Did I See this Ad Because of You or Me? Exploring the Effects of Attributional Cues and Ad-Context Congruence on Advertising Effects

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Social media platforms provide personalized advertising based on users' online activities and social networks. These advertisements often feature attributional cues such as "suggested for you because …" to enhance personalization and transparency. According to attribution theory, attributional cues could be either internal or external. The effects of these cues, as well as the possible interaction, remain underexplored. We empirically examined the effects of attributional cues on advertising responses as a form of behavioral ad targeting, and ad-context congruence as a form of contextual ad targeting. An online experiment (N = 196) showed that self-attributional cues elicited a more favorable attitude towards the ad than friend-attributional and no cues, and perceived personalization mediated this relationship; however, no difference was found regarding ad-context congruence and interaction effects. The results contribute to the attributional theory and current literature in personalized advertising, and practical implications for this type of personalization feature.

Keywords: personalized advertising, attributional cue, ad-context congruence, contextual targeting, behavioral targeting