

Do consumers prefer brands that appear on their Facebook pages?

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You are likely to identify with a brand that advertises alongside your personal information on a Facebook page (especially if you have high self-esteem), according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. The same ad will have less impact if you view it on a stranger's page.

"The vast majority of marketing exposures are experienced under conditions of low attention and little cognitive involvement," write authors Andrew W. Perkins (University of Western Ontario) and Mark R. Forehand (University of Washington, Seattle). "The current research demonstrates that [brand](#) identification can form even in these low-involvement conditions if the brand is merely presented simultaneously with self-related information."

This concept, called "implicit self-referencing," suggests that consumers don't need to own, choose, or endorse a brand to identify with it. The authors believe this occurs because most consumers possess high self-esteem and when brand concepts are linked to consumers' self-concepts, some of those positive feelings rub off onto the brands.

In one experiment, the authors asked participants to sort fictitious brand names with terms related to "self" or "other"; their attitudes toward the "self" brands were more positive. In another experiment, they found that the effect was stronger for individuals who had higher self-esteem. And in a third study, they demonstrated that the effect occurs when brands are simply presented near consumers' personal content on a social

networking site.

Participants were instructed to compare the interfaces of two social networking sites (Facebook and hi5) while fictitious car ads rotated through banner ads. Later, participants reported that they much preferred brands that had appeared (without them being conscious of it) on their own pages. "These results show that the car brands did not benefit from Facebook directly, but rather from their proximity to the consumers' personal content."

"[Consumers](#) are increasingly comfortable posting a wealth of personal information online, and such digital extroversion certainly creates opportunities for marketers to effectively target and embed their appeals," the authors conclude.

More information: Andrew W. Perkins and Mark R. Forehand. "Implicit Self-Referencing: The Effect of Non-Volitional Self-Association on Brand and Product Attitude." *Journal of Consumer Research*: June 2012 (published online September 20, 2011).

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