



## Measuring the drinking experience of beer in real context situations. The impact of affects, senses, and cognition



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### ABSTRACT

Product experience is shaped by the interaction between the human systems and the product. Human systems include a sensory system to perceive the surrounding world, an affective system that evokes emotional responses to certain stimuli, and a cognitive system that makes meaning and processes information. We hypothesise that experience is a combination between these three systems rather than a linear continuum of hedonic reactions. In order to test this hypothesis, we conducted a study measuring the experience of drinking craft and industrial beers. A total of 400 consumers were invited to drink beer, rate their liking and select a set of phrases that better described their drinking experience. Results showed no significant difference in expected liking and purchase intention between the eight beers evaluated. However, a difference between beers was observed for the CATA phrases. Cognitive phrases were more frequently checked for craft beers, while sensory, and affective phrases were more frequently checked for industrial beers. A Multiple Factor Analysis for Contingency Tables showed that the sensory and cognitive systems were more related to liking than the affective system.

### 1. Introduction

Today, the word “experience” is directly linked to our contemporary lifestyle of consumption. In hypermodern societies, the goal towards consumption has shifted from functional to experiential (Lipovetsky, 2016). The production systems, distribution, and consumption are impregnated and shaped by symbolic meanings, hedonism, and aesthetics. The prevalence of beauty and aesthetics are imposed as a constant strategy of the brands; according to Lipovetsky and Serroy (2013) what defines hyper-modern capitalism is an aesthetic approach to production. The consumer is changing from being a collector of possessions to a collector of experiences, a *homo experientialis*.

In the past years, the concept of experience has gained interest, when studying the interaction between a person and the product, as part of a holistic approach to understanding consumers (Desmet and Hekkert, 2007; Labbe et al., 2009; Schifferstein, 2009). An experience also seems to be a competitive advantage, as more and more companies are focusing on creating experiences to differentiate themselves in the increasingly commoditized and competitive food and beverage market. From a marketing perspective, consumers want more than just the delivery and consumption of a product or service. Instead, they seek unique consumption encounters to accompany the products and

services that create memorable experiences (Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011).

The first question that arises is: “What is an experience?” In 1994, Dubet wrote that the notion of experience is ambiguous and vague, especially because it evokes two contradictory phenomena which are important to link. In the first sense, experience is a way of feeling, to be invaded by an emotional state. This is how we usually talk about an aesthetic experience, a loving experience, etc. To this emotional experience, a second meaning is juxtaposed: the experience is a cognitive activity. It is a way to build what is real and, especially, to verify it, to “experience it.”

Over the years, we have seen an increasing number of publications concerning the consumption experience (Carù & Cova, 2003; Gilovich, Kumar, & Jampol, 2015; Hekkert & Schifferstein, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1998). These publications demonstrate that experience is not an amorphous concept. Furthermore, the meaning of this concept changes depending on the discipline in which it is being studied: going from “consumption experience” (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Pine & Gilmore, 1998), “peak” or “flow experience” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Maslow, 1964); “drinking experience” (Schifferstein, 2009), “product experience” (Hekkert & Schifferstein, 2007), “brand experience” (Brakus,

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**Table 1**  
Review of the different concepts used for experience in consumer research.

Author	Year	Concept	Definition	Variables involved
Maslow	1964	Peak experience	Peak experiences are those in which the individual transcends ordinary reality and perceives being in an ultimate reality	Affects
Holbrook & Hirschman	1982	Consumption experience	The consumption experience is a phenomena directed towards the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun	Cognition, affects, and behaviour
Csikszentmihalyi	1997	Flow experience	Flow is the exceptional experience that keeps one motivated. It is the sense of effortless action that someone can feel in moments that stand out as the best in their lives	Affects
Dubet	1994	Experience	The experience is the subjective and cognitive activity which allows the individual to develop	Affects and cognition
Pine & Gilmore	1998	Consumption experience	A distinct economic offering that is as different from services as services are from goods; successful experiences are those that the customer finds unique, memorable and sustainable over time, would want to repeat and build upon, and enthusiastically promotes via word of mouth.	Participation and connection
Oh et al.	2007	Experience economy	From a consumer's perspective, experiences are "enjoyable, engaging, memorable encounters for those participating in these events"	Education, aesthetics, entertainment, escapism, arousal, memory, overall quality, and satisfaction
Schifferstein	2009	Drinking experience	The experience of drinking a product are the effects on its perception through the senses, on the meanings and values attached to the product, and on the feelings and emotions that are elicited	Sensory, semantic and emotional
Schmitt, Brakus, Zarantonello	2009	Consumer & brand experience	Experiences are intimate events, not self-generated, that occur as an answer to a given situation and involve "all being"	Sensory, affective, intellectual, body, and social
Hekkert & Schifferstein	2008	Product experience	The subjective product experience is defined as the awareness of the psychological effects elicited by the interaction with a product, including the degree to which all our senses are stimulated, the meanings and values we attach to the product, and the feelings and emotions that are elicited	Senses, meaning, value, and affects
Warell	2008	Product experience & user experience	Product experience is an emerging model for studies of perceived experiences of product design	Affect, senses, and cognition
Gentile et al.	2009	Consumption experience	Consumption experience is a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction	Sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle, and relational
Gilovich, Kumar & Jampol	2015	Experiential consumption	Experiential consumption refers to those purchases that provide greater satisfaction and happiness because they enhance social relationships, are a part of the person's identity, and evoke fewer social comparisons	Hedonic, affects, satisfaction, and social connection
Guevara & Howell	2015	Consumer experience & experiential products	The experiential products are those that make people happier and are a better economic investment than material items	Hedonic well-being, subjective economic value, identity satisfaction, competence satisfaction, and relatedness satisfaction

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