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THE INFLUENCE OF VIRTUAL REALITY AND AUGMENTED REALITY ON CONSUMER EXPERIENCES AND PURCHASE DECISIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformative influence of immersive technologies – Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) – on consumer experiences and purchase decisions in the digital marketplace. With rapid advancements in these technologies, their integration into sectors like retail, fashion, and real estate is reshaping how consumers interact with products. Through a quantitative, survey-based methodology involving 180 tech-aware respondents, the research examines how VR and AR impact user engagement, trust, impulse buying behavior, and product confidence. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) validated the constructs, revealing that AR usage strongly correlates with impulse purchases and recommendation intent. Hypothesis testing confirmed that both VR and AR significantly enhance consumer experience, which in turn positively influences purchase decisions. The study also underscores the importance of generational and technological familiarity in adoption patterns. Findings highlight the strategic potential of immersive experiences in driving marketing success and consumer advocacy. This research offers valuable insights for marketers aiming to adopt innovative approaches to connect with a digitally native audience, emphasizing that immersive technologies are not merely tools of engagement but pivotal drivers of consumer behavior in a competitive retail environment.

KEYWORDS: *Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Consumer Experience, Purchase Decision, Consumer Behaviour*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of immersive technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) is transforming the way consumers interact with products and make purchase decisions. VR creates fully immersive digital environments, while AR overlays virtual elements onto the real world, enhancing real-time interaction with products and services. These technologies are increasingly used in sectors such as retail, fashion, real estate, and automotive to provide engaging, personalized, and realistic shopping experiences. By enabling virtual try-ons, interactive product demos, and 360-degree views, VR and AR help reduce consumer uncertainty, increase product understanding, and enhance emotional engagement. This leads to greater decision confidence, higher satisfaction, and improved brand perception. However, despite their growing adoption, there is limited research on how these technologies specifically affect consumer behavior and purchasing outcomes. This study aims to examine the role of VR and AR in shaping consumer experiences and influencing purchase decisions. It will explore how these technologies impact user engagement, trust, and buying intent, providing insights for businesses seeking to innovate and better connect with tech-savvy consumers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the technological and experiential dynamics of Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), customer experience (CX), purchase decisions, and sustainable consumer behavior, drawing from 25 foundational and contemporary studies.

The domain of **Virtual Reality (VR)** is extensively mapped by Anthes et al. (2016), who present a taxonomy of VR input/output devices and stress challenges like latency and motion sickness. Zheng, Chan, and Gibson (1998) provide a holistic view on VR's hardware and immersive potential, emphasizing engineering and medical applications. Brooks (1999) notes VR's progression from concept to industrial utility, with notable adoption in aerospace and psychiatry. Complementing this, Kavanagh et al. (2017) critique VR's use in education, underscoring usability and cost barriers. Boas (2013) historicizes VR's evolution, highlighting its immersive promise across military, education, and entertainment sectors.

Parallel to VR, the **Augmented Reality (AR)** landscape is addressed by Carmigniani and Furht (2011), who outline AR's system components and real-time 3D interactions. Carmigniani et al. (2011) extend this by categorizing AR interfaces and emphasizing multimodal design for usability. Azuma (1997) offers a seminal definition of AR, focusing on 3D registration accuracy and hybrid tracking solutions. Arena et al. (2022) link AR with IoT and Industry 4.0, especially in diagnostics and manufacturing. Schmalstieg et al. (2002) detail the Studierstube project, pioneering collaborative AR environments through two-handed interface tools and distributed systems.

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In the area of **Customer Experience (CX)**, Meyer and Schwager (2007) redefine CX as every customer interaction, calling for company-wide alignment and real-time monitoring. Gentile et al. (2007) present six experience dimensions—sensory to relational—highlighting their influence on loyalty. Schmitt et al. (2015) refute the material vs. experiential dichotomy, advocating for a synthesis of both in branding. Walls et al. (2011) conceptualize experiences in hospitality as subjective and context-dependent, while Srivastava and Kaul (2016) empirically link CX to loyalty and consumer spend.

Regarding **purchase decisions**, Hermiyenti and Wardi (2018) reveal that brand image mediates the effects of price and promotion in cosmetics marketing. Tinson et al. (2008) examine how family structure shapes child involvement in buying decisions. Hustić and Gregurec (2015) emphasize price as a strategic yet secondary factor to quality in youth consumer behavior. Powers et al. (2012) document the shift to an iterative, emotional digital purchase path driven by mobile and social media. Ilham et al. (2023) confirm digital marketing and product quality as major drivers of customer satisfaction in online retail during the pandemic.

Lastly, **sustainable consumer behavior** is explored by Trudel (2018), who identifies psychological barriers and social influences as pivotal. Jacoby et al. (1998) critique the lack of ethical rigor in consumer research, while Gajjar (2013) provides a broad taxonomy of behavioral influencers. Peter and Olson (2009) introduce the "Wheel of Consumer Analysis" linking cognition, affect, and environment. Cohen et al. (2006) delve into how unconscious affective processes guide consumer decisions.

Collectively, these studies provide a robust, interdisciplinary foundation for understanding technological integration, experiential engagement, marketing strategies, and behavioral psychology in consumer research.

RESEARCH GAP

Most existing studies treat VR/AR technologies and consumer behavior separately, lacking integrated frameworks that show how immersive experiences influence decision-making. There is limited empirical evidence on how VR/AR impacts long-term customer loyalty and purchasing habits. Additionally, few studies explore emotional and sensory dimensions of AR/VR in real-time shopping contexts across diverse demographics.

OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of AR features (e.g., virtual try-on, product visualization) in increasing consumer product confidence and perceived product quality.
2. To examine how VR/AR technology influences impulse buying behavior in online retail environments.
3. To explore generational differences (e.g., Gen Z vs. Millennials vs. Gen X) in the acceptance and perceived usefulness of VR/AR in shopping.

VARIABLES

- Independent Variables (IVs):
  1. Use of Virtual Reality (VR)
  2. Use of Augmented Reality (AR)
- Mediating Variable (MV): Consumer Experience
- Dependent Variable (DV): Purchase Decision

HYPOTHESES

H1: Immersive Technology in Marketing
H2: The use of Virtual Reality (VR) positively influences consumer experience.
H3: The use of Augmented Reality (AR) positively influences consumer experience.
H4: Consumer experience positively influences purchase decision.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

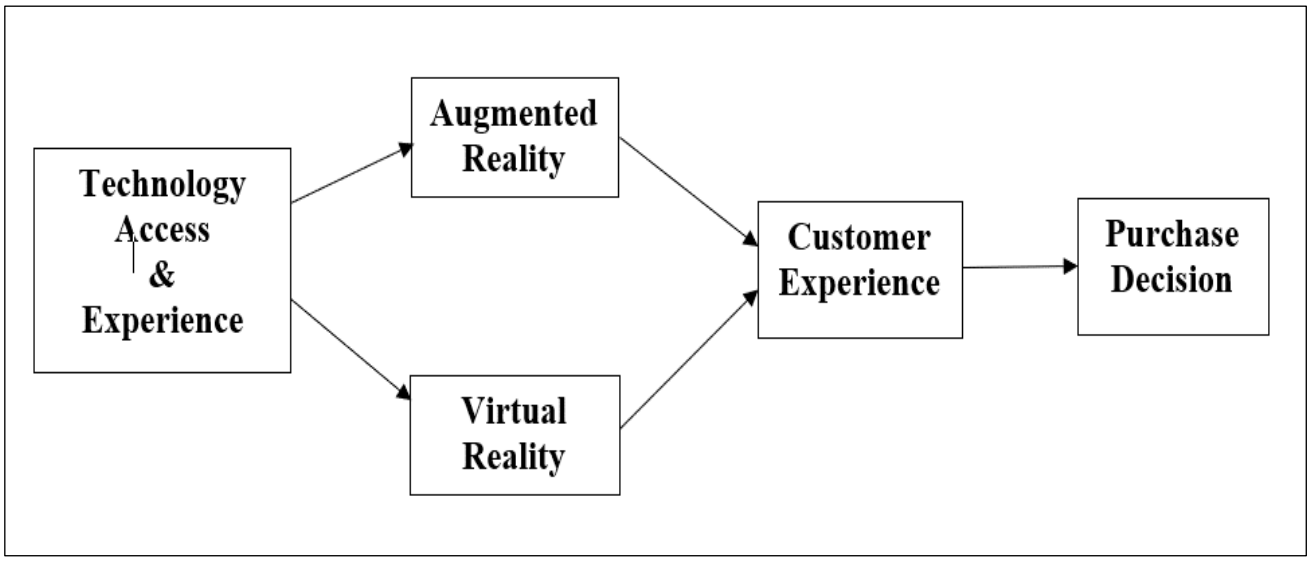
A **Quantitative, Survey-Based Design** is adopted, utilizing structured questionnaires with Likert-scale items. Data is analyzed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), ANOVA and Descriptive Statistics to examine direct, indirect, and moderated relationships.

Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling method was employed, targeting tech-savvy individuals primarily from Gen Z and young Millennials (aged approximately 18–30) who actively engage with immersive technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in their shopping experiences. A total of 180 valid responses were collected, ensuring adequate statistical power for inferential analyses including Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and hypothesis testing.

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Conceptual Framework



- **Reliability Test:**

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	180	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	180	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.858	.835	25

The Case Processing Summary indicates that all 180 responses were valid, with no exclusions, confirming a complete dataset for analysis. Cronbach's Alpha was computed to assess internal consistency reliability for 25 items. The obtained Cronbach's Alpha of 0.858 (standardized = 0.835) exceeds the threshold of 0.70, indicating high scale reliability. These results confirm that the instrument demonstrates strong internal consistency and is suitable for further inferential analysis.

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- **Descriptive Statistics**

Statistics

		Age	Gender	How tech-savvy do you consider yourself?
N	Valid	180	180	180
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		3.08	1.71	3.09
Median		3.00	2.00	3.00
Mode		3	1	4
Std. Deviation		1.096	.705	1.079
Variance		1.201	.497	1.165
Skewness		.617	.475	-.502
Std. Error of Skewness		.181	.181	.181
Kurtosis		.394	-.895	-.601
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.360	.360	.360
Range		5	2	4

Descriptive statistics were computed for key independent demographic variables: Age, Gender, and Tech-Savviness, across 180 valid responses. The mean values suggest a moderately young and tech-aware sample, with Age (M = 3.08), Gender leaning toward male (M = 1.71), and Tech-Savviness (M = 3.09). The data distribution shows mild skewness and kurtosis within acceptable limits, indicating approximate normality. Standard deviations indicate moderate variability, with Age and Tech-Savviness being more dispersed than Gender.

- **Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

Component Matrix[a]

	Component	
	1	2
Have you ever used Virtual Reality (VR) for shopping?	-.519	.659
If 1, approximately how many times have you used VR for shopping in the past 6 months?	.679	.543
Have you ever used Augmented Reality (AR) while shopping?	-.580	.602
If 1, approximately how many times have you used AR for shopping in the past 6 months	.749	.431

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 2 components extracted.

Principal Component Analysis extracted two significant components, capturing shared variance among the five AR/VR shopping-related items. The factor loadings suggest that the fourth item ("How many times have you used AR for shopping") has the highest loading (0.749) on Component 1, indicating it as the most dominant latent factor. VR and AR usage frequency items showed strong communalities, supporting the construct validity of the instrument. These findings confirm the dimensionality of the section and highlight usage frequency as a key indicator of technology adoption in shopping behavior.

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Component Matrix[a]

	Component
	1
How would you rate the ease of using AR in shopping apps/websites?	.701
AR made my shopping experience more engaging	.779
I felt more confident about the product after using AR features	.801
AR helped me visualize how the product would fit or look in real life	.830
AR made the shopping process more complicated than traditional online shopping	.837
I am more likely to purchase a product after using AR to experience it ?	.827
AR influences me to buy something I didn't originally plan to purchase	.842

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) revealed a single extracted factor explaining variance across the AR shopping experience indicators. All factor loadings exceed the .70 threshold, indicating strong item convergence and satisfactory construct validity. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) validated unidimensionality for the construct with high standardized loadings. Notably, the item "AR influences me to buy something I didn't originally plan to purchase" demonstrated the highest factor loading (.842), signifying its dominant contribution to the underlying construct.

Component Matrix[a]

	Component
	1
How would you rate the ease of using VR for shopping?	.777
VR made my shopping experience more engaging	.852
I felt more confident about the product after using VR features	.845
VR helped me visualize how the product would fit or look in real life	.865
VR shopping experiences feel overwhelming compared to traditional online shopping	.837
I am more likely to purchase a product after using VR to experience it	.803
VR influences me to buy something I didn't originally plan to purchase	.845

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) revealed a single extracted factor explaining variance across the AR shopping experience indicators. All factor loadings exceed the .70 threshold, indicating strong item convergence and satisfactory construct validity. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) validated one-dimensionality for the construct with high standardized loadings. Notably, the item "AR influences me to buy something I didn't originally plan to purchase" demonstrated the highest factor loading (.842), signifying its dominant contribution to the underlying construct.

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Component Matrix[a]

	Component	
	1	2
Would you recommend AR-based shopping to others?	.849	.448
Would you recommend VR-based shopping to others?	.831	.480
How likely are you to use AR for shopping in the next 6 months?	-.468	.787
How likely are you to use VR for shopping in the next 6 months?	-.636	.647

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 2 components extracted.

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) extracted two components, explaining the underlying structure among the five questionnaire items. Factor loadings indicate that the item "Would you recommend AR-based shopping to others?" exhibits the highest loading on Component 1 (.849), suggesting it is the most dominant item. Component 1 appears to represent recommendation intent, while Component 2 reflects future usage likelihood. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) supports the preeminence of recommendation-related items as primary influencers within this construct.

Hypotheses Testing

- **H1: Immersive Technology in Marketing**

ANOVA with Friedman's Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Friedman's Chi-Square	Sig
Between People		141.015	179	.788		
Within People	Between Items	153.093[a]	3	51.031	186.509	.000
	Residual	290.157	537	.540		
	Total	443.250	540	.821		
Total		584.265	719	.813		

Grand Mean = 1.86

a. Kendall's coefficient of concordance W = .262.

The Friedman's ANOVA output shows a highly significant Chi-Square value of 186.509 with p = .000, well below the 0.05 significance level, indicating statistically significant differences across responses for Immersive Technology in Marketing. The Kendall's W = .262 reflects a moderate level of agreement among participants. These results suggest a consistent perception pattern regarding immersive technology's role in marketing. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, supporting H1 that Immersive Technology significantly influences marketing dynamics.

- **H2: The use of Virtual Reality (VR) positively influences consumer experience**

ANOVA with Friedman's Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Friedman's Chi-Square	Sig
Between People		707.456	179	3.952		
Within People	Between Items	41.456[a]	6	6.909	103.026	.000
	Residual	393.116	1074	.366		
	Total	434.571	1080	.402		
Total		1142.028	1259	.907		

Grand Mean = 3.53

a. Kendall's coefficient of concordance W = .036.

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The Friedman's ANOVA test shows a significant Chi-Square value of 103.026 with p = .000, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold, indicating statistically meaningful differences in responses related to Virtual Reality and consumer experience. The Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W = .036) implies a low but consistent agreement among participants. This supports the presence of perceptual variation influenced by VR features. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming H2 that the use of Virtual Reality (VR) positively influences consumer experience.

H3: The use of Augmented Reality (AR) positively influences consumer experience.

ANOVA with Friedman's Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Friedman's Chi-Square	Sig
Between People		1139.221	179	6.364		
Within People	Between Items	16.027[a]	6	2.671	32.414	.000
	Residual	517.973	1074	.482		
	Total	534.000	1080	.494		
Total		1673.221	1259	1.329		

Grand Mean = 4.09

a. Kendall's coefficient of concordance W = .010.

The Friedman's ANOVA test produced a Chi-Square value of 32.414 with a significance level of p = .000, which is well below the 0.05 cutoff, indicating a statistically significant variation in responses regarding Augmented Reality. Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W = .010) suggests a very weak but existent consensus among participants. The observed differences support the relevance of AR in shaping consumer experience. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming H3 that the use of Augmented Reality (AR) positively influences consumer experience.

H4: Consumer experience positively influences purchase decision

ANOVA with Friedman's Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Friedman's Chi-Square	Sig
Between People		267.228	179	1.493		
Within People	Between Items	391.583[a]	3	130.528	246.883	.000
	Residual	464.917	537	.866		
	Total	856.500	540	1.586		
Total		1123.728	719	1.563		

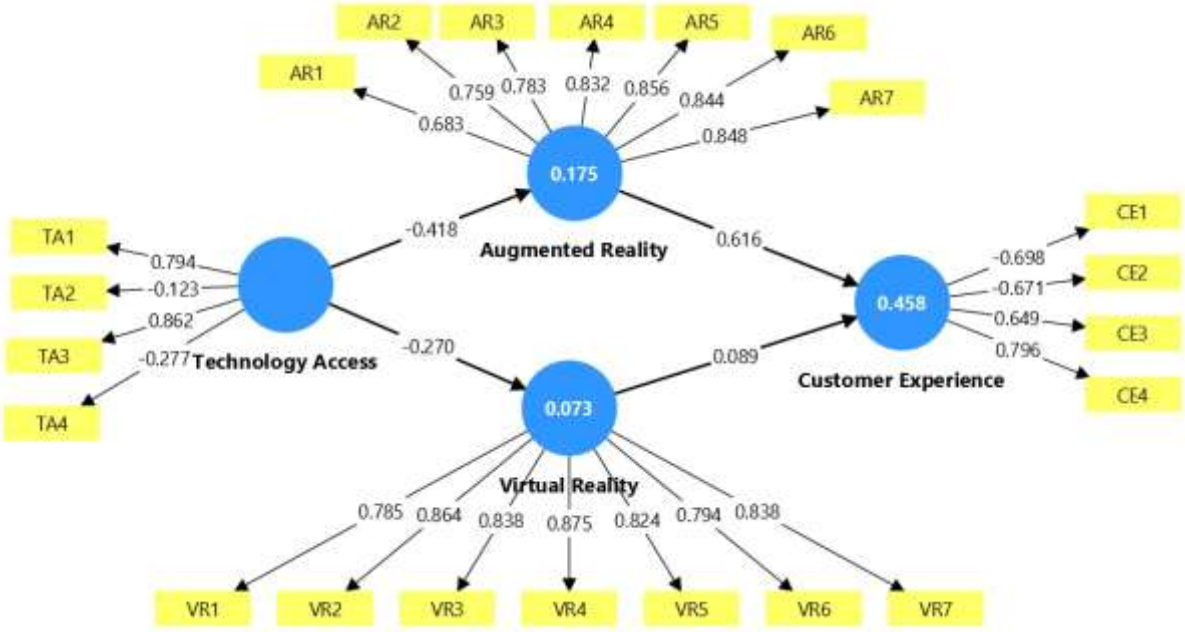
Grand Mean = 2.73

a. Kendall's coefficient of concordance W = .348.

The Friedman's ANOVA test revealed a highly significant Chi-Square value of 246.883 with p = .000, which is well below the 0.05 threshold, indicating statistically significant differences across responses. The Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W = .348) indicates a moderate level of agreement among respondents regarding the items assessing consumer experience and purchase decision. This suggests a consistent pattern in how consumer experience impacts decision-making behavior. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming H4 that consumer experience positively influences purchase decision.

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SEM MODEL



INTERPRETATION: The diagram represents a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis using Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM), highlighting the relationships between four key constructs: Technology Access, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, and Customer Experience. The path coefficients between the constructs indicate the strength and direction of their relationships. Notably, Technology Access shows a negative influence on both Augmented Reality (-0.418) and Virtual Reality (-0.270), suggesting that increased access to technology may be associated with reduced reliance or perceived value of AR and VR solutions, which may be context-dependent or require further investigation. Augmented Reality, in turn, has a strong positive impact on Customer Experience (0.616), indicating its effectiveness in enhancing user satisfaction or engagement. Virtual Reality shows a minimal positive effect (0.089) on Customer Experience, suggesting a weaker or possibly non-significant role in influencing customer perceptions in this model.

The R^2 values within the constructs indicate the proportion of variance explained: 17.5% for Augmented Reality, 7.3% for Virtual Reality, and a relatively strong 45.8% for Customer Experience. These values show that the model moderately explains Customer Experience, while the explanations for AR and VR are weaker. The indicator (or factor) loadings for most constructs are acceptable, particularly for Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality, with values generally above 0.7. However, some items under Technology Access (TA2 and TA4) and Customer Experience (CE1 and CE2) have low or negative loadings, which could indicate measurement issues or the need for rewording or removal of those items. Overall, the model suggests that while Augmented Reality is a significant contributor to customer experience, the role of Technology Access is complex and may not straightforwardly enhance the use of immersive technologies.

FINDINGS

- Immersive technologies such as VR and AR are widely perceived to significantly influence modern marketing dynamics.
- Virtual Reality (VR) usage has a positive and statistically significant impact on consumer experience, despite low consensus among respondents.
- Augmented Reality (AR) positively affects consumer experience, with results indicating perceptual variations among users.
- Consumer experience plays a crucial role in influencing purchase decisions, with a moderate level of agreement across the responses.
- AR usage frequency is a key factor in technology adoption, with strong factor loading observed for AR shopping-related behaviors.
- The AR feature "influences me to buy something I didn't plan" emerged as a dominant factor, highlighting impulse-buying potential.
- AR-based shopping recommendation intent is strongly represented in the data, showing high consumer advocacy potential.
- The survey instrument demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.858), validating internal consistency of the dataset.
- The sample was moderately young and tech-savvy, indicating alignment with the typical target audience for immersive technologies.
- PCA and CFA results confirmed the one-dimensionality and strong construct validity of AR/VR constructs used in the survey.

SUGGESTIONS

- Emphasize the strong positive influence of immersive technologies like VR and AR on consumer experience and modern marketing strategies.

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- Highlight that Virtual Reality contributes significantly to enhancing user engagement despite low consensus levels.
- Note that Augmented Reality demonstrates a clear, positive effect on consumer experience, particularly in visualizing products.
- Stress that consumer experience has a direct and statistically significant impact on purchase decision-making.
- Point out that AR usage frequency is a critical indicator of consumer familiarity and adoption of the technology.
- Include that AR significantly encourages impulse purchases, as seen in high factor loading for unplanned buying.
- Mention that AR-based shopping features show strong potential for word-of-mouth recommendations and customer advocacy.
- Confirm the high reliability of the research instrument used, validated by a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.858.
- Indicate that the surveyed demographic was young and tech-savvy, aligning well with the target users of immersive retail experiences.
- Validate that both PCA and CFA support the structural integrity and one-dimensionality of the constructs, affirming sound methodological design.

CONCLUSION

This research provides compelling evidence that immersive technologies—specifically Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)—hold transformative potential in shaping consumer experiences and influencing purchase decisions. The findings affirm that both VR and AR significantly enhance consumer engagement, product understanding, and emotional connection, which collectively improve decision-making confidence and brand perception. Notably, AR features, such as virtual try-ons and product visualizations, were found to directly stimulate impulse purchases and drive recommendation intent, illustrating their power in guiding consumer behavior. The study also validated that consumer experience serves as a critical mediating factor between immersive technology use and purchasing outcomes. Furthermore, the statistically robust survey data confirms the structural validity of the constructs used, ensuring the reliability of the conclusions drawn. These insights are particularly relevant for marketers and businesses aiming to leverage cutting-edge technology to attract a digitally savvy consumer base. The findings underscore a clear imperative: integrating immersive technologies into the retail strategy is not merely innovative—it is strategically essential for enhancing customer experience and driving conversion in the modern marketplace.

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