Spillover from Online Advertising to Website Evaluations: The Roles of Ad–Website Congruency and Reciprocity Framing

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This study examines whether online advertising spills over to evaluations of the hosting website and whether reciprocity-framed disclosure mitigates this effect. In a 2 (ad–content congruency: low vs. high) × 2 (message framing: no message vs. reciprocity message) between-subjects experiment, 600 Japanese adults viewed a fictional healthcare web page containing an embedded ad. The analyses included 380 respondents who passed manipulation checks. The results showed a significant main effect of ad–website congruency on site attitudes: high-congruency ads produced more favorable website evaluations than low-congruency ads. Reciprocity framing ("This website is free because it is supported by advertising revenue") did not significantly improve site attitudes, nor did it moderate the effect of congruency. These findings support a reverse spillover pathway from advertisement characteristics to media evaluations and suggest that contextual ad fit is a more reliable driver of website attitudes than brief reciprocity-based justification messages in ad-supported environments.