

The Proximity Effect in Augmented Reality (Pear)

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Abstract

Brands increasingly encourage consumers to explore products through Augmented Reality (AR) in their physical environments. This article examines when AR benefits brands. Drawing on visual-scene processing and psychological distance theories, we develop the proximity effect in Augmented Reality (PEAR), which proposes that AR increases preference when the displayed product fits its environment, making it feel psychologically closer. When this relational consistency is violated, AR loses effectiveness. Insights from 20 interviews, nine experiments (N=5,737), and five replications (N=1,664) validate PEAR. The findings advance understanding of psychological distance and offer guidance for AR interface design and online retail strategy.

Track: Consumer Behaviour