Article

Impact of Experiential Value of Augmented Reality: The Context of Heritage Tourism

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Abstract: The use of information boards tends to be regulated in many heritage sites to preserve these cultural heritage places. Although augmented reality (AR) has become a major approach for reducing negative experiences due to restrictions, limited studies have been conducted to understand the effect of AR experiential value on destination-related behavior. Accordingly, the current work aims to investigate how the multidimensional components of AR experiential value (i.e., visual appeal, entertainment, enjoyment, and escapism) affect supportive behavior through AR satisfaction and experiential authenticity. Partial least squares structural equation modeling is performed to test the relationships. Results show that visual appeal, entertainment, and enjoyment exert significant positive effects on destination authenticity and AR satisfaction, ultimately increasing the supportive behavior of an individual. By contrast, escapism does not exhibit a substantial influence on experiential authenticity and AR satisfaction. These findings help practitioners and researchers create competitive advantages for destinations and improve tourist–destination relationships.

Keywords: augmented reality (AR); experiential value; AR satisfaction; experiential authenticity; willingness to support the conservation of heritage destinations; heritage tourism

1. Introduction

Recently, information and communication technology has been extensively introduced into the cultural heritage tourism industry to provide in-depth knowledge and immersive experience to visitors of heritage sites [1,2]. Heritage sites have historical, cultural, and architectural components that attract visitors; however, their incomplete physical structure or the absence of indigenous people frequently requires considerable information and knowledge to appreciate cultural heritage fully [3,4]. Moreover, in the case of tourist attractions linked to cultural heritage or religious relics, regulations on the maintenance of these sites frequently restrict the use of information boards and signs; this practice can negatively affect heritage sites [5]. Under the aforementioned conditions, augmented reality (AR) has been proposed as an ideal solution for limiting the negative effects of tourism on cultural heritage [1]. AR provides a multidimensional environment that overlays digital contents on a real environment [6], allowing visitors to see and receive information while preserving the original state of the site. For example, in the initial stage of visualization development of AR, people used a method in which additional information layer into the physical landscape displayed on portable devices such as smartphones and tablets [7]. More recently, the latest visualization technology that combines AR with VR headsets or smart glasses has been introduced [7]. This technology tracks the movement of the user’s head and displays permanent holographic objects without space constraints; thus, users can more openly recognize geospatial and identify objects. In this regard, AR helps increase the intellectual awareness of historical events or architecture [8,9] Therefore,
cultural heritage practitioners are currently investing in AR to overcome the physical environmental limitations of heritage sites and enhance visitors’ experience [10,11].

As the availability of AR in cultural heritage tourism increases, the question of how visitors’ AR experience affects their behavioral and psychological processes is also eliciting academic attention. However, with the exception of a small number of studies, such as those on AR attitude, satisfaction, and loyalty through visitor’s AR experience [11–14], research on how visitors’ heritage tourism AR experience transforms their perception into destination-related behavior remains an area of unexplored investigation.

Experiential value refers to interactions that involved the direct usage or distant appreciation of products and services [15]. In the tourism literature, researchers have identified an important role of experiential value in the decision-making process of tourists in various contexts, such as museums [16], resorts [17], restaurants/food tourism [18], and online social connection [19]. Similarly, previous studies have recognized the importance of AR experiential value in heritage tourism [13,14]. A true relationship exists between a tourism destination and AR if the integration of AR into a site exerts a holistic effect on travelers [14]. In this regard, the experiential value of AR is considered important because it relies on the value obtained from the interaction between an individual using AR technology and a dynamic experience element [16]. Therefore, the experiential value of AR in heritage tourism can be a salient antecedent to visitors’ perception of new technologies and destinations and their future intentions and behavior [13,14,20].

Mathwick et al. [15] proposed the typology of experiential value that comprises aesthetics, playfulness, return on investment (ROI), and service excellence. In the context of tourism, however, scholars have emphasized that the creation of visitors’ experiential value is related to the intrinsic values of aesthetic and playfulness [14,16]. Therefore, the current study aims to explore how the intrinsic aspects of AR experiential value affect visitors’ technical satisfaction, the experiential authenticity of a destination, and willingness to support the conservation of heritage destinations. The results of this study are expected to provide heritage tourism practitioners with insights into effectively designing AR services to enhance visitors’ experience and promote advocacy for site preservation.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Experiential Value

Empirical researchers have conventionally recognized customer value as a trade-off between quality and price [21–23], disregarding its hedonistic and experiential functions [24]. Holbrook and Hirschman [25] emphasized the experiential aspects of consumption, arguing that consumption should be regarded in a broader sense that encompasses customer experiences of fantasies, feelings, and fun. This experiential view has increased the interest of researchers in various customer-related fields and driven them to adopt similar approaches because customer values are not only based on rational choices but are also multidimensional [26].

Experiential value is defined as customer’s perception of a product or service through direct use or indirect observation [15]. Experiential value is focused on the value that customers retained from experience; thus, experiential value perception is based on direct/indirect interactions with products and services in contrast with customer value. Therefore, these interactions provide the foundation for the relativistic preferences of the involved individuals [27].

Customers can gain experiential value from different types of experiences [28]; this experiential value can be classified into extrinsic and intrinsic values [15,29]. Extrinsic value is closely related to the utility of an exchange and task completion, while intrinsic value is derived from the fun and playfulness of completing a process or task [30]. This initial concept is the so-called “extrinsic–intrinsic” experiential value. In accordance with Holbrook [31], the extrinsic–intrinsic value of an experience can be broadened by including an activity (active–reactive) dimension. An active value represents the close collaboration of a customer with product or service providers; while a reactive value is the
perception, appreciation, understanding, or reaction of a customer to a consumed item or experience [31].

On the basis of Holbrook [31], Mathwick et al. [15] further proposed a typology of experiential values that encompasses the values of playfulness (intrinsic/active), aesthetics (intrinsic/reactive), service excellence (extrinsic/reactive), and customer ROI (CROI) (extrinsic/active). In addition, researchers have argued that the three experiential values, except for service excellence, have subdimensions. First, aesthetics has two subdimensions: (1) visual appeal and (2) entertainment. Visual appeal is perceived through the basic senses, such as sight, hearing, taste, and touch; it provides satisfaction to a customer; meanwhile, entertainment reflects customers’ appreciation for the dramatic or spectacular aspects of service performance [15,32]. Second, playfulness has two subdimensions: (1) enjoyment and (2) escapism. The playfulness value reflects the emotional worth and potential enjoyment of an experience. That is, a playful exchange behavior is reproduced in the intrinsic enjoyment generated from engaging in activities that are absorbing to the point of using them as an escape from the demands of real life [33,34]. Lastly, CROI consists of two subdimensions: (1) efficiency and (2) economic value. In general, CROI describes what a consumer receives in return in the exchange process [32]. Therefore, consumers may experience this return in terms of economic benefits, namely, the recognition of appropriate quality and utility derived from the efficiency of an exchange encounter [31,35,36].

In the context of heritage tourism, the core composition that determines the success or failure of the entire tourism experience is perceived experiential value [14,37]. McCole [38] noted the importance of using appropriate distribution channels to enable retailers to build relationships with customers and provide experiential value. In this regard, AR in heritage tourism sites may also be an effective channel for cultural heritage marketers to provide experiential value to visitors. Pallud and Monod [39] explained that cultural heritage sites are gradually depending on the integration of innovative technologies, such as AR, to guarantee a reenergized and valuable visitor experience. However, AR research in the field of tourism has only begun [14]. Although some researchers have investigated AR in the area of heritage tourism [14,20,40,41], the evaluation of visitors’ experiential value with technologies has received minimal attention. Chung et al. [14] applied an experience economy strategy to the heritage tourism context and determined that the aesthetic experience of AR influences visitors’ AR satisfaction. Pine et al. [42] suggested the underpinning concept of the experience economy, which can be perceived as experiential value; thus, heritage tourism experience with AR may be strongly associated with the use of an experience [43]. Additionally, with regard to the virtual experience, Verhagen et al. [44] found that the experiential value of users’ entertainment and escapism has a strong and direct positive effect on satisfaction. Yuan and Wu [28] examined the links among experiential marketing, experiential value, and customer satisfaction in the F&B context. They identified enjoyment as a key component of emotional experiential value, which turned out to be a positive factor influencing customer satisfaction. Therefore, similar to the subdimensions of experiential value (i.e., aesthetics, entertainment, and escapism), the dimensions of the experience economy may enhance visitors’ AR experiential value and improve their AR satisfaction. In addition, visitors’ experiential authenticity is perceived as the driving force of experiential value [45,46]; thus, visitors’ AR experiential value can be expected to be related to the experiential authenticity of a heritage destination. However, to the best of the authors’ knowledge, limited research has explored the effects of visitors’ AR experiential value on satisfaction with AR and the experiential authenticity of a destination. For example, Jiménez-Barreto et al. [47] suggested that destination brand experience, which combines various experiential value elements in a virtual environment, conveys sufficient authenticity of destination to users. In a similar fashion, Mura et al. [48] indirectly argued that, from a qualitative research perspective, experiential authenticity in tourism setting within virtual environment should be accompanied by physical, sensory, and emotional value of experience.
Hence, to improve the understanding of the effects of AR experiential value in the field of heritage tourism, the present research proposed the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** AR experiential value exerts a positive effect on the experiential authenticity of a heritage tourism destination.

**Hypothesis 1a (H1a).** Visual appeal exerts a positive effect on the experiential authenticity of a heritage tourism destination.

**Hypothesis 1b (H1b).** Entertainment exerts a positive effect on the experiential authenticity of a heritage tourism destination.

**Hypothesis 1c (H1c).** Enjoyment exerts a positive effect on the experiential authenticity of a heritage tourism destination.

**Hypothesis 1d (H1d).** Escapism exerts a positive effect on the experiential authenticity of a heritage tourism destination.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** AR experiential value exerts a positive effect on satisfaction with AR.

**Hypothesis 2a (H2a).** Visual appeal exerts a positive effect on satisfaction with AR.

**Hypothesis 2b (H2b).** Entertainment exerts a positive effect on satisfaction with AR.

**Hypothesis 2c (H2c).** Enjoyment exerts a positive effect on satisfaction with AR.

**Hypothesis 2d (H2d).** Escapism exerts a positive effect on satisfaction with AR.

### 2.2. Experiential Authenticity, AR Satisfaction, and Willingness to Support

The concept of authenticity is complex and ambiguous due to its diverse adoption in various contexts within a wide range of disciplines [49,50]. Authenticity was originally used in museum-related research to emphasize the nature of objective existence [51]; thereafter, it has been applied more broadly by tourism scholars as a more relatively interpreted and socially constructed concept [52–54]. In the tourism literature, a common understanding of authenticity is that it can be generated from toured objects or tourist experience [55,56]. Therefore, for rapidly disappearing destinations, such as heritage tourism sites, authenticity is relevant to understanding a destination’s goals and tourist experiences, which work collectively to create experiential authenticity [45]. Consequently, in the last chance tourism industry, tourists perform activities that are rapidly disappearing from the constraints of their daily lives in travel destinations. These tourists subjectively and genuinely evaluate their experiences on the basis of the degree to which they engage in activities other than their usual undertakings.

Experiential authenticity refers to the totality of tourist experience [57]. In particular, it is concerned with how tourist experiences or specific activities in cultural heritage destinations can activate the emotions of tourists [45]. Accordingly, in the heritage tourism industry, tourists who perform activities in heritage tourist sites subjectively evaluate their authentic experiences on the basis of the degree to which they are not subjected to the constraints of their daily routines and are engaged in activities other than their usual practices [45,50]. Cohen [52] and Zerva [46] suggested that experiential authenticity is primarily perceived as an individual’s experiential value and it influences a person’s decision-making process. See and Goh [58] further examined the effect of perceived authenticity on intention to visit a heritage tourism site, and they found that authenticity is a positive antecedent of behavioral intention. Similarly, Lee et al. [59] found that visitors’
perceived authenticity of a heritage tourism destination plays a significant role in predicting their future behavior.

AR satisfaction refers to the overall evaluation of using AR technology during travel activities (Chung et al., 2018). Previous research on the tourism literature has found that AR satisfaction is related to destination attitude [14] and behavioral intention [13,14]. In their study on AR use in Korean heritage tourism destinations, Chung et al. [14] determined that visitors’ satisfaction with using AR significantly affects behavioral intention toward a focal heritage site. With regard to behavioral intention, several studies have been conducted on visitors’ intention to preserve heritage sites by evaluating economic factors, such as willingness to pay [60,61]. Similarly, visitors who have obtained valuable experiences through AR can exhibit emotional responses, such as positive attitudes or satisfaction with a destination [62,63], which can be assumed to elicit their willingness to support the conservation of heritage sites [64].

In accordance with the preceding considerations, the following hypotheses are suggested:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** The experiential authenticity of heritage tourism destinations exerts a positive effect on willingness to support the conservation of such destinations.

**Hypothesis 3 (H4).** Satisfaction with AR exerts a positive effect on willingness to support the conservation of heritage tourism destinations.

Overall, to investigate the role of experiential value and the outcomes, we propose the research model shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Research model.](image-url)

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Measures

All constructs were measured using a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). To ensure the content validity of the constructs, all the constructs were adopted from previous studies. Experiential value was adopted from Chung et al. [13], He et al. [16], and Mathwick et al. [15]. Four dimensions of experiential value (i.e., visual appeal, entertainment, enjoyment, and escapism) were measured. The measurements for satisfaction were adopted from Chung et al. [14]. Experiential authenticity was adopted from Domínguez-Quintero et al. [65], Kolar and Zabkar [66]; and Wu et al. [45]. Willingness to support the conservation of heritage destinations was also adopted from previous studies [67].
3.2. Data Collection

Participants who experienced AR services during heritage tourism were randomly recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk. In order to ensure low bias in sampling, the authors used random sampling approach. Respondents can only participate in the survey once, and the survey took approximately 15 min to complete. The authors used several screening questions to select qualified respondents who actually experienced AR technology in heritage destinations (e.g., Did the heritage destination site provide AR service? Did you use AR service during the heritage tour?). Then, the survey asked the respondents to answer questions regarding tourists’ AR experiential value, AR satisfaction, experiential authenticity, and willingness to support the conservation of heritage destinations. The respondents were also asked to provide their sociodemographic information. After the survey was completed, each respondent was compensated for US$0.50. A total of 355 usable responses were collected. The detailed demographic information is provided in Table 1.

| Variable                        | Frequency (%) |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Gender                          |               |
| Male                            | 233 (65.6%)   |
| Female                          | 122 (34.4%)   |
| Age                             |               |
| 18–24                           | 8 (2.2%)      |
| 25–34                           | 226 (63.7%)   |
| 35–50                           | 87 (24.5%)    |
| 50+                             | 34 (9.6%)     |
| Income                          |               |
| Less than $24,999               | 47 (13.2%)    |
| $25,999 to $49,999              | 112 (31.5%)   |
| $50,000 to $74,999              | 133 (37.5%)   |
| $75,000 to $99,999              | 47 (13.2%)    |
| $100,000 or more                | 16 (4.5%)     |
| Education                       |               |
| Below or high school graduate   | 1 (0.3%)      |
| Some college/Technical or vocational school | 46 (13.0%) |
| Four year college               | 233 (65.6%)   |
| Post graduate degree            | 75 (21.1%)    |
| Marital status                  |               |
| Single                          | 40 (11.3%)    |
| Married                         | 306 (86.2%)   |
| Divorced/Separated              | 1 (0.3%)      |
| Living with a same sex partner  | 1 (0.3%)      |
| Living with opposite sex partner| 7 (2.0%)      |
| Widowed                         | 0 (0%)        |
| Ethnic                          |               |
| White/Caucasian                 | 140 (39.4%)   |
| Hispanic/Latino                 | 175 (49.3%)   |
| Asian                           | 7 (2.0%)      |
| Black/African-American          | 23 (6.5%)     |
| Other                           | 10 (2.8%)     |

3.3. Data Analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses. PLS-SEM was performed using SmartPLS 3.3 [68]. There are several advantages to using PLS-SEM estimation [69,70]. First, it allows the relaxation of normal distribution assumptions. Second, it is sufficient for limited sample sizes while retaining high prediction accuracy. Third, PLS-SEM is beneficial when the proposed model includes reflective and formative constructs. Hair et al., [71] also highlighted the goal of using PLS-SEM is to observe the casual relationship between variables. To achieve the study objectives, PLS-SEM was used to assess the casual relationship between experiential value and consumer behavior based on a literature review. The model comprised experiential value (i.e., visual appeal, entertainment, enjoyment, and escapism), AR satisfaction, experiential authenticity, and willingness to support. Internal consistency and convergent validity were confirmed by obtaining the composite reliability of all the latent variables to be over 0.70 [71]. All the average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50 [72], as indicated in Table 2. From Table 3, the authors found that none of the latent variable correlations exceeded the square root of AVE, and thus, discriminant validity was confirmed [73].
Table 2. Reliability and validity measures for first-order latent constructs.

| Construct                           | Mean | SD   | Loading | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | CR   | AVE  |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|---------|------------------|-------|------|------|
| **Visual appeal**                   |      |      |         |                  |       |      |      |
| The tourism environment of the (heritage site name) as seen through AR is quite attractive. | 5.752 | 0.784 | 0.863   | 0.612            |       |      |      |
| The view as seen through AR is in harmony with the environment in the (heritage site name) | 5.932 | 0.856 | 0.709   |                  |       |      |      |
| The (heritage site name) as seen through the AR service is quite visually appealing | 5.873 | 0.855 | 0.777   |                  |       |      |      |
| The (heritage site name) view as seen through the AR application provided a way for users to easily experience it | 5.848 | 0.872 | 0.832   |                  |       |      |      |
| **Entertainment**                   |      |      |         |                  | 0.657 | 0.657 | 0.814 | 0.593 |
| I think the heritage tourism experience with the AR is very entertaining. | 5.961 | 0.848 | 0.793   |                  |       |      |      |
| The enthusiasm of the heritage tourism with the AR is catching—it picks me up. | 5.766 | 0.881 | 0.747   |                  |       |      |      |
| The heritage tourism as seen through AR does not just displays heritage contents—it entertains me. | 5.823 | 0.925 | 0.769   |                  |       |      |      |
| **Enjoyment**                       |      |      |         |                  | 0.792 | 0.793 | 0.865 | 0.616 |
| I am thrilled about having such an experience with the AR. | 5.854 | 0.941 | 0.782   |                  |       |      |      |
| I really enjoy this heritage tourism experience with the AR. | 6.000 | 0.843 | 0.768   |                  |       |      |      |
| The heritage tourism experience with the AR is exciting. | 5.856 | 0.881 | 0.782   |                  |       |      |      |
| I am indulged in the activities with the AR. | 5.837 | 0.911 | 0.806   |                  |       |      |      |
| **Escapism**                        |      |      |         |                  | 0.819 | 0.829 | 0.893 | 0.735 |
| Having such heritage tourism experience with the AR gestures me away from the vexations and pressure of real life | 5.758 | 1.079 | 0.889   |                  |       |      |      |
| Having such heritage tourism experience with the AR makes me feel like I am in another world. | 5.761 | 0.929 | 0.801   |                  |       |      |      |
| I get so involved when I have the heritage tourism experience with the AR that I forget everything else. | 5.825 | 1.042 | 0.879   |                  |       |      |      |
| **Authenticity**                    |      |      |         |                  | 0.759 | 0.76   | 0.847 | 0.58  |
| During the visit to (heritage site name), I felt related to the history of (heritage site name). | 5.744 | 0.852 | 0.789   |                  |       |      |      |
| I liked the way this (heritage site name) was designed. | 5.997 | 0.837 | 0.767   |                  |       |      |      |
| The overall sight and impression of (heritage site name) inspired me. | 5.938 | 0.873 | 0.73     |                  |       |      |      |
| I enjoyed the unique experience of (heritage site name). | 5.992 | 0.785 | 0.76     |                  |       |      |      |
| **Satisfaction**                    |      |      |         |                  | 0.845 | 0.847 | 0.896 | 0.682 |
| I am satisfied with the quality of information provided by the AR. | 6.039 | 0.8   | 0.844   |                  |       |      |      |
| I am satisfied with the visual interface design (such as graphic) of the AR. | 5.997 | 0.785 | 0.81     |                  |       |      |      |
| The AR service makes my tourist experience more interesting. | 5.941 | 0.842 | 0.815   |                  |       |      |      |
| I like using the AR service as part of the (heritage site name) visit. | 6.07  | 0.768 | 0.833   |                  |       |      |      |
| **Will**                            |      |      |         |                  | 0.77  | 0.77  | 0.867 | 0.685 |
Table 2. Cont.

| I will support the conservation of (heritage site name) | Mean | SD   | Loading | Cronbach’s Alpha | rho_A | CR | AVE |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------|------|---------|------------------|-------|----|-----|
| The conservation/sustainable development of (heritage site name) is the right choice for cultural heritage tourism | 5.924 | 0.803 | 0.865 |
| The future of (heritage site name) should be conserved in an appropriate way. | 6.054 | 0.836 | 0.793 |

Table 3. Discriminant validity of the first-order construct using the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

|                    | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Visual appeal (1)  | 0.782| 0.770|      |      |      |      |      |
| Entertainment (2)  | 0.677| 0.770| 0.785|      |      |      |      |
| Enjoyment (3)      | 0.717| 0.666| 0.785| 0.857|      |      |      |
| Escapism (4)       | 0.523| 0.599| 0.554| 0.504| 0.762|      |      |
| Authenticity (5)   | 0.742| 0.644| 0.647| 0.651| 0.51 | 0.627| 0.826|
| Satisfaction (6)   | 0.632| 0.635| 0.651| 0.51 | 0.627| 0.645| 0.546|
| Willingness to support (7) | 0.586| 0.539| 0.531| 0.398| 0.645| 0.546| 0.828|

4. Results

The structural coefficients for each path were tested by bootstrapping 5000 subsamples. The results are provided in Figure 2. The path coefficients showed that visual appeal exerted significant positive direct effects on authenticity ($\beta = 0.483, t = 7.382$) and AR satisfaction ($\beta = 0.215, t = 3.670$), supporting H1a and H2a. Entertainment also exhibited significant positive direct effects on authenticity ($\beta = 0.184, t = 3.237$) and AR satisfaction ($\beta = 0.246, t = 4.224$). Hence, H1b and H2b were supported. H1c and H2c were also supported because enjoyment significantly and positively influenced authenticity ($\beta = 0.142, t = 1.967$) and AR satisfaction ($\beta = 0.280, t = 4.597$). By contrast, H1d and H2d were not supported because escapism did not present any significant relationships with authenticity ($\beta = 0.059, t = 1.101$) and AR satisfaction ($\beta = 0.096, t = 1.797$). As proposed by H3, authenticity positively influenced willingness to support the conservation of heritage destinations ($\beta = 0.507, t = 9.464$), and thus, H3 was accepted. Lastly, AR satisfaction also exerted a significant positive effect on willingness to support the conservation of heritage destinations ($\beta = 0.225, t = 3.783$), supporting H4.
5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The current research has several theoretical implications given that previous studies related to the use of advanced technologies, such as AR, in cultural heritage sites, have presented meaningful results that are not sufficiently understood. Although previous studies have investigated AR experiential value in the heritage tourism sector, most of these studies have only applied limited variables of experiential value [13,14]. The present work lays the foundation for an improved understanding of visitors’ technical experiences by attempting to measure all the intrinsic variables of AR experiential value. Through the results, researchers have demonstrated that intrinsic experiential value, represented by aesthetics and enjoyment, is an important factor in satisfaction with AR and the experiential authenticity of a destination. Given that heritage destinations are increasingly using AR technology to enhance visitors’ experiences, we confirm that increasing AR experiential value is significantly correlated with visitor’s AR satisfaction and the experiential authenticity of a destination. In particular, by empirically confirming that there is a meaningful relationship between experiential value and authenticity, it helped to expand the meaning of indirect and qualitative results asserted by previous studies. In other words, it can be seen that the higher the visual appeal of the destination experienced through AR, the higher the possibility of experiencing the actual destination experience more authentically, and the more entertaining and enjoyable the AR, the more visitors perceive the destination as an authentic place of experience.

In addition, the current research expands the study of He et al. [16], which argued that experiential value directly influences willingness to pay more, suggesting the possible mediating roles of AR satisfaction and the experiential authenticity of a destination in the relationship between experiential value and visitors’ behavioral intention.

We also demonstrate that willingness to support the conservation of heritage tourism can be an important dependent variable for a visitor’s post-visit activity. In contrast with previous cultural heritage tourism studies that focused on intention to visit or indirect support behavior, such as willingness to pay more or donate [14,62,74], the current study’s variable, namely, willingness to support the conservation of cultural heritage, suggested an additional aspect of tourist’s post-behavioral intention. In this research, AR satisfaction and experiential authenticity exert positive effects on willingness to support the conservation of cultural heritage. Such results imply that increasing satisfaction with AR experience and having an authentic experience through AR are necessary to increase visitors’ willingness to support the conservation of cultural heritage.

5.2. Practical Implications

With regard to practical implications, practitioners who design and provide AR services in heritage destinations must understand the concept of AR experiential value in heritage tourism. Although many cultural heritage destinations, such as museums and urban heritage destinations, have adopted high-tech services, no specific approach for improving visitors’ technical satisfaction and behavioral intention toward destinations is yet available. Current research results suggest that service providers can improve AR satisfaction and the experiential authenticity of a destination by improving multidimensional experiential values, such as visual appeal, entertainment, and enjoyment. Chung et al. [13] asserted that a design should be developed such that the visual appeal of AR matches well with tourism destinations. Consequently, AR service developers of heritage tourism destinations must first closely capture the originality and differentiation of their destinations and attempt to reproduce these through AR by identifying fascinating elements that can enhance the experiential value of a place. As Holbrook [31] explained, colors, graphic layout, and quality must be effectively combined to create a high level of visual appeal in a cultural heritage experience environment through AR. Moreover, the use of AR service should be an activity that can attract the attention of visitors, i.e., a “caching experience,”
such that entertainment effects may occur. Similarly, the use of AR in heritage tourism destinations should be an intrinsically enjoyable experience.

In addition, practitioners should understand that AR satisfaction and the experiential authenticity of a destination play an important role in enhancing visitor’s willingness to support the conservation of heritage tourism. In the heritage tourism industry, increasing economic benefits and the preservation value of destination development while ensuring sustainability is a critical issue [75,76]. Tourism provides a positive contribution to the conservation and development of heritage; thus, the information of a heritage site experienced by visitors can elicit their responsibility and support for conservation [64], and AR is a useful tool for enhancing visitor experience [14]. Therefore, by providing valuable information through AR, heritage tourism practitioners can produce satisfaction and experiential authenticity among visitors who are using AR, likely increasing their willingness to support the conservation of heritage tourism. In conclusion, to reinforce visitors’ satisfaction with AR and experiential authenticity, cultural heritage marketers and system developers should consider that AR contents must be faithfully configured and placed in an appropriate site. Moreover, periodic system updates are essential.

6. Conclusions and Limitations

The use of AR technology in heritage tourism has been acknowledged as an innovative undertaking because it improves the quality of visitor’s tourism experience and helps practitioners create competitive advantages for destinations and improve tourist–destination relationships. Thus, the ultimate goal of AR development is to maintain and preserve a destination by providing enhanced experiences at cultural heritage sites. Previous studies have argued that improved experiences arise from experiential values. However, studies on the association between AR experiential value and visitors’ perception toward a cultural tourism destination are few [14]. Accordingly, the present study aims to enhance the understanding of the effects of AR experiential value on AR satisfaction, the experiential authenticity of a destination, and willingness to support the conservation of heritage destinations. A conceptual model was proposed on the basis of the intrinsic variables of the hierarchical model of experiential value proposed by Mathwick et al. [15]. In accordance with the results of the study, the intrinsic variables of experiential value, including visual appeal, entertainment, and enjoyment, were determined to positively affect AR satisfaction and the experiential authenticity of a destination. The results also indicated that satisfaction with AR and experiential authenticity are important predictors of the willingness of tourists to support the conservation of heritage destinations. The result of present study contributes to the existing heritage tourism and experiential value literature by examining the theoretically reliable and valid measurement variables. The variables of experiential value assessed in this study, which emphasized the importance role of intrinsic value of AR experience plays among the modern heritage tourists in the era of technology. The current study also helps the practitioners in terms of understanding the value of tourists created through AR experience in heritage tourism destination and how to establish favorable experiential values in the process.

Although the current study provides important theoretical and practical implications, it still exhibits limitations. First, the study measured the effect of experiential value on satisfaction, authenticity, and willingness to support. Personal characteristics such as different degree of interest towards cultural heritage sites or environmental concerns could play a key role in this proposed model. Thus, in order to broaden understanding of heritage tourists’ attitude and behavior, it may be of interest to test the moderating role of personal interest. Second, this study was conducted by organizing the experiential value into four subdimensions of two intrinsic values in accordance with the recommendations of previous studies. However, given that experiential values are formed in a multidimensional structure of intrinsic–extrinsic and active–reactive values, as shown in Figure 1, future researchers can consider this factor and conduct research in an integrated manner. Lastly, this study was the first to measure willingness to support the conservation of heritage
tourism sites from the perspective of visitors by referring to research related to tourism destination development. To increase understanding, future researchers should be able to capture the actual behavior of tourists in various heritage tourism environments. To achieve this goal, researchers can conduct field studies to investigate whether visitors actually support cultural heritage sites.

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