

Assessing the moderating effects of involvement on tourist attitudes and intentions through virtual reality applications

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Abstract

Purpose –This paper aims to evaluate the impact of various preview modes on tourist attitudes and intentions to visit a destination based on consumers' level of involvement in travel decision-making.

Design/methodology/approach – The study was conducted as a between-subjects one-factor [preview mode: static images vs 360-degree tour vs virtual reality (VR) mode] in a laboratory experiment setup to examine how consumers with different levels of involvement in travel decision-making respond to destination marketing toward three different preview modes.

Findings – The findings indicated that VR preview mode highly influences tourist attitudes and visit intentions toward a destination compared to static images and 360-degree tours. This effect is more significant among participants with higher levels of customer involvement. Finally, the results from the study offer empirical evidence of the effectiveness of VR in shaping user behavior compared to traditional preview modes.

Research limitations/implications – The limitations are using a non-probability sampling method, a small sample size and affordable mobile-compatible VR headsets. **Practical implications** – This study offers empirical evidence on the effectiveness of VR in shaping tourist behavior compared to traditional preview modes. It helps destination marketers develop appropriate strategies for promoting tourist destinations.

Originality/value – The novelty of this paper lies in understanding the effectiveness of VR in shaping tourist behavior with different levels of customer involvement in travel decision-making.

Keywords: Immersive technology, 360-degree, Customer involvement, Virtual reality, Tourists attitude, Visit intention, Preview modes

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