360 Virtual Reality’s Impact on Olympic Legacy Venue Tourism

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Huang, Backman, Backman & Chang (2016) reported that 360 Virtual Reality (VR) is a powerful tourism marketing tool. In a crowded tourism market place, managers of Olympic legacies need to generate multiple revenue streams to sustain these legacies. With the growing ease of access to 360 VR tourism attraction content via YouTube, VR offers the potential for increased virtual visitation to Olympic legacy venues that may increase tourism visitation. The authors have modified the 360 VR study by Tussyadiah, Wang, Jung and tom Dieck (2018) to undertake a pilot study of sports management students. Psychology research has examined the effectiveness of VR in modifying attitudes and behavior to VR stimuli (Schuemie, Van Der Straaten, Krijn & Van Der Mast, 2001). The core psychological concept has focused on “presence.” The authors wish to determine if the sense of “presence” during a 360 VR Olympic venue experience has a positive effect on student enjoyment of the VR experience. Also investigated is whether viewing VR videos of Olympic venues has a positive effect on student intention to visit.

Method

The authors selected two Olympic sport tourism destinations for student “visitation.” One was the Berlin Olympic Stadium and the second was the Lake Placid, NY Winter Olympic legacies. The Lake Placid facilities were the 1932 bobsled run and 1980 hockey rink. The authors filmed, edited and published 2, 360 VR videos to YouTube for both locations. Audio clips were incorporated to provide factual information and relevant music. Students use inexpensive VR goggles and their smartphones to view 360 videos. After viewing a video, each student completes a questionnaire that contains 3 VR assessment scales. Presence, Enjoyment and Visit Intention are assessed using the same scales used in the Tussyadiah, Wang, Jung and tom Dieck (2018) study. The 4 item Presence, the 5 item Enjoyment and the 3 item Visit Intention scales all employ a 5-point Likert measure with responses ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. It is hypothesized that this study will support Tussyadiah, et.al’s, (2018) work that revealed that a “sense of presence during a VR experience with a tourism destination will lead to positive consequences…which leads to visit intention.”

Results

To date, a fall class of N=11 American college students viewed and assessed the 1932 Lake Placid Olympic bobsled 360 VR video. A preliminary analysis of one item per scale revealed the following. The “Presence” scale revealed a positive 4.2/5.0 response to “I feel like I was actually there in the VR environment.” The “Enjoyment” scale revealed a positive 4.5/5.0 response and a review of the Visit Intention scale revealed a 3.6/5.0 to “I can see myself visiting the Olympic facilities at Lake Placid, NY in the future.”

After all 4 surveys are completed, a detailed analysis will be undertaken. This pilot study will serve as the basis for a larger and more randomized study of future sport management students and their immersion into 360 VR Olympic venue tourism.