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Interaction effects of media and message on perceived complexity, risk and trust of innovative products

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KEYWORDS

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Summary Firms frequently make quality claims when launching new products in the market. However, little is known about the interaction effects that occur between the media (online/offline channels of distribution) and the message (making/not making quality claims) when new products are launched. By sampling 568 online and offline customers of ICT products, we demonstrate that using quality claims is advisable only in the online context. Specifically, ICT products are perceived less complex and more trustworthy when quality claims are advertised online. In addition, perceived complexity and perceived risk are higher in the offline context than in the online context when product quality claims are used. Therefore, firms should be aware of which quality claims they introduce on their websites so as not to interfere with the product launch. This study adds to the body of research on Internet advertising and innovative products. This study is also useful for marketers who wish to improve the advertising efficiency (in terms of content and media) of innovative and complex products to consumers.

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Introduction

The use of the Internet has increased substantially during the last decade. Worldwide, close to 2000 million persons use the Internet daily, a figure that represents a penetration rate of 28.9% (Internet World Statistics, 2011). In Europe, the penetration rate increases to 71.5%, with close to 400

million users. These data confirm that the proportion of on-line shoppers in the EU has increased from 27% to 40% of consumers during the last decade (Eurostat, 2011). Accordingly, the Internet has become an attractive platform for launching new products, as the media allow firms to display products more attractively than in an offline context. Through online media, customer relations can be formed and much of the operating overhead costs, including time and money, can be saved (Manvi & Venkataraman, 2005; Park & Lee, 2008; Yip & Dempster, 2005). Although the

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