

This VR Experience is Awesome: Really? How VR Devices Influence Emotional and Physiological Mechanisms to Travel Intention

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Cite as:

Jaszus Kathrin, Ramos-Henriquez José, Erdmann Anett, Fernández-Martín Andrés (2026), This VR Experience is Awesome: Really? How VR Devices Influence Emotional and Physiological Mechanisms to Travel Intention. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 55th, (133566)

Paper from the 55th Annual EMAC Conference, Bath, United Kingdom, June 2-5, 2026



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Abstract

Virtual reality (VR) is increasingly used in destination marketing, yet little is known about how different devices influence tourist behavior. Using a mixed-methods design, this study examines how VR environments elicit awe and how this emotion shapes the perceived emotional value of a destination and the visit intention. Study 1 analyzed 4,092 Reddit posts and showed that Apple Vision Pro (AVP) is associated with “wow” reactions, whereas Meta Quest 3 (MQ3) prompts discussions focused on functionality. Study 2 consisted of a laboratory experiment ($N = 60$) assessing awe, heart rate, emotional value, and travel intention while participants viewed destination videos in VR (AVP or MQ3) or 2D. Results indicate that emotional value mediates the effect of awe on travel intention, and that MQ3 increases the destination’s emotional value, whereas AVP generates stronger physiological arousal. The study provides an integrated framework for evaluating VR devices in tourism marketing.

Track: Tourism Marketing