
Advice to U.S. job seekers: drop the Merlot

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DETROIT (Reuters) - Job applicants who drink alcohol are perceived as less intelligent and less hireable by American bosses, a bias dubbed the "imbibing idiot bias" in a study published on Monday.

In a series of six related experiments, researchers from the University of Michigan and the University of Pennsylvania found that an association with alcohol caused observers to "expect cognitive impairment" in a job seeker.

"Merely holding an alcoholic beverage may reduce the perceived intelligence of the person," Scott Rick and Maurice Schweitzer wrote.

Their study was presented to the Academy of Management, an annual meeting of business and management researchers.

In one of their experiments, the researchers asked 610 middle managers at U.S. companies to evaluate a video recording of a dramatized interview over dinner between a pair of actors playing a manager and a prospective hire.

The script for the questions and answers was the same in all cases. In some of the mock interviews, the manager ordered "Coke" or "the house Merlot." The job seeker also ordered either the soft drink or the wine.

Regardless of what the manager ordered, job seekers were seen as less worthy of being hired and less "intelligent, scholarly and intellectual" when they ordered the Merlot.

Job seekers who ordered wine after the manager ordered a Coke were "especially punished" with low ratings for perceived intelligence, the study said.

Rick, a professor of marketing at the University of Michigan, said he had just completed a round of interviews for academic jobs when he and Schweitzer began brainstorming about ways to test how drinking affects the way Americans are seen.

Some of his own recent interviews, Rick said, included social settings where he and those evaluating him had a drink.

"I chose alcohol often and there were a lot of interviews with jobs that I didn't get," said Rick. "Now I wonder about that choice."

A copy of the paper can be read here: [here](#)

(Reporting by [Kevin Krolicki](#), editing by Anthony Boadle)

