

Imagine That! Ad-Induced Telepresence for Online Wine Applications

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◦Purpose: The objective of this research study is to examine the value of virtual tours as a relevant advertising context for wine brands. Specifically, this research suggests that virtual tours have an immersion-inducing quality that leads consumers to experience the brand in an almost realistic fashion, resulting in augmented brand attitudes and purchase intent. The role of consumer imagination and knowledge are also examined.

◦Design/methodology/approach: Two studies are conducted. The first study (n=128) was a field study conducted in France and Ireland, combining product experience with or without a virtual tour. The second study was conducted online (n=228) with American consumers. Study 2 replicates the findings of study 1 and examines the relevance and interaction of imagination and knowledge with media induced telepresence.

◦Findings: The results clearly show a direct effect of telepresence-inducing media (virtual tours) on augmented brand attitudes and purchase intent. An experience with a virtual tour augments product experience. The second study confirms these results and demonstrates that imagination mediates the relationship between telepresence inducing media and consumer knowledge. Consumer knowledge is important when telepresence is not present but imagination is important when telepresence is induced by media contexts, such as virtual tours.

◦Implications: The results of two studies provide insight in terms of the marketing benefits of using online applications that include virtual reality. In the case of experiential goods, such as wine, virtual reality results in positive downstream consumer outcome behaviors. Consequently, it is recommended that wine marketers include virtual reality in their online communications.

Key words: telepresence, wine, virtual reality applications