

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICAL REALITY AND AUGMENTED/VIRTUAL REALITY IN TOURISM: THE QUEST FOR SPECIAL RESTAURANTS

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Abstract:

There is no area in economy that technology has not tried to rewrite, or at least has started to change it so far. The tourism is an area where the presence of technology is very varied, even up to the extremities. The spectrum is very wide in this respect: from simple online reservation to augmented reality (AR) or even to virtual reality (VR), technology is represented in various forms in tourism. The extent of the technology's presence in the tourism product typically depends on the target segment. In this respect, the changes or trends of the consumers must be constantly monitored.

The present study aims (a) to sum up what AR/VR in tourism means, (b) identification of physical forms (physical environments) of certain restaurants and their evaluation by the guests, (c) the role of AR/VR on the level of the marketing mix of the restaurants.

In order for restaurant managers to market the positive outcome of the augmented or virtual reality, they must first build the physical environment in such a way as to enable this (technological) achievement to be exploited.

Keywords: technology, tourism, augmented reality, virtual reality, physical evidence (physical environment/physical elements)

1. Introduction

The relationship between the internet and tourism is characterized by positive aspects such as the possibility of obtaining information, improving global accessibility and cooperation opportunities (Török, 2002).

At the same time, it is a fact that tourism uses innovations belonging to other areas. From this point of view, the use of mobile technology can be mentioned (searching for touristic objects, bookings) or even the use of beauty products in wellness tourism (Nagy).

New habits in the search of information have entered new dimensions due to the fast and complex development of smartphones (Hajnal, 2012). According to the researches of Ráthonyi (2016, p. 23) "the perceived usefulness of tourism mobile

services has a positive impact on the attitude of their users during their travel and on their intended future use during travel”.

Augmented reality and virtual reality as a further end product of technology development provide many new opportunities for units performing their activities in different areas of the national economy. The difference between the augmented reality and the virtual reality lies in the fact that while in the augmented reality space does not change, but enriches with new elements, virtual reality allows entering/staying (in) a given space (available at: <http://holoszoba.hu/mi-a-kulonbseg-a-kiterjesztett-valosag-es-a-virtualis-valosag-kozott/>).

Using smartphones has become an integral part of their everyday lives for most of the people. At the same time, outdoor services, such as restaurants, are becoming more and more popular, as the use of these services can also contribute to a new experience. Collecting new experiences has slowly become a daily need. Consequently, it has become a necessity to examine the triangle of smartphones, augmented/virtual reality and consumers. In our opinion, augmented/virtual reality in case of restaurants has to be considered primarily from the point of view of marketing mix, and this approach requires the examination of the physical environment as its starting point.

2. Literature Review

Augmented reality may appear as a component of tourist attractions. The augmented reality in this case means that the original state of a tourist attraction can be reconstructed and thus presented via a digital screen. However, in order that this reconstruction may be created the physical components of the particular tourist attraction is needed (Juhász, 2016).

According to Steuer (1993, p. 3) "The definition of virtual reality is based on concepts of 'presence' and 'telepresence' which refer to the sense of being in an environment, generated by natural or mediated means, respectively." Guttentag (2010, p. 637) points out during his researches that virtual reality in tourism can be applied to the following fields: (1) "planning and management", (2) "marketing", (3) "entertainment", (4) "education", (5) "accessibility", and (6) "heritage preservation". Virtual reality represent an added value in these fields of application.

Kandampully (2000, p. 16) states, that there are ventures in the field of tourism which "are unable to avoid the impact of technology and competition on the tourism industry as a whole". As Guttentag believes as well, the measure of acceptance of virtual reality (2010, p. 637) "will be determined by a tourist's attitudes toward authenticity and his or her motivations and constraints." However, at the same time, virtual holidays are not the equivalents or substitutes of real/actual holidays but may complement those (Sussmann and Vanhegan, 2000).

The presence of virtual reality in the field of tourism will gain more importance in the future, this will be mainly the case for hotels and airlines (Magál and Slivka, 2017). On the level of destination marketing organization, the 3D virtual world learning means an unlimited opportunity, regarding the search for tourist destinations by the potential tourists (Huang, Backman et al, 2016).

Virtual reality as goggles allow tourists to get an impression of their chosen destination, of what they may expect. Consequently, if the tourist browses/selects from the offer of a tourist agency which uses virtual reality (Thomas Cook), it has the advantage (for the potential tourist) to provide a comprehensive picture about

the chosen destination compared to a more traditional information provider (e.g. printed brochure). One of the advantages of this approach is that the tourist avoids of unpleasant surprises because virtual reality allows them to look around in the chosen hotel. The augmented reality can be used in the case of restaurants as well, because it makes possible to select those ones which have a gastronomic offer requested by the potential tourist (Berta, 2017).

Restaurant services have been gaining popularity recently, since day after day we can see that the media shows a lot of interest in gastronomy. However, to reach the added value of AR/VR in case of restaurants, it is necessary to analyze the factors potential customers consider important when choosing a restaurant.

Regarding restaurants, as one of the major representatives of hospitality, the following factors are equally important for the consumers:

(1) The product, namely the world of food and taste and their visuality: in case of quick-service restaurants taste, freshness, temperature and the whole service quality has a significant impact on brand loyalty (Reich, McCleary et al, 2005).

(2) The role of the price is not negligible regarding the evaluation of the quality of the gastronomic offer, as price may suggest the quality of the service due to the intangibility of the services. Price plays a significant role in the assessment of the perceived service (Kwun and Oh, 2004).

(3) The location of the restaurants should consist the basic of continuous researches and studies, because the significance of these marketing-mix elements is not negligible considering the choice of the quick-service restaurants (Nezakati, Abu et al, 2011).

(4) The quality of the service: the studies of Ryu and Han (2010a) point out that besides the environment the gastronomic offer and the quality of the service have a significant impact on consumer satisfaction, therefore, the quality of the whole service has a significant impact on brand loyalty as well (Reich, McCleary et al, 2005). Consequently, the role of the staff is more than significant, because their attitude influences the assessment of the particular restaurant and the process of brand loyalty.

(5) The quality of the physical evidence: the importance of this extended marketing-mix element is significant as it makes services tangible to a certain extent (Yoon and Hyoung, 2008). From to this point of view, according to Eiglier and Langeard physical evidence is presented as a communication channel (in Veres, 2005). However, the content and message of the communication becomes valid if it is in line with the consumer's experience, because the functional and social dimension of the physical environment play an important role regarding the experiences of the tourists using restaurant services (Ute and Bo, 2012).

In case of restaurants the impact of the environment components (dècor and artifacts, spatial layout, and ambient conditions) on the price experienced by the consumers is significant, not to mention its influence on customer loyalty (Han and Ryu, 2009). In order to increase the level of client satisfaction the quick-casual restaurants have to emphasize the following: attractive interior design, comfortable seating, high quality furniture, pleasant music, appropriate lightning and colour combination. The consumers need a gastronomic experience which is completely different from home meal experiences, and the atmosphere has a more pronounced role than the food itself (Ryu and Han, 2010a). In case of the Upscale Restaurants according to the researches of Ryu and Han (2010b, p. 6) "the dimensions of the physical environment directly affecting disconfirmation were

facility aesthetics, lighting, layout, and social factors". The "cleanliness issues", "mechanical problems" and "facility design issues" are among those factors which have a significant influence on restaurant assessment (Hoffman, Kelley et al, 2003, p. 322).

3. Research objectives and methodology

Physical reality is needed to make possible for augmented/virtual reality to appear as an added value in case of restaurants, as without it real restaurant service does not exist. Physical reality is primarily provided by the physical environment, and physical elements.

The objectives of this study/article are the following:

(a) identification of physical forms (physical environments) of certain restaurants and their evaluation by the guests,

(b) the analysis of the role of AR/VR on the level of the marketing mix of the restaurants. Because restaurants are in the service sector, the same marketing mix elements will be analyzed which are listed in the literature (product, price, place, promotion - classical elements, physical evidence, process, employees, additional services, consumer – extended elements) (Vorzsák, et al., 2005, p. 57, 104).

Searching for the key concepts interesting/special/dazzling restaurants by Google's web search engine has been the starting point of our research. Those restaurants were included in the analyses, which were identified most times by the articles provided by the Google web search system. Since the aquarium restaurants were mentioned in most of the articles, therefore 5 of the 9 analyzed restaurants are such.

The data summarized in Table 1 and Table 2 are based on the secondary data found on Tripadvisor search engine, or (where needed), the website of the particular restaurants. Based on the data presented here, restaurants were categorized according to the following variables:

- physical evidence (physical environment/physical elements), – the source of data presented in Table 1 consisted of photos of the restaurants,
- gastronomic offer - secondary data,
- target segment - secondary data,
- the evaluation of the particular restaurant - secondary data.

The customer's evaluation of the restaurants included in the analysis is based on the opinion of the total clients visiting the restaurant. During the evaluation, consumers could choose from the following alternatives: „excellent” (5), „very good” (4), „average” (3), „poor” (2), „terrible” (1). In this case, the customers evaluated the restaurant as a whole. At the same time, in case of individual restaurants included in the analysis, the physical environment/elements ("atmosphere"), food quality ("service") and "value" of the restaurant were evaluated separately. The evaluations include the opinion of all guests who used the services of the restaurants included in the analysis until 27. 09. 2018.

4. Results and discussion

Nowadays, it is increasingly common for consumers to look for things that are not ordinary. They love what is different, unique or outstanding. The restaurants can fulfil this requirement with the help of physical evidence, but at the same time

they can differentiate themselves from their competitors, because the appearance of the restaurants can be very diverse within the same category of a restaurant.

(a) The form of appearance of the physical environment:

(1) Restaurants built on trees - Costa Rica: Tree House Restaurant; Thailand (Koh Kood): Soneva Kiri.

(2) Underwater restaurants - Dubai: Al Mahar; Nashville: Aquarium Restaurant; Maldives: Sea Restaurant; South-Africa (Durban): Cargo Hold Restaurant; Indian Ocean (near Nyama): Subsix Restaurant.

(3) Restaurants built in caves - Adriatic Sea (Italy): Grotta Palazzese Ristorante.

(4) Restaurants in the air - Athens: Dinner is the Sky Restaurant.

The table below (Table 1) presents the restaurants categorized above according to those factors which determine the content of the restaurant services.

Table 1

Factors which determine the content of the restaurant services

Restaurant	Factors which determine the particular restaurant
Tree House	Physical evidence: the restaurant is built around a huge tree. The tree appears as an interior design element. The 'naturalness' characterizes the whole appearance of the restaurant. Gastronomic offer: American, Central American, Costa Rican, Vegetarian Friendly, Vegan Options, Gluten Free Options. Meals: Lunch, Dinner, Brunch, Late Night. Target segment: friendly groups, who wish to learn about the local gastronomic offer, who are looking for unique dinners, who like romantic dinners, families with children, children, and those who are looking for a scenic view. Many people can take advantage of the restaurant's services at the same time.
Soneva Kiri	Physical evidence: a boat-like construction, which is lifted in 5-meter-height. The tree is not present in its whole intensity as an interior design element. The restaurant's physical appearance is characterized by 'naturalness' and clean lines. Warm colours dominate the interior design. Gastronomic offer: the basic materials are mostly locally produced – in organic gardens. Target segment: those who love nature and healthy lifestyle. The number of guests at a time is significantly limited.
Al Mahar	Physical evidence: aquarium – the restaurant of the Burj Al Arab hotel. The interior design is determined by different shades of blue, gold and red. Gastronomic offer: Seafood. Meals: Lunch, Dinner, Patio Timings. Target segment: those who love the combination of luxury and unique environment. There is a dress code for the guests. There is a separate place designed for families. Children under 10 are welcome during lunch time only. Many people can take advantage of the restaurant's services at the same time.
Aquarium	Physical evidence: aquarium. Blue, gray and brown colors dominate the interior environment. The mythology is an integral part of mood creation with the 'presence' of sirens. Gastronomic offer: American, Seafood, Vegetarian Friendly, Vegan Options, Gluten Free Options.

	<p>Meals: Lunch, Dinner, Brunch, Late Night.</p> <p>Target segment: children, families with children, groups, participants of special events or fans of the scenic view. Many people can take advantage of the restaurant's services at the same time.</p>
Sea	<p>Physical evidence: aquarium – situated in the Anantara Kihavah Villas. The interior design of the restaurant is characterized by clearness and transparency/visibility.</p> <p>Gastronomic offer: Seafood, European, International, Fusion. Particular attention is paid to quality wines offer.</p> <p>Meals: Lunch, Dinner.</p> <p>Target segment: who want to spend some awesome quiet hours away from the noise of the outside world: families with children, lovers of special occasions, lovers of romance. The number of guests is limited (18 people).</p>
Cargo Hold	<p>Physical evidence: aquarium. The restaurant resembles an abandoned ship, the interior design is characterized by more 'faded' than vibrant color.</p> <p>Gastronomic offer: Seafood, European, Vegetarian Friendly, Gluten Free Options.</p> <p>Meal: Lunch, Dinner, Brunch, Late Night.</p> <p>Target segment: lovers of special occasions or fans of the scenic view, business people, children, families with children, groups, those curious of the local gastronomy.</p>
Subsix	<p>Physical evidence: aquarium (can be reached by boat). In its interior design it seeks differentiation regarding the ceiling, the design of the chairs.</p> <p>Gastronomic offer: Seafood, Vegetarian Friendly.</p> <p>Meal: Dinner.</p> <p>Target segment: who mainly love romance.</p> <p>Many people can take advantage of the restaurant's services at the same time.</p>
Grotta Palazzese	<p>Physical evidence: stalactite cave. A cozy atmosphere is typical of the restaurant.</p> <p>Gastronomic offer: Mediterranean, Italian, Seafood, Vegetarian Friendly, Gluten Free Options.</p> <p>Meal: Lunch, Dinner, Late Night.</p> <p>Target segment: lovers of the scenic view, who are curious of the local gastronomy and particular food of the local cuisine, as well as who seek unique occasions, and who are lovers of romance.</p> <p>Many people can take advantage of the restaurant's services at the same time, however, opening hours are seasonal.</p>
Dinner in the Sky	<p>Physical evidence: geometric shape. The physical environment is more important than the physical evidence.</p> <p>Gastronomic offer: Mediterranean, European, Greek, Vegetarian Friendly, Gluten Free Options.</p> <p>Meal: Dinner.</p> <p>Target segment: lovers of the scenic view, fans of dinners for groups, lovers of romance, those who are curious of local cuisine, or for whom special occasions play an important role in their lives.</p> <p>Number of guests is limited (22 people), as well as the availability and the opening hours.</p>

Source: Bibliography ***

The physical display of restaurants is quite varied. Although there are several restaurants which can be grouped into the same category, they still have elements that allow differentiation compared to competitors. The table below (Table 2) presents the evaluation of the guests.

Table 2**Evaluation of restaurants by the consumer**

Restaurant	Overview	Food	Service	Atmosphere	Value
Tree House	4	4	4	4,5	3,5
Soneva Kiri	5	*	*	*	*
Al Mahar	4,5	*	*	*	*
Aquarium	4	4	4	4,5	3,5
Sea	5	5	5	*	4,5
Cargo Hold	4	4	4	4,5	3,5
Subsix	4,5	*	4,5	*	4
Grotta Palazzese	3,5	3,5	3,5	4,5	3
Dinner in the Sky	5	4,5	5	5	4,5

* - there are no data regarding the given variables

Source: *Bibliography* ***

Based on the data in the Table (2), regarding consumer evaluation the physical environment/elements received the highest score as part of extended marketing mix. Interestingly, the gastronomic offer as a classical element only ranked as third. Consequently, the intention of restaurants to provide an unusual experience to their guests through its built environment became a good strategy as it had a positive impact on the restaurant's evaluation.

(b) The added value of the augmented/virtual reality in case of restaurants (as well) refers to the comprehensive view that potential consumers get of the restaurant. Marketing-mix plays an important role in this view.

(1) The role of AR/VR regarding classical marketing mix elements:

- It can provide a "diverse" visualization of the gastronomic offer (product).
- The augmented/virtual reality has no significance in terms of price.
- The role of AV/VR in terms of placement is not negligible - its location within the tourist destination.
- At the same time, we must not ignore the fact that AV/VR also may appear as a communication channel.

(2) The role of AR/VR regarding the extended marketing mix elements:

- Physical evidence also becomes visible through the augmented/virtual reality, although the atmosphere that a given restaurant can provide may become "real", "tangible" by the presence of the consumer/guest. One should not ignore the fact that in our opinion the atmosphere of a restaurant is created not only by the physical environment or by physical elements, but also by the attitude of the staff, and by the behavior of other consumers/guests in the restaurant.

- The role of people/staff in restaurants is significant because guests perceive the restaurant via them, therefore their behavior becomes an integral part of the whole offer. The interaction has a significant role in the quality of the service being created. The augmented/virtual reality allows the visualization of the staff, but the "real" restaurant services require such an interactivity level which cannot be accomplished (so far) neither by AR or VR.

- Additional services can be visualized by the augmented/virtual reality such as hotel lounge music or the existence of a wine cellar.
- Presentation of processes is possible, but in this case human factor plays a significant role again, and in order to generate the output (the useful service) the consumer must also be present.
- Consumers are also eager to take advantage of services which provide something more intellectually. Good examples are the aquarium restaurants. From this point of view, the AR/VR can be very effective in attracting the interest of potential consumers.

5. Conclusions

Restaurants are one of the major representatives of hospitality. Hospitality is an indispensable element of the tourism offer. The relationship between restaurants and consumer behavior is not an easy task, and at the same time it hides many challenges. It is also true that consumer behavior is not shaped by a single peculiar factor, but is typically shaped by the changes in technology, and it is affected by the new opportunities offered by technology to the tourism market players.

(a) By approaching the consumer/tourist perspective, the range of changes in the technological environment, the augmented/virtual reality reduces the risks and increases personalized opportunities. At the same time, as we mentioned before, the possibility of surprises can not be completely excluded, since the behavior of the employees, the behavior of the guests of the given restaurant or the mood of the given consumer can be significantly affected. Furthermore, a particular group of consumers cannot be ignored either, whose risk assumption is an integral part of redesigning, welcoming spontaneity. The total of these adds something for them that makes a trip memorable.

(b) From the point of view of restaurants, the augmented reality/virtual reality primarily represents a new communication channel, but does not replace the interaction between the consumer and staff working in the front line. However, interaction plays an important role in services such as restaurants. Instances of human behavior are so unique and unrepeatable that they cannot be substituted by anything else. Virtual reality can make restaurants more appealing, while the use of augmented reality can make them more "original". As already mentioned in the analyses the role of the physical environment/physical elements is undeniable regarding the 'success' of restaurants. The assessment of restaurant services is influenced by the atmosphere of the restaurant, by what it represents. There are varied and more and more daring ideas about the physical visualization of restaurants, and restaurants that present a different atmosphere than the usual are getting more and more popular. In order that the augmented/virtual reality may truly appear as a valuable communication channel in case of restaurants, there is a need for physical reality. However, in order that physical reality gain validity and real motivational factor for consumers it has to become unique, fascinating, somewhat different.

The restriction of this paper is that it did not discuss all the facets of the physical environment of restaurants. At the same time, we believe that technology and restaurants form a pair that will be worthwhile to be researched in the future, as it is challenging for management to what extent and how to apply the various achievements of technology in the future.

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