

The Selfie Effect in Product Liking

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Technology has dramatically increased the frequency and manner in which we see ourselves day to day. This research seeks to fill a gap in the literature by examining the role of selfie taking and the modern consumers' exposure to their own pictures when considering product evaluation in images. Preliminary results suggest that a consumer's selfie taking habits may influence their preference for certain image types and impact their evaluation of products in images.

Advancing technology has increased the ability of marketers and consumers to provide and examine product information in a virtual setting. At the same time, the proliferation of smartphones, social media, selfies, and photo sharing has changed the way consumers have become used to seeing themselves. The powerful cameras contained in smartphones that many consumers don't leave home without has dramatically increased the practicality for consumers to take pictures of products, friends, and themselves. Despite these changes, little academic research has evaluated the potential influence that the change in how consumers view themselves in images may influence product evaluation when using virtual marketing tools. This research seeks to answer the question: how does a consumer's exposure to their own image influence their evaluation of products and self-images in digital decision aids? The selfie phenomenon and its effect on how consumers evaluate images likely play a key role.

Through three experiments, this research examines the influence of image type, and consumer selfie taking on image and product evaluation. These experiments evaluate consumer judgements of products and images, in person, online, and in their own selfies. Preliminary findings from these experiments provide interesting results that can help lead to an expanded understanding of the aspects of consumer images that can influence their use in digital decision

aids. Broadly, the results demonstrate that consumer exposure to their own image (through selfie taking) will influence how consumers evaluate products and pictures. More specifically, this research identifies a “selfie effect” that influences consumer opinions of products in images. This effect shows two key aspects. First, consumers who frequently take selfies are shown to evaluate products seen in images more positively. Second, consumers who frequently take selfies prefer products when they are viewed in their true (vs. mirror) image. This is a significant finding as it has previously been assumed that consumers preferred their mirror image. Introducing the selfie effect to the equation demonstrates that the selfie taking phenomenon is an important consideration when evaluating how consumers see themselves which should be taken into account by digital marketers. This research also calls into question the long standing assumption that consumers prefer their mirror (vs. true) image.

This research takes a step forward by acknowledging that modern media and technology has changed what consumers are most familiar with and consequently, are changing their preference for how they see themselves. This is shown to be particularly true for consumers who frequently take selfies. The effect of this selfie taking phenomenon has not previously been clearly established in academic literature. While further research on the subject needs to be conducted, this research takes an important step toward identifying the effects of the changing way in which consumers view themselves and its potential effect on marketers and researchers.