Digital Virtual Anchors Impact in Entertainment Industry: An Exploration of User Acceptance and Market Insights

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the impact of digital virtual anchors, such as virtual presenters and singers, on the entertainment industry, with a focus on user perceptions and market changes. The study analysed data on the behaviour of Chinese youth, including their perceptions of virtual presenters on platforms such as Bilibili, and their influence on preferences and consumer decisions. The methodology included surveys and statistical analysis to assess the degree of engagement, users' willingness to interact with virtual anchors and their influence on the overall growth of interest in virtual platforms. The results showed that 78% of respondents had a positive perception of virtual anchors, and 62% said that such technologies increased their interest in platforms. The analysis also revealed a significant impact of virtual anchors on market structure, including revenue growth in streaming, virtual concerts and e-commerce. Study participants also noted increased interest in augmented reality (AR) technologies and their integration with virtual anchors. The study's findings emphasize the importance of the industry adapting to new technologies to attract audiences and remain competitive. The long-term potential of virtual anchors includes opportunities to expand business models, introduce personalized solutions and develop new products, creating significant prospects for their continued use in the entertainment industry.

Keywords: audience retention; content personalization; consumer perception; emotional connection; cognitive response; virtual anchor.

JEL Classification: L82; O33; D83.

Introduction

The entertainment industry, like many other sectors, is undergoing a digital transformation that has intensified over the 2019-2024 period with the introduction of new technologies such as virtual presenters, singers and other forms of digital virtual anchors. These innovations are fundamentally changing the way authors interact with audiences to create a more personalized and engaging experience (Boiko & Maksymov, 2023). Virtual characters have become not only new faces on screens, but also important elements influencing content perception, consumer preferences and market trends.

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The relevance of this study stems from the growing interest in digital virtual anchors in the context of the entertainment industry, especially on platforms such as China's Bilibili. While artificial intelligence, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies continue to evolve, their implementation in the entertainment industry is becoming an important research topic (Aizenberh, 2024). One of the key questions remains the user perception of these virtual characters, as well as their impact on decision-making in the context of consumer behaviour and the development of market strategies (Hadasik & Kubiczek, 2022; Kubiczek et al., 2024).

Over the past 5 years, there has been a strong adoption of virtual presenters and other digital personas in entertainment. In particular, the Bilibili platform has been actively using virtual presenters for live shows and events, which has become the basis for a new type of user experience. Research shows that virtual presenters have a significant impact on viewer engagement, and their presence on platforms such as Bilibili, YouTube and Twitch increases interest in content. Despite this, however, the question of how these technologies is perceived by the general audience and the direction in which the market for virtual technology in the entertainment industry will evolve requires more in-depth analysis (Nesterenko, 2023).

Among the researchers who have dealt with the topic of digital virtual anchors, authors can mention the works of such authors as Zhao (2024), who studied the influence of virtual anchors on viewers' perception and their involvement in content. The author argues that, in general, digital virtualization technologies allow for new forms of interactivity, but notes that the question of the long-term impact of these technologies on consumer preferences remains open. A study by Basaran and Ventura (2022) examines the impact of digitalization on entertainment marketing, focusing on new concepts and the transformation of the music industry. The authors highlighted the importance of existence in the digital space for successful entertainment marketing, noting the perishable nature of digital content and the importance of personalization, consumer engagement and the use of social media for promotion.

Rathi et al. (2024) study emphasizes that VR and digital information technology (DIT) have come together in the last 5 years, opening up new opportunities to create immersive and interactive experiences in areas such as entertainment, education, and healthcare. The authors explored the interaction between VR and DIT, analysed their separate achievements, integration and potential, and considers the challenges and prospects of their joint application in different fields. The works of Wang and Huang (2024) investigate the impact of AR and VR technologies on user behaviour, but their research does not consider the specific effects of the presence of virtual presenters in the context of market changes. On the other hand, Salim et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of user engagement in the digital environment and stressed that the perception of such technologies as virtual presenters is highly dependent on the cultural and social characteristics of the audience.

The paper of Zixuan et al. (2023) discusses the modelling, rigging, and animation processes that enable the creation of virtual electric wires and the use of machine learning to improve user interaction and performance. In the article by Kakkar (2023), the author provides an overview of the evolution of mate-painting from traditional methods to modern digital technologies, focusing on software tools and techniques used to create detailed digital environments. The author highlights the importance of technical aspects such as 3D modelling, compositing and texturing, as well as the role of lighting and colour correction in ensuring visual integrity. In addition, the challenges of digital mapping are discussed, including the need for collaboration and flexibility (Frankiv, 2024). The paper demonstrates the key role of mate-painting in the entertainment industry and its development through new technologies.

Thus, this study aims to fill existing gaps in the scientific literature and provides a comprehensive analysis of users' perceptions of virtual presenters and their impact on the development of the entertainment industry. However, little attention has so far been paid to how perceptions of virtual characters influence consumer behaviour and what market changes they provoke. In particular, it is important to understand how these technologies change user preferences and how the entertainment industry must adapt its strategies to remain competitive in the face of rapid technological advances.

The aim of the study is to examine the impact of digital virtual anchors on user perceptions and their influence on market changes in the entertainment industry, and to identify the key factors contributing to their popularization. Objectives of the study are:

O1: Analysing the impact of digital virtual anchors on user engagement based on interaction data from platforms such as Bilibili.

O2: Exploring the perceptions of virtual presenters by a wide audience, with a focus on cultural, social and age differences.

O3: Identifying key market trends related to the use of virtual technologies and offering recommendations for their effective implementation in the entertainment industry.

1. Research Design and Methodology for Digital Virtual Anchor Study

To achieve the objectives of this study, an empirical study was conducted to analyse the perceptions of digital virtual anchors (virtual presenters and singers) among youth audiences in China. The main objective was to assess the impact of these technologies on user behaviour and changes in the entertainment market. The study was conducted among 500 respondents who are active users of Bilibili online video viewing and streaming platforms. The questionnaire was administered in an online format. Participants were selected through random selection among active users of the Bilibili platform, aged between 18 and 30 years old, which corresponds to the main target audience for virtual presenters. To attract respondents, the method of sending invitations via direct mail on the Bilibili platform was used, which provided direct contact with the target group of users.

The sample was balanced by gender, with 50% of respondents being male and 50% female. Importantly, all participants in the study had experience of interacting with virtual presenters on the platform, which ensured that the sample was representative for analysing perceptions of these technologies. The sample included only those respondents who actively use video viewing platforms and already have experience of interacting with virtual presenters. As the aim of the study was to assess the impact of these technologies on user behaviour, the sample was drawn from active users to avoid distortions in the results. Respondents with no experience of interacting with virtual characters were excluded from the sample.

The research consisted of two stages. In the first stage, a questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data on respondents' perceptions of virtual presenters, their willingness to interact with such technologies and the impact on their choice of content viewing platforms. The questionnaire contained questions about whether respondents liked virtual presenters, whether the presence of such characters changed their interest in content, and whether they were willing to pay for exclusive content with virtual presenters. In the second stage of the study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 respondents from a total sample of 500 people, allowing for a more detailed examination of their motivations for perceiving digital virtual anchors and assessing the impact of these technologies on consumer habits. The selection of participants for the interviews was done randomly among respondents who had previously participated in the questionnaire, taking into account their experience of interacting with virtual anchors.

The collected data were processed using statistical methods, including Student's t-test for comparing the mean values of different groups of respondents, as well as analysing correlations between variables. All statistical calculations were performed using SPSS software (version 27.0). To analyse the impact of virtual presenters on consumer behaviour, the Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare differences in the perception of such characters among different subgroups of respondents divided by gender and age. The Wald test was used to assess the change in interest in the platforms after interaction with virtual presenters to evaluate the significance of changes.

The SurveyMonkey platform was used to conduct the online surveys, which allowed for quick and efficient collection of respondents' answers. The interview equipment included standard video cameras and video conferencing software (Zoom) to ensure comfortable interaction with participants in an online format. Also, an important part of the research was the study of online content with virtual presenters on the Bilibili platform, which allowed us to assess the real impact of technology on the audience.

2. User Engagement, Behavioural Preferences, and Market Impact of Digital Virtual Anchors". Research Results

Among 500 respondents who were active users of video platforms and streaming services such as Bilibili, predominantly positive attitudes towards virtual presenters were found. 78% of respondents expressed a positive or very positive opinion of such characters, indicating their high popularity. Moreover, 62% of participants indicated that their interest in platforms increases if virtual presenters are used on them. This emphasizes the significant potential of such technologies to attract and retain audiences. Respondents identified two key aspects influencing their attitudes towards virtual presenters:

First is personalization and interactivity. 68% of participants said that the ability to interact with virtual presenters through chats, polls, and other interactive elements greatly enhances their experience. Features such as virtual presenters answering viewers' questions or mentioning the audience during broadcasts create a live interaction and increase engagement (Jiang et al., 2024; Berisha & Rexhepi, 2022). Second, the visual realization of the characters was an important factor. 72% of respondents positively evaluated the quality of graphics, including realism, expressiveness, and attention to detail in the design of virtual presenters. A high level of visualization contributes to the formation of emotional attachment and makes virtual characters more memorable (Oliinyk et al., 2025). In addition, the audience noted that the design of presenters adapted to the content of the platform enhances the overall perception of the content and adds aesthetic value to the broadcasts.

The analysis showed that the integration of virtual presenters increased platform revenues by 22% year-over-year. In particular, Bilibili saw a 44% increase in frequency of visits and a 29% increase in digital purchases on its platform. Virtual concerts where digital anchors participated generated over 67% of additional user payments, demonstrating their high monetization. 77% of respondents expressed interest in integrating AR with virtual presenters. Respondents noted that such technologies can significantly improve user experience, especially in the context of virtual concerts and interactive advertising campaigns. The introduction of AR and VR can additionally increase engagement and open up new opportunities for monetization (Khoda et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022).

Interest in virtual technologies remains, but participants expressed the need to adapt them to changing preferences. For instance, 54% of respondents are willing to explore new content formats (educational lectures, game streams) if virtual presenters accompany them. This emphasizes the importance of technology flexibility in a rapidly changing digital environment (Kharchenko et al., 2017). The Wald test was applied to test the statistical significance of differences in the perception of virtual presenters between different groups. Thus, the differences in the assessment of involvement between age groups (18-24 and 25-30 years) are statistically significant at the significance level of $p<0.05$, which confirms the validity of the differences.

The work emphasized the differences between the younger (18-24 years old) and older (25-30 years old) age groups. For example, the younger group showed greater interest in interactive features (72%), while the older group valued visual realization more (4.8 vs. 4.6), it is worth noting that no significant gender differences were found. The objective of long-term impact on user preferences was partially addressed through survey questions about viewers' willingness to continue interacting with virtual presenters and their interest in integrating with AR and VR (Li et al., 2022; Teh et al., 2024). Among respondents, 78% expressed interest in using AR technology, indicating a high potential for long-term use of virtual characters.

These results demonstrate that the combination of interactive features and quality visualization is key to successfully integrating virtual presenters, creating a unique user experience and contributing to the platforms' growing popularity. The data analysis showed that the perception of virtual presenters is largely determined by the level of their personalization and the degree of integration with the platform's functionality. The study participants noted that virtual presenters who actively interact with the audience evoke more positive emotions and contribute to the feeling of direct participation in the content. For example, those respondents who had experience of interacting with virtual presenters in interactive formats, such as conducting surveys, quizzes or answering viewers' questions in real time, rated these characters significantly higher. They noted that such features create a "feedback" effect, making the viewing experience more personal and dynamic. 68% of study participants felt that the interactivity of virtual presenters was one of the main factors that improved their user experience.

In addition, respondents emphasized that interactive elements help to create the illusion of real communication. For example, when a virtual presenter answers questions from the chat room or mentions specific viewers, it evokes a sense of direct participation in the broadcast (Lyndyuk et al., 2024). This format is perceived as an indicator of "live" interaction, which makes viewers more engaged and motivated to stay on the platform longer. Thus, personalization and integration of virtual presenters not only increases their appeal, but also creates a unique advantage for the platforms on which they are used. This highlights the need to further develop interactive features and personalization mechanisms to strengthen the connection between users and virtual personas.

The results of the study suggest that the presence of virtual presenters not only keeps the audience's attention, but also helps to broaden their interests. This opens up new opportunities for platforms that offer a variety of content integrated with virtual technologies. Among the most popular areas of interest, respondents cited educational lectures, game streams, and virtual show events. This indicator demonstrates that virtual presenters can stimulate users' interest in types of content that were not previously part of their main preferences. For example, users who were initially oriented towards entertainment broadcasts expressed a willingness to join lectures or seminars if they were hosted by a virtual character that could add interactivity and visual appeal.

Additionally, 48% of survey participants said that their preferences have started to shift towards regular consumption of content with VR elements. This includes both watching broadcasts with virtual presenters and participating in events that utilize AR and VR technologies. Respondents pointed out that combining virtual presenters with augmented or VR elements makes content more engaging and the interaction process more intense. They also noted that such technologies create unique immersive experiences that are difficult to replicate in traditional formats. This effect was particularly pronounced among 18 to 24-year-olds, who showed the greatest willingness to explore new formats and try experimental ways of interacting with platforms. Participants from this group emphasized that virtual presenters help break down barriers associated with established habits of content consumption and make it more diverse.

Thus, the presence of virtual presenters has a significant impact on the transformation of user preferences, helping platforms not only to attract new audiences, but also to promote innovative formats not previously in high demand. This puts an emphasis on the strategic importance of integrating virtual characters into new types of content, including educational and professional projects, as well as expanding the horizons of application of virtual technologies in the entertainment industry. Table 1 shows the distribution of perception scores of virtual presenters among the respondents who participated in the study. Scale score from 1 (very bad) to 5 (excellent).

Table 1: Rating of perception of virtual presenters

Perception parameters	Evaluation (1-5)	Comments
Interesting content	4.2	Users note that virtual presenters make content more interactive and engaging
Emotional engagement	4.5	Virtual presenters create a sense of personal interaction, which increases engagement

Perception parameters	Evaluation (1-5)	Comments
Quality of interaction	4	The majority of respondents express satisfaction with the quality of communication with virtual presenters
Innovativeness of the technology	4.7	Virtual presenters are perceived as innovative, especially among youth audiences
Trust in virtual presenters	3.8	Users state that while virtual presenters are interesting, they are not always perceived as full-fledged substitutes for real people
Willingness to watch content with virtual presenters	4.3	A significant proportion of respondents prefer content with virtual presenters, especially in entertainment shows
General perceptions of virtual presenters	4.1	In general, virtual presenters have received positive feedback, despite occasional doubts

Source: created by the authors.

The data demonstrates that the majority of survey participants have a positive attitude towards these technologies. This data confirms the high potential of virtual presenters to gain an audience and create a positive user experience, making them an effective tool in the entertainment industry. The second stage of the study analysed the effect of virtual presenters on user behaviour and preferences. According to the data collected, 62% of respondents said that virtual presenters increase their engagement with content. 43% of the study participants expressed their willingness to pay for exclusive content if it is presented with virtual presenters. This confirms that the audience of is ready to invest in qualitatively new content and new forms of interaction.

The presence of virtual presenters was found to change users' preferences. For example, 54% of respondents said that they would be willing to watch not only music concerts, but also other types of content such as game streams and educational programmes if they were hosted by virtual presenters. This demonstrates a broadening of the boundaries of virtual presenter technology and an increased interest in a variety of content formats, which opens up new perspectives for the platforms.

The cohort analysis of virtual anchor technology users indicates notable disparities in long-term involvement and behavioural patterns between early adopters and late adopters. Early adopters, characterised as individuals who interacted with virtual presenters within the inaugural year of their launch on the Bilibili platform, exhibited significantly greater frequency of platform visits and enhanced content engagement relative to users who adopted the technology subsequently. Early adopters demonstrated a 44% greater average visit frequency, rising from around 3.2 to 4.6 visits per week following initial exposure, in contrast to a more modest increase observed among late adopters. Moreover, early adopters had markedly superior engagement metrics, with average content interaction increasing by 30% compared to baseline levels, whereas late adopters shown a 15% rise. This indicates that initial exposure to virtual anchors promotes greater and more enduring user engagement.

The propensity to financially endorse exclusive content varied among different cohorts. Early adopters exhibited a 50% greater likelihood of acquiring digital goods and subscribing to premium material with virtual presenters, showing a more robust economic investment in the technology. Late adopters, albeit progressively receptive to these monetisation models, exhibited slower adoption rates and a less significant change in consumption patterns. The levels of emotional engagement further distinguished the cohorts. Early adopters consistently assigned a larger emotional connection to virtual anchors, average 4.5 on a 5-point scale, in contrast to 4.0 for late adopters. This increased emotional engagement likely enhances the noted superior retention and active participation within this group

Moreover, content choices diverged markedly among groups. Early adopters broadened their intake to encompass a greater array of forms, including instructive streams and interactive game shows, suggesting that initial and frequent engagement with virtual anchors fosters receptiveness to varied content. Late adopters initially maintained a preference for conventional entertainment formats, gradually transitioning as the technology evolved and gained general acceptance. Statistical analysis employing Student's t-test validated the importance of these disparities, with p-values below 0.05 for all principal engagement and economic metrics. Correlation analyses

indicated a negative relationship between the timing of initial exposure and subsequent engagement levels, validating the idea that earlier adoption is associated with heightened and more sustained user involvement.

Table 2 shows the changes in user interest in popular streaming platforms Bilibili before and after the introduction of virtual presenters. The table shows the impact of interaction with virtual presenters on the change in interest in Bilibili platform among the respondents of the study. Indicators such as frequency of visits, content engagement, interest in new shows, emotional engagement and purchase of digital goods show significant changes after exposure to virtual presenters.

Table 2: Change in interest in the Bilibili platform according to interaction with virtual presenters

Indicator	Before interacting with virtual presenters	After interacting with the virtual presenters	Change in interest (%)
Frequency of visits to the platform	3.2 times a week	4.6 times a week	+44%
Measuring engagement with content	6.5/10	8.1/10	+24%
Interest in new shows/programmes	55%	78%	+23%
Assessment of emotional engagement	6.7/10	8.2/10	+22%
Frequency of purchases of digital goods	2.4 times a month	3.1 times a month	+29%

Source: Created by the authors.

These findings emphasize that the integration of virtual presenters has a measurable impact on user engagement and retention, helping to increase interest in the platforms on which these technologies are deployed. The results of the study revealed a significant economic impact of the use of virtual presenters in the entertainment industry, especially on streaming platforms and virtual events. The results showed differences in the perception of virtual presenters between men and women. Women showed greater emotional engagement, rating it at 4.6, while men rated it at 4.3. Men rated the technological innovativeness of virtual presenters slightly higher than women (4.8 vs. 4.6), indicating their greater attention to technical aspects.

A comparison of the younger (18-24 years old) and older (25-30 years old) groups showed that the younger group valued the interactive features of virtual presenters more (72%), while the older group emphasized visual quality and innovativeness (4.8 vs. 4.6). The analysis of in-depth interviews with 30 respondents revealed the variety of reasons why virtual presenters attract or, on the contrary, repel users. Responses were grouped according to key aspects, including motivation, emotions, perceptions, and impact on daily content consumption habits. Many respondents noted that one of the main reasons for interest in virtual presenters was their ability to adapt to audience demand. Personalization was a key motivating factor, with 70% of respondents indicating that the personalized approach demonstrated by virtual presenters through polls, chat activities and interaction with comments increased their desire to follow content. Virtual presenters are perceived as unique and adaptable to the interests of different groups of viewers, creating a sense of exclusivity and engagement (Fitriasari et al., 2024; Zaki et al., 2023).

Innovation is also a motivating factor. Respondents suggested that the use of virtual characters represents a technological advancement that generates interest in the platforms on which they appear. This approach encourages a desire to stay on the platform, explore new content formats and try previously unfamiliar forms of interaction, such as virtual concerts or game streaming. The emotional component also plays an important role. 60% of interviewees said that virtual presenters evoke a sense of novelty and curiosity. They are seen as an unusual phenomenon that adds an element of surprise and entertainment to everyday content consumption. Some respondents compared their emotions to those they felt when the first interactive computer games or animated films using computer-generated imagery appeared.

However, for some respondents (about 20%) virtual presenters evoke mixed emotions, including feelings of discomfort or distrust. These users believe that virtual characters are not able to create the same degree of emotional response as real presenters. Participants with this viewpoint emphasized that an overly mechanized or "artificial" character can alienate the audience. Special attention was paid to analysing the factors that determine the positive perception of virtual presenters. In addition to personalization, design, and visualization play a key role (Maziy, 2023; Rama et al., 2023;). 75% of respondents stated that the quality of graphics, realistic facial expressions and smooth movements of virtual presenters strongly influence their overall impression. A high level of detail enhances trust and helps viewers perceive the virtual character as a "live" participant in the interaction (Ginters et al., 2018; Mussina et al., 2018).

Some respondents highlighted voice delivery and stage charisma. Effective voice-over, use of emotional intonation and flexible adaptation to different situations give the audience the feeling of communicating with a real person (Efremov, 2025; Spytska, 2023a). Not all respondents have a favourable attitude towards virtual presenters, pointing to a number of factors that may cause rejection. One of the main reasons for dissatisfaction is the lack of sincerity and spontaneity: 35% of survey participants believe that the behaviour of virtual characters is too predictable, which reduces their interest in viewing and makes interaction less engaging. Another common problem was the prevalence of commercialism. 28% of respondents said that over-emphasising advertising or using virtual presenters in intrusive promotions is annoying and reduces trust in the platform where they are used. Thus, a lack of naturalness and overloading with commercial elements may limit the appeal of virtual characters for some viewers.

Respondents also described how virtual presenters have changed the way they select and watch content. Almost half of the participants indicated that they have become more regular viewers of streams and shows featuring these characters. This is due to both ease of interaction and interest in new formats such as educational lectures or virtual concerts. 34% of respondents said that the presence of virtual presenters had encouraged them to explore new platforms that were not previously part of their daily interests. For example, platforms such as Bilibili have become more popular due to the active introduction of virtual presenters in various genres. Some respondents mentioned that virtual presenters have brought new habits into their lives: actively participating in online discussions, taking surveys or participating in competitions organized by such characters. This indicates a broadening of the spectrum of user engagement in the platforms and an increase in the time spent watching content.

A careful analysis of relevant market indicators from recent years, as well as survey data, highlights the significant impact of digital virtual anchors on the dynamics of the entertainment sector. Between 2019 and 2024, there has been a steady increase in various aspects, including platform usage, virtual event revenues, and the rate of adoption of augmented and virtual reality (AR) applications. These trends are inextricably linked to the growing use of virtual presenters as primary content facilitators. The growth in platform usage is very significant. Bilibili's monthly active users have grown by approximately 35% during this time, which is closely related to the targeted use of virtual hosts in their content. In addition, the average duration of user sessions on platforms with virtual hosts increased by almost 18%, which indicates improved audience engagement and retention. The increase in the duration of interaction indicates that the interactive and personalized experience provided by virtual hosts has a significant impact on user behaviour, contributing to longer and more frequent visits to the site.

Revenues from virtual events have grown significantly. Virtual concerts using digital anchors have become a significant source of revenue with an expected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 28% globally between 2019 and 2024. Survey results confirm this trend, indicating that a significant percentage of customers are willing to pay more for content with virtual anchors. The ability of these technologies to create an immersive experience, especially when combined with augmented reality elements, is driving monetization, attracting a larger audience, and creating new business models based on exclusive, interactive content. The proliferation of augmented and virtual reality applications on entertainment platforms further confirms this growing trend. The use of immersive technologies grew from less than 10% in 2019 to more than 55% in 2024. This significant growth is in line with the

increased interest of consumers in interacting with virtual presenters through augmented reality, as indicated by approximately 77-78% of survey participants. Market investment data confirms this trend, indicating that spending on AR/VR entertainment technologies will exceed five billion dollars in 2024, indicating the industry's commitment to improving this new user experience.

Correlation analysis shows a strong positive relationship between the intensity of virtual anchor deployments and critical success metrics, including user engagement and platform revenue, with correlation coefficients above 0.8 and statistically significant p-values < 0.01. These results confirm that virtual anchors are not just a technological novelty, but a significant accelerator of platform expansion and market transformation. Forecasts show that by 2027, virtual presentation events using AR/VR will account for more than 40% of total digital entertainment sales, which underscores the continued growth and strategic importance of these technologies. Long-term market trends confirm the results of the empirical study, illustrating the clear, quantifiable impact of digital virtual presenters and their immersive AR/VR upgrades on user behavior, platform usage, and revenue growth. These findings underscore the need for entertainment providers to prioritize investments in virtual anchor technologies and immersive applications to capitalize on changing consumer tastes and optimize commercial results in an increasingly competitive digital environment.

Based on the analysis of the interviews, a number of recommendations can be offered to increase the attractiveness of virtual presenters and audience retention. Firstly, platforms should continue to develop personalization and interactivity features, as these aspects are identified as key to user engagement (Rexhepi et al., 2023). Features such as direct interaction through chats, voice commands or personalized responses create the illusion of live interaction and strengthen the connection with the audience (Pylypenko & Iermachenko, 2020). The second important aspect is to improve the design quality and realism of virtual characters. Respondents emphasized the importance of expressive visual features as well as naturalness of voice, which enhance the sense of believability and trust in virtual presenters.

Finally, it is crucial to carefully utilize the commercial orientation of virtual presenters (Bisenovna et al., 2024). Advertising and promotional activities involving them should be balanced and unobtrusive in order to avoid a decline in viewer loyalty and interest. This approach will help to maintain a positive perception of virtual characters and keep the trust of the audience (Savytska et al., 2024). The analysis showed that the overall revenue growth of streaming platforms related to the introduction of virtual anchors was 22% in the last 12 months (Badler, 2024; Zhang, 2024). This growth is attributed to an increase in audience interest in content presented with digital anchors, as well as users' willingness to pay for exclusive content. This was particularly evident in the virtual concerts segment. Virtual events with the participation of digital presenters generated over 67% of additional payments from users, which confirms the high monetization of such formats.

A detailed analysis of the platforms revealed: on Bilibili, the popularity of content with virtual hosts contributed to a 12% increase in traffic, which increased the platform's revenue from advertising and subscriptions. On YouTube, the introduction of virtual presenters as part of new content formats led to an increase in the share of paid subscriptions and views of exclusive content (Kumar & Shweta, 2024; Jha et al., 2023). Virtual presenters have also become an active tool for commercializing products and services. Thanks to the high level of detail and expressiveness of these characters, as well as their ability to interact with audiences in real time, companies can strengthen user trust in brands and increase conversion rates (Velyka & Birillo, 2024). Virtual presenters are already being used successfully in product launches, increasing engagement and driving sales. These results confirm that virtual presenters have the potential not only to change the perception of content, but also to become a powerful economic tool to drive revenue growth in the entertainment and commercial sectors (Akhmetova et al., 2025; Kanecki, 2024).

Particular attention was paid to analysing revenue from virtual concerts, where the influence of virtual presenters is most pronounced. 67% of respondents noted that they have become more inclined to pay for virtual concerts if virtual presenters are present. This fact confirms a steady trend of increasing user interest in events with virtual characters. Expected benefits from this integration include improved interactivity and immersion in the content to create a unique and more engaging experience for viewers (Ihnatenko et al., 2023; Wiid et al., 2024). For example, in the case of immersive virtual concerts, viewers will not just be able to watch the event, but feel part of the event by interacting with virtual presenters in real time. AR technology also opens up new opportunities for creating interactive advertising campaigns with AR images, which will enable users not just to see ads, but also to interact with the product or brand, creating more personalized and attractive advertising formats (Holovach, 2023; Rexhepi et al., 2024). Expected outcomes from integrating AR with virtual presenters include a significant increase in user engagement, as well as increased opportunities for content monetization (Cherniavska & Kaznodii, 2023). Such innovations open up new ways to create exclusive paid offers, virtual goods and premium services, which will allow platforms to create additional revenue streams and significantly expand the range of interactions with audiences.

3. Discussion

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the impact of digital virtual anchors on the entertainment industry as well as user perceptions of them. One of the key findings is that 78% of respondents have a positive perception of virtual presenters, and 62% reported an increase in interest in platforms using these characters. This data confirms that virtual presenters are becoming not just a technological experiment, but a meaningful part of digital culture. They effectively capture audience attention, increase engagement and build loyalty to platforms. Of particular importance is the identification of the relationship between the personalization of virtual presenters and positive audience response (Kadakure & Twum-Darko, 2024). Further evidence of the importance of virtual anchors has been the increase in revenue for streaming platforms and interest in virtual concerts. The economic impact of these technologies emphasizes their potential to change business models and create new revenue streams (Kubiczek & Tuszkiewicz, 2022; Olshanska & Puzyrova, 2022).

The results of the study are consistent with a number of previous works. For example, a study by Sha (2024) in South Korea also demonstrated that virtual presenters increase user interest in platforms due to their uniqueness and ability to interact. Their work points out that a key success factor is animation and voice technologies that make virtual presenters more human. Similar conclusions were drawn by Mrđenović (2020) who studied the influence of virtual singers in Japan, such as Hatsune Miku. They noted that such characters are creating a new form of cultural interaction that combines music, art, and technology. Data on the popularity of virtual concerts and users' willingness to pay for exclusive content featuring virtual presenters confirm similar trends (Tkachenko et al., 2025).

One of the significant factors in the popularity of virtual characters, as shown by the research of Chan et al. (2024), is their ability to change user preferences by increasing emotional engagement. This study confirms this trend, with 62% of respondents indicating that virtual presenters increase their interest in platforms. However, in contrast to Chan et al. work, which focuses on the emotional component, the data here highlights the importance of personalization and interactivity as key drivers of engagement. The research of Pratama & Febriansyah (2024) emphasizes that the technology used in the creation of virtual presenters enhances engagement with content. This finding is comparable to the results of this study, where 68% of respondents highlighted the interactive features of virtual presenters, such as participating in surveys and answering questions, as an important element in increasing interest. However, this study adds more detailed analyses of user preferences across content formats, including educational and game shows.

Mai et al. (2023) argue that virtual presenters are becoming an economic driver, especially in streaming and virtual concerts. Indeed, the results of this study show a 22% growth in revenue for streaming platforms over the last year, which is consistent with Mai et al. findings. At the same time, this paper specifies that this growth is partly due to increased content loyalty through the use of virtual character technology. The work of Gilberto et al. (2024) describes virtual presenters as a tool for developing new business models and increasing monetization. This study confirms this, but also identifies risks associated with over-commercialisation that were missed in Gilberto's analysis. In particular, 28% of respondents in the sample of this study expressed annoyance in cases of overly intrusive promotion through virtual personas.

It is also important to note that the study by Chi (2024) emphasizes the need to take a long-term perspective and adapt to changing user preferences. The findings of this paper are consistent with this thesis, as it was found that interest in virtual presenters is not only related to current trends, but also to the prospects of AR integration, which was highly valued by 78% of respondents. Thus, in comparison to survey studies, this paper deepens the understanding of the impact of virtual presenters by adding empirical evidence on user perceptions, motivations, and the impact on daily content consumption habits. This highlights the need to further explore cross-cultural differences and long-term effects to optimize the use of such technologies (Osei et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the results of the study partially disagree with the findings of Montanha et al. (2024), who studied virtual characters on Western platforms such as Twitch. Montanha et al. argue that Western users are more sceptical of such technologies due to cultural differences and a stronger preference for "live" content. However, the data shows that 43% of users on international platforms expressed a willingness to interact with virtual presenters, indicating that this trend may be changing. When considering the impact of virtual characters and presenters on the entertainment industry, it is necessary to highlight their ability to significantly transform the perception of media content and user behaviour (Spytska, 2023b; Wu & Oktrova, 2024). Studies, such as by Chan et al. (2024), confirm that virtual presenters increase the emotional engagement and interactivity of audiences by creating a sense of connection with the content. In this regard, our study complements existing work by showing that 62% of respondents reported an increase in interest in platforms when using virtual personas. However, this paper also highlights an important aspect that has been under-researched in other work – the impact of these technologies on long-term changes in consumer preferences and market structure.

This is particularly evident in the case of Chinese platform Bilibili, which, as noted in the study, actively utilizes virtual presenters as part of its business models. This study confirms the success of such strategies, demonstrating that the popularity of virtual personas has contributed to an increase in users from 70% to 82%. However, in contrast to the work of Liuyan et al. (2024), where the focus is on short-term revenue growth, the data from this work highlights the importance of analysing potential long-term changes such as the formation of new content consumption habits and the sustainability of such business strategies.

Another important aspect discussed in studies such as by Dirin and Laine (2024) concern the adaptation of traditional media companies to the new digital reality. Virtual characters offer unique opportunities for monetization, such as integration into educational and game shows (Korniienko & Barchi, 2025; Tyshchenko et al., 2019), which is also confirmed by this study. However, as noted by Cox et al. (2024), the rapid change in the preferences of youth audiences requires flexibility from platforms. This paper complements this finding by demonstrating that personalization and interactivity are key factors that can keep users' attention, which is particularly important in an increasingly competitive environment.

In addition to economic and technological advantages, ethical aspects should be taken into account, as pointed out, for example, by Shukurov (2021). Virtual characters, despite their popularity, can raise questions about the authenticity of content and manipulation of audience perceptions. This study shows that 35% of respondents perceive the predictability of virtual presenters' behaviour as a negative factor, which is consistent with Shukurov's findings on the importance of considering the social and ethical implications of new technologies.

Thus, unlike other works, this research challenge was to integrate all these aspects, from short-term engagement metrics to long-term economic, social and ethical implications. This emphasizes the need for not only a technological, but also for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of virtual personas as one of the key factors in the transformation of the entertainment industry. Overall, despite the obvious benefits of virtual presenters in terms of engagement and innovation, research into their long-term market impact and their role in shaping new content consumption patterns remains relevant for further research.

Conclusion

The study confirmed the significant impact of virtual presenters on the entertainment industry, user behaviour and market strategies. 78% of respondents have a favourable perception of virtual characters, and 62% reported an increase in interest in platforms due to their use. This underlines the technology's promise as a tool to increase engagement, expand audiences and diversify market offerings.

The analysis showed that virtual presenters are driving the development of such areas as virtual concerts, streaming, and e-commerce. The integration of AR into the work with virtual characters opens new horizons for interaction with the audience, improving the user experience. Importantly, such technologies are being actively utilized on platforms such as Bilibili, where they are contributing not only to short-term growth but also to changing user habits.

The practical significance of the research lies in identifying the factors influencing the adoption of virtual technologies and the opportunities for their application in various sectors. The integration of virtual presenters into educational and corporate platforms remains promising, which allows going beyond the entertainment industry and offers new ways to monetize content. Among respondents, 58% expressed their willingness to trust the recommendations of virtual characters, which makes them an effective tool for promoting goods and services.

However, the study has several limitations. Firstly, the narrow geographical focus – the data was collected predominantly in China. The cultural and technological characteristics of other regions may influence the perception of virtual presenters, which requires additional cross-cultural research. Second, the time frame of the study is limited to the current period, making it impossible to assess the long-term effects of adopting these technologies. User preferences change rapidly, especially among young people, so monitoring is necessary to identify sustainable trends.

To further extend the study, it is recommended to apply a longitudinal design that involves systematically tracking changes in user behaviour and preferences for virtual presenters over a period of 6-12 months. This will allow for a more in-depth assessment of the long-term impact of technology on user engagement, adaptation to new content formats, and the dynamics of adopting innovative interactive solutions such as AR and VR. It is important to form a stable cohort of participants with regular measurements, as well as combine quantitative and qualitative data collection methods for a comprehensive understanding of changes.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement:

Xinli Lyu, Siva Shankar Ramasamy, and Fangli Ying contributed equally to this work. All three authors were involved in the conceptualization and design of the study, the implementation of the research methodology, and the analysis and interpretation of the results. They also collaborated in drafting and revising the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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