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Virtual Travel Experience and Destination Marketing: Do Well-Crafted Contents of Virtual Reality Matter for Authentic Customer Experience and User Satisfaction?

Abstract

This study uses the IS Success Model to explore user satisfaction and the authentic experience generated by a VR experience. The delinquent facet of the IS Success Model is that the other technology-related factors like customer satisfaction and experience that shape a nomological net for this model are missing. The customer experience has been discussed in the light of crafting well-thought VR content, as unnecessary focus on creating VR for all customer experiences might influence the experience process negatively. This study has enhanced the model empirically by adding playfulness and immersion to this model. Furthermore, the PLS-SEM analysis verified the mediated effect of these contents on the visit intention of the tourists. The results demonstrated that this addition significantly influenced user satisfaction and customer experience. Finally, the theoretical and managerial implications have been discussed to bridge a consensus between industry and academia, which can give VR advertisement a new direction for the tourism and hospitality Industry.

Keywords: virtual reality (VR), destination marketing organizations (DMOs), information system (IS) success model, authentic experience, user satisfaction

1. Introduction

Virtual Reality (VR) is an emerging tool that has the potential to revolutionize the tourism and hospitality industry. Service providers advertise an immersive experience in a digitally simulated space; VR allows individuals to experience realistic and appealing places (Liu & Huang, 2023). VR tours provide users with immersive 360 tours to experience beauty and culture (Slevitch, Chandrasekera, & Sealy, 2022). In addition, VR advertisements are used by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) to let tourists experience new offerings and can help the DMOs understand tourism from the customer's point of view (Orús, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Flavián, 2021; Lee, Lee & Jeong, 2020). VR is used in various tourism experiences (McLean & Barhorst, 2022). The benefit of using VR in the tourism and hospitality industry is increased customer comfort from the accessibility of one click.

Extensive literature on VR is available, accompanying the increased use of VR and augmented reality applications. Although numerous studies are on VR usage, there is not much literature about VR elements that make a VR experience attractive for users. The requirement for VR is different for every branch of tourism. However, experience and user satisfaction following the VR encounter is still uncharted territory (Flavián,

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Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús, 2019). VR experience becomes exceptional for a customer with a need but boring when not required (Fan, 2022). VR experiences have drawn criticism for merely being graphical and being created without any requirement (Orús et al., 2021). VR requirements, content, and context should be considered while industries invest in VR experiences for maximum output. The content aspect of VR has not been paid much attention to in the literary world (Orús et al., 2021), except for a few (Lee, Lee, Jeong & Oh, 2020). The information quality and senses have been used as the content that enhances the factor of joy, not satisfaction. The effectiveness of the content on emotions is determined by making video comparisons (Liu et al., 2023). Contents play an essential part in creating a VR experience. This study focuses on new content in VR that may develop authentic travel experiences, customer satisfaction, and intention to visit the destination. However, sometimes VR negatively impacts intention building as it reduces desire due to being too real (Lee et al., 2020)

Ali (2022) highlights the possibility of giving consumers real-world experiences in a virtual environment when interacting with websites and apps, depending on the website's competence. VR technology for content creation has significantly impacted VR tourism (Kim, Lee & Preis., 2020). 360-degree tours, results reveal that VR offers a higher level of website user experience. Consequently, experience is linked with satisfaction and revisiting behaviour (Ali, 2016). Based on previous knowledge of VR, this study aims to (1) evaluate VR websites according to customer insight based on pre-determined contents, (2) examine the role of contents in creating an authentic experience and customer satisfaction, (3) inspect the role of authentic experience and user satisfaction towards behavioural intention to visit the destination physically.

2. Literature review

2.1. VR research in tourism & hospitality

It has long been acknowledged that virtual reality has the power to transform and reinvent the advertisement industry completely. Today, visitors' lives become increasingly entwined with virtual digital worlds (Mura et al., 2016). Experience is the primary element in the economies of developed countries, and studies found the experience to be the fundamental aspect of a VR platform (Kim et al., 2020; Orús et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2022). The kind of experience industries target is, first, core experiences that have minimal technology intervention. Secondly, supported experiences are where technologies are prominent for experience, and finally, empowered experiences are where technologies are the key part of new customer experience (Neuhofner et al., 2014).

Empowered experiences are an enhanced use of technologies that amplify consumer experience (Fan et al., 2022). Perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, and perceived immersion are consumers' value perceptions of VR (Kim et al., 2020). Previous research also includes customer engagement, telepresence, and social presence (Mura et al., 2016). Mental imagery and cognitive images have also been considered powerful content for customer experience in VR (McLean, 2022). Experts also consider vividness and interactivity crucial elements of VR (Lee, Lee & Jeong, 2021). There is a consensus that VR disconnects from the real world (Tussyadiah, Wang, & Jia, 2017). Contents are necessary for the experience (Liu & Huang, 2023). The contents of VR create an empowered experience, which leads to satisfaction and visit intention for tourists.

2.2. DeLone & McLean's information system (IS) success model

DeLone and Mclean (2003) developed a framework that concisely describes the environments, influencing factors, and behaviours explicitly involved with information systems. Since its inception, this model has been applied to several technology-related studies (Petter & McLean, 2009) to investigate the consumer behaviour

towards technical aspects of IS systems consisting of elements such as Information Quality (IQ), System Quality (SQ), User Satisfaction (US), System Usage (SU), Individual Impact (II) and Organizational Impact (OI). The model was updated with a holistic approach that was previously lacking (Seddon, 1997), with the addition of Net Benefits (NB) (DeLone & McLean, 2004). Gao et al. (2017) instigated the IS success model in their study to understand the virtual communities in tourism. Hence, the IS Success Model has not been explored long enough to improve the consumer experience.

3. Hypothesis development

3.1. Authentic experience leads to behavioral intention

Experiences have great significance in marketing, and the authenticity of the experiences matters in the consumption journey (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Authenticity is precisely what is sold (Rahilly, 1993). Graphical and animated content is not an authentic user experience (Orús et al., 2021), so an experience must be accurate. As mentioned earlier, the VR experiences are made of either technology-mediated or empowered (Neuhofer, 2014; Mura et al., 2016). Technology-empowered experiences are critical, as too much exposure to technology may create an adverse effect (Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez, & Orús, 2021). Empowered experiences have given rise to a new hospitality and tourism industry trend: "Try before you buy" (Tussyadiah et al., 2018). Authentic experience is significant in the pre- and post-purchase phases (McLean & Barhorst, 2022). Literature suggests that authentic experience is vital for the visit intention in a virtual setting, so we posit:

H1: Authentic experience positively affects behavioural intention.

3.2. User satisfaction leads to behavioral intention

The main factors that signal satisfaction are language, behaviours, and emotional expressions of consumers (Hallowell, 1996). User satisfaction is the key factor when providing marketing and advertisement needs through any technical medium (Djelassi et al., 2018) inferior quality results in customer dissatisfaction (Park et al., 2018). Technology-empowered experiences are critical for enhanced customer satisfaction (Willems et al., 2019). Customer evaluation of the experience as being pleasant in recent memory leads to customer satisfaction (Park et al., 2018). The above literature proves that user satisfaction positively impacts the visit. Consequently, we postulate:

H2: User satisfaction positively impacts behavioural intention.

3.3. Content quality

Content quality is essential to DeLone & McLean's study as it makes virtual communication logical for the users (DeLone & McLean, 1992). Many researchers have validated that content is essential to technological services (DeLone & McLean, 2004). Formative and Summative assessment of the content periodically is a critical success factor in content being attractive to users (Morrison et al., 2005). The content's pictures, videos, and animations should portray usefulness and be adequate (Yang et al., 2005). Completeness, reliability, and relevancy are the top criteria for respectable content quality (Chai et al., 2009). All these aspects are aligned with the IS Success Model's prerequisites of content quality. Aesthetics and uncertainty avoidance make VR more acceptable for tourists and drive buying intention in virtual settings (Jeyaraj, 2020). It is evident that content is an essential part of any VR experience, so we posit:

H3a: VR content quality positively affects customers' authentic experience.

H3b: VR content quality positively affects user satisfaction.

3.4. System quality

System quality is the first component of the IS success model. It is the first factor that attracts users toward the virtual environment. System quality should be reliable, available, and have an acceptable response time (Jeyaraj, 2020). System quality refers to user-friendly, hassle-free, and easy to navigate (Gorla *et al.*, 2010). An experience with system interruption and glitches leads to dissatisfaction (Sabarudin & Razak, 2021). Ease of understanding and navigation in a virtual environment (AlSondos & Salameh, 2020) are all the elementary prerequisites of the IS Success Model. If essential system quality is not provided in a virtual environment, it leads to a bad experience and dissatisfaction (McLean & Barhorst, 2022), so we posit:

H4a: VR system quality positively impacts the authentic experience for users.

H4b: VR system quality positively impacts user satisfaction.

3.5. Playfulness

Playfulness in adults positively influences the desired outcomes, especially in a service sector such as advertisement (Glynn & Webster, 1992). A consumer exchange is not always rational; efficient consumption patterns are comprehended when the exchange is based on playfulness (Webster & Martocchio, 1992). A business transaction appears to be for necessity purposes, but playfulness is the intrinsic drive behind consumer satisfaction. In virtual tourism, users always indulge in an interactive and playful interface rather than a dull and boring one (Kang *et al.*, 2020) since it provides customers with fun and curiosity. This discussion settles that playfulness has a positive relationship with authentic experience and user satisfaction; thus, we posit the following hypothesis:

H5a: VR playfulness positively affects customers' authentic experience.

H5b: VR playfulness positively affects user satisfaction.

3.6. Immersion

It means being present in the experience mentally and physically (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The idea of immersion within a virtual setting is to incorporate flow, cognitive preoccupation, and appealing experiences (Jennett *et al.*, 2008). The continuum between being virtual and authentic is close to immersive experiences (Hudson *et al.*, 2019). Information that captures users' somatic, sensory, and cognitive aspects is called immersive. Spatio-temporal belonging in a virtual world, along with connectivity to the real world, is the immersive experience of VR (Yim *et al.*, 2017). With the right amount of indulgence, users will not be overwhelmed by an overload of information, which is true immersion, especially in VR tourism (Hansen & Mossberg, 2017). Immersion is necessary for authentic experience and user satisfaction. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H6a: VR immersion positively impacts the customer's authentic experience.

H6b: VR immersion positively affects user satisfaction.

3.7. Interactivity

An interaction between the user and the portal is based on a sense of support, a dialogue between the user and the portal (Kalyanaraman & Sundar, 2006). The responsive nature of a VR platform is an essential component that creates a reciprocal nature of experience in a two-way flow of communication known as interactivity (Liu, 2003). The interactive platform leads to a repetitive and close review of the information for users. This level of interactivity enhances informativeness and satisfaction (Kang *et al.*, 2020). As a result of the accessibility of information, consumers can review information anytime and make decisions at their own pace (Kang, 2020). Interactivity refers to the relationship between humans and machines in a way that satisfies the users (Dehghani, Lee, & Mashatan, 2020). The human and machine relationship cannot be overlooked in a virtual environment; thus, we postulate the following:

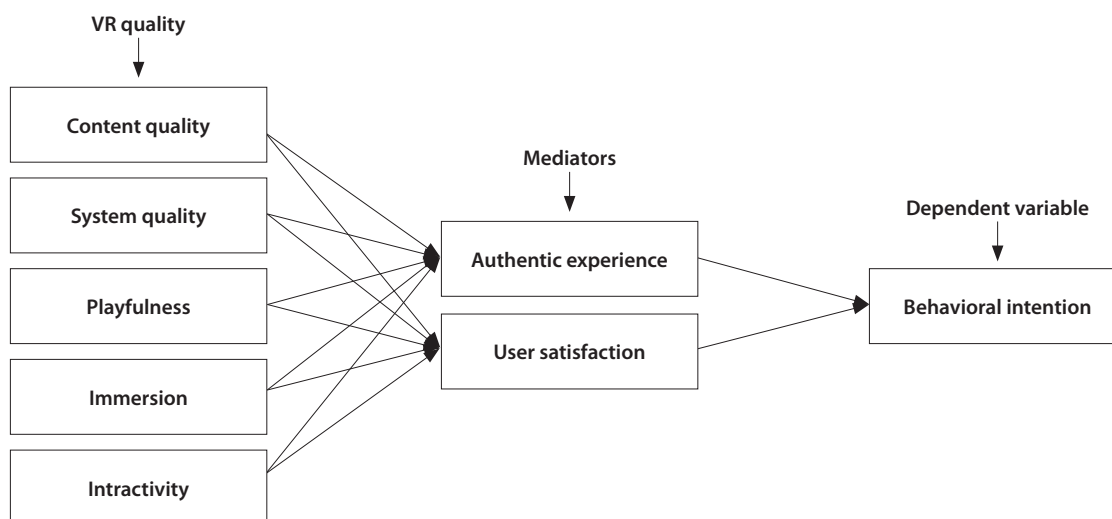
H7a: VR interactivity positively affects customers' authentic experience.

H7b: VR interactivity positively affects user satisfaction.

3.8. Behavior intentions

In the literature on hospitality and tourism, behaviour intentions are frequently used due to their appropriateness for consumer behaviour for purchase decisions (Pelet et al., 2017). Ajzen (1991) established the theory of planned behaviour that accentuated the importance of intentions that lead to actions. Consequently, a user's response toward advertising through the technological medium is a propensity to react favourably or unfavourably to the stimuli. In addition to all these factors, enriched technology-enhanced experiences matter the most and are more likely to elicit a favourable response (Yim, Chu, & Sauer, 2017). The literature indicates the importance of intentions and actions built on user satisfaction and user experience, and hypotheses have already been developed for user satisfaction and customer experience.

Figure 1
Conceptual framework



4. Research methodology

The study used the official website of a DMO: www.xplorit.com/orlando-Florida, which has developed VR tours for Orlando, Florida, USA. The website provides a complete tour and travel guide to the city, with 3D videos, maps, and hotel, restaurant, amusement park, and business tour guides. Based on the IS success model, we developed a research framework and empirically tested it through an online survey platform. Customers were required to watch this VR for 3 minutes and then answer the online survey based on the framework. This research has adopted its methodology from the previous researchers (Lee et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021).

4.1. Survey design

An online survey was administered using pre-defined measurements selected carefully from previous research. The responses were acquired from the US. Amazon Mechanical Turk is a popular software for collecting online data from targeted audiences. It is widely used to select respondents based on the study requirements and respondents' ability to handle the assignment. Amazon Mechanical Turk is a reasonable medium for obtaining high-quality information. As far as conducting VR research accessibility remotely is concerned, Amazon Mechanical Turk is a reliable medium for collecting VR-related data. Amazon Mechanical Turk is

reliable and satisfactory for studies that require VR-related feedback. Based on its reliability through previous research, this study also employed Amazon Mechanical Turk's workers for this study.

4.2. Measurements

The measurements used in this study were all adopted from well-reputed papers published in reputable journals. Five items of content quality were adopted from (Aladwani & Palvia, 2002; Chai et al., 2009; Petter & McLean 2009) four items of system quality were from (AlSondos & Salameh, 2020); four items of playfulness were adopted from (Webster & Martocchio, 1992); five items of immersion were taken from (Yim et al., 2017; Hansen & Mossberg, 2017; Dehghani et al., 2020) three items of interactivity were implemented from (Kang, 2020; Lee et al., 2021), seven items of authentic experience were taken from (Oh et al., 2007). and four items of user satisfaction were adopted (Hallowell, 1996), whereas behaviour intention has been adopted (Phillips et al., 2013).

5. Results

Data were collected from potential customers in the US. After the survey, 347 complete responses were selected for the analyses. The characteristics of the sample were analyzed. Table 1 details the sample characteristics.

Table 1
Sample characteristics

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	223	64%
	Female	124	36%
Age	18 to 25 years	40	12%
	24 to 35 years	162	47%
	35 to 44 years	99	29%
	45 to 54 years	22	6%
	Over 55 years	24	6%
Annual income	50,000 \$ and less	118	34%
	50,000 \$ to 90,000 \$	199	57%
	90,000 \$ or higher	30	9%
Occupation	Student	9	3%
	Employed full time	298	86%
	Employed part-time	26	7%
	Unemployed	13	4%
	Retired	1	0.20%
Work experience	Less than a year	21	5%
	1 to 3 years	109	31%
	4 to 6 years	106	31%
	6 years or more	111	32%
Education level	Elementary school	0	0
	Middle school	8	2%
	High school	27	8%
	Graduation	139	40%
	Masters	173	50%
Marital status	Married	225	65%
	Widowed	4	1%
	Divorced	8	2%
	Separated	4	1%
	Never married	106	31%
Have you been to Orlando, Florida before?	Yes	125	36%
	No	222	64%

5.1. Measurement model assessment

For measurement model and testing, we applied a two-step approach where the first step is related to eliminating the items of the construct that do not converge properly with other constructs, relying on confirmatory factor analysis (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). CFA is a statistical procedure used to measure a variable that is best suited for measured constructs into a lower number of constructs (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014). Table 2 represents the composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and factor and cross loadings for the construct in the model. Cronbach's alpha represents the reliability of the construct, with an acceptable value of 0.7 (Hair, Howard, & Nitzl, 2020). As shown in Table 2, all the values of Cronbach's alpha are almost higher than 0.7. Rho_A and composite reliability are also greater than 0.7. Convergent validity is a sign that all the construct items converge well to the overall measurement of the model. The average variance extracted (AVE) threshold should be higher than 0.5; in this case, all the measurements converge well together (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2
Convergent validity

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Rho_A	Composite reliability	AVE
AE	0.742	0.742	0.853	0.661
BI	0.832	0.837	0.899	0.748
CQ	0.639	0.657	0.805	0.581
IM	0.753	0.755	0.859	0.671
IN	0.628	0.628	0.843	0.729
P	0.761	0.765	0.862	0.677
SQ	0.639	0.659	0.845	0.732
US	0.754	0.754	0.891	0.803

AVE is an imperative determinant of convergent reliability, and its acceptable value for any study, according to SmartPLS analysis experts, is 0.5 for all the constructs to converge well (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012). A visual representation of AVE in Table 3 shows that all the values are higher than 0.5. According to several studies, the acceptability of the AVE is good when it is higher than or close to 0.5 but lies between 0 and 1; however, in this case, the representation of AVE indicates an excellent convergent validity. Another important aspect of validity is discriminant validity, which represents each construct's identity (Sarstedt, Ringle & Hair, 2021).

Discriminant validity was assessed according to Fornell and Larcker's criteria (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), implying that AVE's square root should be higher than all other lower values. The Fornell–Larcker criteria represent the correlation between the lower values. In this case, it is according to the requirements other than one value of user satisfaction; however, according to some studies, it does not create a considerable difference as long as the values as a whole present a good overall picture, as reflected in Table 3 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2011).

Table 3
Correlation matrix and discriminant assessment (Fornell-Lacker Criterion)

Constructs	AE	BI	CQ	IM	IN	P	SQ	US
AE	0.812							
BI	0.675	0.865						
CQ	0.669	0.667	0.762					
IM	0.629	0.566	0.630	0.818				
IN	0.463	0.42	0.455	0.493	0.854			
P	0.67	0.605	0.661	0.698	0.472	0.823		
SQ	0.497	0.456	0.577	0.471	0.461	0.485	0.856	
US	0.741	0.646	0.688	0.631	0.477	0.682	0.518	0.896

The diagonal values in Table 4 are the values that are compared in correlation with the other constructs, and these values are the square root of AVE. The threshold value for AVE is 0.5. According to the AVE, all the values are higher than 0.5, and the square root of all those values is shown in Table 4, which is the primary criterion to check the discriminant validity of the construct. Moreover, the table shows that all the constructs are positioned to show that the discriminant validity is according to Fornell–Larcker’s (1981). These criteria are similar to those many studies have identified as representing a strong discriminant validity of every construct.

5.2. Structural model assessment

According to the conceptual framework, eight hypotheses were established. We followed Hair et al. (2020) suggestion to determine the criteria for the assessment of hypothesis testing. According to these assessment criteria, we conducted our hypothesis testing through the bootstrapping resampling method, specifically through path coefficients; clarified variance and β *R* t-ratios were two also consulted for hypothesis testing (Sarstedt et al., 2017). For H1, as reflected in Table 4, content quality (H1a and H1b: $\beta = 0.297$, $t = 4.738$; $\beta = 0.317$, $t = 5.202$) and its *p* values are significant, which indicates that H1 is accepted (Sarstedt et al., 2017). For H2, system quality (H2a and H2b: $\beta = 0.072$, $t = 1.382$; $\beta = 0.088$, $t = 1.741$) and its *p* values are insignificant, thereby rejecting H2. For H3, playfulness (H3a and H3b: $\beta = 0.282$, $t = 4.123$; $\beta = 0.284$, $t = 4.543$) and its *p* values are also significant, thereby accepting the hypothesis. For H4, immersion (H4a and H4b: $\beta = 0.173$, $t = 2.478$; $\beta = 0.150$, $t = 2.324$) and its *p* values indicate the hypothesis’ acceptance. Our following hypothesis, interactivity (H5a and H5b: $\beta = 0.077$, $t = 1.647$; $\beta = 0.084$, $t = 1.798$), and its *p* values are insignificant, thereby rejecting the hypothesis. For the last hypothesis, behavioural intention (H6a and H6b: $\beta = 0.436$, $t = 5.837$; $\beta = 0.322$, $t = 4.079$) has significant *p* values, indicating the acceptance of the last hypothesis. All the hypotheses, except for system quality and interactivity, were accepted. Important indicators for the acceptance of the hypotheses are path coefficient, t-ratios, and *p*-values (Hair et al., 2013).

Table 4
Hypotheses testing

Structural path	β	S.E.	<i>t</i> -ratio	Hypotheses testing
Content quality → Authentic experience (H1a)	0.297	0.063	4.738**	Supported
Content quality → User satisfaction (H1b)	0.317	0.061	5.202**	Supported
System quality → Authentic experience (H2a)	0.072	0.052	1.382	Not supported
System quality → User satisfaction (H2b)	0.088	0.051	1.741	Not supported
Playfulness → Authentic experience (H3a)	0.282	0.068	4.123**	Supported
playfulness → User satisfaction (H3b)	0.284	0.063	4.534**	Supported
Immersion → Authentic experience (H4a)	0.173	0.070	2.478*	Supported
Immersion → User satisfaction (H4b)	0.150	0.065	2.324*	Supported
Interactivity → Authentic experience (H5a)	0.077	0.047	1.647	Not supported
Interactivity → User satisfaction (H5b)	0.084	0.047	1.798	Not supported
Authentic experience → Behavioral intention (H6a)	0.436	0.075	5.837**	Supported
User satisfaction → Behavioral intention (H6b)	0.322	0.079	4.079**	Supported

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01

Two variables were tested: authentic experience and user satisfaction, which have a strong association. Smart-PLS provided pragmatic evidence of a significant relationship between both variables. To verify the role of authentic experience and user satisfaction, the relationship was tested by bootstrapping, total indirect effect, and specific indirect effect, as it has been replicated in Table 4. Table 4 indicates the mediating relationship of all variables with authentic experience and user satisfaction. Content quality is indirectly related to authentic experience and user satisfaction, which leads to behavioural intention ($\beta = 0.130$, $t = 3.425$; $\beta = 0.102$, $t = 3.206$). System quality does not hold a mediating relationship between the authentic experience and user

satisfaction. Playfulness is indirectly related to behavioural intention through behaviour intention and user satisfaction ($\beta = 0.123$, $t = 3.084$; $\beta = 0.091$, $t = 2.917$). Immersion also has an indirect relationship, proving that a mediating relationship exists ($\beta = 0.076$, $t = 1.977$; $\beta = 0.049$, $t = 1.977$). Interactivity does not have a mediating relationship with behavioural intention because the mediating effect of authentic experience and user satisfaction is insignificant.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This study emphasizes the potential impact of the current technological VR development of DMOs in virtual environments on customer experience and user satisfaction in the hospitality and tourism industry. Despite the absence of synchronization between practitioners and academia (Lee, 2020), academic research implies that VR experience increases customer experience and maximizes the intention to visit with an extensive literature review on VR experiences in the industry. Our study does not represent situations where technology creates new experiences regardless of context (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Instead, DMOs use technology to create meaningful experiences. When meaningful experiences are not a part of the VR experience, they can also have opposite effects on the user or may restrict users.

IS Success Model that incorporates the sophisticated system aspects for human-to-machine interaction. According to the dimensions of the IS Success Model proposed by DeLone and McLean (1994, 2004) and explored by Jayaraj (2020). In the present study, we hypothesized system quality (SQ), content quality (CQ), playfulness, immersion, and interactivity for breaking that nomological net of the IS Model to test the relationship of these constructs with the authentic experience and user satisfaction. We found a positive relationship with content quality, playfulness, and immersion. We recommend the industry use the IS Success Model without its nomological net to create various VRs for practitioners. In the post-experience stage, the IS Success Model facilitates the customer in making a decision where the customer finally decides to visit the destination (behavioural intention) based on the experience (Flavián et al., 2019). The representation of actual content as compared to graphical or animated content provokes a superior level of experience and satisfaction, and these findings are in line with the (Orús, 2021).

7. Theoretical implications

Current research conducted on VR content is still in its infancy phase as researchers who most recently suggested more exploration (Kim et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2023). In our study, respondents felt wholly absorbed with the VR while having a visit, lost track of time, and felt high levels of immersion and playfulness. The content of VR should be carefully crafted, as content not rightly designed for the right kind of experience might prevent tourists from visiting the place.

Moreover, user satisfaction with VR tourism content has been explored in this study. User satisfaction can be achieved through expectations, reciprocity, and peak-end rule (Park et al., 2018). As far as theoretical contributions are concerned, this research has firstly enhanced the IS Success Model, which was previously restricted to the dimensions of impact, quality, and usefulness, to more constructs empirically proven as playfulness and immersion. An authentic experience that previously has not been a part of any hospitality and tourism VR study has been discussed in detail about the technology-empowered experiences, which aligns with previous content research (Liu, 2023).

8. Practical implications

For practical implications, tourists must understand that they seek valid and authentic information online. As VR is not always the right choice for marketing, sometimes only photos and videos can serve the purpose.

The other suggestion for the industry is to create real-world content, as creating graphical content can put off customers, who might change their minds about the visit (Orús et al., 2021). This study used a VR platform with all the content based on reality. Nothing is animated or graphical, and the same recommendation is given to marketing managers. Lastly, the VR content should be playful and immersive, as dull content can lower the expectations of potential visitors.

9. Limitations and future research suggestions

Research on a VR platform is a complex phenomenon involving technical advancements, respondents' mental capability, and cost considerations. Another limitation is the mental health of a potential user, as some VRs include hyper-sensory (not present in this study) experiences, which may lead to further mental health issues. Secondly, technical collaborations with the industry to conduct research can also be helpful and cost-effective. Thirdly, technological advances may undermine the previous research too quickly, which can waste time, cost, and energy in this area of research.

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