

VIRTUAL REALITY IN TOURISM: AN INCENTIVE OR OBSTACLE TO GAINING A REAL TOURIST EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Virtual reality (VR) is becoming increasingly prevalent in the tourism industry due to its unique capabilities to simulate the experience of visiting remote locations and provide users with an immersive experience. The paper analyzes the role of VR in tourism in terms of its two effects, incentives and potential obstacles to physical travel. Based on the analysis of scientific literature and practical examples, it is investigated how VR can increase interest in real visits, but also how it can act as an alternative to physical visits, especially in the context of cultural and natural attractions. The aim of this research was to consider the motivational aspects of VR, its advantages and disadvantages, and the main factors influencing tourist behavior. It is concluded that VR has potential as a tool for destination promotion and protection, but that it can also be a barrier to authentic experiences, particularly due to its limitations in providing social interaction and emotional engagement. Further research into the long-term impact of VR on the tourism industry and its potential incorporation into sustainable practices that promote a balanced approach between virtual and real travel is recommended.

Keywords: Virtual reality, tourism, psychological presence, social interaction, authenticity of tourist experience, digital transformation in tourism.