



## Bringing Technology into the Classroom: “Wear Your Magic Box”

Jeongah Shin, Yoo-Kyoung Seock

Department of Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors, The University of Georgia

*Keywords: Technology, VR, Pedagogy, Teaching, Classroom*

**1. Background of Teaching Project** The adoption of advanced technology in the retail market has accelerated since the Covid-19 outbreak (De Villiers, 2020). To comply with government regulations (e.g., stay-at-home orders, lockdowns), most brick-and-mortar retailers seek innovative and technological solutions to connect with their customers. For example, AR and VR are the technology that is most representative and rapidly spreading in the retail market. AR is already being provided by various brands such as Amazon, Ikea, and Gucci. Consumers can access AR services using their smartphones. However, due to the cost of VR equipment and concerns related to user accessibility, VR is not as commonly used as AR in our everyday life as well as in the fashion market. To keep the fashion market abreast of technological advancement, students in the relevant fields need to learn what and how different types of technology are being used in the current retail industry. However, the adoption of VR technology for teaching in college classrooms is still in a primitive stage despite the growing popularity of and need for new technologies. One way to address this need is to provide opportunities for students to gain exposure to, as well as have hands-on experiences of using, innovative technologies in class. Therefore, this study aims to make implications for retail and merchandising educators to utilize innovative technologies in a class by describing learning objectives, steps for implementation, and students’ reflections on a project titled “Wear Your Magic Box” in the First-Year Odyssey-class: Inside the World of Fashion.

**2. Learning Objectives** The learning objectives of this project were (1) to understand technology adoption in the fashion industry, (2) to explore the different types of advanced technologies and their use in the field, (3) to gain an experience inside the virtual world using VR headset and share their vivid reflections with peers in class.

### 3. Implementation

*Prior Knowledge* The purpose of this icebreaking stage is to help students share their prior experiences related to the class materials before jumping into the instructor-led lecture. Instructor asked students to share any types of AR and VR experiences in their daily lives.

*Content (Lectures)* The content was mainly focused on the fashion area by nature of course. As mentioned above, many retail brands are already providing AR and VR services to connect with customers and improve their shopping experiences. The lecture notes included news articles, images, and videos. Through the lecture, students understand the concepts of diverse advanced technology services (e.g., try-on apps, virtual reality, augmentative reality, and mixed reality). Furthermore, students learn how major fashion brands adopt the technologies to enhance the current service.

### *Practice and Discussion*

To participate in in-class activities, students downloaded a VR Player app on their own smartphones and watched videos in a 3-D virtual setting. Students performed this activity in two class periods and watched “History of fashion” and “Haute couture and ready-to-wear fashion show.” Afterward, students shared their VR experiences with the class and posted reflection notes on fashion.

### *Assessment*

After performing the activity using VR headsets, students answered following the questions: 1) *How was your experience of using a VR headset,* 2) *Have you ever used advanced technology (such as VR and AR) when you shopped? If so, please share your experience (which technology did you use? How was it? Did you like it or not? Why?). If not, what type of advanced technology do you want to use? And why?* In addition to the technology-focused questions, other questions related to the contents of the videos were asked. Then, the authors evaluated how students were able to develop knowledge about VR through the activity.

**4. Learning Outcomes** This project provided students in the First-year of the Odyssey class with an aim to improve their learning experiences and enhance their knowledge in technology adoption. More specifically, the course was provided to help students learn diverse technology tools and provide virtual experiences using VR headsets. In their discussions, most students were not aware of and had an experience with AR and VR. Although some students had experience using AR or VR, it was mainly limited to games and entertainment: *“I have only used VR to play games with friends.”* *“I have used a virtual reality headset before that had games and different activities, but not for trying on clothing or shopping.”* However, students shared their opinions on using each technology as a shopping channel and revealed their willingness to use them. Students further discussed various perspectives of adopting these technologies with classmates: *“I have never used this technology when shopping, but I would love to try it. I feel like it'd be very helpful to see what a piece would look like when I online shop. Sometimes a color or style isn't as flattering as I'd hoped when it comes in, and I think this technology could help me see that beforehand. This would probably save me from ordering and returning a significant amount online!”* *“I have never used advanced technology when shopping. If I did have the ability to use advanced technology in my next shopping experience, I would like to use the VR technology to walk around a digital store or even walk around in a digital runway show.”* *“I think this type of technology is very useful for online shopping. Since online shopping is becoming very prevalent, I think that it will end up being incredibly beneficial to have more information about the product. It is almost like you have a trial of the item to see if it is really worth your money to invest in! I am really excited to see how technology improves the purchasing experience even further!”*

Overall, the project “Wear Your Magic Box” made the learning process more engaging and provided a unique learning experience in the class: *“Using VR was very cool, and I enjoyed learning in a new and different way.”* *“This was actually my first time using a VR headset. I liked this activity because it made the videos of the progression of fashion more immersive than simply watching the video on the screen in the classroom.”* *“I enjoyed using the VR headset! I*

*felt like it was a fun take on a normal activity that allowed it to feel more interactive and engaging.” “I enjoyed watching the videos using a VR headset. I thought it was a fun and unique experience that we don't get the opportunity to do in a lot of classes.”*

**5. Conclusion** The increasing use and adoption of AR and VR technologies in the retail industry emphasize the importance of students' exposure to and understanding of technological advancements. This study presents how students were able to better engage in class and increased their interest in utilizing VR and AR technologies in their future lives. These findings suggest that it is very important for students to learn and experience innovative technologies in class as it relates to their increased engagement and interest in learning advanced and visual technologies (Pitler et al., 2012; Reid et al., 2002). Future work is needed to expand on the findings. This course is offered to first-year students who are interested in fashion merchandising. Due to the early stage of learning discipline- focused knowledge and skills, this study is limited to show implications for students in their second year or greater in the program. Future work may investigate how these students expand their discipline-focused knowledge and improve their career preparation by completing in-class activities using advanced technologies, such as eye-tracking, VR with a controller, and AI chatbot.

**References:**

- De Villiers, R. (2020). Accelerated Technology Adoption by Consumers During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Textile Science & Fashion Technology*.
- Pitler, H., Hubbell, E. R., & Kuhn, M. (2012). Using technology with classroom instruction that works. *Ascd*.
- Reid, S. (2002). The integration of information and communication technology into classroom teaching. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 48(1).