

Now it's official: beauty is in the eye of the beer-holder

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Psychologists led by Laurent Begue at the Pierre-Mendes France University in the southeastern city of Grenoble carried out an unusual experiment in a local bar and then in laboratory conditions.

In the first stage, 19 drinkers, two-thirds of them men, were asked to assess their attractiveness on a scale of one to seven.

Their [alcohol](#) levels were measured by a breathalyser, and true to form, the higher the amount of booze that had been drunk, the rosier the [self-assessment](#).

In the second phase, 94 men were invited to taste-test a new fruit cocktail on behalf of a research firm that was in fact a bogus company set up for the purposes of the experiment.

They were told that half of the volunteers would be given an alcoholic version of the cocktail and the others would be given a non-alcoholic version. No-one knew which was which.

They were then asked to write and deliver a filmed message that was supposed to be used in advertisements for the new "brand."

Each volunteer was asked to watch his film and rate his own performance for attractiveness, brightness, originality and humour.

Their alcohol concentrations were measured -- the levels ranged from zero to twice the legal drink-driving limit.

But the data showed up a curiosity.

Those who believed they had drunk alcohol gave themselves high self-assessments, regardless of whether they had imbibed any booze or not.

And those who had believed they had not drunk any alcohol gave themselves a low assessment, even when there had been a hefty shot of pure alcohol in their drink.

"Our study shows that the mere fact of believing that you have drunk alcohol makes you feel more [attractive](#)," Begue told AFP. "The alcohol dose has no effect in itself."

The study, due to be published shortly in [*British Journal of Psychology*](#), suggests the buzz is a placebo effect.

It contends there is a cultural phenomenon called "alcohol-related expectancy" by which one believes that a drink will boost one's own attractiveness.

"The concept of alcohol is linked to social lubrication, to making you feel at ease with others," said Begue.

The downside, of course, is that the sexy charmer that you confidently feel is not what others may see.

In Begue's experiment, a panel of independent judges later watched the filmed presentations.

Many gave a low attractiveness rating to the men who, at the time, had believed themselves to be silver-tongued devils.

Previous research has established that other people become more attractive the more you drink -- a tendency popularly known as "wearing beer goggles."

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