BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES
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PHD THESIS

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Ph.D. thesis title:
ANTECEDENTS OF AUGMENTED REALITY FILTERS ADOPTION ON ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK USERS

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ABSTRACT

The subject of the doctoral thesis "Antecedents of Augmented Reality Filters Adoption among Online Social Network Users" is extremely relevant and timely in the context of the rapid evolution of digital technologies and the transformation of how tourism organizations interact with consumers. Given the increasing popularity of smartphones and the growing consumption of digital content, studying the impact of augmented reality (AR) on consumer behavior is essential for understanding and optimizing tourism marketing strategies. In an era where technology plays a central role in marketing strategies and consumer experiences, AR proves to be an innovative tool that surpasses traditional promotion methods. The thesis proposes a detailed exploration of the use of augmented reality as a marketing tool for promoting tourist destinations. The in-depth analysis of how augmented reality transforms consumer interaction with tourism products on social networks is innovative, considering the significant impact of technology on destination visitation decisions.

Additionally, the thesis develops a proprietary theoretical model based on existing theories about the adoption of new technologies, such as the extended TAM model with perceived enjoyment (a model used for dual systems research), while also incorporating new concepts unexplored in existing literature, such as content quality, system quality, and interaction quality, to analyze the impact of AR filters on visitation intention. The application of this methodology is an original contribution to the field, providing a solid foundation for evaluating user and consumer behavior towards tourist destinations. The thesis employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the impact of augmented reality filters.

The thesis addresses an expanding field and highlights ways in which AR can transform and improve the promotion of tourist destinations, offering valuable contributions to both researchers and practitioners in the field.

The work is structured into eleven chapters, as follows:

Chapter I. Augmented reality - technology at the border between real and virtual: This chapter defines the technology, describes the development stages, and compares augmented reality and virtual reality technologies.

Chapter II. Augmented reality as a marketing tool: A review of the specialized literature, highlighting the areas where augmented reality has been applied and the results obtained.

Chapter III. Integrating augmented reality technology into social networks: An analysis of social platforms that use augmented reality, the types of augmented reality filters, and user motivations.

Chapter IV. Identifying hedonic and utilitarian motivations for using augmented reality filters (exploratory research): This chapter presents exploratory research conducted during the doctoral studies, aiming to identify the hedonic and utilitarian motivations of users of augmented reality filters.

Chapter V. Identifying adoption barriers to augmented reality filters (exploratory research): This chapter presents another exploratory research conducted during the doctoral studies, investigating the reasons why social media users choose not to adopt the behavior of using social filters.

Chapter VI. Using augmented reality filters on social networks to promote tourist destinations: Discusses examples of tourist destinations that use AR, and the impact of this technology on visitation decisions.

Chapter VII. Constructing the theoretical model of augmented reality filter adoption among social network users: This chapter discusses the main models, theories, and concepts used to research the adoption behaviors of new technologies and study consumer/user behavior. At the end of the chapter, based on studies identified in the specialized literature, a theoretical model is constructed that forms the basis of the doctoral thesis.

Chapter VIII. Pre-testing the extended TAM model: Pre-testing the extended TAM model for the adoption of augmented reality filters. Since augmented reality filters are dual-use technologies (users use them for both hedonic and utilitarian reasons), perceived enjoyment is added to the standard TAM constructs, namely perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness.

Chapter IX. The impact of augmented reality filters on the intention to visit a destination: This chapter includes a study conducted using mixed research methods (questionnaire and focus group) and aims to identify the intention to visit tourist destinations before and after testing augmented reality filters for social networks, and record the change in this intention, whether positive, negative, or neutral. Focus group discussions provided context for these changes and led to the identification of criteria for evaluating augmented reality filters from the users' perspective.

Chapter X. The impact of portal-type filters on the intention to visit a destination and the adoption behavior of augmented reality: This chapter aims to test the proposed theoretical model. It details the hypotheses, research model, and data analysis methods, as well as the results obtained. All the model's hypotheses were validated, making the model reliable for analyzing the impact of augmented reality filters on the intention to use the filters and the intention to visit a tourist destination.

Chapter XI. Conclusions: The conclusions of the research presented in the doctoral thesis are highlighted. The conclusions suggest that augmented reality filters represent a dual-use technology, and their use is based on both hedonic and utilitarian motivations. Additionally, the filters have significant potential as a marketing tool, capable of playing roles in each stage of the purchase process.

Keywords: augmented reality, tourism marketing, technology adoption, consumer behaviour, social media

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