

Abstract

THESIS: The adoption of virtual reality as a social interaction tool: Integrating COVID-19 context to the technology acceptance model

STUDENT: Si Hyun Kim

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This thesis examines the impact of COVID-19 on peoples' acceptance of VR experiences. The research design is guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), a model applied to predict user attitudes and their likelihood to accept new technology. Based on prior literature, I aim to answer the following questions: (1) How does the users' perceived impact of the COVID-19 pandemic affect their attitude towards using VR and intention to adopt VR (even after the pandemic)? (2) In the context of COVID-19, what relationships do the variables in TAM (i.e., Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness) have to the intention to use VR as a social interaction tool? (3) How do mental health consciousness and perceived social interaction mediate those relationships? An online survey was implemented to investigate the relationship between variables of TAM and the potential predictors, including mental health consciousness, perceived social interaction, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use. The results suggest the perceived impact of COVID-19 is a strong predictor for positive attitude toward and acceptance of VR experiences. Furthermore, users who are conscious of their mental health displayed positive attitudes towards VR experiences when they perceived social interaction.