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DIGITALISATION OF HERITAGE TOURISM EXPERIENCES: a
Flemish Heritage Visitor Perspective

Tips & tricks for using technology to create immersive heritage tourism experiences

1. WHO IS THE FLEMISH HERITAGE VISITOR

- Accidental heritage visitors — 7%
- Heritage-orientated visitors — 13%
- Casual/interested heritage visitors — 80%

1. CASUAL/INTERESTED HERITAGE VISITORS
- Average heritage capital
- Seek interactive, short, easily accessible edutainment experiences
- Require push towards digital platforms

2. HERITAGE-ORIENTATED VISITORS
- High heritage capital
- Plan holidays around heritage, more time, stay longer
- Indulge in creative learning experiences

3. ACCIDENTAL HERITAGE VISITORS
- Low heritage capital
- Seek sun, sea, sand instead of heritage
- Cultural heritage experiences should be fun & interactive
- Need to be led to digital experiences

2. GENERAL INTEREST IN TECHNOLOGY

1. TECHNOLOGY FANS
- Will try new technology when the opportunity arises

54%

2. TECHNOLOGY HESITANT
- Not too interested in new technology
- Wait until new tech is tried & tested

33%

3. DIE-HARD TECHNOLOGY ENTHUSIASTS
- Great fans of technology
- Try out new tech as it's released

13%

3. THINGS THAT CREATE A MEMORABLE HERITAGE TOURISM EXPERIENCE

A beautiful, interesting environment,   ¼

Heritage theme   ¼

State of the infra/suprastructure   ¼

Contextualisation of the experience   ¼

1. HERITAGE THEME
- Portray impactful event(s)
- Tangible currently existing and connected artefacts (moveable/immovable)
- Objects that do not exist anymore

2. CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE EXPERIENCE
- Storytelling: personal stories/experiences
- Evoke all senses (visual, audio, storytelling)
- Interactive, short, concise, guided visits

3. STATE OF THE INFRA/SUPRASTRUCTURE
- Old, run-down, 'sad-looking' infra-/suprastructure diminishes the experience

4. A BEAUTIFUL, INTERESTING ENVIRONMENT

4. PREFERRED EXPERIENCES WITH TECHNOLOGY

VISITORS **ARE OPEN TO**:
- **Basic technology** (audio phones, scanning of QR codes with smartphone etc.)
- Slightly **less familiar with** more **advanced technology** such as AR and VR

HOWEVER
- If the use of advanced technology was 1) **explicitly offered** to them, 2) according to the **preconditions stated in this brochure**, visitors are more open to trying it

5. OVERCOMING TECHNOLOGY-USE BARRIERS

1. TRUE BARRIERS FOR THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

A. Boring experiences!

AR/VR showing 'boring' objects in 'boring' environments with added ambience (sounds, visuals) that doesn't captivate attention/imagination

Possible solutions:

- **When presenting objects in AR/VR experience,** make sure that they have personal/emotional connections to the 'story' being told
- **Objects shown in motion/use -** e.g. a person using the 3D object to achieve something
- **Ambient sound** to make the experience more sensory & immersive
- **Objects as part of a landscape** – show objects in the environment where they were found
- **Good storytelling –** personal stories & anecdotes create a more gripping experience
- **Good narration voice is crucial**
- Create **cohesion between the experience environment** and the **technology** being used

B. Too many apps!

Downloading and learning how to navigate and use a new app for each heritage experience is too much effort

Possible solution:

- Together with other heritage partners, develop or collectively make use of a communal, single app
- The app should cover the required media and technological capabilities
- The app should cover a wide range of heritage sites (provide opportunities for many to develop content for the app)

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6. SMALLER BARRIERS TO TECHNOLOGY USE
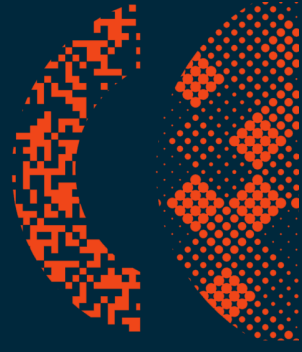
SMALLER, YET SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS

1. **Over-interpretation by technology**
   o Keep info short, concise – "will the info enhance the experience?"

2. **Inconvenience of loaned museum device** (don't always want to walk back to return device)
   o Provide option to use own device
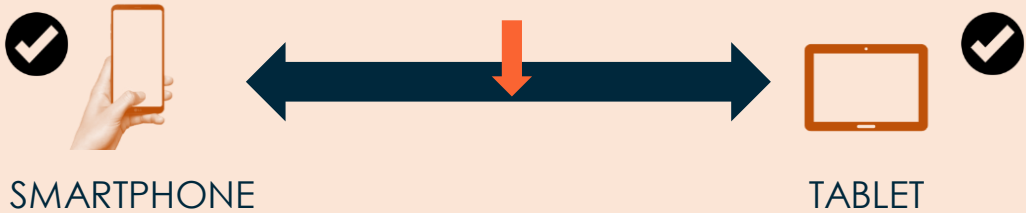   o Make device returns easy & intuitive

3. **Technological experiences that don't work correctly** – creates an instant negative image of the experience
   o Make use of trusted technology providers
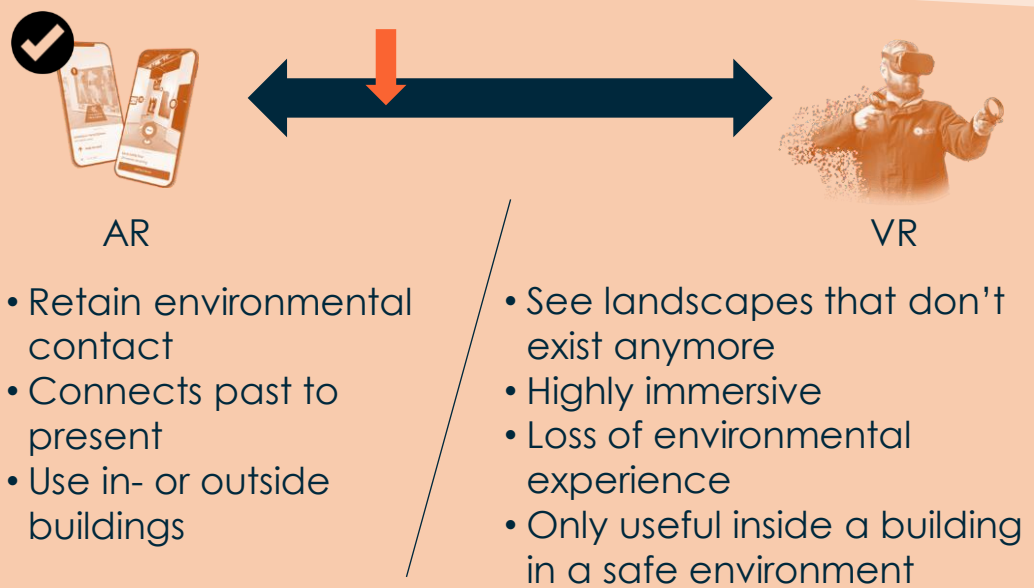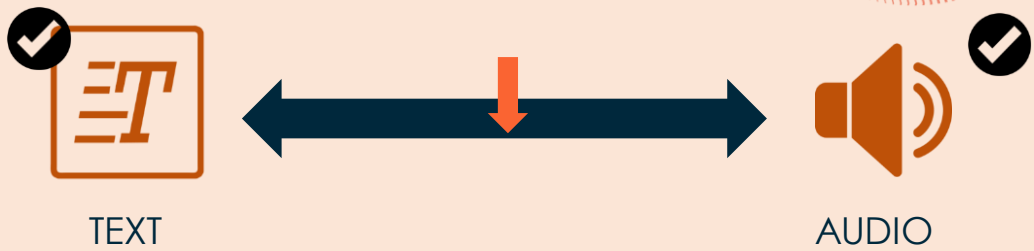   o Do regular checks/maintenance on technology on offer

4. **Large visitor group sizes** – Technology degrades experiences when travelling in groups (group members cannot be sufficiently social)
   o Provide alternatives (guided tours) when groups are visiting

7. PREFERRED USE OF TECHNOLOGY DURING HERITAGE VISITS

SMARTPHONE ← → TABLET

MUSEUM DEVICE ← → OWN DEVICE

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7. THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY DURING HERITAGE VISITS

TEXT ←→ **AUDIO**

AR ←→ **VR**

- Retain environmental contact
- Connects past to present
- Use in- or outside buildings

- See landscapes that don't exist anymore
- Highly immersive
- Loss of environmental experience
- Only useful inside a building in a safe environment

8. ADVANTAGES OF TECHNOLOGY USE

1 **It brings heritage to life!**
- See things as they are or as they used to be
- Stimulates the imagination

2 **Creates deeper heritage meaning!**
- Improved awareness
- Increased interest, understanding & learning

3 **Increased 'fun factor'!**
- Increased interactivity & immersion
- Improved atmosphere, sense of mystery & surprise

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9. TECH PREFERENCES ACCORDING TO VISITOR GROUP CONSISTENCY

GROUPS

- **Mostly disruptive**: group members want to speak to one another
- **Younger groups** are **more open** to its use

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN

- **More entertainment, less education**
- **Tech triggers visitation motives in children**

INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS

- Preference for either **technological experience OR** (passionate) **human-guided tour**

DISINTERESTED IN MUSEUMS

- **AR** can make museums **more appealing**
- **Learn through entertainment**

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CONTACT US

Do you want to take the first steps towards creating digital heritage experiences but some things still a bit unclear? We can provide further advice for setting you on the course.

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