NAVIGATING VIRTUAL WORLDS: FEATURES OF VIDEO GAME MAPS DRIVING TOURIST DESTINATION INTENTION

[1]Djalal Eddine Yahiaoui ✉, [2]Ayoub Chakali, [3]Safa Maamir, [4]Amin Saba, [5]Mounir Belali

[1]Professor, Higher National School of Management, Tipaza, Algeria;
d.yahiaoui@ensmanagement.edu.dz,
ORCID: 0000-0003-4371-0742

[2]MSc student, Thunderbird School of Global Management, Arizona, USA; achakali@asu.edu,
ORCID: 0009-0000-8402-7638

[3]Professor, High School of Commerce, Tipaza, Algeria; s_maamir@esc-alger.dz,
ORCID: 0000-0001-9528-8032

[4]Professor, Higher National School of Management, Tipaza, Algeria; a.saba@ensmanagement.edu.dz,
ORCID: 0009-0000-2146-3109

[5]Assistant professor, Higher National School of Management, Tipaza, Algeria; m.belali@ensh.dz,
ORCID: 0000-0002-2437-255X

ABSTRACT

In early 2020, global travel and tourism faced disruptions, necessitating the formulation of novel marketing strategies. Consequently, there emerged a need to explore innovative approaches in tourism promotion. This study aims to contribute to the expanding domain of tourism, specifically focusing on the intersection with maps video games. The research addresses a literature gap concerning the influence of various game genres on individuals' motivation to explore different destinations. To delve deeper into this subject, a qualitative method was employed, involving interviews with 15 participants across diverse countries and gaming platforms. The findings reveal that players' intentions to visit places are influenced by factors such as the degree of freedom, emotional engagement, historical context, and cultural representation within the virtual worlds of video game maps. The results of the interviews had one thing in common: they were all about history. So, it is important to focus on historical places and the different cultures depicted in video game maps when creating tourism marketing content.

Keywords: travel intention, video games maps, virtual experience, virtual tourism

NAVIGÁCIÓ VIRTUÁLIS VILÁGOKBAN:
A VIDEÓJÁTÉK-TÉRKÉPEK UTAZÁSÖSZTÖNZŐ HATÁSA

[1]Djalal Eddine Yahiaoui ✉, [2]Ayoub Chakali, [3]Safa Maamir, [4]Amin Saba, [5]Mounir Belali

[1]Egyetemi tanár, Nemzeti Vezetéstudományi Főiskola, Tipaza, Algéria;
d.yahiaoui@ensmanagement.edu.dz, ORCID: 0000-0003-4371-0742

[2]MSc hallgató, Thunderbird Globális Vezetéstudományi Iskola, Arizona, USA;
achakali@asu.edu, ORCID: 0009-0000-8402-7638

[3]Egyetemi tanár, Kereskedelmi Főiskola, Tipaza, Algéria;
s_maamir@esc-alger.dz, ORCID: 0000-0001-9528-8032

[4]Egyetemi tanár, Nemzeti Vezetéstudományi Főiskola, Tipaza, Algéria;
a.saba@ensmanagement.edu.dz, ORCID: 0009-0000-2146-3109

[5]Adjunktus, Nemzeti Vezetéstudományi Főiskola, Tipaza, Algéria;
m.belali@ensh.dz, ORCID: 0000-0002-2437-255X

ABSZTRAKT

2020 elején a globális turizmus komoly kihívásokkal szembesült, ami új marketingstratégiák kidolgozását tette szükségessé. Következésképpen felmerült az igény az innovatív megközelítések kidolgozására a turizmus népszerűsítésében. A tanulmány célja, hogy hozzájáruljon a turisztikai szektor bővüléséhez, különös tekintettel a térképes videójátékok felhasználása révén. A kutatás e szakmai hiátusra alapozva a videójáték-térképek különböző utazási célpontok tényleges felfedezésére gyakorolt hatásait vizsgálja. A témában való mélyebb elmélyülés érdekében kvalitatív módszert alkalmaztunk, amely különböző országokban és játékplatformokon készített 15 interjú elemzésén alapul. Az eredmények azt mutatják, hogy a játékosok látogatási szándékát olyan tényezők befolyásolják, mint a szabadság foka, az érzelmi elkötelezettség, a történelmi kontextus és a kulturális reprezentáció a videójáték-térképek virtuális világában, amelyeknek közös vonása, hogy azokat egyértelműen történelmi vonatkozások dominálják. Fontos tehát, hogy a turisztikai marketingtartalom létrehozásakor a történelmi helyekre és a videójáték-térképeken ábrázolt különböző kultúrákra koncentráljunk.

Kulcsszavak: utazási szándék, videójáték-térképek, virtuális tapasztalat, virtuális turizmus

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, tourism scholars have sought to determine what induces visitors to choose and travel to a destination. Some have suggested that travel selection often relies on the emotional significance that tourists attach to destinations (Wang et al., 2019). For tourists, emotions make destinations special (Xu et al., 2015), for instance, the desire to revisit historic sites when feeling nostalgic about a destination.

Movies have proven their worth in attracting the attention of tourists prior to their travel and increasing their readiness to review the destination or recommend it to friends afterward (Báez-Montenegro & Devesa-Fernández, 2017). Films provide a realistic picture of a destination and enhance viewers' confidence in their potential visit (Ahmed & Ünuvar, 2022). Similarly, in recent years, virtual maps in video games have had a significant impact on tourism marketing (Shen et al., 2020). Compared to non-interactive films, virtual maps in video games provide an interactive experience that allows players to explore these destinations in a fun and engaging way (Klimmt et al., 2009). It can create a sense of excitement and curiosity about the location, encouraging players to visit it in real life.

On a worldwide scale, the use of virtual experiences is considered a new promotion strategy in the tourism sector (Skard et al., 2021). Because video games can present the actual world in a virtual form, it enables them to provide an accurate and authentic representation of real-world locations (Egger & Bulencea, 2015). Discovering new places (Neuhofer et al., 2014) also gives reliable experiential information (Shen et al., 2020). Video games can also be used to promote hotels and tourist destinations. Hotels can create online games to advertise their services and facilities, offer rewards for participation, and encourage guest loyalty (Sigala & Haller, 2019). Utilizing game-based marketing strategies has tremendous potential to capture the attention of tourists and raise brand awareness. It is crucial for tourism researchers and game developers to collaborate in order to gain insights into the factors that motivate individuals to play games (Xu et al., 2015), into game type and content (Pasca et al., 2021), and into the ability to integrate players (Xu et al., 2015).

Despite the fast development of the gaming industry in recent years, there is evidence of both positive and negative impacts on different locations (Dubois & Gibbs, 2018; Dubois et al., 2021) and its applications in tourism (Xu et al., 2013). Research, however, has not yet clarified how virtual maps in video games affect people's feelings or activities toward a given destination during the pre-travel phase. Therefore, this research presents a preliminary understanding of the drivers and systems of video game-induced tourism by exploring how perceived predictors of visit intention manifest in this particular context.

The gaming industry has expanded significantly, which has attracted the attention of marketers who consider electronic gaming a viable marketing tool. A variety of industrial events, as well as strong suppositions in the trade literature about good results, have prompted the introduction of products and brands. There is, however, little research supporting the use of games as a promotional tool and limited empirical data on the effects of marketing messages conveyed through this medium to consumers. It is important to

determine the impact of video games on visit intentions to use them in future plans or research as a communication or advertising tool. This paper aims to explore this theme by addressing the following research question: what are the components of the virtual lived experience in video game maps that stimulate visit intentions?

2. Literature review

2.1. Digital marketing through video game maps

Digital marketing via video games reaches more audience members and more categories, allowing for continuous real-time advertising campaign optimization (Marti-Parreno et al., 2017). It is also an effective tool for influencing brand trends (Ingendah et al., 2023). Many travel companies and businesses in the tourism sector may now connect with global customers that were previously unable to do so. Compared to other forms of marketing, gaming may offer more demanding, interactive, and interesting experiences (Xu et al., 2015). According to Xu (2015), games provide entertainment while allowing the player to learn about the destination in ways that would not be possible otherwise. Therefore, this medium can increase the player's overall interest in the location while providing an intriguing and distinctive experience.

According to Dubois & Gibbs (2018), in video games, players are encouraged to take risks and explore the virtual worlds in which they are immersed and enter a liminal space by submerging themselves in the incredible virtual environment, leaving their everyday lives behind. Gamers face obstacles and are attracted by rewards, which helps them stay focused on their objective throughout the process (Lee & Faber, 2007). As a result, they may gain new information and abilities (Sajid et al., 2018).

Video games also allow gamers to experience locations in a more interactive and immersive manner than virtual reality tours (Politiopoulos et al., 2019). Gamers transition from passive engrossment to active engagement in gaming encounters by utilizing the four experience domains, that is, entertainment, education, escape, and aesthetic (Deterding et al., 2011).

Video games and gamification share many similarities but they are not the same thing (Zahedi et al., 2019). Video games are complete, self-contained experiences designed primarily for entertainment, while gamification is the process of adding game elements to non-game contexts to improve engagement and motivation (Seaborn & Fels, 2015). However, there is a growing interest in integrating this approach into video games (as *Pokémon Go* was used as a marketing tool), yet video games in tourism marketing continue to be underutilized (Ramirez-Moreno & Leorke, 2021).

2.2. Virtual experience through video games

The main goal of experiential marketing is to give clients comprehensive experiences that include sensory, emotive, and creative perspectives by focusing on customer experiences, consuming holistic experiences, understanding the client as a rational and emotional being,

and looking at methods and tools as being eclectics (Schmitt, 2000). A virtual tour (VT) can be defined as a simulation of an existing site that is composed of a series of video images, which is structured as a series of movies or pictures supplemented by sound effects, voice guidance, or text descriptions. The virtual environment is designed to properly imitate the atmosphere of the real location, along with all of its related effects (Osman et al., 2009). According to Pavlidis et al. (2007), most people come across VTs when browsing the internet. A computer enables a visitor to observe and interact with a simulated environment by using a monitor and a mouse, respectively. VTs can, however, also be experienced via other cutting-edge technologies like virtual reality, as explained by (Barbieri et al., 2017).

Video game experiences are not only for fun anymore. The interactions between players and the virtual environment in games may have a significant impact on how users perceive the world (Blum et al., 2012). The graphics and sound effects used in today's video games closely imitate reality, giving players a feeling that they are in the virtual world. According to studies, this feeling of presence will affect players' emotional states and future behavioral intentions (Ravaja et al., 2006).

The virtual experience is considered a new promotion strategy in the tourism industry as video game maps provide potential tourists with a chance to experience a location digitally. Interactive media such as video games allow users to concentrate more on the information by giving them more control over their actions and visual perspective than films or video clips do, resulting in a more intense emotional experience, so video games are an effective way to elicit sentiments of nostalgia (Wulf et al., 2020). People play video games for a variety of reasons, including the freedom they enjoy in a virtual environment, excitement, role-playing, character development, immersion, escapism, and social interaction (Neuhofer et al., 2020).

2.3. Tourism and video game maps

Virtual tourism maps might be crucial in preventing the total suspension of many tourism activities during crisis periods (Guha, 2009) by developing brand-new business models and offering a range of options for various players in the tourist ecosystem. These options, for instance, allow visitors to experience and learn about many locations even when travel is barred or restricted (UNESCO, s. a.), allowing museums and other tourist attractions to keep engaging with the general public (Sallent, 2020).

In tourist marketing, video games provide offer real-time information about a region, and they may also be helpful for pre-experiencing areas of interest and advertising visitors' attractions to players because locales in video games are sometimes an ideal or post-apocalyptic picture of a real-life environment mixed with imagination (Salmond & Salmond, 2016). Although not all video games are tied to the area on display, certain titles allow players to virtually explore locations. According to several surveys, consumers strongly identify the destination's experience with the game. With a growing interest in video game maps that simulate interactivity and socializing, challenges arise because of players'

expectations for more customized and experienced forms of travel through games as opposed to a basic form of entertainment environment (Howley, 2020). As video game technology progresses, more and more games are developed that feature real-world locations, resulting in stunning pictures of destinations and prompting tourism (Dubois et al., 2021).

According to Xu et al. (2015), reality-based games that represent real maps provide suggestions and entertaining settings for potential visitors; thus, video games can boost brand popularity and attract potential tourists for tourism marketing (Xu et al., 2015). Games enhance visitors' experience by allowing them to enjoy imagination, immersion, and fun while increasing their pleasure. The environment presented in the video game encourages tourists' stories to stimulate their emotions about visiting real-world sites (Egger & Bulencea, 2015).

The locations represented in video games may entice players to travel there. Due to the high level of immersion, video game-induced tourism is seen as one way to make a lasting impression on players, but marketers should be mindful that tourists may want experiences that are identical to those in games. Therefore, it is important for game creators to seamlessly integrate the interests of visitors and gamers, given the embryonic stage of gaming in tourism marketing. However, a lack of knowledge about in-game experiences and gamers as a developing market frequently restricts the growth of video game-induced tourism (Ramirez-Moreno & Leorke, 2021).

3. Methods

In recent years, video games have become a popular form of entertainment for people of all ages. The graphics and details have significantly improved with the advancements in technology, creating a more immersive and realistic experience for players. One aspect that has improved is the in-game maps that allow players to navigate the game's virtual world. These maps are often detailed and interactive, providing players with a comprehensive understanding of the game's environment (Beck et al., 2019).

However, in addition to their use in video games, these maps could also serve as a valuable tool in the tourism industry. With their detailed and interactive features, they could be used as a promotional tool to attract visitors to real-world destinations. By creating virtual maps of tourist locations, game developers and tourism marketers could provide potential visitors with an immersive and engaging experience, showcasing the attractions, landmarks, and events of a particular destination. In this way, video game maps could become an innovative way to promote tourism and boost the industry (Kim et al., 2020).

3.1. Sampling

In this exploratory study, we employed a qualitative in-depth interview methodology. To choose participants who have played different kinds of games we used a purposive sampling method. We interviewed 15 male and female participants ranging in age from 18

to 29. Participants reported that they had played video games for an average of five to eight years and for an average of seven hours per week.

We formulated the questions using the literature on video game and film-induced tourism. The interview started with general questions about video games and the kind of games that the participants enjoyed, followed by detailed questions about the impact of video games on their lives. Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes. Manual transcription was used for all interviews. Because video game-induced tourism is still in its infancy, an inductive thematic analysis was used to identify new trends and recurring occurrences. Based on the literature study, the primary survey questions (such as those about gaming motivation and visit intentions of the players) were chosen.

3.2. Selection of the platforms

The platform selection was carefully chosen in order to fulfil the objectives of this research: Ubisoft, Origins, and Steam. These communities were chosen because they are all connected to most of the popular video games. The Steam community offers approximately 58.000+ video games (SteamDB, 2023).

3.3. Interview guide

This research aims to determine the different aspects that affect the players' visit intentions. The interviews were semi-directive in order to facilitate an analytic approach and to help the participants express their ideas freely. According to Dubois et al. (2021), the dominating phase is a two-condition, between-subjects experimental study designed to determine the effect of presence and nostalgia on a person's behavioural intentions when interacting with a virtual medium.

• The interview started with general questions about video games. Participants were asked simple questions about their playtime, favorite games, and the platforms and consoles they were using.

• The second part was about virtual world dynamics in games and freedom. The objective of this part was to determine the factors that affect the visit intentions of the players. It is important to ask the participants about the virtual world in video games and what they liked the most.

• The third part was about immersion and nostalgia; according to the literature review of this research, there were other factors besides video game players' visit intentions and decisions.

• The fourth part was about films and TV shows. Films, as mentioned in the literature review, have an impact on visit intention.

• In the following part on history and culture and the post-game experience, participants were asked if they had played *Grand Theft Auto V* or any of the *Assassin's Creed* series and their post-game experiences. History and culture are also considered factors that influence people's visit intentions.

- In the final segment of the interviews, participants were asked about their visit intentions and how video games influenced them.

3.4. Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of learning how different pieces of information are related and how those relationships affect one another (Albers, 2017). Once the interviews were completed, the collected data were analyzed using the process of our analysis, composed of five phases (Vernette, 2006):

- Interview transcription: This initial step provides us with access to the raw data. It entails printing an exact copy of every recorded and noted interview.
- Categorization: According to Dumez (2015), the second phase allows us to identify the most frequently repeated themes, sub-themes, and key words in the material. These components comprise our survey's categories and subcategories.
- Coding: The analysis grid, which is used to place similar or related themes in the same category, is made up of the categories that emerged from the previous step.
- Quantification: This stage involves calculating the frequency of occurrence of each topic. There are two distinct analysis methods (Vernette, 2006):
- Synthesis: To conclude the content analysis, this stage allows, as the name implies, to synthesize all the results obtained from interviews

3.5. Interview results

This stage involves calculating the frequency of occurrence of each topic. Vernette's two distinct analysis methods were adapted to analyze the results.

- Horizontal analysis, which counts the number of times each of them appears in all completed and detailed interviews, to obtain extra data and information.
- Vertical analysis, which achieves the same goal but only examines one interview at a time. This allows to determine the order in which various themes are handled for a single person.

Table 1: Interview results interpreted

Main Sections	Sub sections	Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4	Interviewee 5	Interviewee 6	Interviewee 7	Interviewee 8	Interviewee 9	Interviewee 10	Interviewee 11	Interviewee 12	Interviewee 13	Interviewee 14	Interviewee 15
The virtual world dynamics in games	Places that correspond to reality	x	x	x	x		x		x		x		x			x
Playing rather than watching	Real places seen in movies	x	x		x	x		x		x				x	x	
	Live experience		x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x		
Freedom	High level of freedom		x	x		x	x		x	x	x		x			
Various activities	Various activities	x			x			x	x		x	x		x	x	
Nostalgia and emotions	Sensory stimulation			x		x	x	x		x				x		x
History and culture			x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
Visit intention		Low	High	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	High	Low	Low	High	Medium	Low

Source: edited by the authors based on interview data.

4. Interpretation of the results

According to the information and data collected from the interviews, there were different ideas and impressions about the factors that impact visiting intentions (*Table 1*). Starting with the dynamics of the virtual world, the participants all agreed on one aspect: the details, designs, and dynamics of the virtual game maps felt real. They mentioned that these dynamics are realistic, practical, and accurate. Some participants mentioned that the dynamics resembled real-life places that they had visited before; for instance, Interviewees 8 & 9 claimed that the places they saw in the video game resembled some places in France. The virtual dynamics were crucial in capturing players' attention.

Moving on to the next chapter, which is concerned with freedom, participants expressed a strong desire to do things or perform actions that they would be able to do in

real life. A few participants reported that they had a good experience in video games where there were no rules, limits, or borders; they felt superior and could do whatever they wanted in games without risk. One participant claimed that he had the chance to explore Los Angeles virtually because he had never been there due to visa issues. As a result, video games eventually give a general perception of what cities look like from home with no struggle over borders, rules, or visa issues. The second chapter presented nostalgia and immersion. Participants experienced different levels of nostalgia, immersion, and emotions when playing video games. Some claimed that games remind them of their childhood and memories, while others agreed on common points that expressed the number of attachments, feelings, emotions, and immersion they obtained from video games. Some participants felt immersed and connected to the virtual world in the game, while others have high expectations for the upcoming video game series. Hence, emotions, immersion, and nostalgia all play an important role in capturing players' attention and making them feel as if they have lived a real journey. This factor could be used later in developing marketing strategies that feature emotions to capture customers' attention.

TV shows and movies play an important role in tourism promotion. An important section of the interview compares the impact of TV shows and video games. The majority of the participants reached a consensus: playing video games gave them a better vision and a live experience, rather than just watching in-game. It is also important to mention that some participants have a passion for movies and video games. Interviewee 10 claimed that "I would watch movies and then play some video games with the same map".

As a result of this section, it is important to take into consideration the preferences of the players and what they seek in video games. This could be beneficial to target their visions, which may later influence their visit intentions. The participants shared a few common ideas about their journey in video games in the following section of the interview, which was related to history and cultures presented in video game maps. Some were impressed by the old French architecture shown in *Assassin's Creed Unity*. Others talked about ancient Egyptian culture and traditions, claiming that they could discover more things about them. Some participants shared a different point of view, claiming that they were not interested in discovering history or culture; they were just having fun.

The last part of the interview was devoted to post-game thoughts and intentions. Starting with recollection, participants had different views and opinions. They mentioned that some places in video games help them recall some good memories from their past or childhood. Some of the participants expressed their journey through video games, claiming that they learned more about cities, areas, history, and cultures. Several participants believed that video games helped them to make better use of their time.

According to the results obtained, people's imaginations and intentions differ from one another because everyone is unique. However, based on the data collected, we can deduce that participants had a visit intention for different reasons. The characteristics of the virtual world allow users to explore the virtual world in a short period of time; emotions

and memories also have an influence on the players, and most of them had similar ideas about their future decision in visiting places they became connected to. Video games helped the players get further information about history and culture, which sparked their interest in discovering some historical places in the world. The level of freedom is incredible; most players had a favorable opinion about it: they could experience whatever they wanted in-game and travel across virtual maps with no boundaries using planes, cars, and boats. This virtual experience helped them to explore different areas around the world, and consequently, it will affect their visit intentions in the future.

According to the data gathered, participants with no visit intentions agreed that the dynamics of the virtual map in video games are effectively constructed. While some players expressed dissatisfaction, Interviewee 3 claimed "After playing a few games, I did not find he exact places in video games". Another participant mentioned that the dynamics in the virtual maps are inaccurate.

The next section was about the level of freedom, about which the participants had different viewpoints. While some expressed that they were limited in what they could accomplish in video games, and there few exciting activities to participate in games, others noted that they had full control of the character they were using. The level of freedom is somewhat controversial and differs according to the actions people choose to perform in video games. In terms of the level of immersion and nostalgia, some participants felt involved in the virtual world, as if they knew the game by heart, while others claimed that they had no emotions towards any video games and they did not relate. Emotions and impressions are difficult to control; thus, researchers and video game developers should focus on what attracts players and how they express their emotions via these games.

The fourth section was about TV shows and video games. Participants claimed that there is no connection between video games and movies. For instance, Interviewee 11 mentioned "Movies show real places, like the American cities presented in movies or TV shows, games do not reach that level". Interviewee 3 also claimed that "if it is about movies or games, I would rather a 2-hour movie than play 20 hours just to explore a city". The rest of the participants claimed to do both watching and playing.

The fifth section focused on history and culture. Participants claimed that they would rather watch documentaries that present history and cultures than play historical games, whereas others noted that they prefer to read books or articles about these topics. Interviewee 15 mentioned that "I am not sure if the history in video games is real or just edited to match the standards of the games". Interviewee 1, on the other hand, said "I am just playing to have fun and enjoy my free time not to learn about history or culture".

As a conclusion and for the last chapter of this survey, post-game differences were found to differ from one to another. Participants had different kinds of views and opinions: some were just seeking to have fun and enjoy their free time, whereas others mentioned that they did not really trust the virtual world. As one more important point, Interviewee 3 mentioned that when it comes to virtually exploring the world, games usually take 80+

hours of playtime to finish, but movies take less time and give a realistic vision of different areas about the world.

5. Discussion of the results

This study conceptualizes a few major experiential marketing factors that influence in-game experiences and a person's desire to visit different places around the world. According to the results obtained, the game's world dynamics are one of the most essential components for players. 4/5 of the participants with a strong visit intention paid attention to the game's dynamics. According to some participants, traveling through the map gives an additional level of involvement. In the current body of language, affordance theory has been used to explain how objects and players interact in video games. These results confirmed that the affordance in video games can indirectly influence the participants' choice of destination (Sjoblom et al., 2019).

According to the results obtained, Immersion is another factor that influences players' intention or destination choice. Several participants (4/5 of those with a high visit intention) claimed that they felt like they were really walking through ancient Egypt. On the other hand, the live experience had a 5/5. Some mentioned that video games are usually more immersive than movies because they can manage the characters, have an actual impact on the scenario, and live their lives, including their daily activities. These results are consistent with of Sajid's research (Sajid et al., 2018). When compared to a movie, video games can induce more emotional reactions from people.

According to results obtained, 4/5 of those with high visit intentions claimed that one of the most significant differences between watching movies and playing video games is self-control in games. Because they can customize their experiences, they believe that playing video games is more participatory, engaging, and immersive. The degree of flexibility provided by video games is really an important factor. Most participants (four-fifths) had a lot of impression about how they felt when examining maps in such a simple and effortless way. According to the findings obtained from the interviews, open-world games can better serve as a resemblance of real tourism settings. Yet, game designers should be aware of flow experiences while considering the concept of gamification. An optimal flow state suggests that an individual is capable of overcoming the challenges presented, which is crucial in creating the sense of freedom, engagement, and immersion (Egger & Bulencea, 2015).

Nostalgia provided an interesting result (4/5). Video games that imitate players are a more effective means to create an emotional connection with the virtual environment. Playing games reminds them of their childhood and brings back memories for them. Mahika (2011) claims that having nostalgia for certain places plays an important role in affecting visit intention of tourists. According to researchers, video gaming is a powerful tool to generate nostalgic emotions (Wulf et al., 2018). In comparison to films or video clips, interactive media such as video games allow users to focus more on the information by allowing them to control their actions and the visual aspect, resulting in a more

emotional experience (Poels et al., 2012). Previous studies on the tourism industry revealed that visitors' travel intentions are strongly correlated with their emotional reactions to the site (Ghosh & Sarkar, 2016). The results of the present paper confirm or match with those of previous studies. It has been mentioned that heritage sites can trigger tourists' nostalgia based on their past experiences even if they have never visited the sites (Muehling & Pascal, 2012). The results of the interviews (4/5) had one thing in common, which was related to history. Participants reported that playing historical games made them curious about past lives and lifestyles, which motivated them to delve into history.

According to the participants, gaming is a fun method to explore the past in depth and travel back in time. Exploring historical places provides flashbacks of how life used to be. Thus, history is considered an important factor that affects players' visit intentions because, according to the results obtained, they incline and plan to visit archaeological sites.

According to the results obtained from the interview, most participants were influenced by different factors that affected their visit intentions to different places all over the world. Based on the interview results, players are affected by emotional and nostalgic aspects. Some participants learned about historical places and old cultures from around the world just by playing video games, while others obtained a first impression and showed high interest in visiting some countries that they experienced in the virtual world.

6. Conclusion

This study contributes to unique ways of understanding video game-induced tourism by providing insights through the perspective of experience design. It identifies important experiential marketing characteristics that are enticing to in-game experiences and influence the intention to visit in-game destinations. The results of the surveys and interviews can contribute to advancing the marketing of video games and tourism. This study enhances empirical knowledge on experiential marketing methods and contributes to advancing the literature on media-induced tourism.

Most participants paid close attention to game dynamics. The majority stated that they would rather try different things in the virtual world of video games than simply see them in movies. One of the most significant contrasts between watching movies and playing video games is the level of self-control in games. Players can customize their experiences, leading to a more participatory, engaging, and immersive experience. Marketers should leverage this in the tourism industry by integrating tourism content marketing into the virtual world.

Other factors influencing players' intentions or destination decisions include immersion and the level of freedom. Several participants claimed that they sometimes felt like they were part of the game's virtual environment. Marketers can focus on these common factors that result in a high level of immersion for players to drive profitable customer actions.

Utilizing the emotional side of players in creating tourism marketing content is likely to affect their visiting intentions. The results of the interviews had one thing in common: they were all about history. Participants also reported that playing historical games makes them curious about past lives, lifestyles, and societies, motivating them to investigate history. It is important to focus on historical places and the different cultures depicted in video games when creating tourism marketing content. These aspects could be used to attract players' attention, as most of them had a positive impression of them.

References

Ahmed, Y. & Ünuvar, Ş. (2022). Film tourism and its impact on tourism destination image. *Çatalhöyük Uluslararası Turizm ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi 8*: 102–117. Available online: https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/2464971/

Albers, M. (2017). *Introduction to quantitative data analysis in the behavioral and social sciences.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 219 p. Available online: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781119290384/

Báez-Montenegro, A. & Devesa-Fernández, M. (2017). Motivation, satisfaction and loyalty in the case of a film festival: differences between local and non-local participants. *Journal of Cultural Economics 41* (2): 173–195. DOI: 10.1007/s10824-017-9292-2

Barbieri, L., Bruno, F. & Muzzupappa, M. (2017). Virtual museum system evaluation through user studies. *Journal of Cultural Heritage 26*: 101–108. DOI: 10.1016/j.culher.2017.02.005

Beck, J., Rainoldi, M. & Egger, R. (2019). Virtual reality in tourism: a state-of-the-art review. *Tourism review 74* (3): 586–612. DOI: 10.1108/TR-03-2017-0049

Blum, L., Wetzel, R., Mccall, R., Oppermann, L. & Broll, W. (2012). The final TimeWarp: using form and content to support player experience and presence when designing location-aware mobile augmented reality games. *Proceedings of the designing interactive systems conference,* pp. 711–720. DOI: 10.1145/2317956.2318064

Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R. & Nacke, L. (2011). From game design elements to gamefulness: defining "gamification". *Proceedings of the 15th international academic MindTrek conference: Envisioning future media environments,* pp. 9–15. DOI: 10.1145/2181037.2181040

Dubois, L.-E., Griffin, T., Gibbs, C. & Guttentag, D. (2021). The impact of video games on destination image. *Current Issues in Tourism 24* (4): 554–566. DOI: 0.1080/13683500.2020.1724082

Dubois, L.-E. & Gibbs, C. (2018). Video game–induced tourism: a new frontier for destination marketers. *Tourism Review 73* (2): 186–198. DOI 10.1108/TR-07-2017-0115

Dumez, H. (2015). *Méthodologie de la recherche qualitative: Les questions clés de la démarche compréhensive.* Paris: Vuibert, 240 p.

Egger, R. & Bulencea, P. (2015). *Gamification in tourism: Designing memorable experiences.* Books on Demand, 190 p.

Fowler, F. J. (2013). *Survey Research Methods.* New York: Sage Publications.

Ghosh, T. & Sarkar, A. (2016). "To feel a place of heaven": Examining the role of sensory reference cues and capacity for imagination in destination marketing. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing 33* (1): 25–37. DOI: 10.1080/10548408.2014.997962

Guha, S. (2009). *Motivational push factors for visiting reenactment sites.* Master Thesis. San Jose State University, 61 p. Available online:
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4700&context=etd_theses

Ingendah, M., Vogel, T., Maedche, A. & Wänke, M. (2023). Brand placements in video games: How local in-game experiences influence brand attitudes. *Psychology & Marketing, 40* (2): 274–287. DOI: 10.1002/mar.21770

Kim, M. J., Lee, C. K. & Jung, T. (2020). Exploring consumer behavior in virtual reality tourism using an extended stimulus-organism-response model. *Journal of Travel Research 59* (1): 69–89. DOI: 10.1177/0047287518818915

Klimmt, C., Hefner, D. & Vorderer, P. (2009). The Video Game Experience as "True" Identification: A Theory of EnjoyableAlterations of Players' Self-Perception. *Communication Theory 19* (4): 351–373. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2885.2009.01347.x

Lee, M., & Faber, R. (2007). Effects of product placement in on-line games on brand memory: A perspective of the limited-capacity model of attention. *Journal of advertising 36* (4): 75–90. DOI: 10.2753/JOA0091-3367360406

Mahika, E.-C. (2011). Current trends in tourist motivation. *Cactus Tourism Journal 2* (2): 15–24. Available online:
https://www.academia.edu/2496818/Current_trends_in_tourist_motivation

Marti-Parreno, J., Bermejo-Berros, J. & Aldas-Manzano, J. (2017). Product placement in video games: the effect of brand familiarity and repetition on consumers' memory. *Journal of Interactive Marketing 38* (4): 55–63. DOI: 10.1016/j.intmar.2016.12.001

Muehling, D. D. & Pascal, V. J. (2012). An involvement explanation for nostalgia advertising effects. *Journal of Promotion Management 18* (1): 100–118.
DOI: 10.1080/10496491.2012.646222

Neuhofer, B., Celuch, K. & To, T. (2020). Experience design and the dimensions of transformative festival experiences. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management 32* (9): 2881–2901. DOI 10.1108/IJCHM-01-2020-0008

Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D. & Ladkin, A. (2014). A Typology of Technology-Enhanced Tourism Experiences. *International Journal of Tourism Research 16* (4): 340–350. DOI: 10.1002/jtr.1958

Osman, A., Wahab, N. & Ismail, M. (2009). Development and evaluation of an interactive 360 virtual tour for tourist destinations. *Journal of Information Technology Impact 9* (3): 173–182. Available online:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268730854_Development_and_Evaluation_of_an_Interactive_360_Virtual_Tour_for_Tourist_Destinations/

Pasca, M., Renzi, M., Di Pietro, L. & Guglielmetti Mugion, M. (2021). Gamification in tourism and hospitality research in the era of digital platforms: a systematic litterature review. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice 31* (5): 691–737. DOI: 10.1108/JSTP-05-2020-0094

Pavlidis, G., Koutsoudis, A., Arnaoutoglou, F., Tsioukas, V. & Chamzas, C. (2007). Methods for 3D digitization of cultural heritage. *Journal of cultural heritage 8* (1), 93–98. DOI: 10.1016/j.culher.2006.10.007

Poels, K., De Kort, Y. & Ijsselsteijin, W. (2012). Identification and categorization of digital game experiences: a qualitative study integrating theoretical insights and player perspectives. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 9 (1): 107–129. Available online: https://www.westminsterpapers.org/article/id/186/

Politiopoulos, A., Mol, A., Boom, K., & Ariese, C. (2019). History is our playground: action and authenticity in *Assassin's Creed: Odyssey. Advances in Archaeological Practice 7* (3): 317–323. DOI: 10.1017/aap.2019.30

Ramirez-Moreno, C. & Leorke, D. (2021). Promoting Yokosuka through videogame tourism: the shenmue sacred spot guide map. In: Leorke, D. & Owens, M. (eds.) *Games and play in the creative, smart and ecological city*. London: Routledge, pp. 38–63.

Ravaja, N., Saari, T., Turpeinen, M., Laarni, J., Salminen, M. & Kivikangas, M. (2006). Spatial presence and emotions during video game playing: Does it matter with whom you play? *Presence Teleoperators and Virtual Environments* 15 (4): 381–392. DOI: 10.1162/pres.15.4.381

Sajid, M. J., Cao, Q., Xinchun, L., Brohi, M. A. & Sajid, M. F. (2018). Video gaming a new face of inducement tourism. main attractors for juvenilegamers. *International Journal for Social Studies* 4 (5): 52–56. Available online: https://journals.edupub.org/index.php/ijss/article/view/6307/2866

Salmond, M., & Salmond, J. (2016). The gamer as tourist: the simulated environments and impossible geographies of videogames. In: Long, Ph. & Morpeth, N. D. (eds.) *Tourism and the Creative Industries.* New York: Routledge, pp. 151–163.

Schmitt, B. (2000). *Experiential Marketing: How to Get Customers to Sense, Feel, Think, Act, Relate?* Free Press, 304 p.

Seaborn, K. & Fels, D. (2015). Gamification in theory and action: A survey. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies 74*: 14–31. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijhcs.2014.09.006

Shen, Y. S., Choi, H. C., Joppe, M. & Yi, S. (2020). What motivates visitors to participate in a gamified trip? *Tourism Management 27*: 104074. DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2019.104074

Sigala, M. & Haller, C. (2019). The Impact of Social Media on the Behavior of Wine Tourists: A Typology of Power Sources. In: Sigala, M. & Robinson, R. N. S. (eds.) *Management and Marketing of Wine Tourism Business*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 139–154. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-75462-8_8

Sjoblom, M., Torhonen, M., Hamari, J. & Macey, J. (2019). The ingredients of Twitch streaming: Affordances of game streams. *Computers in Human Behavior 92*: 20–28. DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2018.10.012

Skard, S., Knudsen, E. J., Sjastad, H. & Thorbjornsen, H. (2021). How virtual reality in uences travel intention: The role of mental imagery and hapiness forecasting. *Tourism Management 87*: 104360. DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104360

Vernette, E. (2006). *Une nouvelle vision du leader d'opinion en marketing: une approche phénoménologique*. 5ème Congrès Tendances du Marketing, Venise, 34 p. Available online:
https://archives.marketing-trends-congress.com/2006/Materiali/Paper/Fr/Vernette.pdf/

Wang, D., Li, X. R., Liang, J. & Huang, Y. (2019). How destination emotional intelligence effects tourist emotional loyalty. *Journal of Travel Research, 58*, 570-584.

Wulf, T., Bowman, N., Velez, J. & Breuer, J. (2020). Breuer, J. (2020). Once upon a game: Exploring video game nostalgia and its impact on well-being. *Psychology of Popular Media 9* (1): 83–95. DOI: 10.1037/ppm0000208

Wulf, T., Bowman, N., Rieger, D., Velez, J. & Breuer, J. (2018). Running head: video game nostalgia and retrogaming. *Media and Communication 6* (2): 60–68. DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i2.1317

Xu, F., Tian, F., Bouhalis, D., Weber, J. & Zhang, H. (2015). Tourists as Mobile Gamers: Gamification for Tourism Marketing. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing 33* (8): 1–19. DOI: 10.1080/10548408.2015.1093999

Xu, F., Weber, J. & Buhalis, D. (2013). Gamification in tourism. Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism. *Proceedings of the International Conference in Dublin*, pp. 525-537. Available online:
https://www.academia.edu/7239622/Gamification_in_Tourism/

Zahedi, L., Ross, M. & Batten, J. S. (2019). Implications of gamification in learning environments on computer sci-ence students: A comprehensive study. *126th Annual Conference and Exposition of American Society for Engineering Education.* Available online:
https://stem-cyle.cis.fiu.edu/1a213f1d839f124c20867c7e888e0d7f/asee-gamification-jb-edits.pdf/

Online sources

Howley, D. (2020). *The world is turning to video games amid coronavirus outbreak.* Yahoo!Finance Mar 18 2020. Available online:
https://finance.yahoo.com/news/coronavirus-world-turning-to-video-games-150704969.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmR6Lw&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAHE14dZ4eBW_dSyd3veFE6Y7U3Mn_e9CbOep5AWMOMJrMEaoK6AHooI70bgyRzE342QVOheCy5yvlasNLRNBWfOM&guccounter=2/ Accessed on:

Sallent, M. (2020). *Tourism in Africca: Virtual safaris kick in as countries slowly open to tourists.* Africa Renewal 9 July. Available online:
https://www.un.org/africarenewal/web-features/coronavirus/tourism-africa-virtual-safaris-kick-countries-prepare-reopen-tourists/ Accessed on:

SteamDB (2023). Top Rated Games on Steam. As decided by SteamDB rating algorithm. Available online: https://steamdb.info/stats/gameratings/ Accessed on:

UNESCO (s.a.). Tourisme Durable. Programme sur le Patrimoine Mondial et le tourisme

durable de l'UNESCO. Available online: https://whc.unesco.org/fr/tourisme/