

XR and Metaverse Applications in Transforming Tourism, Events, and Cultural Heritage Experiences

Organized by

Dr Mujde Bideci, Canterbury Christ Church University

SCOPE

Beyond traditional tourism services, the convergence of Extended Reality (XR) — including Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) — with the emerging Metaverse presents unparalleled opportunities to transform tourism, events, and cultural heritage experiences (Kim, Lee, & Jung, 2020). This convergence enables the creation of three-dimensional simulated versions (Buhalis, Leung & Lin, 2023) portraying the past and future of places (Bideci & Bideci, 2023), crafting a mental imagery phase that unveils stories and evokes a sense of presence within tourist destinations.

While these technologies are increasingly popular and acknowledged for their significance and disruptive methods, they remain relatively new within the tourism economy (Bogicevic et al., 2019). This novelty in practice also highlights a research gap in understanding how visitors and actively engaged service providers perceive immersive technologies in the tourism and especially cultural heritage sector. In 2021, the global market size for virtual tourism, integrating XR and Metaverse technologies, stood at five billion U.S. dollars, foreseeing a substantial growth, reaching an estimated 24 billion U.S. dollars by 2027 (Statista, 2022). However, despite existing literature defining the conceptual boundaries of these technologies in enhancing visitor experiences, there remains a lack of clarity in implementing and conceptualizing contemporary immersive experiences within tourism heritage destinations.

The proposed special session aims to explore the diverse applications of XR, specifically VR and AR, and Metaverse, seeking to delve into the transformative potential of these technologies in redefining visitor interaction with both physical and virtual worlds in a tourism setting. Furthermore, this special session aims to consolidate the potential of immersive technologies in enhancing visitors' understanding of cultural heritage destinations.

We highly value all theoretical and methodological approaches—both qualitative and quantitative studies and inviting submissions in any subject area focusing on XR (augmented and virtual reality) and the Metaverse in tourism and cultural heritage. We especially encourage diverse submissions that span multiple disciplines such as marketing, psychology, and business management, and cover various topics related to hospitality and event, tourist experience and behaviour. Submissions should offer evidence relevant to the special issue's theme. Researchers are invited to submit papers exploring, among other potential areas, the following:

TOPICS OF INTERESTS

- a) XR/Metaverse applications in tourism, events, cultural heritage
- b) XR/Metaverse for tourist engagement, experience, and satisfaction
- c) VR/AR in tourism marketing
- d) XR/Metaverse and immersive tourism experiences
- e) Visitors' cognitive, emotional, and affective processes in multisensory extended reality
- f) XR/Metaverse and the preservation and presentation of cultural heritage sites
- g) XR/Metaverse platforms and collaboration, connectivity, and user-generated content
- h) Technological barriers and accessibility and inclusivity of XR and Metaverse applications

- i) Legal, ethical, and regulatory issues of XR/Metaverse
- j) Visitor safety and privacy
- k) Darkverse (addiction, anxiety, dissociation of XR/Metaverse)

SUBMISSIONS OF ABSTRACTS

Abstracts of no more than 300 words should be submitted electronically by May 12th, 2024, to Dr Mujde Bideci (mujde.bideci@canterbury.ac.uk). For further enquiries regarding the conference, please visit the conference's website: <https://iatour.org/icot2024/>