

Is Virtual Reality the ‘Final Platform’ for Hedonic Media? Understanding Consumer Responses to High-Immersive Gaming Experiences

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Abstract

While virtual worlds attract millions of gamers, relatively few use high-immersive devices (HIDs) like virtual-reality (VR) headsets. This limited adoption contrasts with claims that VR will transform gaming as the ‘final platform’ for hedonic purposes, offering superior value compared to 2D interfaces like tablets, PCs, and TVs—a logic driving billion-dollar investments by companies like Meta and Apple. This study examines VR's context-dependent value-creation potential in high-fidelity and metaverse gaming. We propose a conceptual model integrating consumer perceptions of the virtual experience (spatial presence, competence, social relatedness) and the physical experience (spatial presence, competence, self-representation). Across three large-scale experiments (111–484 participants) using state-of-the-art HIDs (Meta Quest 3, PSVR2) versus lower-immersive devices, results reveal HIDs enhance enjoyment, satisfaction, and recommendation via virtual spatial presence. However, in non-optimized contexts, exhaustion and reduced physical competence hinder user experiences.

Keywords: Virtual Reality, Gaming, Self-Determination Theory

Track: Innovation Management & New Product Development