

Public Abstract

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In light of the new phenomenon of multiple high profile newspaper circulation accounting fraud scandals in recent years, this thesis sought to examine the relationship between factors that motivate advertisers to buy space and their perceptions of trust and credibility toward newspaper sales departments. A survey of 82 automobile dealerships in an urban Texas market afflicted by a circulation scandal in 2004, that served by The Dallas Morning News, sought to determine to what extent purchase motivation variables, such as trust and credibility, were associated with reduced buying as a result of a 2004 circulation accounting scandal. Also sought was a measure of any impact on credibility of the newspaper's image restoration strategy of internal accounting reforms and compensation as restitution. The response rate to the survey was insufficient to conduct meaningful statistical analysis. A number of solicited respondents cited fear of newspaper retaliation for their cooperation in the form of monopoly pricing abuse. Nevertheless, the available responses did provide indications worth noting for discussion here and for future study. It is namely that, beyond a short period of time, "intangible" purchase motivation factors such as trust, believability and credibility did seem to significantly reduce purchases but over time became less influential than more pragmatic "tangible" motivators like price, audience reach and impact on store traffic.