

Learning from experience? Multisensory tools create discerning wine lovers

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Wine aficionados are better able to resist misleading advertising if they are provided with accurate sensory descriptors, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"Wine is a complex, sensory-driven product, which is difficult to master based on regular consumption alone," write authors Kathryn A. LaTour and Michael S. LaTour (both University of Nevada, Las Vegas). In two experiments, they investigated ways aficionados can learn from their direct wine-tasting experiences.

In their first experiment, the authors provided aficionados with accurate sensory descriptors (a wine aroma wheel) or misleading marketing descriptions. Some participants later received misleading advertising, while others (the control group) did not.

"We find that aficionados who received the accurate sensory descriptors formed stronger memories and were able to withstand persuasion from the misleading advertising, resulting in more accurate experiential memories," the authors write. The participants who received the misleading sensory terms were more accepting of the advertising, which resulted in memory distortion of their taste experiences.

In a second experiment, the researchers compared the effectiveness of the wine aroma wheel and accurate multisensory descriptors provided in an advertisement to more general background information about wine. "The aficionados who had received the wine aroma wheel and the

multisensory advertising were more accurate in their recognition than the background knowledge condition and the control condition," the authors explain.

Wine is different from products like utilitarian goods, where most brands perform about the same, the authors write. "In our studies we had many aficionados who consumed wine almost daily yet were not able to form meaningful experiential memories and were easily swayed by marketing information."

The study's conclusions may have implications for other products such as music, gourmet food, or movies. "Marketers can engage and direct the aficionados' learning through multisensory advertising," the authors conclude.

More information: Kathryn A. LaTour and Michael S. LaTour. "Bridging Aficionados' Perceptual and Conceptual Knowledge to Enhance How They Learn from Experience." *Journal of Consumer Research*: December 2010.

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