



Virtual Reality and Destination Marketing

What is the issue?

Marketing tourism is challenging, as consumers must be convinced to purchase an intangible product that they may have no experience with. The use of visual imagery can be useful in communicating what a destination is like, and the types of experiences available. Virtual Reality (VR) is becoming more mainstream, and offers users an immersive experience that feels more like the real thing. There is great potential, therefore, for destinations to use VR to promote themselves to potential visitors. However, little research has been done on how VR can affect destination image and intent to visit.

What did the researcher do?

The researchers conducted an experiment to compare the affects of VR on the promotion of South Africa as a tourism destination. Forty students were shown a VR video on South Africa using the Oculus Rift VR Head Mounted Display, another group of students watched the same video but on a laptop, a third group were given a website promoting the same experiences shown in the video, and a fourth control group were given no promotional material. All groups were then asked the same survey questions about their feelings towards the destination and the advertisements.

Why is this research Useful?

Destinations and other tourism providers can use this research to better understand how VR can improve marketing efforts. There is substantial potential for VR promotion of intangible and distant experiences, and this research helps identify how VR content is experienced, and what elements of destination image are most impacted.

What were the outcomes?

- Results showed that VR users had more positive emotions about the destination than other groups.
- VR users were also more excited about the promotional material, and were more likely to share information about the destination and the video with friends and family.
- VR users were also more likely to say they would look for more information on the destination at a later date.
- However, there was no significant difference between groups on self-congruity, suggesting that VR did not increase the likelihood that users would feel as if the destination's values were consistent with their own values.

About the Researcher

Tom Griffin, Mark Lee, Daniel Guttentag and Frederic Dimanche are all faculty members at the Ted Rogers School of Management. Juleigh Giberson is a Hospitality and Tourism undergraduate student, and Maria Kandauriva and Ksenia Sergueeva are MScM students.

Citation

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