

# Virtual Reality as a Vector of Isolation vs. Engagement: Exploring Subjective Mental Representations of VR Through an Implicit Association Test

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## **Abstract**

Abstract: Due to its unique level of immersion, virtual reality (VR) has often been linked to connecting individuals, creating more interaction, and engagement. Despite these benefits, VR adoption is still limited, and the industry struggles to gain momentum. Negative perceptions of isolation and reality detachment are among the reasons identified. Therefore, understanding users' subjective mental representations towards this technology is pivotal: is VR associated with isolation or engagement? To address this question, two studies were conducted using the IAT method, known for its ability to unveil the strength of unconscious associations. Study 1 (n = 199) aimed at testing the associations with VR devices and Study 2 (n= 200) with VR usage. The findings of both studies reveal a significant bias toward associating VR devices and its usage with isolation. This research contributes to understanding VR's societal and psychological perceptions, urging industry adaptation, and further research into factors influencing these beliefs.

**Subject Areas:** *Diffusion of Innovations, Information Systems, Intention-Behavior Link*

**Track:** Innovation Management & New Product Development