



THE ROLE OF AUGMENTED REALITY IN RETAIL: ENHANCING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES AND DRIVING SALES

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ABSTRACT

AR technology has completely revolutionized the way consumers engage with vendors of furniture, appliances, and branded clothing, transforming their retail sector. This study aims to provide retailers and practitioners with relevant data on the impact of augmented reality (AR) technology on consumer behavior and in-store experiences. Using a quantitative research approach and a detailed analysis of the body of recent literature, this study examines how augmented reality (AR) influences brand perception and purchase choices by focusing on both the emotional and cognitive aspects of consumer interactions.

The study's findings show that augmented reality (AR) technology raises buyers' likelihood of making purchases and increases customer happiness and engagement. It also creates immersive shopping experiences, which raise the likelihood that customers would purchase the specific product they have viewed. Retailers may get a competitive edge in the market and unleash new potentials for consumer engagement by leveraging augmented reality technology successfully. The study closes gaps in the literature and provides useful advice on how to use augmented reality (AR) to turn branded apparel stores into engaging retail spaces.

This work also examines how to apply the design thinking approach to the creation of augmented reality-based services that enhance the in-store customer experience by integrating the perspectives of retailers, consumers, and technology. In order to help academics and managers better understand the processes via which augmented reality (AR) influences customer decisions in retail environments, this study looks at how AR affects retail user experience (UX) and how that influences user happiness and readiness to buy.

Keywords: Immersive Retail, Brand Perception, Buying Behaviour, Customer Experience, And Augmented Reality.

I. INTRODUCTION

The integration of Augmented Reality (AR) technology is bringing about a dramatic shift in the retail industry, especially when considering Retail 4.0. With its ability to seamlessly integrate digital aspects with the actual world, augmented reality has become a potent tool for improving the in-store experience for customers. This introduction presents the study's goals and gives a general overview of the application of augmented reality in retail, highlighting the importance of comprehending customer behaviour in AR-enabled retail environments.

Overview of Augmented Reality in Retail:

The retail industry gains a fresh perspective via Augmented Reality (AR) technology, which enhances the shopping experience by incorporating virtual components into the real-world setting. Essentially, augmented reality (AR) modifies users' sense of reality by superimposing digital content, including movies, pictures, or three-dimensional models, over the actual environment. AR provides customers with dynamic and engaging experiences in retail environments. It lets them see things in real time, test out virtual samples, and interact creatively with branded material.

There are numerous technologies that provide augmented reality experiences in retail contexts, particularly in branded clothing stores.

Here is a list of a few of such technologies.



- **Mobile Equipment:** The most common way to access augmented reality experiences is through smartphones and tablets that have AR-capable apps installed. Users may smoothly engage with virtual components thanks to these gadgets' integration of cameras and sensors to superimpose digital material over the real environment.

- **AR Software Development Kits (SDK):** AR SDKs are used by developers to construct AR apps that are specialized to the demands of a certain retailer. These kits include a range of resources and technologies, including as 3D object tracking, marker identification, and picture recognition, making it easier to incorporate virtual elements into the real world.
- **Computer Vision:** Computer vision algorithms are essential to augmented reality because they allow devices to see and understand their environment. Computer vision enhances the entire augmented reality experience by facilitating natural interactions between people and digital material through the recognition of objects, surfaces, and gestures.

Recognizing Customer Behaviour is Critical in AR-enabled Retail Environments

It is critical to understand how customers engage with augmented reality and how it affects their shopping decisions as more shops use this technology to improve the in-store experience. Retailers may customize augmented reality (AR) experiences to match customer preferences and maximize engagement and sales by having a thorough understanding of consumer behavior in AR-enabled retail locations. Retailers may create engaging and immersive experiences that appeal to their target audience by learning more about elements like brand perception, purchasing choices, and emotional reactions to AR interactions.

Objectives of the Study:

In light of this, the main goal of this research are to:

- Examine how augmented reality is affecting in-store experiences and consumer behaviour in the retail industry.
- Examine the effects of augmented reality on customer perceptions of brands, decisions about what to buy, and the emotional and cognitive dimensions of consumer interactions.
- Examine the effect of augmented reality on businesses and offer practical advice on how to use AR technology in the era of Retail 4.0 to improve consumer engagement and boost sales.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- **Social Identity Theory:** Henri Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory emphasizes the role that social identity plays in shaping people's behavior and views. This idea contributes to our knowledge of how consumers' brand preferences and group connections influence their retail purchase decisions.
- **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM):** John Cacioppo and Richard E. Petty devised the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). It implies that information is either processed centrally by customers through a detailed assessment of the product's attributes, or peripherally by them based on surface-level cues. ELM clarifies the influence that customers' cognitive processing and level of participation have on how they react to augmented reality experiences in retail.

Augmented Reality Technology and its Role in Retail:

Augmented reality (AR) technology improves the shopping experience by blending the virtual and real worlds together through the overlay of digital content on the physical surroundings. AR technology is comprised of several components and features that enable its application in retail:

- **Visualization and Product Interaction:** Customers may examine products in real-world settings using Augmented Reality (AR), which also allows them to virtually try on, personalize, and take part in interactive product demos. The ability to visualize information influences consumers' decisions to buy by helping them better understand the features and advantages of the product.
- **Enhanced Immersion and interaction:** By providing immersive experiences, augmented reality (AR) draws in customers and promotes more involvement with products and enterprises. Through interactive storytelling, gamification, and experiential marketing, augmented reality (AR) creates memorable experiences that connect with customers and enhance brand affinity.



- **Customization & Personalization:** Retailers are now able to offer experiences that are customized to each customer's tastes and requirements, all thanks to augmented reality technology. Augmented reality (AR) allows customers to personalize their buying experiences, increasing customer pleasure and loyalty. This features virtual changing rooms and personalized product recommendations.
- **Omnichannel Integration:** Mobile applications, e-commerce websites, and physical stores are just a few of the retail channels with which Augmented Reality (AR) may be readily connected. Customers may effortlessly transition between online and physical shopping environments and are certain of consistent brand experiences with the support of an omnichannel strategy.

Integration of Emotional and Cognitive Aspects in Consumer Interactions:

Customer interactions in augmented reality settings have an impact on people's attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions in both emotional and cognitive domains:

- **Emotional Engagement:** Augmented Reality (AR) experiences evoke feelings in customers, such as delight, enthusiasm, and curiosity, hence augmenting their emotional engagement with companies and products. Purchase intentions, general contentment, and brand impression are all influenced by emotional reactions to augmented reality encounters.
- **Cognitive Processing:** When interacting with augmented reality material, assessing characteristics of products, weighing alternatives, and making judgments about what to buy, consumers use cognitive processing. Customers' reactions to AR-enhanced retail experiences are influenced by cognitive aspects such as information processing, cognitive biases, and heuristics in decision-making.
- **Memory & Recall:** Augmented reality experiences influence customers' capacity to recall brand names and product details by promoting memory encoding and retrieval processes. AR makes a brand more memorable and easier to remember in situations when a brand may be purchased in the future.
- **Effects on Perception and Behaviour:** Augmented reality interactions shape how customers view the features, cost, and value proposition of products, which in turn influences how they behave when making purchases. Retailers may influence desired consumer behaviours and outcomes by matching AR content to consumers' interests and motivations.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Evolution of Augmented Reality in Retail:

The way that customers engage with products and brands has evolved significantly with the introduction of Augmented Reality (AR) technology into retail. Several significant turning points in the history of augmented reality in retail may be identified:

- **Early Proof of Concept and Experiments:** In the latter half of the 20th century, proof-of-concept demonstrations and experimental projects were used to examine AR's potential to improve retail experiences. The foundation for further developments in augmented reality technology and its use in retail environments was established by these early initiatives.
- **Emergence of AR Applications:** In the early 2000s, AR applications started to gain popularity in the retail industry as a result of the widespread use of smartphones and other mobile devices with cameras and sensors. Retailers tried virtual try-ons, interactive marketing campaigns, and product visualization using AR-enabled applications.
- **Adoption by the Mainstream and Industry Integration:** Due to developments in mobile technology, computer vision, and geographical mapping, the use of augmented reality (AR) by large shops and brands surged in the 2010s. Retailers are providing immersive online and in-store purchasing experiences by using augmented reality into their omnichannel operations.
- **Growth of AR Use Cases:** AR technology has surpassed conventional retail applications to include a broad spectrum of use cases, such as interactive displays, virtual showrooms, and augmented reality advertising. Retailers used augmented reality (AR) to set themselves out from the competition, interact with consumers, and increase sales.
- **Personalized Recommendations:** Recommendation engines driven by augmented reality (AR)



examine customer preferences and behaviours to provide customized product suggestions based on each user's requirements and preferences. AR makes items more appealing and relevant by making timely suggestions, which raises the probability that a customer will make a purchase.

Immersive Shopping Experiences and Consumer Engagement:

Augmented Reality (AR) transforms traditional shopping experiences into immersive and interactive journeys, fostering deeper engagement and connection with consumers:

- **Interactive Product Discovery:** AR allows for innovative methods for customers to interact with items, including virtual try-ons, 3D product visualizations, and interactive product demos. This leads to interactive product discovery. Customers become more engaged and interested as a result of these immersive experiences, which hold their interest and promote investigation.
- **Emotional Brand Experiences:** Through immersive storytelling and experiential marketing

IV. METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Research Approach:

This study uses a quantitative research methodology to examine how augmented reality (AR) technology affects consumer behaviour and in-store experiences in the retail industry. It does this by collecting and analysing numerical data in a methodical manner. Through statistical analysis and the extrapolation of results to a broader population, quantitative research facilitates the investigation of correlations among variables. Retailers and practitioners can benefit greatly from the quantitative approach's objective and quantifiable insights into the issues being studied.

Data Collection Methods:

Quantitative information on the effects of augmented reality technologies in retail environments is gathered using a variety of data gathering techniques:

- **Surveys:** Consumers' self-reported information about their experiences with AR-enabled retail settings is gathered through surveys. Various variables, including brand perception, buying decisions, happiness levels, and involvement with augmented reality experiences, may be the subject of survey questions. To reach a wide range of customers, surveys might be distributed via mobile applications, in-store, or online.
- **Observational Studies:** In observational studies, customer behaviour in AR-enabled retail settings is systematically observed and recorded. Researchers track consumer behaviour patterns, preferences, and degrees of engagement by watching how customers interact with AR technology, goods, and brand information. Observational data offers important insights into the interactions and behaviours of actual customers.

Analysis of Transaction Data: To determine how AR technology affects buying behaviour and sales performance, transaction data from retail sales records is analysed. The frequency of purchases, basket size, and income earned may all be measured by researchers by comparing sales data from before and after the introduction of AR experiences. Analysing transaction data yields unbiased estimates of the financial effects of augmented reality technology on retail results.

- **Experimental Studies:** Experimental studies involve the manipulation of variables to assess their impact on consumer behaviour within controlled environments. Researchers may conduct experiments to compare consumer responses to AR-enhanced versus traditional retail experiences, measuring outcomes such as brand perception, purchase intent, and satisfaction. Experimental studies allow for causal inference and control over extraneous variables, enhancing the validity of research findings.

Analysis Techniques:

Quantitative data collected through surveys, observational studies, transaction data analysis, and experimental studies are analysed using various statistical techniques:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** The features of the data set are summarized and described using descriptive statistics, which include mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequency distributions. The distributions, central trends, and variability of the variables under study are all shown by descriptive



statistics.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study's conclusions show that integrating augmented reality (AR) technology into retail settings significantly increases the possibility that customers will make a purchase. AR improves the buying experience by enabling users to perceive things in real-world settings, giving them a more engaging and dynamic way to interact with products. Users feel more secure and knowledgeable about their purchasing selections as a result of this increased interaction, which raises purchase intent. Additionally, AR makes it easier for consumers to explore and find things, giving them the opportunity to give them a closer look before making a purchase. All things considered, the results indicate that augmented reality technology influences consumer behaviour favourably, increasing conversion rates and increasing revenue for merchants.

Augmented Reality's Effect on Customer Happiness and Engagement:

The results of the study show a favourable relationship between consumer satisfaction and engagement in retail settings and augmented reality (AR) technology. Positive feelings like joy, curiosity, and excitement are sparked by augmented reality experiences, which increase user happiness and provide a pleasant purchasing experience. AR increases consumer engagement by offering immersive and interactive experiences that promote extended engagement with retail content. Personalized interactions are also made possible by augmented reality (AR), which increases user happiness by providing recommendations and suggestions that are specific to each user's tastes. Overall, the results point to the good brand impression and increased user well-being that AR technology fosters, leading to increased consumer satisfaction through deeper interaction with retail content.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR RETAILERS

Competitive Edge through Successful AR Implementation:

Retailers may get a competitive advantage in the market by implementing Augmented Reality (AR) technology effectively, which can improve the whole shopping experience and set their brand apart from rivals. The successful integration of augmented reality (AR) into retail operations has several significant ramifications.

- **Innovative Brand Image:** By utilizing augmented reality technology, retailers show creativity and foresight, establishing themselves as leaders in their respective industries and trendsetters. Retailers may draw in tech-savvy customers and strengthen their brand's image for originality and innovation by providing cutting-edge augmented reality experiences.
 - **Enhanced Product Differentiation:** Customers may have distinctive and unforgettable purchasing experiences with AR-enabled product visuals and interactive activities. By using augmented reality (AR) to highlight features, functions, and customization choices, retailers may set their items apart from those of their rivals, boosting perceived value and encouraging buy intent.
 - **Enhanced Customer Engagement:** Augmented reality technology makes it possible for customers to engage more deeply with brands by providing them with immersive and engaging experiences that grab their attention. Retailers may use augmented reality (AR) to craft unique and personalized experiences that connect with customers and encourage brand advocacy.
 - **Increased Sales and Conversion Rates:** Augmented reality technology can help merchants raise sales and conversion rates by decreasing uncertainty and enabling more informed purchasing decisions. Consumers are empowered to make confident purchasing decisions by AR-enabled virtual try-ons, product visualizations, and interactive demos, which increases transaction volumes and revenue growth.
 - **Omnichannel Integration:** AR technology works perfectly with e-commerce sites, smartphone apps, and physical storefronts, among other retail channels. Retailers may improve omnichannel engagement and foster consumer loyalty by using AR to provide unified and consistent brand experiences across many touchpoints.
- help customers learn about and experience products firsthand, which will increase customer interest



and engagement.

- **Social Sharing and Virality:** As customers share their immersive retail experiences on social media platforms, augmented reality (AR) experiences promote social sharing and virality. Augmented reality-enhanced user-generated content increases brand recognition and reach, encouraging word-of-mouth recommendations and natural brand promotion.
- **Gamification and Rewards:** Retailers may use augmented reality (AR) technology to gamify the shopping experience by implementing interactive challenges, scavenger hunts, and rewards programs to encourage engagement and loyalty. Retailers may create a sense of excitement and competitiveness to encourage customer involvement and encourage return visits.
- **Storytelling & Brand Narrative:** Retailers may develop immersive storytelling experiences that bring brand storylines to life with the use of augmented reality technology. Retailers may create more emotive and engaging brand experiences and brand affinity by using augmented reality (AR) into their advertising campaigns and activations.

Advice for Turning Branded Apparel Stores into Engaging Retail Spaces:

Branded apparel stores can transform into engaging retail spaces by strategically leveraging Augmented Reality (AR) technology to enhance the in-store experience and drive consumer engagement.

Key advice for turning branded apparel stores into engaging retail spaces includes:

- **Interactive Virtual Try-Ons:** Implement AR-powered virtual try-on solutions that allow consumers to visualize clothing and accessories in real-time. By enabling consumers to virtually try on different styles, sizes, and colours, retailers can enhance the shopping experience and reduce the need for physical fittings.
- **Customization and Personalization:** Offer AR-enabled customization options that allow consumers to personalize their clothing and accessories. From choosing fabrics and colours to adding custom embellishments and monograms, AR technology enables consumers to create unique and one-of-a-kind pieces that reflect their individual style and preferences.
- **Digital Styling Assistance:** Integrate AR-powered digital styling assistants that provide personalized fashion recommendations and styling tips. By analyzing consumer preferences, body measurements, and style preferences, retailers can offer tailored fashion advice and outfit suggestions that align with each consumer's unique taste and lifestyle.
- **Interactive Product Displays:** Enhance in-store product displays with AR-enabled interactive experiences that showcase product features, styling options, and outfit inspirations. By incorporating AR technology into store layouts and merchandising displays, retailers can create visually engaging and informative experiences that encourage exploration and discovery.
- **Seamless Omnichannel Integration:** Ensure seamless integration between AR experiences in-store and across digital channels, including e-commerce websites and mobile applications. By providing a consistent and cohesive brand experience across all touchpoints, retailers can maximize consumer engagement and drive omnichannel sales and loyalty.

VII. DESIGN THINKING IN AR-BASED RETAIL SERVICES

Integrating Perspectives of Retailers, Consumers, and Technology:

Design Thinking in AR-based retail services involves integrating the perspectives of retailers, consumers, and technology to create innovative and user-centered experiences. This approach recognizes the importance of understanding the needs, challenges, and aspirations of all stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of AR solutions in retail environments. Here's a detailed context on integrating these perspectives:

- **Retailers Perspectives:** Retailers play a crucial role in defining the strategic objectives, business goals, and operational requirements for AR-based retail services. From enhancing customer engagement to driving sales and brand loyalty, retailers seek solutions that align with their overarching business strategies and objectives. Retailers also provide insights into logistical considerations, resource constraints, and scalability requirements that influence the feasibility and implementation of AR initiatives.



- **Consumers Perspectives:** Consumers are at the heart of AR-based retail experiences, and their needs, preferences, and behaviors inform the design and development of AR solutions. Understanding consumers' expectations, pain points, and desired outcomes helps designers create AR experiences that resonate with their target audience. Through user research, persona development, and empathy mapping, designers gain insights into consumers' motivations, behaviors, and decision-making processes, shaping the design and functionality of AR applications.

- **Technology Perspectives:** Technology plays a pivotal role in enabling AR-based retail services, providing the infrastructure, tools, and capabilities needed to deliver immersive and interactive experiences.

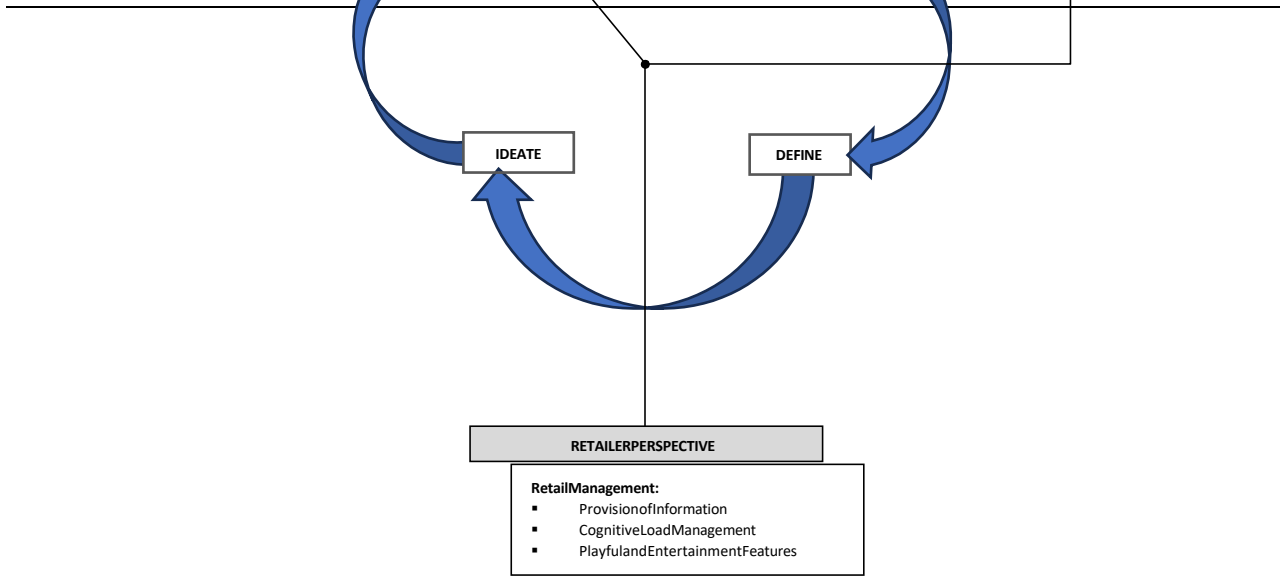
Technology stakeholders, including developers, engineers, and solution architects, contribute their expertise in AR development platforms, computer vision algorithms, spatial mapping technologies, and cloud computing infrastructure. By understanding the technical requirements and constraints of AR implementation, designers can ensure the feasibility, scalability, and performance of AR solutions in retail environments.

By integrating the perspectives of retailers, consumers, and technology stakeholders, designers can create AR-based retail services that meet the needs of all stakeholders, deliver value to end-users, and drive business outcomes for retailers.

Creating Enhanced In-store Customer Experiences through Design Thinking:

In the iterative process of Design Thinking applied to AR-based retail services, retailers follow a structured approach to continuously refine and optimize their solutions based on feedback and insights gathered from testing. This procedure involves a few important steps:

- **Empathize:** Design Thinking commences by empathizing with in-store customers to deeply understand their needs, preferences, and pain points. Retailers employ observation, interviews, and feedback gathering to gain insights into customers' shopping journey, expectations, and aspirations.
- **Define:** Informed by the insights gleaned from customer empathy, retailers define specific design challenges pertaining to enhancing in-store customer experiences through AR technology. These challenges may involve improving product discovery, enhancing product education, or increasing engagement and interactivity within the retail environment.
- **Ideate:** Design Thinking fosters brainstorming sessions aimed at generating creative ideas for utilizing AR technology to address the defined design challenges. Retailers engage in collaborative idea generation, exploring solutions such as AR-powered product visualizations, virtual try-ons, interactive product demos, and personalized recommendations.
- **Prototype:** Design Thinking encourages the rapid creation of prototypes for AR-based solutions, allowing retailers to bring their ideas to life and visualize how they would function in practice. Low-fidelity prototypes of AR experiences are developed to enable retailers to quickly iterate on concepts and explore various design possibilities.
- **Test:** Prototypes of AR experiences are subjected to usability testing with in-store customers to gather feedback and validate assumptions. Retailers conduct tests to assess the usability, effectiveness, and satisfaction of AR-based solutions, ensuring that they meet the needs and expectations of in-store customers.



VIII. AUGMENTED REALITY AND RETAIL USER EXPERIENCE (UX)

Augmented Reality (AR) has a profound impact on retail User Experience (UX), influencing various aspects of how consumers interact with brands, products, and services in retail environments. Understanding the influence of AR on retail UX is crucial for retailers to enhance customer satisfaction, drive engagement, and ultimately increase sales. Here's a detailed exploration of the influence of AR on retail UX and its implications for user happiness and purchase readiness:

Influence of AR on Retail UX:

AR technology revolutionizes user engagement by immersing users in interactive experiences, offering a vivid portrayal of products within real-world settings. This immersion not only enhances the memorability of shopping encounters but also extends user engagement, encouraging prolonged interaction with retail content. Moreover, AR facilitates enhanced product discovery, granting users the ability to examine items from various angles, thereby facilitating better understanding and informed purchase decisions. Tailoring interactions to individual preferences, AR fosters personalized experiences, delivering recommendations and suggestions tailored to user behaviour and preferences. By offering such customized content, AR not only enhances user satisfaction but also fosters a sense of personal connection. Furthermore, AR introduces new levels of interactivity, enabling users to engage with products through virtual try-ons, interactive demos, and gamified experiences. This heightened interactivity not only enriches the user experience but also cultivates deeper engagement with retail content. Finally, AR seamlessly integrates digital content into physical environments, blurring the lines between online and offline shopping. This integration ensures a cohesive and consistent user journey across various touchpoints, enhancing the overall coherence and continuity of the shopping experience.

Implications for User Happiness and Purchase Readiness:

AR technology evokes positive emotional responses such as excitement, curiosity, and delight, fostering user happiness and satisfaction. By delivering enjoyable and memorable interactions, AR contributes to overall user well-being and fosters positive brand perception. Moreover, AR empowers users to make confident and informed purchase decisions by visualizing products in real-world contexts, thereby reducing uncertainty and enhancing transparency. This heightened confidence and trust in the accuracy and authenticity of product representations lead to increased purchase readiness among users. Additionally, AR enhances the perceived value of products by providing additional information, context, and utility, making AR-enabled products more desirable and valuable in users' eyes. As a result, users exhibit higher purchase intent and are more willing to pay premium prices for AR-enhanced products.



Furthermore, AR-driven shopping experiences result in heightened user satisfaction and fulfilment, meeting expectations for interactivity, personalization, and engagement. By enhancing the overall quality of the user experience, AR contributes to greater satisfaction with the retail brand. Lastly, AR accelerates the purchase decision-making process by offering users instant access to relevant information and visualizations, streamlining the path to purchase and reducing friction points. This increased efficiency expedites conversion rates, facilitating faster decision-making and driving business success.

IX. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research should delve into advanced applications of Augmented Reality (AR) in retail environments to uncover innovative ways of enhancing the shopping experience. This includes investigating emerging AR technologies such as holographic displays, spatial computing, and wearable AR devices, and exploring their potential applications in retail settings. Additionally, research could focus on integrating AR with other emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, and Internet of Things (IoT) to create more immersive and personalized retail experiences. Furthermore, examining the scalability and feasibility of deploying advanced AR solutions in real-world retail contexts will be crucial for understanding their practical implications and adoption challenges.

Long-term Effects of AR on Consumer Behavior:

Future studies should investigate the long-term effects of AR technology on consumer behavior in retail environments. This entails longitudinal research to track changes in consumer attitudes, preferences, and purchasing habits over extended periods of time following exposure to AR experiences. By examining how AR influences consumer loyalty, brand perception, and repeat purchase behavior over time, researchers can gain insights into the lasting impact of AR on retail performance. Additionally, exploring the role of contextual factors such as product category, purchase frequency, and user demographics in shaping the long-term effects of AR will provide a more nuanced understanding of its influence on consumer behavior.

X. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the transformative role of Augmented Reality (AR) technology in revolutionizing the retail landscape. Through an in-depth examination of the impact of AR on consumer behaviour and in-store experiences, valuable insights have been uncovered regarding the significant benefits that AR offers to both retailers and consumers.

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