

# THE INDIRECT EFFECT OF ADVERTISING PERCEPTIONS ON SALESPERSON EFFORT AND PERFORMANCE

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## ABSTRACT

Considerable research explores advertising's role in influencing buyer perceptions and behavior. However, advertising's impact on another key audience - the firm's sales force - has been largely overlooked. Drawing from social identity and expectancy theories, and using survey and objective performance data from a sample of 200 field salespeople, we demonstrate that a salesperson's perception of brand advertising has a significant effect on the effort placed in support of that brand, and resulting salesperson performance, by positively influencing the extent to which the salesperson identifies with the brand and his or her expectancy that such effort will generate results. More specifically, a salesperson's perception of advertising *quantity* positively affects results expectancy, while attitudes towards the advertising message positively affect salesperson - brand identification. Brand identification influences salesperson performance not only through increased in-role effort, but also through the salesperson's increased propensity to engage in brand-supportive extra role behaviors. Therefore, in addition to its well documented value in creating "pull," advertising may also function as a "push" device, by facilitating salespeople's identification with a brand and by engendering among salespeople stronger expectations that effort placed on a brand will result in improved sales performance. These results suggest that managers should not only pay attention to how brand advertising is being perceived by sales employees, but they should proactively work to influence salesperson perceptions via thoughtful and sufficient internal communications.

References Available on Request.