

Curiosity and Truth in Consumer Judgment: How Situational Curiosity Impacts Perceived Truthfulness

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Abstract

In today's era of misinformation and message overload, understanding how communication design shapes perceived truthfulness is essential. While repeated exposure is known to increase perceived truth through processing ease, this research introduces situational curiosity as a novel influencing factor. Situationally induced curiosity prompts information search and processing, thereby impacting truthfulness judgments of the sought-after information. Two experimental studies test this effect: the first uses trivia facts to establish the mechanism, showing higher perceived truth when information is presented as a question with a delayed answer. The second applies this mechanism to advertising, demonstrating greater perceived truthfulness for curiosity-inducing messages and higher attitude and purchase intention. The findings advance advertising and communication research by identifying curiosity as a psychological mechanism that enhances message truthfulness and thus, persuasive impact.

Track: Advertising & Marketing Communications