

Study finds realism a key factor in driving engagement with virtual reality videos

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A recent study finds that realism is a key factor in determining whether viewers engage with virtual reality (VR) videos—and that engagement is itself a key factor in determining whether viewers are interested in

watching VR videos in the future.

The researchers focused on VR videos that offer a 360-degree view of a given scene that viewers can navigate on conventional [video](#) screens; VR headsets were not required.

For the study, researchers surveyed 1,422 study participants located in the United States, all of whom had [previous experience](#) with virtual reality videos. Participants were asked a series of questions designed to explore both which factors drew them to VR videos and what elements of the videos increased viewer engagement.

"We found there were two aspects of [virtual reality](#) videos that were the most powerful predictors of whether viewers enjoyed VR videos and engaged with their content," says Yang Cheng, first author of the study and an associate professor of communication at North Carolina State University. "Specifically, we found that realism and enjoyment were the key variables here. Another variable that contributed to user engagement was whether the VR videos were part of an interactive platform that allowed users to establish a sense of community.

"Our study is the first to identify that realism in these videos is a key variable in driving viewer engagement," Cheng says. "And the more engaged viewers were, the more likely they were to want to view additional VR videos in the future."

The researchers note that their findings can be used by video developers to improve user engagement and encourage continued use of immersive videos.

The research was published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

More information: Yang Cheng et al, Shared Virtual Reality Experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring the Gratifications and Effects of Engagement with Immersive Videos, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph19095056](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19095056)

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