Absract

There is growing recognition for the potential benefits of utilising Virtual Reality (VR) in destination marketing. Conceptual papers suggested the technology's increased immersion, interactivity, and visualisation would translate well into advancing the avenues of information dissemination to potential consumers. However, empirical research on the effects of VR on consumer behaviour is still limited despite rapidly increasing interest from the tourism industry. The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of VR on destination image and perceived destination choice risk for family tourism. Data was collected from 48 members of 12 families who experienced VR through the Samsung Gear VR headset. They were then interviewed as whole-family groups. The findings suggest that VR positively influenced both destination image and reduced perceived destination choice risk, with stronger cognitive and affective components of destination image attributed to the immersive experiences. Participants elicited both cognitive and affective components of destination image used in post-visit studies just from the virtual experience pre-visit. Managerial implications include recommendations for VR content tailored to families instead of generic VR experiences as part of DMOs targeting strategies for this segment.