

'You talking to me?' The influence of peer communication on adolescents' persuasion knowledge and attitude towards social advertisements

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This article examines how peer communication among adolescents (14–16 years) affects the evaluation of social advertising (i.e. targeted ad that adopts the social proof heuristic by using an individual's social ties as endorsers for a brand) on social networking sites (SNSs). More precisely, the focus lies on how engaging in online peer chatting on these social platforms alters persuasion knowledge and attitude towards the ad. In order to test this, two between-subjects experiments were conducted in which adolescents chatted with peers on a mock SNS that contained a social ad. In Experiment 1, results reveal that a social ad generates a more positive attitude among adolescents when they have engaged in online peer communication, and at the same time, triggers less persuasion knowledge. In Experiment 2, the depth of the relationship between the chatters (tie strength) plays a significant moderating role as peer communication with strong ties yields greater effects, compared to communication with weak ties. These findings reveal important social influence dynamics that may alter the elaboration of persuasive communication, leading to valuable theoretical and practical implications.

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