expectations? (Telepresence, cognitive response)
- How do you feel after viewing the VR travel advertisements? (Authentic experience, affective response)
- What makes you want to visit the simulated destination in the VR travel advertisements after viewing? (Visit intention).

Interview content was recorded, synthesized, and adjusted for appropriate variables in the scale.

After a pilot test, questionnaires were distributed in a convenient sampling technique to implement quantitative research. The study used the Likert scale with 7 levels: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Somewhat disagree, (4) Neutral, (5) Somewhat agree, (6) Agree, (7) Totally agree. Data is collected from selected 298 over 305 people with valid answer sheets. The research sample is focused on Vietnamese citizens who are (from 18 to 28 years old), and who can decide independently when buying travel services. This research used The Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) for exploratory and predictive analyses of the causal links and effects among variables proposed in theoretical models (Hoyle, 1999; Hoyle & Kenny, 1999; Marsh & Hau, 1999). According to (Hoyle, 1999), SEM models can be tested even if the sample size is small. The popular sample size for conducting SEM is $N = 100-150$, and some sample sizes may reach 200 (Hoogland & Boomsma, 1998). With 296 observations, this sample size is appropriate. The collected data were processed by PLS SEM for Cronbach's Alpha evaluation, factor analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

3.3. Measurement items

Table 1. Research Instruments and Outer Loadings

Experiential Marketing Dimensions	Variable	Items	Question	Outer loading	Authors
Sensory experience	Telepresence	TEP1	I felt like I was physically present in this real-world destination during the VR travel advertisements.	0.851	Hyun & O'Keefe, (2012); Yung & Khoo-Lattimore (2019)
		TEP2	The real-world destination was represented well in the VR travel advertisements.	0.890	
		TEP3	I felt exciting once I could be in one place yet be able to perceive and act like I was present in a different place.	0.863	
		TEP4	The lively sound of the VR travel advertisements made me feel like I was there.	0.771	
		TEP5	The audio tour guide of the VR travel advertisements gave me very useful information about the destination.	0.663	
		TEP6	The audio tour guide of the VR travel advertisements made me feel like I was there.	0.640	
Thinking experience	Authentic Experience	AUE1	VR travel advertisements explore the core ideas and themes of real-world destinations.	0.727	Thị Thu Hà et al., (2021);

Experiential Marketing Dimensions	Variable	Items	Question	Outer loading	Authors
		AUE2	I was impressed by a real-world destination images which were conveyed during a Virtual visit.	0.803	Wu & Lai (2022)
		AUE3	I learned new knowledge from the information provided by the VR travel advertisements.	0.794	
		AUE4	VR travel advertisements made me think about the real-world destinations.	0.817	
Action experience	Cognitive response	COR1	Using the tourism-related VR activity gave me alternative way to visit a destination.	0.812	Vishwakarma et al (2020b)
		COR2	Using the tourism-related VR activity changed my life style	0.843	
		COR3	Using the tourism-related VR activity is beneficial	0.781	
		COR4	Using the tourism-related VR activity allows me to form friendships with other users	0.619	
Emotional experience (FEEL) & Associate experience (RELATE)	Affective response	AFR1	I felt relaxed and joyful during the VR tour.	0.831	Vishwakarma et al., (2020a); Williams (2006)
		AFR2	Using the tourism-related VR activity eased my stress.	0.832	
		AFR3	Using the tourism-related VR activity is fun for me.	0.814	
		AFR4	Using the tourism-related VR activity is captivated	0.733	
		AFR5	VR travel advertisement met my expectation.	0.663	
		AFR6	VR travel reflected my life style.	0.751	
		AFR7	VR travel made me have a sense of belonging.	0.771	
	Visit intention	VIT1	I believe that visiting the real-world destination shown in VR travel advertisement is a wise decision.	0.826	Choirisa & Rizkalla, (2021); Hung et al (2019)
		VIT2	I have a strong desire to visit the real-world destination shown in VR travel advertisement.	0.881	
		VIT3	I am willing to visit the real-world destination shown in VR travel advertisement in near future	0.781	
		VIT4	I will make effort to visit the real-world destination shown in VR travel advertisement.	0.782	

Source: Own work (2023)

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive results

Table 2. tourist's characteristics of this study

Variables		Frequencies	Percentage
Gender	Male	166	55.7
	Female	132	44.3
Age	From 18 to 20 years old	185	62.1
	From 21 to 28 years old	113	37.9
Monthly income	Below 1 million	46	15.4
	From 1 to below 5 million	70	23.5
	From 5 to below 10 million	46	15.4
	From 10 million and above	14	4.7
Occupation	Students	81	27.2
	Entrepreneur	65	21.8
	Employed	18	6.0
	Unemployed	12	4.0

Variables		Frequencies	Percentage
Traveling style	Take a group tour	27	9.1
	Independent travel with friends or family	211	70.8
	Solo travel	42	14.1
	Prefer to stay at home	18	6.0
VR tourism experience	Yes	298	100.0
	No	0	0.0

4.2. Reliability of the measurement

The Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) is a useful tool for exploratory and predictive analyses of causal links and effects among variables (Hoyle, 1999). It is suitable for researchers using latent variable scores in predictive relationships. This study used a reflective model and Smart PLS 3.0 as a variance-based technique, evaluating reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity.

The first measurement of this study analysis assesses the convergent validity and reliability of different variables based on their AVE, item reliability, and composite reliability. Values for the AVE should be higher than 0.50, and at least 50% of the indicator variance must be considered (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). A result in Table 3 shows that all variables > 0.50 . These variables are evaluated to confirm their consistency and stability. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha tests measure the reliability of surveys by measuring the accuracy of the data. If a variable has a correlation coefficient of 0.7 or higher, it meets the requirements (Nunnally, 1978). The results at Table 1 show that most of the measurements have Cronbach's Alpha value, as evidenced by the $0.774 - 0.879 > 0.7$, so they are qualified. During the testing, the observable variables TEL5, TEL6, COR4, AFR5 has outer loadings by the < 0.7 . We have to remove these variable from the measurements.

Table 3. Convergent Validity and Reliability

Items	Number of origin observable variable	Number of remaining observable variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Affective Response (AFR)	7	6	0.879	0.880	0.624
Authentic Experience (AUE)	4	4	0.793	0.797	0.618
Cognitive Response (COR)	4	3	0.742	0.745	0.660
Telepresence (TEP)	6	4	0.866	0.874	0.714
Visit Intention (VIT)	4	4	0.815	0.820	0.643

The second measurement is Discriminant validity. The Fornell & Larcker, (1981) criterion was used to corroborate the discriminant validity of the AVE indices for each concept. The AVE square root value is compared to the construct correlation value in Table 4, which provides the highest value in any column or row relative to the highest correlation value of any other construct (Hair et al., 2010). Results satisfied the criteria according to the value analysis and answered the research question raised by (Kamis et al., 2020).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Items	AFR	AUE	COR	TEP	VIT
AFR					
AUE	0.857				
COR	0.833	0.787			

Items	AFR	AUE	COR	TEP	VIT
TEP	0.568	0.641	0.505		
VIT	0.729	0.650	0.700	0.424	

The third measurement is Cross-loading analysis. This measurement determined correlations between constructs' values and indicator-standardized data. The AVE value of each indicator was also shown to be larger than the others, reducing the multi-collinearity between latent variables. The results in Table 5 showed that the cross-loading values support the construct measurement framework's validity.

Table 5. Cross Loading

	AFR	AUE	COR	TEP	VIT
AFR1	0.830	0.617	0.603	0.422	0.469
AFR2	0.832	0.602	0.515	0.380	0.503
AFR3	0.814	0.616	0.578	0.402	0.441
AFR4	0.733	0.526	0.504	0.408	0.472
AFR6	0.751	0.510	0.514	0.377	0.541
AFR7	0.773	0.515	0.479	0.360	0.505
AUE1	0.526	0.727	0.442	0.420	0.366
AUE2	0.569	0.804	0.497	0.487	0.443
AUE3	0.566	0.793	0.438	0.351	0.384
AUE4	0.589	0.818	0.521	0.418	0.452
COR1	0.499	0.485	0.813	0.303	0.436
COR2	0.585	0.513	0.842	0.330	0.475
COR3	0.558	0.477	0.781	0.361	0.417
TEP1	0.421	0.452	0.373	0.850	0.305
TEP2	0.447	0.505	0.403	0.890	0.329
TEP3	0.428	0.439	0.305	0.863	0.313
TEP4	0.377	0.400	0.286	0.773	0.259
VIT4	0.442	0.409	0.464	0.239	0.784
VTI1	0.477	0.423	0.418	0.305	0.791
VTI2	0.564	0.462	0.473	0.311	0.847

4.3. Hypotheses identification

Table 6 (Path Coefficient) and Figure 2 (Basic Bootstrapping result in Smart PLS 3) present the hypothesis's findings. All the hypotheses were valid and accepted.

In stimulus and organism correlation, the finding showed that:

- H1: Telepresence positively effects on cognitive response (H1: $\beta=0.118$, $t=2.052$, $p=0.040 < 0.05$);
- H2: Telepresence positively effects on affective response (H2: $\beta=0.116$, $t=2.442$, $p=0.15 < 0.05$);
- H3: Authentic experience positively effects on cognitive response (H3: $\beta=0.542$, $t=10.656$, $p < 0.05$);
- H4: Authentic experience positively effects on affective response (H4: $\beta=0.433$, $t=8.606$, $p < 0.05$);

In organism and response correlation, the findings showed that:

- H5: Cognitive response has a positive effect on affective response (H5: $\beta=0.366$, $t=7.163$, $p < 0.05$);
- H6: Cognitive response has a positive effect on visit intention (H6: $\beta=0.208$, $t=3.258$, $p < 0.05$);
- H7: Affective response has a positive effect on visit intention (H7: $\beta=0.389$, $t=4.962$, $p < 0.05$);

Table 6. Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	Original sample (O) Beta (β)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T-value	P values	Accepted / Rejected
H1	TEP \rightarrow COR	0.118	0.119	0.058	2.052	0.040	A
H2	TEP \rightarrow AFR	0.116	0.116	0.048	2.442	0.015	A
H3	AUE \rightarrow COR	0.542	0.543	0.051	10.656	0.000	A
H4	AUE \rightarrow AFR	0.433	0.434	0.050	8.606	0.000	A
H5	COR \rightarrow AFR	0.366	0.365	0.051	7.163	0.000	A
H6	COR \rightarrow VIT	0.208	0.209	0.064	3.258	0.001	A
H7	AFR \rightarrow VIT	0.389	0.389	0.078	4.962	0.000	A

4.4. Mediating Effects

Additional analysis of the mediating roles was performed. This is to investigate whether each indirect relationship from telepresence, authentic experience to visit intention through each intermediate variable. Mediation is the study of how a third variable influences the relationship between two other variables (An et al., 2021; W. G. Kim & Moon, 2009; Willems et al., 2019). The PLS bootstrapping method was applied to examine the mediations of the variables. As shown in Table 7, cognitive responses do not mediate between telepresence and visit intention ($p>0.05$), cognitive response mediates between authentic experience and visit intention ($p<0.05$), affective response mediates between telepresence and visit intention ($p<0.05$), affective response mediates between authentic experience and visit intention.

Table 7. Mediation testing

Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STD EV)	P values	Accept/ Reject	Mediation
TEP \rightarrow COR \rightarrow VIT	0.019	0.019	0.012	1.558	0.119	R	No mediation
AUE \rightarrow COR \rightarrow VIT	0.086	0.087	0.036	2.408	0.016	A	Partial Mediation
TEP \rightarrow AFR \rightarrow VIT	0.049	0.049	0.021	2.327	0.020	A	Partial Mediation
AUE \rightarrow AFR \rightarrow VIT	0.184	0.185	0.041	4.463	0.000	A	Partial Mediation

5. Discussion

Virtual reality tourism offers potential tourists the opportunity to visit a destination presented in a virtual reality environment, and it is a very effective destination marketing strategy. Based on the SOR model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), the research has developed and tested the theoretical framework for the relationships between telepresence and authentic experience (stimuli), cognitive, affective response (organism), and visit intention (response). Besides, the study also sheds light on why potential tourists want to visit the destinations, which they have already experienced in VR travel advertisements. Consequently, the findings provide knowledge for destination marketers to better understand the telepresence, authentic experience in the VR tourism environment, its presence in the virtual reality tourism environment, and its

effects on 's visit intention through experiential marketing related to tourism. Using the SEM analysis, the results of this study provide several theoretical contributions to tourism theory:

Firstly, the examination confirms the relationship between VR travel advertisements and experiential marketing. This study shows that the variable considered matching with experiential marketing as follows: telepresence matches with sensory experience (SENSE), authentic experience matches with thinking experience (THINK), cognitive response matches with action experience (ACTION), affective response matches with emotional and associative experiences (FEEL & RELATE).

Secondly, this study provides evidence that not only does authenticity (Kim et al., 2020), the VR tourism environment also provides users with a sense of presence. The psychological state of "being there" (Steuer, 1992) is considered by this study as a trigger for tourists to perceive information, and especially emotional experience for a destination. Furthermore, describes the idea of using VR tourism as "cool," "fun," and "exciting." By analyzing two important components of presence, telepresence and authentic experience, this study also identify the factors that affect the visit intention of to travel after viewing VR tourism experiential marketing. From there, it helps marketing researchers to learn deeply about the psychological mechanism to create a higher sense of presence and authentic experience, with the aim of improving the quality of the virtual reality travel experience.

Thirdly, the most theoretically important finding is that cognitive and affective response to VR experiential marketing in tourism has a greater effect on potential s' visit intention. In another words, a tourist will intend to visit a destination simulated in the VR travel advertisement when he or she believes that this visit is a wise decision.

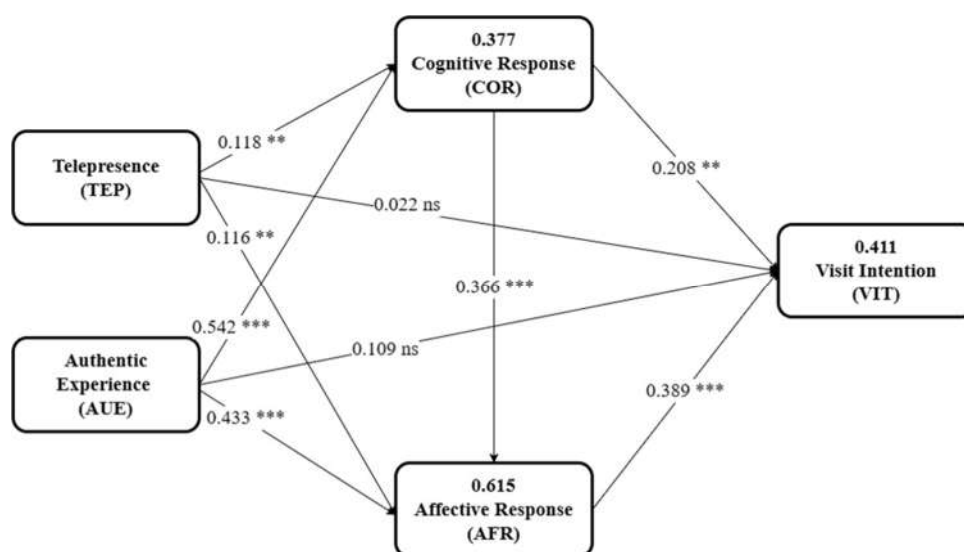


Figure 2. Research of path analysis

Note: ns (not significant), ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1. Recommendations

Virtual reality (VR) is an important tool in the tourism industry, as it offers a powerful tool for communication and engagement with potential customers. VR marketing strengthens companies to reach their target audience by offering an exciting and impactful medium. It is becoming increasingly popular in today's world of virtual communication, as people are increasingly relying on VR for a realistic experience.

Brands have already integrated VR into their digital marketing strategies, and it is what consumers expect from the brands to engage and be customers, especially in tourism.

One of the most common uses of VR in tourism is creating virtual hotel tours. To allow the tourists to have immerse experience, these tours can feature 360-degree photos or videos and add them to the website. Moreover, the hotel should add music and narration into the video. This is to enhance the experience of the tourist at the pre-arrival stage. Additionally, virtual wine tasting can be offered from the comfort of the audience's house with a guide giving information about the wines they are testing. These experiences can be great for wineries, as well as promoting wine regions, retailers, and wine clubs.

Besides, virtual tours of travel destinations are becoming increasingly popular as people prefer to watch travel videos. Businesses can benefit from VR in marketing by creating virtual tours, such as 360-degree video ads. Guided virtual city tours are informative, enjoyable, and engaging, and can showcase city attractions and landmarks. For instance, virtual visits to museums and galleries has been popular since the beginning of the pandemic. And, the virtual reality tourism is a great way to experience adventure and creativity. It can be used to create virtual spaces, such as rock climbing, skiing, skydiving, bungee jumping, scuba diving, and more.

Thus, the recommendations of this study can help travel organizations and tourism marketing agencies answer questions about how to apply VR in experiential marketing.

6.2. Conclusion

Virtual reality tourism offers potential tourists the opportunity to visit a destination in a virtual reality environment and is an effective destination marketing strategy. This study developed and tested the theoretical framework for the relationships between telepresence, authentic experience, cognitive, affective response, and visit intention. It also explains why potential visitor desire to see the locations they have already seen in VR travel marketing. The results of this study suggest that virtual reality tourism advertisements and experiential marketing often match each other, with telpresence matching with sensory experience (SENSE), authentic experience matching with thinking experience (THINK), cognitive response matching with action experience (ACTION), affective reaction matching with emotional and associative experiences (FEEL & RELATE). This study examines the psychological state of being there and the factors that affect the visit intention of to travel after viewing VR tourism experiential marketing. It finds that VR tourism provides users with a sense of presence, particularly emotional experience, and that the idea of using VR tourism as "cool," "fun," and "exciting" is attractive to . It also finds that cognitive and affective response to VR experiences has a greater effect on potential s' visit intention. This suggests that a tourist will only visit a destination simulated in the VR travel advertisement if they believe it is a wise decision.

In brief, technology in tourism is opening up new space for creativity and imagination, making VR a great option for reaching out to many. The result of the study gives managerial implications and proposes practical solution for the tourism organization to develop strategies to boost the tourists' intention of buying tourism products. Using this study's solution in tourism marketing strategy enables companies to explain themselves better, convey their messages more clearly, build strong relationships with the tourist and increase the sales and brand awareness.

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