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BEST DAY EVER! IMAGINARIES OF COMMERCIAL SPACE TRAVEL

Abstract

In 2021, ten minutes of weightlessness became a reality to a small group of private individuals. Known as "the year of space travel" or "the year of the billionaires," 2021 became a pivotal year for commercial space travel. The desire to travel into space is, however, not new. In fact, imaginaries involving space travel has emerged since the 1600s and have been articulated by scientists, engineers, writer, and entrepreneurs. This presentation situates commercial space travel within what has become known as the social study of space. The social study of space travel is concerned with how people derive meaning from, in this case, commercial space travel. The presentation responds to the question: How did a diverse group of english-speaking audiences respond to Blue Origin's and Virgin Galactic's 2021 space travel events? Although commercial space travel is widely watched on social media platforms, we currently know very little about how these viewers respond and view commercial space travel including commercial space travel's future potential. This presentation will seek to add valuable knowledge on how space travel "for all" is perceived and imagined by a diverse group of individuals and potential future consumers.