

Too Close to Let Go: Psychological Distance and Consumers' Tendency to Perceive Ownership for Products Presented in Augmented Reality

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Cite as:

Finken David, Hofstetter Reto (2021), Too Close to Let Go: Psychological Distance and Consumers' Tendency to Perceive Ownership for Products Presented in Augmented Reality. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 50th, (94732)

Paper from the 50th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, May 25-28, 2021



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Abstract

In in this research, we propose that presenting products in AR (vs. 2D-static-, vs. 3D-dynamic images) increases consumers' feeling of ownership for the product (i.e., feeling of mine) with positive downstream consequences. Based on construal level theory, we argue that AR's unique characteristic to superimpose one's own environment with virtual products in real time reduces the psychological distance between a consumer and a product, increasing felt ownership for the product. Three online-experiments conducted on mobile devices across multiple products provide support for this expectation. We identify an important boundary condition: AR only increases ownership of products in usual (vs. unusual) use-contexts, which we explain with AR's reciprocal benefit of use-contexts. Unusual use-contexts increase psychological distance because consumers feel products to be less present in one's reality. The results support e-tailers' interests in implementing AR for their product presentation.

Keywords: *augmented reality; perceived ownership; psychological distance*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media