

“Sound and Space”: How AI Voice Companions Shape Senior Tourists’ Affective Environment Fit and Tourist Enjoyment

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Abstract

Despite the rapid growth of travel technologies, the socio-psychological influence of AI travel companions on older adults remains underexplored. Guided by Person-Environment fit theory and Media Richness Theory, this study will examine how the social nature of AI companions (Strong vs Weak) shapes senior tourists’ enjoyment. We propose that Strong AI will enhance enjoyment by fostering affective environment fit and meeting socioemotional needs. Two boundary conditions are also expected. Social crowding will strengthen the value of Strong AI by offering a sense of safety in stressful settings, while a limited Future Time Perspective, informed by Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, will heighten sensitivity to the emotional support provided by Strong AI. Through three experiments, this research will advance smart tourism scholarship by identifying the compensatory mechanisms of human-AI sociality and offer practical guidance for developing AI-supported tourism experiences that strengthen psychological well-being.

Track: Tourism Marketing