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Will Virtual Reality Experience Quality be an Alternative to Offline Visit Decision? Review of Literature on Tourist Behaviour on Instagram Social Media

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Abstract

Virtual reality is the latest addition to the tourism industry, leveraging advancements in Internet technology. The advent of Virtual Reality [VR] tourism technology offers a comprehensive portrayal of tourist destination details and mitigates customer apprehension or uncertainty by acquainting consumers with unfamiliar locales. Virtual reality is a highly captivating advancement in tourism marketing that enables consumers to immerse themselves in and encounter destinations in real-time. The objective of this study is to develop a conceptual model that explains how virtual reality can be used to replace traditional offline decision-making processes in the tourism industry. This study employs a comprehensive review of existing literature on the utilisation of virtual reality and its influence on offline visitation choices. Subsequently, a conceptual framework and research hypotheses are formulated. This research paper explores the behaviour of tourists who engage in offline or virtual experiences. Multiple articles were assessed for future research advancements. The findings of this study reveal distinct patterns of tourist behaviour, particularly among millennials, in relation to their ability to adapt to technological advancements. The research findings are anticipated to offer both theoretical and practical benefits to stakeholders involved in tourism technology, particularly in its application as a marketing instrument.

Keywords: technology, tourism, virtual reality

1. Introduction

The tourism research phenomenon focuses on newly developed high-tech applications for marketing purposes, such as mobile phones, mobile apps, and virtual reality [1]. Tourist behaviour is critical to understand because it helps develop tourism products to supply tourist needs. Tourist behaviour can include activities to choose destinations, evaluate tourism products, visit, and intend future behaviour [2]. Predictable future behaviour is the decision to visit. Internet diffusion has changed consumer buying behaviour substantially, with the most significant change being that it is now easier for consumers to search, share, and buy products via the Internet, especially on social media [3]. VR is a relatively new technology that has yet to be researched in the tourism context, so understanding the challenges and risks associated with using VR in marketing is still limited [4]. [5] also reveals that technology and experience must be clearly defined. VR quickly creates new tourism experiences that provide information, entertainment, education, accessibility, and heritage preservation [6]. At the same time, developments in VR technology, in all its forms, provide opportunities for destinations, hospitality businesses, and attractions throughout all phases of the customer journey. Based on this, in-depth analysis is needed regarding the factors that form tourist offline visiting decisions which are predicted based on the experience of using virtual reality.

The offline visit decision is a systematic process in which visitors evaluate and select the most suitable option based on specific criteria [7]. Tourists who have a greater level of interest and desire to visit a place are more likely to make the decision to visit. The ability for individuals to accurately assess their own interests and desires leads to quicker decision-making. A favourable image will enhance behavioural intentions and lead to a decision [9].

A study conducted by Li & Chen (2019) [10] demonstrates that the quality of virtual reality experiences has a notable and adverse impact on the intention to visit. Furthermore, the destination image moderates the connection between virtual reality and the intention to visit, particularly for tourists who lack prior experience. A study conducted by An et al., (2021) demonstrates that the quality of virtual reality experiences has a positive and significant impact on the intention to visit. The study demonstrates that the quality of the virtual reality experience has a significant impact on the intention to visit physical locations. Various research findings have been obtained in this regard, prompting this study to specifically examine the impact of virtual reality experiences on the decision to visit physical locations. This study aims to conceptually define the existence of virtual reality, which cannot substitute offline activities, by drawing on various prior studies. The objective is to generate hypotheses for future research based on the findings. Consequently, the findings of this study can yield conclusions about the factors that can impact the decision to visit offline. The study was carried out on the Instagram account of the Singapore guidebook, which focuses on social media. The subjects of the study will consist of tourists or individuals who utilise the Singapore guidebook Instagram on social media. Singapore Guidebook is an Instagram account that utilises Indonesian language to offer information about various tourist attractions in Singapore. The Singapore Guidebook Instagram account was selected as the research subject due to its potential to provide valuable insights for Indonesian tourism management in devising strategies to attract tourists to different destinations in Indonesia. Singapore Guidebook is the pioneering social media account in Singapore that offers comprehensive insights into tourist attractions in Indonesia. The aim of this literature study is to generate hypotheses and conceptual research models that can aid future research in comprehending tourist behaviour patterns in Indonesia. The Indonesian tourism management can implement this strategy by establishing Instagram accounts to showcase diverse Indonesian tourist destinations. This will enable tourists to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the virtual tourist spots in Indonesia, thereby enhancing their interest and inclination to visit these destinations in person.

2. Literature Review

The tourism industry has been greatly influenced by virtual reality experiences [13]. According to certain literature, virtual experiences are believed to have similar elements as broader consumption experiences [14]. Therefore, comprehending virtual experiences and their constituents is a means to enhance our understanding of the elements of consumption experience in a broader sense, while examining the distinctive characteristics of virtual experiences. Li and Kim (2021) [12] proposed that by augmenting the significance of experiences, tourists can cultivate favourable recollections, optimistic sentiments, and comparatively minimal adverse sentiments, ultimately attaining genuine happiness. The value of experience in virtual tourism can be defined as the user's evaluation of virtual tourism products and the experiential processes involved, such as transactions or the generation of experiences [16]. Lo & Cheng (2020) [17] discovered that virtual travel experiences can successfully alleviate the stress and negative emotions experienced by individuals confined to their homes, while also eliciting positive emotions amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from that, the virtual reality experience can also make tourists have a perception of destination image before making offline visit decision.

Destination image in the world of tourism is assumed to be the same as brand image. Brand image describes the association and consumer confidence in a particular brand [18]. Kotler & Gertner (2002) [19] branded image as a vision and belief hidden in consumers' minds as a mirror of associations that persist in consumers' memories. Furthermore, consumer confidence in the brand is a consumer attitude. Destination image is categorised as affective, cognitive, and conative [20]. Destinations are considered tourism products that provide an integrated experience for tourists [21]. International and national tourists perceive destination images differently [22]. In addition, recreational, historical, and accommodation attractions are critical for competitiveness and a unique destination image [23].

Destination image is tourists' perception of a tourism destination and the perceived value of their visit either before the visit or after the visit. Pre-visit is how tourists search for information and explore it before staying at the destination. Meanwhile, post-visit occurs when they have visited a tourist destination, encouraging them to promote and recommend this destination to others. Generally, these are known as before, during, and after the trip. This research focuses on tourist behaviour before going on a tour until the decision to travel. Based on knowledge about the destination image and the quality of their experience in making virtual reality visits, tourists can do novelty seeking, which is a search for new information related to the destination image and virtual reality to increase their insight regarding tourist destinations. Novelty seeking can be interpreted as a search for novelty related to differences in perceptions between previous experiences and present reality, meaning new and unfamiliar experiences that differ from previous experiences [24]. Fuch *et al.* (2013) [25] showed that thrill-seekers among backpackers are less concerned with social threats (e.g., crowded and commercial places) and more concerned with the behaviours and activities they may be interested in as part of their thrill-seeking. The level of sensation-seeking influences tourist participation in adventurous and challenging behaviours and activities [26]. Technology allows consumers to move beyond simply gathering more information about a product or service to elements of the product or service experience that can influence traveller decision-making.

Dynamics of tourism decision-making have investigated by [6] [27]. The study found four new dimensions of decision-making. The dimensions encompassed in this context are the ability to make decisions with adaptability, the specific location and timing of travel, the social makeup of the individuals involved, and the particular stage or phase of the trip. Flexibility permits the modification of decisions during subsequent stages of the decision-making process. Decision theory draws a parallel between the act of making a decision and the act of purchasing a product. Research conducted by [28] suggests that the decision-making process of tourists visiting a place is similar to the decision-making process of consumers when buying a product. The decision-making process involves visitors evaluating and selecting the appropriate alternatives based on specific criteria [7]. In their study, Luo (2017) [29] identified three distinct stages in the consumer's online vacation decision-making process: information search, evaluation, and purchase. During the buying stage, consumers engage in a comprehensive interaction with the brand [30] as they choose and purchase their desired travel package. When tourists display post-purchase behaviour, they internally evaluate and compare their travel experiences with their initial expectations [31].

3. Methodology

This type of research is descriptive and qualitative, using literature studies to develop research hypotheses and research conceptual models. This conceptual model article aims to formulate a research hypothesis and construct a questionnaire. Several previous studies were analysed to formulate a conceptual model and research hypothesis. This qualitative study was chosen as the first step in research activities to determine the conceptual model and the theory that covers the conceptual model created. Previous research was selected based on the criteria of reputable scientific journals with publication years in the last ten years. The theory used in the research is evaluated and used as reference material, and then it is selected according to the research object. Several previous studies were also adopted to formulate statements on the questionnaire. The data used in this study is secondary data obtained from previous research literature. Previous research on the factors that can influence the decision to visit offline via virtual reality is analysed to formulate a research hypothesis. Based on several articles that have been evaluated, several variables were determined that could influence the offline visit decision. A hypothesis was formulated, and a research questionnaire plan was made. Apart from reviewing the results of previous research, this research concept model is also associated with supporting theories such as Behavioural Theory and UTAUT2 related to the use of technology in the millennial generation era. Through the S-O-R model, this research places the attributes of the VR travel experience that determine the quality of VR travel content as a stimulus, the Intention to Visit as an organism, and the decision to visit a destination

as a response. Furthermore, regarding adaptation to new technology, the UTAUT2 theory is also used as a middle-range theory to prove that society has adapted to technology, especially in social media. In the UTAUT theory, there are three moderators (namely age, gender, and experience) that can influence consumer behavioural intentions and actual use of technology. To overcome bias, this research was chosen as the first step in determining research indicators and items and a conceptual research model.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Result

A novel virtual reality (VR) concept has been introduced by the tourism industry. Virtual reality can provide visitors with an immersive experience of both familiar and unfamiliar tourist destinations, offering a novel and captivating experience for tourists [32]. Virtual reality tourism provides prospective travellers with the chance to explore space, engage in thrilling adventures, visit popular attractions, and attend special events without leaving their homes. This allows them to make an informed decision about whether or not to visit in person. The SOR behavioural theory [33] serves as a foundational theory to fill gaps in the existing literature and demonstrate the impact of virtual reality experiences on cognitive and affective responses. These responses, in turn, influence individuals' attachment to VR tourism experiences and their intention to visit destinations that are showcased through VR tourism activities. This is particularly relevant for potential consumers who have experienced VR tourism and wish to make informed decisions about visiting destinations offline. Environmental stimuli (S) elicit emotional reactions (O) which in turn trigger behavioural responses (R) [34]. This model has been utilised to elucidate the consumer decision-making process, allowing for the inclusion of internal sources of information such as website quality, as well as external stimuli like reputation, which influence purchase intention [response] through consumer cognition and emotion [organism]. The SOR model is applicable for forecasting the effects of visual and vocal stimuli on tourism motivation. It serves as a promotional tool to generate travel intentions and actual visits as behavioural outcomes [35].

Individuals tend to conform to the expectations or viewpoints of their salient references (e.g., friends, relatives, and family). The higher an individual's perceived subjective norm, the more likely they are to carry out the behaviour. Several experts have confirmed that subjective norms positively influence an individual's intention to carry out a behaviour [36]. Following the same logic in the context of visiting a tourist destination, if individuals believe that the majority of significant references think they should visit the tourist destination, they will be more likely to choose to visit the tourist destination. Experience is the primary basis for making decisions to visit tourists. Virtual tourism experiences can form a novelty seeking activity to compare tourist destinations. Destination Image also influences the destination choice, so it can impact interest in visiting first. Based on several previous studies, research has been conducted explaining the relationship between each variable to be studied in conceptual research and creating a research hypothesis. This type of research is descriptive and qualitative, using literature studies to develop research hypotheses and research conceptual models.

4.2. Discussion

The literature review findings are aligned with the research objectives, specifically presenting a conceptual model for future research based on the hypothesis model. This model can serve as a foundation for further research that connects to the three key theories in the field of tourism marketing. Several previous studies used TAM and intrinsic motivation theory, the Theory of innovation diffusion and the Theory of uses and gratifications, as well as SOR theory in virtual reality experience research based on the context of tourism research. The research is grounded in the Grand Theory of behaviour, which explains how tourists respond to stimuli and organisms. Hence, by utilising the SOR model as a theoretical framework, this study aims to investigate the psychological process through which the characteristics of a virtual reality travel experience elicit specific feelings

and ultimately influence the decision to visit. This study utilises the SOR model to examine the factors that influence the quality of VR travel content. The attributes of the VR travel experience are considered as the stimulus, Novelty seeking and destination image are seen as the organism, and the decision to visit a destination is regarded as the response. The focal point of this study is the variable of virtual reality experience quality, which serves as a marketing tool in the tourism industry by offering information and immersive experiences pertaining to tourist destinations. Drawing upon the virtual reality experience quality, tourists engage in Novelty seeking and form destination images to gain comprehensive knowledge about the specific tourist location they intend to visit, ultimately influencing their decision to proceed with the visit. According to behavioural theory, novelty seeking is driven by the desire for optimal levels of stimulation. This means that when the stimuli in the environment are not sufficiently stimulating, organisms are motivated to seek novelty, complexity, adventure, or similar conditions. Conversely, when the stimuli are already at optimal levels, the motivation to seek novelty decreases. The decision to visit a physical location is influenced by the organism's response to the quality of the virtual reality experience, the desire for novelty, and the perception of the destination. This response leads to the formation of a behavioural response, ultimately resulting in the decision to visit the location in person.

The study employs the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as the intermediate framework to ascertain the ultimate tourist behaviour, specifically the decision to visit offline. The TPB model comprises three essential variables: perceived behavioural control, subjective norms, and attitudes towards behaviour [44]. Attitude pertains to the assessment of particular behaviours. Individuals who perform rituals exhibit a favourable disposition towards the air and are more likely to have a heightened inclination to participate in such behaviour, and vice versa. This conceptual research employs the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to forecast the ultimate behaviour of tourists, specifically their offline visits to tourist destinations. Tourist intentions and behaviour are assessed through behavioural factors such as the quality of virtual reality experiences, destination image, and novelty seeking. Tourist behaviour serves as a middle-range theory that explains how tourists select their destinations based on various characteristics of both the tourists themselves and the destinations. The attributes of tourists, in this instance, encompass their attitudes and experiences. Simultaneously, the attributes of the destination encompass amenities, provisions, and administration. Travelling to a destination relies on virtual experiences. In addition, UTAUT Theory 2 is employed as a middle-range theory to demonstrate the societal adaptation to new technology, particularly in the realm of social media. The UTAUT theory encompasses three moderators, namely age, gender, and experience, which have the potential to impact consumer behaviour intentions and the practical adoption of technology. These moderators primarily influence the relationship between external and internal constructs, particularly through higher-level interactions [45]. The UTAUT2 model has effectively elucidated consumer acceptance of diverse innovative technologies. Furthermore, there are various factors that have an impact on UTAUT2, which are applicable in the context of hedonic media technological innovation [46]. This research posits that the UTAUT2 model is also a pertinent theoretical framework for comprehending the acceptance of technology in the context of virtual reality experience.

Prior to visiting, tourists exhibit a behaviour characterised by the selection of new tourist destinations based on the destination's image and their desire for novelty. This selection is influenced by the quality of virtual reality experiences. During the visit, tourists engage in behaviour that pertains to their experiences at the destination. After the visit, their behaviour involves evaluating their experiences and making decisions about whether to visit the destination in person. Tourists' attitudes towards tourist destinations can impact their behavioural intentions. When people believe that tourist attractions offer a valuable experience and are worth visiting, they will develop an intention to visit these attractions in person. On the other hand, individuals who hold unfavourable opinions about tourist attractions that are judged based on personal experience are unlikely to go to tourist destinations. Experience is the predominant factor influencing decisions to visit tourist destinations. Virtual travel experiences can serve as a means of seeking novelty by exploring and comparing various tourist destinations. The selection of tourist destinations is also

influenced by the perception of the destination, which can determine whether one chooses to visit in person or not.

Virtual Experience is the primary basis for making decisions to visit tourists. Virtual tourism experiences can form a novelty seeking activity that can help compare tourist destinations. Destination Image also influences the choice of tourist destination, so it can impact the decision to visit. In this research, the virtual experience felt by tourists can form novelty seeking and shape attitudes and lead to behavioural interests. The attitude formed is behavioural interest, namely visit intention and offline visit decision. This research also wants to prove the role of virtual reality about the experience tourists feel when using virtual reality, whether it can replace offline tourism or not. The relationship between virtual reality experience and offline visit decision has not been found in previous research. The decision to visit offline is the final result of tourists' choices after they enjoy virtual reality online, which, based on the perceived experience, can attract tourists' attention to visit directly.

So far, no previous research has been found that examines the effect of virtual reality experience quality on novelty seeking directly. Research by Lee *et al.* [7] tested the effect of virtual reality experience quality on novelty seeking indirectly through media richness. The relationship between virtual reality experience quality and novelty seeking can directly be explained by behavioural Theory [38] that virtual reality is a stimulus that can provide tourist organisms to carry out Novelty seeking as explained by [39] that in the tourism context, novelty seeking has replaced by new search, which is very important concerning tourist destinations. According to (Lee & Crompton, 1992) a new journey in novelty seeking as a journey marked by different new and foreign experiences, so novelty seeking can create a new experience, namely a virtual experience. In the context of tourism, Novelty seeking is the tendency of tourists to seek a variety of tourist destinations and tourist services [41]. Thus, Novelty seeking is the tendency of tourists to visit and try new tourist destinations after searching for diversity related to tourist destinations based on perceived virtual experience—a logical or rational relationship between virtual experience and Novelty. Novelty seeking can be explained when tourists are looking for diversity related to tourist destinations online so that they will get a virtual experience. Visitors' virtual experience can produce a new experience or new knowledge. In online platforms, customers share information and gain knowledge from several activities to make comparisons [42]. Based on the new knowledge, tourists will look for information related to other tourist destinations as a comparison. In the context of this study, the virtual experience felt by tourists can form a novelty seeking and shape attitudes and lead to behavioural interest. The attitude formed is the behavioural interest which is a visit intention and an offline visit decision.

This research also wants to prove the role of virtual reality related to the experience tourists feel when using virtual reality can replace visiting tours offline or not. The relationship between virtual reality experience and offline visit decisions has not been found in previous studies. The decision to visit offline is the final result of tourist choices after they enjoy virtual reality online, which, based on perceived experience, can attract the attention of tourists to visit in person. Canio et al., (2021) explain that the decision to visit a tourist destination is determined based on previous experience; if tourists are satisfied, they will visit offline and vice versa. Several previous studies have explained the respective relationships between variables, and the relationships between variables that have not been examined have been described and linked to the existing theory so that based on the conceptual framework and previous research, the relationships between variables can be formulated in the following hypothesis:

1. Virtual Reality experience quality has a significant effect on destination image.

2. Virtual Reality experience quality has a significant effect on novelty seeking.

3. Virtual Reality experience quality has a significant effect on the offline visit decision.

4. Novelty Seeking has a significant effect on the offline visit decision.

5. Destination Image has a significant effect on the offline visit decision.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Virtual reality experience quality is one of the qualities of tourism marketing based on technological developments, which has an important role in tourist behaviour patterns and creating offline visit decisions. In the offline visit decision process, novelty seeking, destination image, and intention to visit variables, as well as several other variables outside the research model, can be used to determine offline visit decisions and control tourist behaviour. Other variables in previous research, such as trust and awareness, need to be studied in the conceptual model of future research. It is hoped that the results of this literature review can contribute to understanding the conceptual model of tourist behaviour patterns in Indonesia; Indonesian tourism management can adopt it in creating Instagram accounts to promote various Indonesian tourist destinations so that tourists know more about various virtual tourist destinations in Indonesia and can improve tourist visiting decisions offline.

Author Contributions

AK: Supervision and investigation; **EP**: Supervision and investigation, and **KSR**: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Investigation, Writing—review and editing.

Conflicts of Interest

There are no conflicts to declare

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