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密接密集を避けた新たな文化体験手法の探究： 仮想空間とインタープリテーションの融合による authentic experience の提供に向けて

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Investigating a new approach to cultural experiences: Offering authentic experience in a virtual environment with interpretation

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本研究は密接密集を避けた新たな文化体験手法として、仮想空間での旅行体験に焦点を当てた。質の高い旅行体験には本物体験（authentic experience）が重要であり、本研究では、まずバーチャルツアーの参加者18人に質的インタビューを実施して、本物さの認識について調べた。バーチャル空間での体験をどのように理解・意味付けし、本物さを認識したのかを示した。また、上記の結果を踏まえて、文化遺産に関するバーチャル体験として新たに映像を作成した。これを学会にて発表予定である。この映像が本物さの認識に及ぼす影響の調査は次段階の研究課題とする。

This research focused on virtual tourism as a means of vicarious tourism experiences without physically attending or being close to other tourists. As authenticity is a crucial aspect of quality tourism, firstly qualitative interviews were conducted with 18 online tour participants to investigate their perceived authenticity. The findings revealed how the participants made sense of their tour experience and how they developed their perception of authenticity in a virtual tour. Secondly, based on these findings, a new virtual experience—a cultural heritage film—was created, which will possibly influence audiences' perception of authenticity. The film will expectedly be presented at a conference in the U.S. The impact of the film will be examined in the next research phase in near future.

1. 研究内容

Introduction

This research focused on virtual tours as a means of vicarious tourism experiences without physically attending or being close to other tourists. Studies on virtual tours suggest that destination experiences through online platforms prior to on-site visits can shape tourists' perceptions of the destination's authenticity (Mura, Tavakoli, & Pahlevan Sharif, 2017). However, little research has

been done on meaningful and authentic experiences in virtual tourism (Bec, Moyle, Schaffer, & Timms, 2021; Tavakoli & Mura, 2015). This research examines the questions of whether online tours offer an authentic experience and how people experience authenticity during an online tour. Understanding what contributes to the perception of an experience as being authentic in an online tour will help strategically design a digital tourism environment.

Although a number of scholars have argued the concept of authenticity and authentic experiences in tourism contexts (Moore et al., 2021; Rickly, 2022), little knowledge is available on authentic experiences and authenticating process in virtual tourism (Tavakoli & Mura, 2015). Examining the experiences of participants in online tours can potentially lead to a better understanding of how to produce meaningful and authentic experiences in a virtual environment. This research was aimed at exploring a range of perceptions of online tour participants and identifying contributors to the perceived authenticity in a virtual environment.

Methodology

For this study, first the researchers reviewed online tours that were produced in Japan and targeted English-speaking audiences to assess the tours for quality, length, and content. Virtual tours offering VR or AR experiences were not taken into consideration in the study's selection process since the purpose was to explore a range of perceptions that audiences gained through online tours. Three independent online tours met the selection criteria and were used for this research. Differences among the four, such as the guide, subject area, length, and technology used, were not considered to be an issue because this research was not aimed at assessing the tour quality; rather, it aimed at understanding what perceptions were produced in those taking part in the experiences and what contributed to those perceptions.

The participants were recruited to participate in one of four tour sessions held in August or October 2021. Using purposeful sampling, the authors invited English-speaking individuals who had no or little experience of online tours in the past and were interested in a tourist attraction in Japan. In

total, 18 individuals participated in one of the four tours and agreed to be interviewed afterward. The participants (7 women and 11 men) ranged in age from their 20s ($n=10$) or 30s ($n=3$) to their 40s ($n=4$) or 60s ($n=1$). Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom immediately after the tour.

The transcripts were reviewed by two researchers independently. After all codes were explored by the first coder, the second coder verified whether the codes were properly applied. The codes represented a feature of the data, including semantic and latent contents. Having two coders compare the consistency of the codes' application allowed for the generation and organization of themes into meaningful categories. The majority of the themes matched previously reported concepts in virtual tourism and authenticity research, which will be described below.

Results and Discussion

The respondents positively assessed their online tour experiences using the following criteria: spatiotemporal presence was not required to experience the destination; physical effort was not needed to experience the activity in the tour; actual travel was not needed to see the destination; and online tours offered accessibility and diverse experiences. Regarding accessibility, one respondent clearly mentioned that the tour enabled him to "climb up" a mountain, giving him access to an experience that was normally unavailable to him because of a physical disability. This finding is consistent with other studies that report the accessibility of virtual tourism (Lu et al., 2021). Another respondent valued the fact that an online tour allowed for nonlinear experiences that,

because of spatiotemporal constraints, would not otherwise be possible in an actual tour. The simultaneous experience of nonlinear actions and events, such as viewing the same scenery in different seasons or seeing the sunrise from the perspective of multiple locations and days, enabled participants to appreciate diverse aspects of the site.

The respondents also reported negative perceptions around such things as experiences that fell short of expectations, the poor quality of photos and technologies used in the tours, and their inability to engage in physical movement, or a lack of physical fatigue that would be felt in an actual tour. These negative perceptions interfered with the respondents' perception of physical presence and the tours as "real." These findings suggest that the sense of presence is one of elements that create meaningful experiences in a virtual tourism, which is in line with previous research (Tussyadiah et al., 2018; Wu & Lai, 2022).

Tour guides were generally singled out as a source of positive impressions among the participants. The ability of tour guides to offer diverse opportunities to engage with the tours appeared to influence the participants' perceptions. For example, respondents mentioned their guides' effectiveness in answering questions, providing knowledge and interpretations regarding local cultures and rituals, relating authentic stories, and communicating with participants. They positively evaluated their guides' personalities and skill in leading tours. Online tour guides appeared to function as partners in co-creating tourism experiences with the participants. This finding supports previous research (Irimiás et al., 2020). Thanks to new technologies, people can take trips from home while enjoying the benefits of a tour

guide at the destination (Fennell, 2021).

The responses suggested offered different indications of perceived authenticity that were consistent with previous research: a feeling of being present (Kim et al., 2021; Tussyadiah et al., 2018), the use of multiple senses (Harley et al., 2020; Jin et al., 2020), exposure to authentic stories (Penrose, 2020), and interactions with local people (Shang et al., 2020). The interviewees viewed the tour as an information source for their future travels and considered it a pre-visit experience; this finding is consistent with previous research (Mura et al., 2017). The information obtained in the tour helped participants to decide about future travel destinations, gain motivation to visit those locations, prepare for actual visits, and simulate travel to those places; this result was also congruent with previous findings (Lekgau et al., 2021). As these findings illustrate, online tours have the potential to help the tourism industry not only recover from the disruption because of the pandemic but also to serve as an alternative form of entertainment or way to advance the tourism experience for people with diverse demands and needs.

Conclusion

Tourism in the new age of disruption must be open to transformation, and technological innovation is a key to the industry's resiliency (Sharma et al., 2021). Tourism based on new technologies can potentially allow tourists to stay at home but still obtain the benefits of a tour guide at the destination. The findings of this research demonstrate the capability of online tours to transform the tourism experience. The participants did not always express a desire for authenticity in online tours, but they did note that their tour

experiences were different from conventional in-person tourism practices. The study's participants talked about their virtual tourism environments in terms of physical and sensorial involvements, which they perceived as an important component of experiencing authenticity (Mura et al., 2017).

Virtual tourism offers the potential to create alternative experiences that influence accessibility, education, entertainment, and marketing (Guttentag, 2010) and may help alleviate the overtourism problem (Bec et al., 2021). As the tourism industry continues to encounter challenges, demand for and acceptance of virtual tourism may remain high. Transforming tourism experiences expands tourism markets themselves, resulting in a more diverse and inclusive tourist population. As the crisis throughout the industry has accelerated the development and application of new means of experiencing tourism, the potential for virtual tourism will continue to grow in both number and importance.

2. 発表（研究成果の発表）

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