

Effect of Explicit and Implicit Conditions on Inference-Making of Missing Information in Consumer Product Evaluation

Samsinar Md. Sidin, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Ooi Soo Kang, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Muhammad Afrizal Abdul Rahim, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Abstract

The effect of missing information on inference making during consumer product evaluation has an important impact on a firms' marketing strategy. Findings in the past and of this study strongly indicate that the effect of missing information on the process of evaluation and decision-making in product purchasing should not be overlooked. This research focused on two products, hand-phones and motorcars. It was conducted with a sample of 275 respondents who consisted of both user and non-user groups. The study evaluated the effect of missing information on these two market segments in terms of their attitude, perceived sufficiency of information, likelihood to buy and intention to buy.

Introduction

The buying process encompasses decision on where to buy and how to buy. In complex decision-making situations, consumers evaluate brands in a detailed and comprehensive manner. There are five phases in the decision-making process: - 1) problem recognition, 2) search for information, 3) evaluation of alternatives, 4) choice, and 5) outcome of choice. In many choice situations of active search, only partial information is available.

In such situations, consumers face problem of how to respond when the value of the main product attribute is unknown. Consumers have several alternative responses in choice situations in which one or more of the alternatives are partially described. One response is to search for more information about the partially described options. A second response is to form evaluations for each option on the basis of the available information and then compare the overall evaluation. A third response is to form inferences about the missing information and use those inferences in the evaluations of the alternatives.

Research objectives

The research aims to study the effect of missing information on product evaluation by experienced consumers as well as potential users. The specific objectives of the study included determining the effect of missing information on product evaluation by experienced consumers and potential users under explicit conditions. Besides that, the study also aimed to confirm that experienced consumers are capable of perceiving insufficiency of information. Finally, the study also determined that intention to buy and likelihood to buy are a function of perceived information sufficiency of and attitude to a product.

