

I Will Like Your Product, but First Let Me Take a Selfie

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ABSTRACT

Through the proliferation of smartphones, social media, photo sharing, and selfies, the way consumers have become used to seeing themselves has changed. This paper aims to examine the influence of image type and consumer selfie taking on image and product evaluation. More specifically, this research seeks to address the question: how does a consumer's exposure to their own image influence their evaluation of products and self-images? 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. This research begins to examine the role of selfie taking and the modern consumers' exposure to their own pictures when considering product evaluation in images. These findings have implications for marketers and provide opportunities for future research. First, this study establishes the "selfie effect". This effect suggests that consumers who frequently take selfies are generally more likely to positively evaluate products seen in multiple types of images. The selfie effect also influences consumer preference for image type. Consumers who frequently take selfies more strongly favor their true image in product evaluation. It has long been assumed that due to increased familiarity, and therefore increased processing fluency, that consumers prefer their mirror 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.

These findings have meaningful consequences for consumer use of marketing and shopping tools. In particular, the findings should prove useful to researchers and marketers concerned with online consumer reviews and virtual try-on technologies. Consumers are increasingly enabled and encouraged to include pictures in the online reviews they write. This research shows that people more positively evaluate a product when it is shown on another consumer than when it is displayed by itself. This could suggest that online shoppers would benefit from online reviews that include pictures of the reviewer demonstrating the product. This research also has implications for virtual try-on technologies. Virtual mirrors for example are reliant on consumer images for their function and effectiveness. Understanding that consumers may now have a preference for their true image in product evaluation and that this effect is stronger for consumers who frequently take selfies, is an important consideration in the use and design of these tools.

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