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### DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, COOPERATION AND GLOBAL INTEGRATION IN THE NEW NORMAL

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

### APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY AND BIG DATA IN THE FIELDS OF FINANCE, ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

BANK RUN AND SILICON VALLEY BANK .....	1
Lam Dang Xuan Hoa, Ho Minh Khoa, Huynh Vo Nhat Linh .....	1
BIG DATA AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS.....	14
Le Thi Minh, Vo Trung Hau .....	14
THE EFFICIENCY OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEM IN RISK MANAGEMENT AT THE NAM A COMMERCIAL JOINT STOCK BANK .....	23
Truong Thanh Loc, Tran Ngoc Thanh.....	23
VIETNAM - AUSTRALIA ECONOMIC AND TRADE COOPERATION IN THE NEW NORMAL: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR VIETNAMESE INVESTORS.....	30
Nhu Nguyen Phuc Quynh*, Anh Nguyen Thi Nguyet, Duy Nguyen Anh .....	30
IMPACTS OF CREDIT GROWTH AND CREDIT RISK ON THE PROFIT OF VIETNAM JOINT STOCK COMMERCIAL BANKS .....	43
Dao Le Kieu Oanh*, Tran Thi Huong Ngan .....	43
FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMERS' DECISIONS TO USE E-BANKING AT JOINT STOCK COMMERCIAL BANKS IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	57
Nguyen Duy Khanh <sup>1</sup> , Pham Quoc Tham <sup>2</sup> .....	57
HOW CHINA_USA POLITICAL TENSIONS AFFECT STOCK MARKET RETURN OF CHINA AND THE USA? A QUANTILE VAR CONNECTEDNESS APPROACH .....	70
Hao Wen Chang <sup>1</sup> , Tsangyao Chang <sup>2</sup> and Mei-Chih Wang <sup>3</sup> .....	70
BANKING HUMAN RESOURCES BEFORE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AI .....	92
Nguyen Huynh Chi.....	92
IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TRAINING THROUGH IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENT TESTING AND ASSESSMENT – CASE IN ACCOUNTING BRANCH, UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND FINANCE .....	102
Thuy Thi Ha .....	102
ACTIVITIES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN VIETNAMESE COMMERCIAL BANKS: AN OVERVIEW DURING THE COVID-19 RECOVERY PERIOD.....	109
Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Châu, Đào Lê Kiều Oanh .....	109
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR VIETNAM IN ATTRACTIVE FDI IN GLOBAL MINIMUM CORPORATE TAX IMPLEMENTATION .....	117
Ngo Hoang Thong .....	117

IMPACTS OF STATE OWNERSHIP AND BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS ON TAX AVOIDANCE: EVIDENCE IN VIETNAM.....	128
Huyen Ngoc Nguyen, Thanh Dan Bui .....	128
RUSSIA'S IMPACTS AND SCENES ON BEING BANNED FROM SWIFT .....	143
Lam Dang Xuan Hoa <sup>1</sup> , Phan Ngoc Anh <sup>2</sup> .....	143
THE ROLE OF ACCESS TO FINANCE AND THE ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION OF YOUNGERS IN THE SOUTHWESTERN PROVINCE, VIETNAM.....	151
Vu Truc Phuc*, Nguyen Dang Hat, Nguyen An Phu, Dao Le Kieu Oanh .....	151

## **DIGITAL ECONOMY IN VIETNAM, TRENDS AND POTENTIABILITY**

DEVELOPING SMART HOME MODEL FOR APARTMENTS IN HO CHI MINH CITY BASED ON INTERNET OF THINGS (IoT) TECHNOLOGY .....	182
Dang Thanh Thuy <sup>1</sup> , Nguyen Thanh Dien <sup>2</sup> .....	182
TRANSPARENCY OF ACCOUNTING INFORMATION OF CONSTRUCTION ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY – CASE STUDY OF APPLICATION OF ACCRUAL ACCOUNTING .....	193
Truong Thanh Loc <sup>1*</sup> , Pham Thi Yen Nhi <sup>2</sup> .....	193
FACTORS AFFECTING THE QUALITY OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	207
Truong Thanh Loc <sup>*</sup> , Dang Nguyen Tuong Han, Nguyen Ngoc Mai Phuong, Nguyen Thi Quynh Huong .....	207
THE CRITICAL FACTORS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' INTENTION TO USE METAVERSE TECHNOLOGY FOR SUBJECTS RELATED TO IMPORT-EXPORT LEARNING .....	221
Van Thuy Nguyen Ho, Chau The Huu, Luan Thanh Nguyen <sup>*</sup> .....	221
CONSUMER PERCEPTION ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT OF LUXURY BRANDS IN VIETNAM AND CHINA MARKETS.....	233
Tran Minh Tu <sup>1</sup> .....	233
INFLUENCE OF WOM AND EWOM IN MAKING DECISION BUYING GOODS .....	247
Doan Anh Tu <sup>1</sup> , Kim Phi Rum <sup>2</sup> , Nguyen Pham Hai Ha <sup>3</sup> .....	247
DIGITAL ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL IN VIETNAM.....	257
Hoang Thi Chinh, Nguyen Hoang Phan .....	257
BLOCKCHAIN APPLICATION IN MODERN LOGISTICS: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIETNAM .....	266
Nguyen Nu Tuong Vi.....	266
FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY IN VIETNAM .....	272
Vo Tien Si .....	272
LEGAL FRAME FOR THE OPERATION OF THE REAL ESTATE BUSINESS UTILIZING THE BLOCKCHAIN PLATFORM IN VIETNAM.....	284
Le Thi Khanh Linh.....	284

## **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION – COOPERATION – GLOBAL INTEGRATION IN BUSINESS**

FACTORS INFLUENCING BUSINESS ACCEPTANCE OF INDUSTRY 4.0 TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS IN DONG NAI PROVINCE.....	291
Thanh-Thu Vo*, Minh-Huong Tang.....	291
DIGITAL ORIENTATION, INNOVATION CAPABILITY AND FIRM PERFORMANCE: A PROPOSAL RESEARCH MODEL .....	298
Nguyen Van Hau .....	298
PREDICTION OF STUDENT'S BEHAVIORAL INTENTION TO USE SMART LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: A COMBINED MODEL OF SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY AND TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE .....	309
Nguyen Thi Hai Binh <sup>1</sup> , Dao Y Nhi <sup>2</sup> , Nguyen Thanh Luan <sup>3</sup> , Dang Quan Tri <sup>4</sup> .....	309
THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPACT OF GRAMMARLY ON EFL WRITING COMPETENCY: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT. ....	323
Nguyen Thi Hong Lien <sup>1</sup> , Nguyen Truong Gia Minh <sup>2</sup> , Nguyen Ngoc Vu <sup>3*</sup> .....	323
FACTORS AFFECTING PURCHASING DECISION OF THE YOUTH ON TIKTOK .....	336
Ngoc Pham <sup>1</sup> , Thanh Cong Tran*.....	336
FACTORS AFFECTING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY BEHAVIORS OF WORKERS DIRECT PRODUCTION AT CU CHI POWER COMPANY.....	345
Minh Luan Le, Thi Trang Tran.....	345
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR.....	355
Nguyen Xuan Hung <sup>1</sup> , Ha Le Thu Hoai <sup>1</sup> , Nguyen Huu My Truc <sup>2&amp;3</sup> , Pham Tan Nhat <sup>2&amp;3</sup> .....	355
THE INNOVATION CAPACITY - THE ROLE OF LEADERS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM.....	365
Huynh Nhut Nghia .....	365
PEOPLE'S THOUGHTS ON THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON BUSINESS .....	376
Ton Nguyen Trong Hien, Bui Tuyet Anh .....	376
FACTORS AFFECTING BRAND SWITCHING INTENTION IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM .....	382
Ly Dan Thanh, Nguyen Phu Quoi, Tran Hoang Nam, Vo Hong Son, Nguyen Ngoc Thuy Tien .....	382
ENHANCE THE DIGITAL COMPETITIVENESS .....	398
Tran Quang Canh, Hoang Thi Chinh.....	398

ASSESSING PATIENT SATISFACTION (BRAND) AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AT THU DUC CITY HOSPITAL.....	408
Nguyen Hoang Dung <sup>1*</sup> , Nguyen Huynh Bao An <sup>2</sup> , Van Phuong Trang <sup>2</sup> .....	408
INDUSTRIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES FORM THE FOUNDATION FOR BINH DUONG'S SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....	408
Hoang-An Nguyen .....	417
IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL FAIRNESS ON THE EMPLOYEES' KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	426
Le Thi Nhu Quynh <sup>1,2</sup> , Le Thi Giang <sup>2</sup> , Truong Quang Dung <sup>1</sup> .....	426
THE EFFECT OF PERSONAL MOTIVATION ON THE TACIT KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOR OF 5-STAR HOTELS' EMPLOYEES IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	440
Le Thi Giang, Nguyen Bach Hoang Phung.....	440
DIGITAL COMPETITIVENESS AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF ENTERPRISES IN THE DIGITAL ERA: THE CASE OF VIETNAMESE ENTERPRISES .....	453
Diep Nguyen Thi Ngoc <sup>1*</sup> , Canh Quang Tran <sup>2</sup> , Anh Bach Hoang Ngoc <sup>1</sup> .....	453
FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' SELECTION OF PRIVATE PRESCHOOLS IN THU DUC CITY .....	466
Thi-Trang Tran <sup>1</sup> , Thi-My-Dung Pham <sup>2</sup> , Thi-Bich-Diep Le <sup>1*</sup> .....	466

## **RECOVERY COMMUNICATIONS IN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

DEVELOPING A SPIRITUAL TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE MEASUREMENT SCALE OF AN GIANG .....	474
Nguyen Vuong Hoai Thao <sup>1</sup> , Nguyen Quyet Thang <sup>2</sup> .....	474
PROSPECTS OF VIRTUAL REALITY TOURISM APPLICATION IN VIETNAM TOURISM PROMOTION .....	487
Nguyen Thi Hong Ha, Pham Thi Huong Giang.....	487
PERSONALIZATION TRAVEL TRENDING IN HO CHI MINH CITY IN THE CONTEXT OF POST COVID-19 .....	497
Duong Bao Trung.....	497
IMPACTS OF MEDIA ON CUSTOMERS' DECISION TO CHOOSE FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICES POST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC .....	511
Nguyen Thi Bich Van .....	511
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION APPLICATION TO PROMOTE THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT OF INBOUND TOURISM IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	521
Tran Trong Thanh .....	521
VIETNAM TOURISM AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC .....	527
Nguyen Hoang Phan <sup>1</sup> , Hoang Thi Chinh <sup>2</sup> .....	527
NAVIGATING THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DATA MINING AND PRIVACY .....	537
Pham Thai Hien .....	537
THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT SELF-REPORTED GENERAL WELL-BEING AND PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS, TEACHERS, AND UNIVERSITY .....	545
Virginia Kelsey <sup>1</sup> , Đặng Thị Mai Ly <sup>2*</sup> , Nguyễn Anh Khoa <sup>2</sup> , Nguyễn Văn Tường <sup>2</sup> .....	545

## **DIGITAL VERSUS NON- DIGITAL**

PROVIDING CONVENIENCE TO CUSTOMERS IN THE DIGITAL MARKETING ERA: OBSERVATIONS FROM COMMERCIAL BANKS IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	556
Nguyen Quang Trung .....	556
VIRTUAL REALITY: AN INNOVATIVE TOOL IN TOURISM EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING .....	564
Thanh Nguyen Ngoc Le <sup>1</sup> , Khuong Thanh Nguyen <sup>2</sup> .....	564
THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF STRATEGIC POSITIONING FOR PLACE BRANDING: A CASE STUDY OF DONG THAP PROVINCE .....	580
Phan Bao Giang.....	580
LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON VIETNAM'S SMALL AND THE MEDIUM BUSINESS ENTERPRISES (SMEs) .....	587
Lê Kim Nguyên * .....	587



## **CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATION**

PROPOSE AN ONLINE TEACHING COMPETENCE SCALE FOR UNIVERSITY LECTURERS .....	596
Duong Thi Kim Oanh*, Dang Thi Dieu Hien .....	596
EXAMINE USAGE OF LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMSS) BY FACULTY STAFF AT UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS (UEF) AND FINANCE WITH EXPANDED TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM).....	608
Ha Truong Minh Hieu, Ngo Minh Hai*, Mach Tran Huy.....	608

## **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AN INDISPENSABLE EVOLUTION FOR SUSTAINABLE CORPORATES**

FACTORS AFFECTING THE APPLICATION OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING AT MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES IN BINH DUONG PROVINCE .....	618
Truong Thanh Loc <sup>1*</sup> , Nguyen Thi Thanh Truc <sup>2</sup> .....	618
HRM DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: TAKING A ROAD OF SUCCESSION PLANNING ..	629
Trương Phan Hoàng Anh, Giang Ngọc Anh.....	629
THE IMPLICATION OF CONTACTLESS SERVICE AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER REVISIT INTENTION .....	640
Linh, Nguyen Duy Yen* .....	640
TOURISM BRAND LOVE IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE ROLE OF ONLINE TOURIST EXPERIENCES, TOURIST-BRAND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY .....	651
Thanh Nguyen Ngoc Le .....	651
CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS IN CROSS-CULTURAL SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (SoTL): A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY .....	662
Punithan Moganathas <sup>1</sup> , Jenny Hill <sup>2</sup> , Andy V.-M. Kok <sup>2</sup> , Matt Barr <sup>2</sup> , Ruffin Relja <sup>2*</sup> , Philippa Ward <sup>2</sup> , Duong Tran Quang Hoang <sup>3</sup> , Quynh Phuong Tran <sup>3</sup> .....	662
LEVERAGING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABLE CORPORATE EVOLUTION IN VIETNAM .....	677
Nguyen,Tan Dat <sup>1</sup> , Le,Dinh Thang <sup>2</sup> .....	677

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND APPLICATIONS

FB-PROPHET MODEL FOR TIME SERIES FORECASTING IN SALES .....	691
Thanh Cong Tran .....	691
USING AI CODE IN C# PROGRAMMING .....	698
Nguyen Ha Giang.....	698
DETERMINANTS OF CONTINUANCE USAGE INTENTION OF MOBILE FOOD ORDERING APPLICATIONS (MFOAS) AMONG VIETNAMESE USERS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF E- SATISFACTION .....	705
Lam Hoang Phuong <sup>1*</sup> , Nguyen Thi Kim Lien <sup>2</sup> , Tien Hung Nguyen <sup>3</sup> , Vinh Long Nguyen <sup>4</sup> .....	705
DECODING MARKETING INSIGHT: INSIGHT FROM OUTSIDE.....	718
Hoàng Thị Hằng, Trần Thành Công* .....	718
DIGITAL DISRUPTION AND DATA SECURITY: HOW FINTECH IS RESHAPING BANKING ...	724
Hoàng Văn Hiếu, Trần Ngọc Thiên Ngân.....	724

## **TRENDS AND ISSUES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**

EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDES AND LEARNING ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNICATIVE GAME-BASED GRAMMAR TEACHING .....	736
Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen <sup>1</sup> , Tran Quoc Thao <sup>2</sup> .....	736
APPROACHES TO TEACHING L2 LISTENING:.....	749
CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN REAL-LIFE AND CLASSROOM-BASED LISTENING .....	749
Luu Thi Mai Vy .....	749
DEFINING ROLES OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY LANGUAGE CLASSROOM .....	755
Ho Xuan Tien, Duong My Tham.....	755
EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND LEARNING INVESTMENT IN PORTFOLIO - BASED ENGLISH WRITING LEARNING: A LITERATURE REVIEW .....	763
Ly Gia Huy <sup>1</sup> , Tran Quoc Thao <sup>2</sup> .....	763
EXPLORING EFL LEARNER IDENTITIES IN PROJECT-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING AT A HIGH SCHOOL IN AN GIANG PROVINCE .....	774
Nguyen Hong Thien <sup>1</sup> , Tran Quoc Thao <sup>2</sup> .....	774
THE VALUES OF SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY IN ACADEMIC WRITING: A LITERATURE REVIEW .....	791
THE ISSUE OF AMBIGUITY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.....	801
Nguyen Dinh Tuan .....	801
RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EFL STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING .....	812
Huynh Thanh Nhon <sup>1</sup> , Tran Quoc Thao <sup>2</sup> .....	812
EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF WRITING ANXIETY ON VIETNAMESE ESL UNDERGRADUATES' WRITING PERFORMANCE: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY.....	821
Nguyen Ngoc Nguyen, Nguyen Hoang Phan.....	821
THE APPLICATION OF THE "FLIPPED CLASSROOM" MODEL IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT .....	838
THE USE OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN EFLFLIPPED CLASSROOMS .....	847
Nguyen Quynh Thao Vy <sup>1,*</sup> , Duong My Tham <sup>2</sup> .....	847
INSIGHTS INTO ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS' USE OF PHRASAL VERBS IN ACADEMIC WRITING.....	860
Do Thi Thanh Thuy, Tran Quoc Thao .....	860

## **LAW IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION**

LEGALISING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INFRINGEMENTS IN RUSSIA – A WAR TACTIC IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIA’S INVASION OF UKRAINE.....	869
Bui Thi Hong Ninh* .....	869
MODEL OF ASSET REGISTRATION WORLDWIDE AND LESSONS FOR VIETNAM IN IMPROVING ASSET REGISTRATION LAWS.....	880
Vu Anh Sao <sup>1,2</sup> , Nguyen Thi Xuan Mai <sup>2</sup> .....	880
LEGAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) - INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS FOR VIETNAM .....	887
Le Hoang Minh Huy*, Nguyen Thi Thu Ha, Dao Trong Duc, Ky Dieu Linh, Bui Thi Thuy Linh, Nguyen Nam Trung.....	887
SOUTH KOREA’S EXPERIENCES ON PROPERTY REGISTRATION LAW - LESSONS FOR VIETNAM .....	896
Vu Anh Sao, Pham Huynh Bao Oanh.....	896
THE RISE OF REMOTE WORK: LEGAL CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT LAW IN VIETNAM .....	903
Nguyen Thi Xuan Mai <sup>1</sup> , Nguyen Thi Ngoc Loan <sup>2</sup> .....	903
CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN THE EMERGING AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.....	910
Nguyen Thi Thu Trang .....	910
THE IMPACTS OF GLOBAL MINIMUM TAX ON FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) CORPORATIONS IN VIETNAM.....	921
Trần Ngọc Thanh <sup>1</sup> .....	921
CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE ACTIVITIES AND TAX MANAGEMENT ISSUES .....	933
Le Huynh Phuong Chinh, Ngo Thi Khanh Linh, Pham Ngoc Lan Anh.....	933
EXPERIENCE IN KOREA AND CHINA ON TAX MANAGEMENT FOR CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE ACTIVITIES .....	941
Duong Anh Son <sup>1</sup> , Tran Vang Phu <sup>2</sup> .....	941
LEGAL PERSPECTIVE ON REGULATIONS RALATED TO PERSONAL INCOME TAX WHEN EARNING INCOME THROUGH E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS IN VIETNAM, TAKING THE CASE OF INDIVIDUALS DOING BUSINESS THROUGH TIKTOK APPLICATION.....	946
Nguyen Duc Tri <sup>1</sup> , Hoang Minh Châu <sup>2</sup> .....	946
THE COMPATIBILITY ON THE SCOPE OF MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE (MLA) IN CRIMINAL MATTERS AND THE CONDITIONS OF REFUSAL MLA IN CRIMINAL MATTERS BETWEEN VIETNAMESE LAW AND INTERNATIONAL TREATIES WHICH VIETNAM HAS SIGNED. ....	956

Pham Huynh Bao Oanh.....	956
TAX POLICY FOR E-COMMERCE OF COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO VIETNAM.....	967
Nguyen Thanh Minh Chanh, Ha Thi Van Anh, Pham Lam Tam Nhu .....	967
LEGAL REGULATIONS FOR ENTERPRISE OBLIGATIONS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON E-COMMERCE PLATFORM .....	974
Truong Kim Phung*, Nguyen Hoang Chuong .....	974
“ROBOT TAX” – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIETNAM.....	981
Gian Thi Le Na, Pham Phuong Doanh.....	981
WTO APPELLATE BODY REFORM IN THE CONTEXT OF ESCALATING GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS.....	988
Nguyen Nam Trung.....	988

## 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

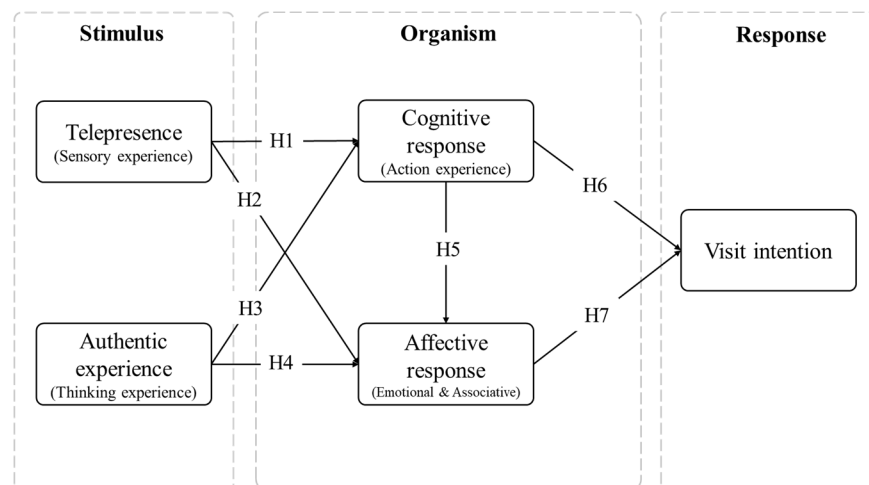
Attitude can be defined as a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively to a given idea, item, person, or situation, as well as how a person observes and judges something or someone. As mentioned above, cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses are the three aspects of cognitive 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
<b>AFR</b>					
<b>AUE</b>	0.857				
<b>COR</b>	0.833	0.787			

Items	AFR	AUE	COR	TEP	VIT
<b>TEP</b>	0.568	0.641	0.505		
<b>VIT</b>	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
<b>AFR1</b>	<b>0.830</b>	0.617	0.603	0.422	0.469
<b>AFR2</b>	<b>0.832</b>	0.602	0.515	0.380	0.503
<b>AFR3</b>	<b>0.814</b>	0.616	0.578	0.402	0.441
<b>AFR4</b>	<b>0.733</b>	0.526	0.504	0.408	0.472
<b>AFR6</b>	<b>0.751</b>	0.510	0.514	0.377	0.541
<b>AFR7</b>	<b>0.773</b>	0.515	0.479	0.360	0.505
<b>AUE1</b>	0.526	<b>0.727</b>	0.442	0.420	0.366
<b>AUE2</b>	0.569	<b>0.804</b>	0.497	0.487	0.443
<b>AUE3</b>	0.566	<b>0.793</b>	0.438	0.351	0.384
<b>AUE4</b>	0.589	<b>0.818</b>	0.521	0.418	0.452
<b>COR1</b>	0.499	0.485	<b>0.813</b>	0.303	0.436
<b>COR2</b>	0.585	0.513	<b>0.842</b>	0.330	0.475
<b>COR3</b>	0.558	0.477	<b>0.781</b>	0.361	0.417
<b>TEP1</b>	0.421	0.452	0.373	<b>0.850</b>	0.305
<b>TEP2</b>	0.447	0.505	0.403	<b>0.890</b>	0.329
<b>TEP3</b>	0.428	0.439	0.305	<b>0.863</b>	0.313
<b>TEP4</b>	0.377	0.400	0.286	<b>0.773</b>	0.259
<b>VIT4</b>	0.442	0.409	0.464	0.239	<b>0.784</b>
<b>VTI1</b>	0.477	0.423	0.418	0.305	<b>0.791</b>
<b>VTI2</b>	0.564	0.462	0.473	0.311	<b>0.847</b>

#### 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 ( $\beta$ )	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

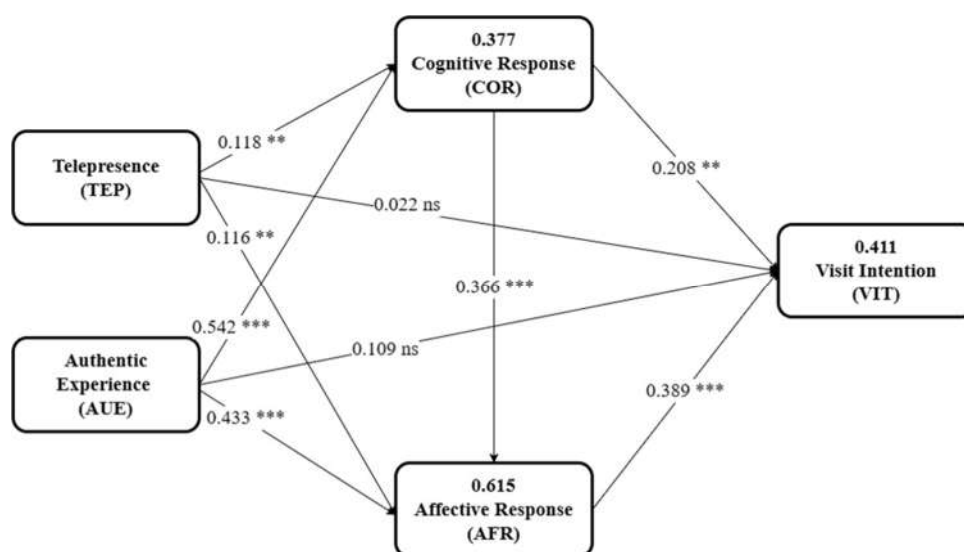
Virtual reality tourism offers potential tourists the opportunity to visit a destination presented in a virtual reality environment, and it is a very effective destination marketing strategy. Based on the SOR model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), the research has developed and tested the theoretical framework 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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