

**A FRAMEWORK FOR VIRTUAL REALITY ADOPTION:  
STUDY OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

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**A FRAMEWORK FOR VIRTUAL REALITY ADOPTION:  
STUDY OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

**by**

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## CERTIFICATE

The thesis titled, “**A Framework for Virtual Reality Adoption: Study of the Tourism Industry**” being submitted by **Ms. Nidhi Yadav** to the **Indian Institute of Technology Delhi**, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** is a record of bonafide research work carried out by her. She has worked under my guidance and supervision and has fulfilled all the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which has attained the standard required for a Ph.D. degree of this institute. The results presented in this thesis have not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree or diploma.

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## ABSTRACT

The last decade has witnessed a technological transformation of marketing. The increased adoption of digital technologies, supported by the rise of advanced computing technologies like Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), big data, cloud computing, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are helping marketers to creatively interact, engage, and sell to consumers (Hassouneh & Brengman, 2011; Verhagen et al., 2012). At the same time, consumers are becoming more technologically aware and are looking to engage experientially with brands with use of advanced technologies. The global virtual reality market was \$21 billion in 2023 and is estimated to grow to \$67 billion in 2028, growing at a CAGR of 26% (Source: [ResearchandMarkets](#)). The earliest application of VR was seen in the entertainment sector in the form of games and videos; however, over time it can be seen that it is not just limited to gaming organisations. Various sectors are experimenting with this technology for virtual product design and testing (De Silva et al., 2019); virtual brand engagements (Kim & Hall, 2019); training, experiential marketing (Violante et al., 2019); product demos (Juan et al., 2018), etc. This is further supported by a ‘YouVisit survey-Virtual Reality Brand Power Index’ that highlights 75 percent of Forbes’ most powerful brands that have innovated and created VR or AR experiences in one form or the other (Soriano, 2016). Thus, the increasing adoption of virtual reality in the last decade is reflected in the way marketers have adopted this new technology and this is further facilitated by the advancement of technology, growing digitisation, affordable VR devices, and increased user adoption.

The concept of telepresence given by Steuer (1992) shifts the view of VR from a mere

technology to the concept of immersion and experience. Steuer (1992) suggests that ‘presence’ is the key to defining VR and presence can be defined as a ‘sense of being in an environment’ (p.75). Hence, Steuer (1992) has defined VR as ‘a real or simulated environment in which a perceiver experiences telepresence’ (p. 76). Telepresence is a function of the medium and also the perceiver and a combination of both of these leads to an experience of reality. The definitions of VR before Steuer’s (1992) seminal article heavily emphasised on technology and hardware and did not appreciate the experience of the user. It is the conceptualisation after 1992 that gave regard to the concept of immersion and user experience and it opened up the array of opportunities for various industries. The researchers considered both the technological and experiential aspects and defined it as ‘a set of technologies that enable people to immersively experience a world beyond reality’ (Berg & Vance, 2016, p.1).

The research on VR in marketing has evolved from a technological to an experiential point of view, with substantial research published in the last two years. However, the research is scattered with views ranging from virtual reality technology to virtual games, product development, consumer behaviour, marketing channels, advertising and branding, e-commerce, and others.

Virtual reality has emerged as a transformative technology with numerous applications in various industries, including tourism. The use of virtual reality in marketing within the tourism industry has gained attention due to its potential to enhance the customer experience and provide immersive and engaging content. Several studies have highlighted the value of virtual reality as a complement to travel in areas such as marketing, travel planning and management, entertainment, education, accessibility, and heritage preservation (Guttentag, 2010). Virtual reality offers a

unique opportunity to provide users with a full immersion in a proposed reality, creating a powerful and manageable experience.

Pantano & Servidio, 2011 found that virtual reality increases the level of authenticity, thereby enhancing tourists' perception of the destination image. Additionally, virtual reality offers the potential to stimulate the need to travel and aid consumers in making decisions about where to travel (Leung et al., 2020). Israel et al., 2019, also emphasize the importance of virtual reality preview experiences in shaping customer responses to hotel brands and destination images. Moreover, the adoption of virtual reality in tourism marketing has been observed among leading brands in the travel and hospitality sector such as Carlson Rezidor, Hilton, Airbnb, Holiday Inn Express, and Vacasa (Zeng et al., 2020). The application of virtual reality in tourism marketing has the potential to transform the tourist experience and bring significant changes to the marketing strategy of experience goods in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Despite the fact that the VR tourism marketing research began nearly four decades ago, there is no holistic VR adoption framework for the tourism sector. Many studies in VR in tourism marketing are focused on applied research and prototype development, with little consideration for underpinning theories, concepts, or frameworks. The latest studies on VR in tourism marketing also suggest further extending the existing theories in new studies by incorporating new constructs more connected to VR and developing a comprehensive framework of VR adoption (Loureiro, Guerreiro, & Ali, 2020).

Additionally, the concept of telepresence, its antecedents, and its outcomes have received little attention from researchers (Lee, 2018), resulting in a limited understanding of its impact on the tourism sector. Per Steuer, 1992, the definition of VR from the telepresence view significantly

changed the direction of research in this area, however, most of the studies tried to understand telepresence as a mediator and not as an antecedent. Considering, that telepresence influences consumer behaviour in VR, it is critical to understand how it impacts the various motivational metrics.

The three hierarchical processing stages of responding to advertisements (i.e., cognition, affect, and conation suggested in general advertising effects research) have not been examined in tourism advertising (Weng et. al., 2021), and most of the researches are focused on studying the conversion (Intent to visit, purchase, recommend, re-visit). This failed to incorporate the cognitive responses that might not bring immediate visits to destinations but result in long-term attitudinal and behavioural changes (Johnson & Messmer, 1997; Kim et al., 2005; Weilbacher, 2003). Thus, there is a gap in studying how differently information is processed in VR by consumers as compared to a website.

Finally, there is limited empirical evidence in the scientific field regarding the influence of VR in tourism on purchase intention (Israel, et. al., 2009).

This thesis fills the above-mentioned research gaps by conducting two quantitative studies. The primary aim of the thesis is to propose and empirically test a framework for adoption of VR in tourism. It presents a validated VR adoption framework that incorporates facilitators, inhibitors, and moderators, and provides a detailed summary of the research process and findings. It offers valuable insights into the factors influencing VR adoption in the tourism industry and provides a methodological approach for studying technology acceptance and rejection in this context.

A VR experience of Egypt tourism is created and user response is collected to explores drivers of VR adoption in tourism. A confirmatory factor analysis is conducted for all the

constructs of the study followed by path analysis. The theoretical framework is analysed using Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Further, the information processing difference is studied in VR as compared to website. An additional study is conducted to evaluate the purchase intent in a VR experience.

The information processing difference between VR and website clearly highlights that VR tourism experience leads to better information processing as compared to website. The most significant finding of this thesis is the VR adoption framework in tourism. It is a holistic framework consisting of its facilitators, inhibitors, and moderators and the impact of telepresence is evaluated. The UTAUT model is supported and extended in the framework. Hedonic, performance expectancy, effort expectancy and social influence are the facilitators of visit intention in VR tourism experience and Opportunity cost Time and Perceived Lack of Value inhibit visit intention in VR tourism experience. Gender, past VR experience and Voluntariness of Use moderates the relationship between facilitators and the visit intention.

The thesis has significant theoretical and managerial significations. With an aim to develop a stronger understanding VR adoption in tourism, it has developed a holistic framework of VR adoption. It enriches the theory by providing a theory-based framework of VR which is multi-dimensional in nature. It also builds the VR literature by a systematic review of the literature. The drivers of VR adoption proposed and tested in this thesis can be used by marketers to design the VR experiences. They can focus on antecedents that have a strong impact on experiences and channelize their resources wisely. Managers can also look at the outcomes of VR and their impact on purchase consideration to have a better understanding of customers' buying behaviour in VR experience.

Overall, this thesis provides direction to both academicians and practitioners in the understanding of the concept of VR better. This thesis adds to the theoretical advancement of VR and serves as a basis for future researchers for further development of the field.

## सारांश

पिछले दशक में विपणन (मार्केटिंग) का तकनीकी परिवर्तन देखा गया है। डिजिटल तकनीकों को अपनाने में वृद्धि, वर्चुअल रियलिटी (VR), ऑगमेंटेड रियलिटी (AR), बिग डेटा, क्लाउड कंप्यूटिंग और आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस (AI) जैसी उन्नत कंप्यूटिंग तकनीकों के उदय के साथ, विपणक को उपभोक्ताओं के साथ रचनात्मक तरीके से बातचीत, जुड़ाव और बिक्री करने में मदद कर रही है (Hassouneh & Brengman, 2011; Verhagen et al., 2012)। वहीं, उपभोक्ता भी तकनीकी रूप से जागरूक हो रहे हैं और उन्नत तकनीकों का उपयोग करके ब्रांड्स के साथ अनुभवात्मक जुड़ाव की तलाश कर रहे हैं। वैश्विक वर्चुअल रियलिटी बाजार 2023 में \$21 बिलियन था और इसके 2028 तक \$67 बिलियन तक बढ़ने का अनुमान है, 26% की चक्रवृद्धि वार्षिक वृद्धि दर (CAGR) के साथ (स्रोत: ResearchandMarkets)।

VR का शुरुआती उपयोग मनोरंजन क्षेत्र में खेलों और वीडियो के रूप में हुआ था; हालांकि, समय के साथ यह केवल गेमिंग संगठनों तक सीमित नहीं रहा। विभिन्न क्षेत्र इस तकनीक का उपयोग वर्चुअल उत्पाद डिजाइन और परीक्षण (De Silva et al., 2019), वर्चुअल ब्रांड जुड़ाव (Kim & Hall, 2019), प्रशिक्षण, अनुभवात्मक विपणन (Violante et al., 2019), उत्पाद डेमो (Juan et al., 2018), आदि के लिए कर रहे हैं। 'YouVisit सर्वे-Virtual Reality Brand Power Index' के अनुसार, Forbes के 75% सबसे शक्तिशाली ब्रांड्स ने VR या AR अनुभवों का नवाचार और निर्माण किया है (Soriano, 2016)।

Steuer (1992) द्वारा प्रस्तुत "टेलीप्रेजेंस" की अवधारणा VR को केवल एक तकनीक से अनुभव और डूबने (इमर्शन) की अवधारणा में बदल देती है। उनके अनुसार, "प्रेजेंस" VR को परिभाषित करने की कुंजी है और इसे "किसी वातावरण में होने का अनुभव" कहा जा सकता है। उन्होंने VR को "एक वास्तविक या सिमुलेटेड वातावरण जिसमें एक व्यक्ति टेलीप्रेजेंस का अनुभव करता है" (पृष्ठ 76) के रूप में परिभाषित किया। इस दृष्टिकोण ने 1992 के बाद से VR अनुसंधान की दिशा बदल दी और उपयोगकर्ता अनुभव और डूबने की अवधारणा को महत्वपूर्ण बनाया।

विपणन में VR पर शोध तकनीकी से अनुभवात्मक दृष्टिकोण की ओर विकसित हुआ है। हालांकि, यह शोध विभिन्न दृष्टिकोणों जैसे कि वर्चुअल गेम्स, उत्पाद विकास, उपभोक्ता व्यवहार, विपणन चैनल, विज्ञापन और ब्रांडिंग, ई-कॉमर्स आदि में बिखरा हुआ है।

पर्यटन उद्योग में VR का उपयोग विपणन में ग्राहकों के अनुभव को बेहतर बनाने और उन्हें आकर्षक सामग्री प्रदान करने के लिए किया गया है। विभिन्न अध्ययनों ने पर्यटन में VR के उपयोग को यात्रा योजना, मनोरंजन, शिक्षा, पहुंच, और धरोहर संरक्षण में पूरक के रूप में मान्यता दी है (Guttentag, 2010)। VR उपयोगकर्ताओं को एक प्रस्तावित वास्तविकता में पूरी तरह डूबने का अवसर प्रदान करता है, जो एक शक्तिशाली और प्रबंधनीय अनुभव बनाता है।

Pantano & Servidio, 2011 के अनुसार, VR गंतव्य छवि की प्रामाणिकता को बढ़ाता है और पर्यटकों की धारणा को सकारात्मक रूप से प्रभावित करता है। इसके अलावा, VR यात्रा की आवश्यकता को प्रेरित कर सकता है और उपभोक्ताओं को यात्रा स्थलों के बारे में निर्णय लेने में सहायता कर सकता है (Leung et al., 2020)। यात्रा और आतिथ्य क्षेत्र के प्रमुख ब्रांड जैसे Carlson Rezidor, Hilton, Airbnb, Holiday Inn Express, और Vacasa ने पर्यटन विपणन में VR को अपनाया है (Zeng et al., 2020)।

हालांकि VR पर्यटन विपणन अनुसंधान लगभग चार दशक पहले शुरू हुआ था, पर्यटन क्षेत्र के लिए कोई समग्र VR अपनाने का ढांचा उपलब्ध नहीं है। अधिकांश अध्ययन व्यावहारिक अनुसंधान और प्रोटोटाइप विकास पर केंद्रित हैं। Loureiro, Guerreiro, & Ali (2020) ने सुझाव दिया है कि नए कारकों को शामिल करके मौजूदा सिद्धांतों का विस्तार किया जाना चाहिए और VR अपनाने का एक व्यापक ढांचा विकसित किया जाना चाहिए।

Steuer (1992) की "टेलीप्रेजेंस" की परिभाषा ने अनुसंधान की दिशा बदल दी, लेकिन अधिकांश अध्ययनों ने इसे एक मध्यस्थ के रूप में देखा है, प्रारंभिक कारक के रूप में नहीं। विज्ञापन प्रभावों में संज्ञानात्मक, भावनात्मक और क्रियात्मक प्रक्रियाओं (Weng et al., 2021) की जांच पर्यटन विज्ञापन में नहीं की गई है। इसने उस जानकारी को अनदेखा कर दिया है जो तुरंत यात्राओं का परिणाम नहीं बनती लेकिन दीर्घकालिक व्यवहारात्मक बदलाव लाती है।

इस शोध में इन अनुसंधान अंतरालों को भरने के लिए दो मात्रात्मक अध्ययन किए गए हैं। इस शोध का मुख्य उद्देश्य पर्यटन में VR को अपनाने के लिए एक ढांचा प्रस्तुत करना और उसका परीक्षण करना है। एक VR अनुभव विकसित किया गया और उपयोगकर्ता प्रतिक्रियाओं का संग्रह किया गया। इसके अलावा, VR और वेबसाइट के बीच सूचना प्रसंस्करण में अंतर का अध्ययन किया गया।

यह शोध VR को अपनाने के लिए एक समग्र ढांचा प्रदान करता है जिसमें प्रोत्साहक, बाधक, और मध्यस्थ शामिल हैं। UTAUT मॉडल को विस्तारित और समर्थित किया गया है।

यह शोध VR के सिद्धांत और विपणन में इसके उपयोग को बेहतर ढंग से समझने में विद्वानों और पेशेवरों दोनों को दिशा प्रदान करता है।

## Table of Contents

<b><i>CERTIFICATE.....</i></b>	<b><i>i</i></b>
<b><i>Acknowledgments .....</i></b>	<b><i>ii</i></b>
<b><i>Abstract.....</i></b>	<b><i>iii</i></b>
<b><i>List of Figures.....</i></b>	<b><i>xv</i></b>
<b><i>List of Tables.....</i></b>	<b><i>xvi</i></b>
<b><i>List of abbreviations.....</i></b>	<b><i>xix</i></b>
<b><i>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</i></b>	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b>1.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Virtual Reality - Transition from Technological to Experiential View .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.3 VR in Marketing.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.4 VR in Tourism industry .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>1.5 Need of the Study and Research Problem .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1.6 Organisation of thesis.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b><i>Chapter 2: Review of Literature.....</i></b>	<b><i>28</i></b>
<b>2.1 Technology Evolution in the Tourism Industry .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>2.2 Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>2.3 Literature summary and synthesis .....</b>	<b>37</b>

2.4	Research Theory .....	78
2.5	Gaps in Literature .....	80
<b>Chapter 3: Research Questions, Objectives, and RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>		<b>85</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	85
3.2	Research Questions .....	85
3.3	Research Objectives .....	86
3.4	Research Environment.....	87
<b>Chapter 4: Information processing difference between VR and website .....</b>		<b>89</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	89
4.2	Theoretical background .....	93
4.3	Research model and Hypotheses .....	101
4.4	Methods.....	103
4.5	Measures .....	105
4.6	Data analysis and results .....	110
<b>Chapter 5: Role of telepresence in VR adoption .....</b>		<b>125</b>
5.1	Concept of Telepresence .....	125
5.2	Model constructs.....	128
5.3	Research model and hypothesis design .....	132

5.4	Measures used in the study .....	134
5.5	Data Collection .....	136
5.6	Data Analysis and Results .....	137
5.7	Predictive Results .....	160
5.8	Hypotheses Testing Summary.....	162
<b>Chapter 6: VR adoption Frameowrk for tourism .....</b>		<b>164</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	164
6.2	Framework constructs .....	166
6.3	A proposed framework of Virtual Reality adoption.....	171
6.4	Hypotheses and framework.....	173
6.5	Research design.....	175
6.6	Data Analysis and Results .....	181
6.7	Hypothesis testing results.....	198
<b>Chapter 7: Conclusion.....</b>		<b>202</b>
7.1	Summary .....	202
7.2	Introduction .....	202
7.3	Major findings of the thesis .....	204
7.4	Discussion .....	211

7.5	Research implications.....	215
7.6	Limitations and Future Scope .....	219
7.7	Concluding remarks .....	220
	<i>References</i> .....	<i>222</i>
	<i>Annexure</i> .....	<i>271</i>
	<i>Brief Profile</i> .....	<i>287</i>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Technological transition in the tourism industry.....	30
Figure 2: Selection process and sampling for sourcing of articles .....	36
Figure 3: Distribution of publications by year (1995-2023).....	38
Figure 4: Egypt Virtual Reality tourism experience (Luxor temple).....	87
Figure 5: Egypt tourism website .....	88
Figure 6: Research model for RO1 .....	101
Figure 7: RO2: Model 1: Telepresence as an antecedent .....	132
Figure 8: RO2: Model 2: Telepresence as a mediator .....	133
Figure 9: RO3: Proposed conceptual VR adoption framework .....	172
Figure 10: RO3: Validated VR Adoption Framework.....	201

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Virtual Reality definitions – Transition from technological to experiential view.....	7
Table 2: Technology development in tourism and introduction of Virtual Reality.....	32
Table 3: Top journals based on the number of publications between 1995 and 2023.....	38
Table 4: Chronological summary of identified literature on Virtual Reality.....	52
Table 5: Summary of research theories in the studies .....	80
Table 6: Demographic spread of survey respondents.....	104
Table 7: Measures used in RO1 .....	105
Table 8: RO1: Outer loadings and Cronbach's alpha: Utilitarian factors .....	110
Table 9: RO1: Outer loadings: AIDA Model- VR Experience.....	112
Table 10: RO1: Outer loadings: AIDA Model- Website.....	113
Table 11: Internal consistency analysis for RO1 .....	116
Table 12: RO1: CR, AVE and correlations of constructs (square root of AVE is in the bold diagonally) – VR Experience.....	117
Table 13: RO1: CR, AVE and correlations of constructs (square root of AVE is in the bold diagonally) – Website .....	117
Table 14: RO1: Test of multicollinearity.....	118
Table 15: RO1: Structural Path Results .....	120
Table 16: RO1: Predictive Results – R Square.....	122
Table 17: RO1: Predictive Results – Q Square.....	122
Table 18: RO1: Hypothesis summary.....	123

Table 19: Measures used in RO2 .....	134
Table 20: RO2: Demographic profile of respondents.....	138
Table 21: RO2: Outer loadings and Cronbach's alpha: Telepresence as an antecedent and a mediator .....	140
Table 22: RO2: Outer loadings and Cronbach's alpha: Utilitarian factors: Telepresence as an antecedent .....	141
Table 23: RO2: Outer loadings and Cronbach's alpha: Utilitarian factors: Telepresence as a mediator .....	142
Table 24: RO2: Outer loadings and Cronbach's alpha: Hedonic factors: Telepresence as an antecedent .....	144
Table 25: RO2: Outer loadings and Cronbach's alpha: Hedonic factors: Telepresence as a mediator .....	145
Table 26: RO2: Outer loadings and Cronbach's alpha: Subjective Well-being: Telepresence as an antecedent .....	146
Table 27: RO2: Outer loadings and Cronbach's alpha: Subjective Well-being: Telepresence as a mediator .....	147
Table 28: RO2: CR, AVE and correlations of constructs (square root of AVE is in the bold diagonally): Telepresence as an antecedent.....	149
Table 29: RO2: CR, AVE and correlations of constructs (square root of AVE is in the bold diagonally): Telepresence as a mediator.....	150
Table 30: RO2: Test of multicollinearity.....	151
Table 31: RO2: Structural path results: Telepresence as an antecedent .....	153

Table 32: RO2: Structural path results: Telepresence as a mediator .....	155
Table 33: RO2: Structural path results and Hypothesis summary .....	156
Table 34: RO2: Predictive Result.....	161
Table 35: Summary of RO2 results .....	162
Table 36: Measure used in RO3.....	176
Table 37: RO3: Outer loadings: Facilitators.....	182
Table 38: Internal consistency analysis for RO3 .....	186
Table 39: RO3: Reliability and Validity analysis.....	188
Table 40: RO3: Test of multicollinearity.....	189
Table 41: Structural Path Results for RO3 Facilitators .....	191
Table 42: Structural Path Results for RO3 Facilitators .....	192
Table 43: RO3: Moderating effect of Gender.....	193
Table 44: RO3: Moderating effect of Gender.....	194
Table 45: RO3: Moderating effect of Previous VR Experience.....	195
Table 46: RO3 Predictive Results.....	197
Table 47: Summary of RO3 hypotheses testing results .....	199

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIDA	Attention, Interest, Desire, Action
AmI	Ambient Intelligence
AR	Augmented Reality
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CR	Composite Reliability
EIR	Economic Impact Research
ELM	Elaboration Likelihood Model
GDP	Groos Domestic Product
IT	Information Technology
OTT	Over-the-top
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square Structure Equation Modelling
SEM	Structure Equation Modelling
SOR	Stimulus-Organism-Response
UTAUT	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
VIF	Variance Inflation Factors
VR	Virtual Reality
WTTC	World Travel & Tourism Council