

Self-deprecating advertisements enhance consumers' perception of experience-related product attributes.

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Abstract

Product attributes differ in how easily they can be evaluated. While search attributes can be assessed before purchase, experience attributes require direct use to be meaningfully evaluated. Brands must therefore craft advertising to persuasively convey attributes related to product experience. Traditional advertisements often rely on self-promoting claims to highlight these attributes. In contrast, self-deprecating advertisements (e.g., Listerine's "The taste people hate. Twice a day.") violate these norms by deliberately highlighting a product or brand flaw. We suggest that this unconventional approach prompts consumers to rationalize why a brand would voluntarily reveal a weakness. In doing so, they may infer compensatory strengths, particularly in unobservable, experience-related attributes. Across five studies, we show that self-deprecating advertisements lead consumers to generate more positive inferences about product experience.

Track: Consumer Behaviour