

Virtual Reality for Social Impact: Exploring the Potential of a 360-degree VR Documentary 'The Hidden' based on Bonded Laborers in India

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Abstract : Virtual Reality (VR) has emerged as a promising tool to create immersive experiences for social impact. This study examines the capacity of virtual reality (VR) as a means of creating social change. It does so by analyzing a 360-degree VR documentary called 'The Hidden,' which specifically addresses the problem of bonded labour in India. Bonded labour is a contemporary manifestation of slavery in which individuals are coerced into working to repay debts that can endure for many generations. The documentary seeks to enhance awareness and elicit empathy towards this matter. The study utilizes a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate the influence of 'The Hidden' on the audience's views and their inclination to combat bonded labour. A total of ninety-six individuals used Oculus Quest 2 VR headsets to watch the documentary and subsequently engaged in interviews to discuss their encounters. The data underwent analysis using linear regression to discover any noteworthy trends in the replies. The results indicate that virtual reality (VR) has the potential to greatly amplify viewers' emotional involvement and facilitate societal transformation by offering immersive, direct encounters with crucial social matters.

Keywords : virtual reality, societal influence, indentured servitude, 360-degree virtual reality documentary, immersive media, societal transformation

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