

Pioneering the reality of virtual experiences

Virtual reality (VR) is coming of age. Having initially brought new immersive experiences to gaming it is now being adopted across industry from travel to real estate.



VR's promise for consumer insight is total immersion - to create virtual experiences so realistic that we feel and behave as though we're in the real world. But do we? Understanding how virtual experiences reflect actual feelings and behaviour is crucial. We share some key learnings from our recent pioneering studies which assess the potential of VR to bring unique in-the-moment insights for shopper experiences, product testing and more.

Building on our expertise in context-setting research techniques, from real size video projections to 3D virtual store simulations, Stratégir set out to evaluate what 360° immersion might contribute to consumer insight. We explored the experiences of consumers across a sequence of three shopping visits to a Samsung store – a live trip, a video-projected tour at real size and a virtual reality visit using a Samsung Gear VR headset with images that adapt to the field of view with every head movement.



When immersed with 360° VR, shoppers had a strong impression of being transported into the environment. "It was like I was actually in the store." It created a feeling of freedom and autonomy to move around (even though the walking route was fixed). Shoppers were easily able to focus their attention on their task and their behaviour was natural and authentic.

The study has shown us that VR technology is realistic, active and immersive and brings insight to in-store perceptions and reactions. The only reservations cited by consumers are opportunities to make their experience even more realistic by improving image quality and creating more interaction with products and people in the virtual environment.



The ability of VR immersion to put a person at the heart of the action means it can go beyond the retail experience to other research areas where contextualisation is useful.

Our next VR pilot investigated the value of immersion 360° in product testing. We created convivial virtual settings for consumers to evaluate either beer or snacks and compared them with the results when the same consumers evaluated the products in a neutral environment.



We concluded that the VR context has great potential as a practical way to immerse consumers in the moment when they use or consume a product. This is of benefit not only for the more obvious candidates, like alcoholic drinks, where absence of context can depress product performance but for a range of other situations including setting suitable context for testing out of season products, like ice cream and sun-care in winter.

We have seen that VR can be effective as a solution to a variety of challenges in consumer research. VR solutions are now making virtual a reality. The journey is starting... and this is the time when immersion 360° will play a more prominent role in the research toolkit.



To discuss this topic further please contact:

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