

A PROPOSED MODEL TO HELP EXPLAIN THE INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING AND PHYSICAL CONTEXTUAL CUES ON THE PERCEIVED QUALITY OF AN ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The effects of advertising and physical contextual cues on perceived quality have remained in two separate streams of marketing research. Surprisingly, no conceptual foundation has been proposed for a unifying model that focuses on explaining the impact of both types of variables on perceived quality. This paper presents a proposed model and preliminary empirical evidence which suggests how advertising and physical contextual cues affect the perceived quality of an organization.

This paper suggests that the self-confirmatory bias framework (Darley and Gross 1983) can provide the conceptual foundation for a proposed unifying model that helps explain how advertising and physical contextual cues can affect the perceived quality of an organization. The self-confirmatory bias framework indicates that advertising is effective because it raises expectations that consumers have a bias toward confirming through their experience with the product. For example, the framework indicates that advertising can raise within consumers specific expectations about a service. When consumers are experiencing that service, they will focus on those elements of the service experience that are consistent with those expectations. Additionally, the framework indicates that consumers are more likely to ignore and/or distort those elements of the service experience that were inconsistent with the expectations that were created by advertising.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a model and present preliminary empirical evidence that extends previous research in three ways. First, previous research (e.g., Hoch and Ha 1986) indicates that the self-confirmatory bias framework can help explain how adver-

tising information affects the perceived quality of tangible objects. The proposed model and this research suggest that the self-confirmatory bias framework can be extended to help explain the cognitive process that consumers use to form their perception of the perceived quality of an organization. Second, previous research (e.g., Deighton 1984) suggests that the self-confirmatory bias framework can help explain the effects of advertising. This research and the proposed model suggest that the self-confirmatory bias framework can be extended to help explain the effects of physical contextual cues, also. Third, previous research indicates that the self-confirmatory bias framework can help explain the effects of advertising following a single experience with the product. The proposed model and this research suggest that the self confirmatory bias framework can be extended to help explain the effects of advertising and physical contextual cues even after consumers have multiple experiences with a service.

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