Does Knowledge of the Marketplace Really Help Consumers? the Case For (Or Against) Persuasion Knowledge

Session Chair: Christina L. Brown, The Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan
Discussion Leader: Ian Skurnik, The University of Toronto

Vigilance Against Perceived Manipulation: The Effect of Regulatory Focus on the Use of Persuasion Knowledge
Amna Kirmani, Southern Methodist University
Rui Zhu, Rice University
We demonstrate that individuals' regulatory focus interacts with the accessibility of manipulative intent in message cues to influence the activation of persuasion knowledge, which, in turn, affects brand evaluation. Specifically, promotion-focused individuals are likely to activate persuasion knowledge only in the presence of cues that make manipulative intent highly accessible. In contrast, prevention-focused individuals are likely to activate persuasion knowledge in the presence of cues that make manipulative intent either highly or moderately accessible. However, when ad cues reassure prevention-focused individuals that they are not being duped, they will respond positively.

Fortification or Trojan Horse? The Impact of Warnings on the Effectiveness of Product Placements
Margaret C. Campbell, University of Colorado-Boulder
Peeter W. J. Verlegh, Erasmus University Rotterdam
Gina E. Slejko, University of Colorado-Boulder
Both researchers and policy makers have a long standing interest in the ability of (fore)warnings to protect consumers from unwanted persuasion. Recently, policy makers, advertisers and consumer advocacy groups have engaged in a lively debate about the use of warnings in the context of product placements. Drawing on persuasion knowledge, our research examines how pre- and post-warnings impact the effectiveness of product placements. We find differential effects for these two types of warnings on brand recall and brand attitude, and show that sometimes warnings may increase rather than decrease the effects of product placements.

The Logic of the Marketplace: How Consumers Use Metacognitive Skills to Process Brand Claims
Christina L. Brown, The Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan
Can consumers reason better in marketing situations? Do they draw on domain-specific metacognitive skills to do so, or do they merely invoke a general reasoning ability? In two studies, I adapt the Wason four-card selection task to an advertising context. Results show that a conditional claim (“If it’s Angelo’s, it’s got to be authentic Italian food”) believed to be an ad (vs. word of mouth) evokes an advertising-specific “cheater detection” rule, but not more information search or a generalized reasoning ability. The truth of brand claims was correctly learned only when advertising claims were presented in straightforward order.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/12445/volumes/v33/NA-33

[copyright notice]:
Does Knowledge of the Marketplace Really Help Consumers?
The Case for (or against) Persuasion Knowledge
Christina L. Brown, University of Michigan

PAPERS PRESENTED

“Vigilance Against Perceived Manipulation: The Effect of Regulatory Focus on the Use of Persuasion Knowledge”
Anna Kirman, Southern Methodist
Rui Zhu, University of British Columbia

“Fortification or Trojan Horse? The Impact of Warnings on the Effectiveness of Product Placements”
Margaret C. Campbell, University of Colorado
Peeter W.J. Verlegh, Erasmus
Gina E. Slejko, University of Colorado

Christina L. Brown, University of Michigan

Discussant:
Ian Skurnik, University of Toronto

SESSION OVERVIEW

In their seminal article, “The Persuasion Knowledge Model: How People Cope with Persuasion Attempts” (1994), Marian Friestad and Peter Wright proposed that consumers’ knowledge of the marketplace acts as a defense against unwarranted persuasive attempts. This persuasion knowledge includes not only declarative knowledge of the marketplace, but also lay theories of how marketplace persuasion itself occurs; i.e. consumer metacognition. From an ecological perspective, it is hard to see how such knowledge might develop if it is not beneficial to the consumer; however, the notion that declarative and/or metacognitive elements of persuasion knowledge are effective in helping consumers “cope” has not been definitively tested. The purpose of this special session was, therefore, to determine whether and how consumers’ persuasion knowledge does indeed make them less vulnerable to persuasion. This purpose underscored the central theme of the conference, “transformative consumer research,” in its consumer perspective and its concern over improving consumer outcomes as well as those of managers.

The session addressed three fundamental questions: first, how can we assess whether persuasion knowledge has improved consumer outcomes? One standard for consumer decision-making but a more domain-specific perspective. Second, what is the underlying cognitive process by which persuasion knowledge may (or may not) improve outcomes? Margaret C. Campbell, Peeter W.J. Verlegh, and Gina E. Slejko addressed this question in their paper, “Fortification or Trojan Horse? The Impact of Warnings on the Effectiveness of Product Placements,” which studied of product placement in television shows. Using a professionally edited videotape of a TV show, the authors manipulated the presence and timing of a forewarning of product placement. Consistent with Kirman and Zhu, they showed that concern over manipulative intent heightens attention to the product. Study 1’s results showed that pre-warnings increase the likelihood that viewers notice and remember brand placements, but the placements are less likely to be seen as manipulative. Study 2 demonstrated that improvement in brand attitudes is mediated by whether manipulative intent is attributed to the advertiser or the TV network itself.

Third and finally, in “The Logic of The Marketplace: How Consumers Use Metacognitive Skills to Process Brand Claims,” Christina L. Brown showed that in some cases persuasion knowledge can actually undermine decision quality by encouraging faulty logical reasoning. The author adapted the Wason four-card selection task to provide an objective measure of how advertising affects the quality of consumers’ decision-making skills. She showed that brand claims taking a conditional form (“If it’s Angelo’s, it’s got to be authentic Italian food”) are more likely to result in accurate reasoning when participants understand the claims to be advertising slogans than when the claims are heard “on the street.” This result was driven not by a general increase in consumer information search but a more domain-specific “cheater detection” algorithm (Gigerenzer and Hug 1992). She also showed that consumer persuasion knowledge improves consumer learning only when advertising claims take a familiar form; when claims are reversed (“If it’s authentic Italian food, it’s got to be Angelo’s”), decision quality was actually reduced when these claims were presented as ad slogans.

Ian Skurnik was the discussant.

REFERENCES