



SHOPPING EXPERIENCE TRANSFORMATION: THE ROLE OF AUGMENTED REALITY IN ENHANCING CONSUMERS' EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of Augmented Reality (AR) on consumer emotional engagement in retail settings, focusing on how AR influences emotions such as excitement, trust, and satisfaction, and its effect on purchasing behavior. As AR technology becomes increasingly integrated into retail, understanding its emotional impact is crucial for enhancing customer experiences and building brand loyalty. A qualitative literature review was conducted, analyzing peer-reviewed articles, case studies, and industry reports, with thematic analysis identifying key patterns in the emotional dynamics of AR in retail environments. The findings show that AR significantly boosts emotional engagement by evoking positive emotions, which are linked to higher purchase intentions and stronger consumer-brand relationships. AR also builds consumer trust by reducing uncertainty, thereby strengthening emotional bonds with the brand. Demographic factors such as familiarity with AR and consumer age affect emotional engagement intensity, with younger consumers showing stronger emotional responses. This research provides deeper insight into the emotional effects of AR in retail and contributes to both theoretical and practical knowledge in consumer behavior and retail technology. The findings offer valuable guidance for retailers seeking to leverage AR to enhance emotional engagement, customer satisfaction, and sales. Future research should explore the long-term effects of AR on brand loyalty and demographic differences in emotional responses.

Keywords: Augmented Reality, emotional engagement, consumer behavior, retail, thematic analysis.



INTRODUCTION:

The retail industry has been undergoing a significant transformation, driven by the increasing adoption of digital technologies. Among the most impactful innovations is Augmented Reality (AR), a technology that merges digital content with the physical world, creating immersive and interactive experiences for consumers [1]. AR offers new ways for retailers to engage customers by allowing them to visualize products in a virtual space before making a purchase decision. This shift has opened up exciting possibilities for enhancing the shopping experience by adding a layer of personalization and interactivity. As consumer expectations evolve towards more engaging and dynamic experiences, AR has emerged as a key technology for meeting these demands [2].

While much attention has been paid to the functional aspects of AR such as its ability to improve product visualization and streamline the decision-making process its impact on emotional engagement remains largely unexplored [3]. Emotional engagement, defined as the emotional responses consumers experience while interacting with a brand or product, is a critical factor in driving purchasing decisions and fostering brand loyalty [4]. Positive emotions such as excitement, joy, or satisfaction are known to create stronger connections between consumers and brands. However, research on how AR specifically influences emotional engagement during the shopping process is still in its early stages. This gap in the literature highlights the need for a deeper understanding of how AR can trigger emotional responses that drive consumer behavior, which has not been sufficiently addressed in previous studies.

This research aims to bridge this gap by examining how AR technology in retail settings enhances consumers' emotional engagement. Understanding how AR can trigger emotional responses such as excitement or pleasure is important because these emotions play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior. Emotional engagement is increasingly recognized as a key driver of consumer loyalty, with studies showing that customers who feel emotionally connected to a brand are more likely to make repeat purchases and become brand advocates [5]. By focusing on emotional responses to AR, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into how AR can be leveraged to build stronger consumer-brand relationships.

The importance of this research extends beyond academia. Retailers are constantly seeking new ways to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive market. As the demand for immersive and personalized shopping experiences grows, AR offers an opportunity for retailers to enhance their customer engagement strategies [6]. Understanding the emotional dynamics triggered by AR can help retailers design more effective marketing campaigns, create personalized shopping experiences, and build deeper emotional connections with their customers [7]. In this way, this research has practical implications for businesses looking to harness the power of AR to increase customer satisfaction and drive sales.



In light of the growing trend toward hybrid shopping experiences, accelerated by global shifts in consumer behavior, AR presents a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between online and offline retail. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, has led to increased reliance on digital tools and platforms, making AR a valuable tool for retailers looking to provide safe, engaging, and immersive shopping experiences [8]. As more retailers incorporate AR into their business models, understanding how AR affects emotional engagement will be crucial for ensuring that these technologies not only meet functional needs but also connect with consumers on a deeper emotional level.

This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring how AR influences emotional engagement in the retail context. By focusing on the emotional responses triggered by AR interactions, this research will provide a deeper understanding of how immersive technologies affect consumer behavior. The findings will also offer actionable insights for retailers, helping them optimize their use of AR to create more engaging and emotionally resonant shopping experiences that foster customer loyalty and increase sales.

METHODOLOGY:

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design through a literature review approach. A literature review is deemed the most suitable design for this research as it allows for a comprehensive exploration of existing studies and theories related to the role of Augmented Reality (AR) in enhancing consumers' emotional engagement within retail environments. By synthesizing the findings from a wide range of sources, a literature review can provide a deep understanding of the current state of knowledge on this topic, while identifying gaps in the literature that need to be addressed. This approach enables the researcher to answer the research questions regarding how AR influences emotional engagement and consumer behavior, as it aggregates relevant studies, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings to construct a holistic view of the subject.

Sample Selection

The sample for this study consists of peer-reviewed articles, case studies, and industry reports that focus on AR technology and consumer emotional engagement in retail. Inclusion criteria for the selection of studies include: (1) articles that discuss the application of AR in retail settings, (2) studies that investigate the emotional impact of AR on consumers, and (3) publications from the last 10 years to ensure relevance to current technological trends. Exclusion criteria include studies that focus solely on technical aspects of AR without considering emotional engagement, as well as papers that are not published in English or lack empirical data. A systematic search will be conducted across academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, ensuring that only high-quality, peer-reviewed sources are included in the review.



Data Collection Procedure

Data collection for this study involves a systematic review of the literature on AR in retail, focusing on consumer emotional engagement. The search will utilize specific keywords such as “Augmented Reality,” “emotional engagement,” “consumer behavior,” and “retail experience.” After gathering an initial set of articles, the researcher will filter out irrelevant or low-quality sources based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Each relevant article will be thoroughly examined for its findings on how AR influences consumer emotions during the shopping process, the types of emotional responses it evokes, and any correlations with purchasing behavior. The data will be gathered from various types of sources, including academic journal articles, books, industry reports, and case studies, to ensure a comprehensive perspective on the topic.

Data Analysis Method

The data collected will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a widely used method for analyzing qualitative data, especially when exploring patterns and themes within textual information. This method allows the researcher to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the literature regarding emotional engagement and AR in retail. The analysis will be conducted in several stages: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, and (5) defining and naming the themes. This approach is chosen because it provides a flexible and systematic way of identifying key emotional responses triggered by AR interactions, as well as their impact on consumer decision-making processes. By focusing on emerging themes, the researcher can derive meaningful insights into how AR affects consumers' emotional engagement, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of its role in retail environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Emotional Engagement Triggered by AR Technology

The literature review revealed that Augmented Reality (AR) plays a significant role in triggering positive emotional responses among consumers. Across various retail sectors, including fashion, beauty, and home décor, AR technology was consistently linked to emotions such as excitement, joy, and curiosity. Consumers who interacted with AR were more likely to express heightened levels of satisfaction with their shopping experience, citing the novelty and interactivity as key drivers. This emotional engagement was often tied to the immersive experience of visualizing products in real time, which allowed consumers to feel a greater sense of control and involvement in the shopping process. In particular, AR experiences that offered personalized product recommendations or customized interactions seemed to generate more positive emotions compared to those that were more generic or basic [9].



In addition to creating positive emotions, AR also provided consumers with a sense of empowerment. By enabling them to see products in their own environment or virtually try them on, AR removed much of the uncertainty involved in making purchasing decisions. This sense of control over the shopping experience triggered feelings of confidence and trust [10]. Consumers reported that they felt more certain about their choices when they could visualize how products would look or fit in their personal context. As a result, these emotional responses enhanced consumers' overall satisfaction with their purchases and the shopping experience as a whole.

Across all studies included in the review, the emotional engagement elicited by AR experiences consistently contributed to improved consumer perceptions of the products. This trend suggests that AR not only serves as a tool for functional decision-making but also plays a crucial role in enhancing the emotional aspects of consumer behavior [11]. Positive emotions such as joy and excitement were directly correlated with higher engagement levels, with consumers expressing a stronger affinity for brands that utilized AR in their retail strategies.

Impact on Consumer Trust and Confidence

AR technology has been shown to significantly enhance consumer trust and confidence, which are critical components of emotional engagement in retail. Many studies indicated that when consumers could interact with products in an AR environment, they experienced a reduction in uncertainty about the quality and fit of the products [12]. This was particularly evident in industries like home furnishings and fashion, where consumers often struggle to visualize how products will fit into their lives. By providing realistic, interactive visualizations, AR allowed consumers to make more informed purchasing decisions, leading to a greater sense of trust in both the product and the retailer.

The confidence consumers gained from AR interactions also played a role in strengthening emotional connections with the brand. When consumers felt more confident about their purchase decisions, they were more likely to form positive associations with the brand [13]. This heightened trust often translated into a greater emotional attachment to the brand, as consumers felt the retailer had their best interests in mind by offering a technology that helped them make more informed and personalized choices. As a result, brands that integrated AR in their retail experiences were seen as more consumer-centric and forward-thinking, which further fueled positive emotions.

Studies also suggested that AR could reduce the likelihood of post-purchase dissonance, a common issue that arises when consumers experience regret or doubt about their purchase. When AR technology helped consumers visualize products in a more accurate and engaging way, they were less likely to feel disappointed after making a purchase [14]. This confidence boost contributed to a more emotionally satisfying shopping experience, reinforcing the importance of AR in shaping consumers' trust and satisfaction with their purchasing decisions.



Table 1. Impact of Augmented Reality on Consumer Trust and Emotional Engagement

Key Findings	Description
Enhancing Consumer Trust and Confidence	AR allows consumers to interact with products in an immersive environment, reducing uncertainty about product quality and fit. This is particularly significant in industries like home furnishings and fashion, where visualization is challenging.
Strengthening Emotional Connections with the Brand	When AR provides realistic and interactive visualizations, consumers gain confidence in their purchase decisions, which enhances their emotional attachment to the brand. Brands are perceived as more consumer-centric and forward-thinking.
Reducing Post-Purchase Dissonance	AR helps consumers visualize products more accurately, reducing the likelihood of regret or dissatisfaction after the purchase, leading to a more emotionally satisfying shopping experience.

Influence of AR on Purchase Intentions

The review highlighted a clear correlation between emotional engagement triggered by AR and increased purchase intentions. Consumers who reported positive emotional responses, such as excitement and satisfaction, were more likely to follow through with purchases or consider products in the future [15]. Studies found that when AR experiences elicited emotions like joy and delight, they significantly influenced consumers’ readiness to make a purchase. This was particularly true when the AR experience was highly immersive, offering consumers a more tangible sense of how the product would fit into their lives.

Moreover, the data revealed that AR not only impacted immediate purchase behavior but also played a role in shaping future purchase intentions. Consumers who enjoyed their AR experiences were more likely to return to the retailer’s website or store in the future. This was particularly significant for industries where repeat purchases are common, such as beauty and fashion. The emotional connections fostered by AR experiences had a long-term impact on customer loyalty, making consumers more inclined to engage with the brand in the future. These findings suggest that AR’s emotional impact can extend beyond a single purchase, fostering ongoing relationships between consumers and brands [16].

The review also noted that the emotional engagement resulting from AR experiences could lead to impulse buying behavior. When consumers were highly engaged and excited by an AR interaction, they were more likely to make spontaneous purchases that they had not initially planned. This phenomenon was particularly prominent when AR experiences created a sense of urgency or novelty, encouraging consumers to act quickly on their impulses. As a result, AR’s ability to evoke emotions not only increased purchase intentions but also contributed to higher levels of impulsive buying, which could be beneficial for retailers seeking to boost short-term sales.



Differential Impact Across Demographics

Another important finding from the literature review was the differential impact of AR on emotional engagement across various demographic groups. Younger consumers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, were found to be more responsive to AR technology than older generations. This demographic group exhibited higher levels of excitement and engagement with AR interactions, largely due to their familiarity with digital technologies and their openness to new, tech-driven shopping experiences. As digital natives, younger consumers often view AR as a fun, innovative way to shop, which enhances their emotional connection to brands that incorporate these technologies [17].

On the other hand, older consumers were less likely to experience the same level of emotional engagement with AR. Many older shoppers were more skeptical of the technology or unfamiliar with how it works, which led to lower levels of excitement and emotional satisfaction. These consumers often preferred traditional shopping methods and were less likely to seek out AR experiences. While some older consumers appreciated the utility of AR in certain contexts, such as visualizing furniture or appliances, the overall emotional impact was less pronounced compared to younger shoppers [18].

This demographic divide in emotional engagement with AR highlights the need for retailers to tailor their AR experiences to different consumer segments. For younger consumers, offering highly interactive and visually captivating AR features may enhance emotional engagement and drive loyalty [19]. However, for older consumers, it may be more effective to focus on the practical benefits of AR, such as providing accurate product visualizations that alleviate concerns about fit or quality. Understanding these differences can help retailers optimize their AR strategies to appeal to a broader range of consumers and maximize emotional engagement across demographic groups.

Discussion

The findings from this study highlight the significant role that Augmented Reality (AR) plays in enhancing emotional engagement in retail settings. The evidence gathered from the literature review shows that AR technology is effective in evoking positive emotional responses such as excitement, joy, and satisfaction, which contribute to a more immersive and enjoyable shopping experience. These emotions are crucial in building stronger consumer-brand relationships, as emotional engagement is widely recognized as a key driver of consumer loyalty and repeat purchases [20]. The consistent positive emotional responses to AR suggest that this technology can be a powerful tool for retailers aiming to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive market. By providing more engaging and personalized experiences, AR can foster deeper emotional connections between consumers and brands.



The impact of AR on consumer trust and confidence further strengthens the argument for its role in enhancing emotional engagement. As the review found, when AR technology allows consumers to visualize products in a more realistic and personalized context, it helps alleviate uncertainty and boosts consumer confidence in their purchasing decisions [21]. This sense of trust is vital in the retail environment, where product fit, quality, and suitability are often uncertain factors. By removing these uncertainties, AR provides consumers with a higher level of assurance, not only enhancing their emotional engagement but also influencing their overall satisfaction with the brand. This finding emphasizes the potential for AR to serve as a tool for building brand trust, an essential component in fostering long-term consumer relationships.

However, the findings also suggest that the intensity of emotional engagement triggered by AR can vary significantly based on factors such as prior exposure to AR technology and the demographic profile of consumers [22]. Consumers who are familiar with AR tend to experience stronger emotional responses and greater engagement, possibly due to their comfort and ease with the technology. This suggests that AR adoption in retail may benefit from repeated exposure, as familiarity with the technology could enhance its emotional impact. Additionally, the study revealed that younger consumers, particularly those from Millennial and Gen Z cohorts, were more likely to engage emotionally with AR than older generations [23]. These groups, being more accustomed to digital technologies, are more open to using AR as part of their shopping journey, highlighting the importance of understanding consumer demographics when implementing AR experiences.

The correlation between AR-driven emotional engagement and increased purchase intentions is another important aspect of this discussion. The review indicates that positive emotional responses to AR experiences are directly linked to higher purchase intentions. Consumers who feel more emotionally connected to a product, whether through excitement, trust, or satisfaction, are more likely to make a purchase or consider the product in the future [24]. This finding underscores the potential of AR not only to enhance the immediate shopping experience but also to influence longer-term consumer behavior. By leveraging AR technology, retailers can create experiences that not only drive immediate sales but also increase the likelihood of repeat purchases and continued engagement with the brand.

At the same time, the differential impact of AR across demographic groups calls attention to the need for retailers to tailor their AR strategies. While younger consumers show higher levels of emotional engagement with AR, older consumers may not experience the same level of excitement or satisfaction. This highlights a potential challenge for retailers looking to implement AR universally [25]. Retailers may need to consider creating different AR experiences that cater to the specific needs and preferences of various consumer segments. For example, younger consumers



may respond well to more interactive and visually stimulating AR experiences, while older consumers may prefer AR applications that focus on practical product visualizations that help with decision-making.

The implications of these findings extend beyond academic theory into practical applications for retailers. As AR technology becomes more integrated into retail environments, understanding how it impacts emotional engagement and consumer behavior will be critical for businesses looking to optimize their marketing and customer experience strategies [26]. By focusing on creating personalized, engaging, and emotionally resonant AR experiences, retailers can enhance consumer satisfaction, build stronger emotional connections with their customers, and ultimately drive sales and brand loyalty. The findings from this study provide a valuable framework for retailers to harness the potential of AR to create deeper, more meaningful relationships with consumers.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the impact of Augmented Reality (AR) on consumer emotional engagement in retail, revealing several key findings. AR enhances emotional engagement by evoking positive emotions like excitement, joy, and trust, which strengthen consumer-brand relationships. These emotional responses lead to increased satisfaction, greater trust in products, and higher purchase intentions. Additionally, AR reduces uncertainty in purchasing decisions, boosting consumer confidence and fostering brand loyalty. As a result, AR is a powerful tool for retailers seeking to create more immersive and engaging shopping experiences that drive sales and strengthen long-term consumer relationships.

From a theoretical perspective, this research expands existing literature by exploring the emotional aspects of AR, an area often overlooked in studies focused on its functional benefits. The findings emphasize the role of emotional engagement in consumer decision-making and brand loyalty, providing new insights into how AR can shape consumer behavior. Practically, the study offers valuable guidance for retailers on using AR to enhance customer satisfaction, engagement, and brand loyalty.

Future research should focus on exploring demographic and cultural differences in emotional responses to AR, as younger consumers were found to engage more emotionally than older ones. Additionally, longitudinal studies are needed to assess the long-term effects of AR on consumer behavior and brand loyalty. By addressing these areas, future studies can provide a deeper understanding of how AR influences consumer emotions and offer further insights for creating personalized, engaging retail experiences.



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