GIVING ADVERTISERS THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT: TRUST, COOPERATIVE COMMUNICATION, AND CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF IMPLICATION IN ADVERTISING

by

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GIVING ADVERTISERS THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT:  
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Under the supervision of Professor Peter R. Darke at the University of British Columbia

ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to expand our understanding of why consumers “go with the gist” of ads that imply more than they literally claim. Such persuasion is especially surprising in light of several facts: (1) the goal of advertising is to induce purchase, giving advertisers an incentive to exaggerate through implication in order to maximize the appeal of their products; (2) polls have consistently found a high level of public cynicism toward marketers, and; (3) consumers are generally believed to be active and skeptical users of information. Working from linguistics research on conversational implicature, I develop a conceptual framework to explain the process by which implied advertising claims persuade. A central element of this framework is the cooperative principle of conversation – the presumption that speakers will normally try to design messages that are truthful, unambiguous, and mindful of both the context of the conversation and the pre-existing knowledge of the recipient. Conversational implicature theory holds that widespread adherence to the cooperative principle in everyday communication (a) makes it possible for listeners to reconstruct the intended meaning of a message, and (b) makes it reasonable for them to favor this meaning over its literal interpretation. However, such cooperativeness on the part of the recipient is believed to occur only when that individual has at
least a nominal level of trust in the communicator, implying that phenomena which undermine trust will have particularly negative consequences for advertisements in which claims are implied rather than explicitly stated.

Hypotheses flowing from the proposed framework are tested using two experiments, which manipulate individuals' general level of suspicion toward advertising (high vs. low) and the nature of the advertising claim (implied vs. stated), and investigate the effects of these manipulations on attitudes and information processing. The first experiment establishes the effects for two types of implied advertising claims (qualified claim and missing information), while the second clarifies some questions raised by the initial study, and explores the moderating effects of having a reputable brand. Results from these two studies provide reasonable support for the notion that consumers accept implied advertising claims because they are acting as cooperative message recipients whose goal is to infer the intended meaning of the communicator. Under normal circumstances, individuals expressed a moderate level of trust toward the advertiser, and there was no difference in the effectiveness of stated claims and claims made by implication. However, when feelings of general suspicion toward marketers were induced, trust in the specific advertiser was undermined and implied claims resulted in less favorable attribute beliefs and product attitudes than did claims that were stated outright.
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1.0 Overview

Consider the following advertising claims:

1. Kleen detergent gives you whiter whites.
2. Get through a whole winter without colds. Take Eradicold pills.
3. Isn’t quality the most important thing to consider in baby food? Choose Kinder.

Each of these is an example of how advertisers can insinuate positive things about a product without making any literal assertions. The first suggests that using Kleen detergent will yield clothes that are whiter than rival brands, but offers no specific referent by which the claim could be judged. The second implies that Eradicold pills will enable users to get through the winter without catching a cold, but does not actually make this claim. The third seems to indicate that Kinder brand baby food is of higher quality than its rivals, but does so without making a single declaratory statement about the product.

Even the most cursory survey of television, billboards and magazines will yield ads that similarly suggest – but do not explicitly state – that the product in question offers attributes, features, or benefits that consumers are likely to find desirable. What is interesting is not that advertisers are tempted to use such claims, but rather that consumers seem so willing to accept them, despite the fact that the implications are generally inconsistent with the literal meaning of what is being said. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that consumers lack the
motivation, opportunity or ability to critically evaluate such claims, yet empirical evidence indicates that the behavior occurs even when such factors are ruled out. Indeed, research has shown that the tendency for consumers to accept the “gist” of an ad can be sufficiently strong, that it persists even in the presence of devices explicitly intended to discourage it, including cautions against over-generalizing the meaning of a specific claim (Pechmann, 1996) and disclosures that specifically correct invalid inferences (Johar, 1996; Johar and Simmons, 2000). More generally, the widespread use of implication in modern advertising (Garfinkel, 1983) suggests that the consumer tendency to “go with the gist” is not only well known among marketing practitioners, but seen as relatively reliable. This dissertation seeks to explain this curious yet important aspect of consumer behavior, and to identify potential boundary conditions outside of which it is unlikely to occur.

Working from linguistics research, I develop a conceptual framework to explain the process by which people make sense of ads that imply more than they literally claim, and thereby understand why consumers usually accept the unstated insinuations of advertisers. Underlying this framework is the theory of conversational implicature first advanced by Grice (1975), which argues that precise language is too cumbersome to be practical in everyday communication, and that individuals consequently use verbal shortcuts for sake of efficiency. For such a process to function, Grice argues, speakers must take care to construct messages in such a way that listeners will have no trouble interpreting their meaning, while listeners must, in turn, be willing to accept the speaker’s apparent meaning rather than the literal sense of their words. This “cooperative principle of communication” is associated with four specific norms, commonly dubbed the “rules of conversation”, which state than speakers should produce messages that are truthful, relevant, informative, and unambiguous. Grice contends that widespread observance of these norms make it possible for listeners to use social convention and shared knowledge to infer a speaker’s intent,
thereby allowing human beings to communicate via statements whose literal and actual meaning may not fully correspond.

Importantly, the cooperative principle takes as given that the speaker is crafting his or her message with the goal of being understood. However, speakers may have other objectives, such as ingratiating, intentional ambiguity, or even deliberate deception. If listeners are to accept the apparent meaning rather than the literal meaning of an utterance, they must trust that the message was designed so that a reasonable individual, drawing reasonable inferences, would correctly interpret the speaker's intention. Put another way, they must believe that the speaker was actually trying to be cooperative.

This has important ramifications for advertisers. When a speaker's trustworthiness is called into question, individuals may become reluctant to perform their usual function of "reading between the lines" and respond differently than is otherwise the case. In the case of advertising, this seems likely to occur in situations where consumers have been primed to think of the marketer as a potential manipulator rather than a mere communicator. Under these conditions, implied-claim ads - which are otherwise highly effective - may cease to be as persuasive as those which state their claims explicitly.

In this dissertation, hypotheses based on this line of reasoning are tested using two experiments, which manipulate individuals' general level of suspicion toward advertising (high vs. low) and the nature of the advertising claim (implied vs. stated) and investigate the effects of these manipulations on attitudes, beliefs, and information processing. The first experiment establishes the basic effects for two types of implied advertising claims (qualified claim and missing information), while the second clarifies questions raised by the initial study and explores the moderating effects of having a reputable brand.
Overall, results from these two studies provide support for the notion that consumers accept implied advertising claims because they are acting as cooperative message recipients seeking to infer the intended meaning of the communicator. Under normal circumstances, individuals expressed a moderate level of trust toward the advertiser, and there was no difference in the effectiveness of stated claims and claims made by implication. However, when feelings of general suspicion toward marketers were induced, trust in the advertiser was undermined and implied claims resulted in less favorable beliefs and product attitudes than did stated claims.

1.1 Contribution of this Research

Understanding why consumers so readily accept the implications of advertisers is of significant theoretical interest because consumers are generally presumed to be active thinkers who are not only skeptical of advertising (e.g., Calfee and Ringold, 1988; Ford, Smith, and Swasy, 1990), but conscious of the fact that marketers design ads with tactics that are specifically intended to persuade them (Friestad and Wright, 1994; 1995; 1999). Given this, it seems reasonable to expect that consumers would scrutinize advertising claims for evidence of trickery, give thought to why implied claims were not explicitly stated, and exhibit conservatism in their inference-making. That they appear instead to be willing to go beyond the information given is starkly at odds with this view. A key theoretical contribution of this dissertation is its capacity to address this apparent inconsistency.

In addition, this work helps to place marketing communications in the broader context of research that has emphasized the importance of viewing communication as a social exchange, rather than a mere exercise in logic. There is growing recognition in social psychology that people do not simply process the messages they receive from others, but instead use the information contained within as a starting point for deducing what the speaker intended to convey (e.g., Dulany and Hilton, 1991; Hilton, 1995; Schwarz, Strack, Hilton, and Naderer,
1991; Schwarz, 1994; 1996). Seen in this light, a behavior that has traditionally been viewed as evidence of logical error – accepting what an ad seems to say, rather than what it literally claims – can be more appropriately interpreted as the application of generally adaptive behavior in a context in which it is sometimes inappropriate. Such insight provides a foundation from which regulators and consumer groups may develop more effective ways of addressing the problem of advertising that misleads through implication. It should also help honest marketers to minimize the risk of unwittingly using ads that have the potential to mislead and/or create lofty expectations that their products are not able to satisfy.

Relatedly, this work also shines additional light on the role of trust in consumer information processing, and lends weight to the argument that marketers should strive to maintain public confidence. Although source credibility has long been acknowledged as a key determinant of communication effectiveness, the present research demonstrates that trust plays an especially critical role when an ad suggests something without directly stating it. Such instances promise to become increasingly common, as the general proliferation of commercial messages and the high cost of media time create incentives for advertisers to be more succinct and creative. Findings from this research suggest that trust can encourage consumers to accept the overall gist of an advertising message even when specific claims about the product or service are lacking.

On a more practical level, the dissertation offers guidance to managers charged with designing and evaluating marketing communications. In offering an explanation for consumers’ tendency to go along with the gist of ads, it specifies when and why such behavior is unlikely to occur, and consequently when otherwise effective implication-based ads are likely to lose their persuasiveness – either because the consumer refuses to make the desired inference, makes an inference that differs from the one intended, or responds negatively to the use of implication.
Consequently, this work not only offers a basis for significant enhancements in advertising effectiveness, it also minimizes the risk of serious negative fallout in situations where consumers have a particular distaste for claims that are implied rather than stated.

Finally, this research has important benefits for consumers, in that it provides insight into a mental process that may significantly affect their response advertising messages. As research on deceptive advertising has shown, acceptance of what an ad seems to be saying often leads to inaccurate beliefs and sub-optimal consumer outcomes. While a solution to this problem requires more than simple awareness of this tendency – consumers must also be able to recognize when it is occurring, and have sufficient skill and opportunity to control it – awareness of the phenomenon is a necessary and critical first step.

1.2 Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation begins with a review of the research literature that forms the theoretical basis for the subsequently described experimental work, beginning with the large body of empirical findings which demonstrate that consumers accept what ads imply rather than what they literally claim. The next section explains why this “cooperativeness” is surprising: Not only have decades of survey research shown that the public holds highly cynical views toward marketing, but current conceptualizations of consumers such as the Persuasion Knowledge Model regard consumers as savvy thinkers who actively question the motives and tactics of marketers. To better understand this discrepancy, these findings are discussed in the broader context of interpersonal communication and the means by which people construct meaning from verbal messages. Particular attention is paid to the concept of “conversational norms” (Grice, 1975) and the idea that humans engage in a “communication game” in which social cues and conventions serve as a means of interpreting the intended meaning of verbal utterances (Higgins,
McCann, and Fondacaro, 1982; Higgins, 1992). This serves as the basis for proposing the key premise that consumers’ willingness to “go with the gist” of ads does not represent a deficiency in human judgment, but rather a propensity to rely on tacit rules of interpersonal communication to reconstruct the speaker’s intended meaning. Evidence is offered to argue that this behavior is sensible in most other contexts because it facilitates efficient communication. Trust, which theory suggests is critical to this willingness to engage in inference-making, is then discussed, with special attention paid to why people trust and ways in which trust can be undermined. In particular, experiences which cause individuals to be generally suspicious have been found to be effective at undermining the tendency to trust a specific other.

On the basis of this literature review, the hypotheses of the dissertation are then expressed more formally, with explanations of how the theory will be tested, and a description of the specific instances of implied advertising that will be examined. This includes a description of the research methodology employed in the two studies used to test the hypotheses. Findings from each of these studies are reported and subsequently interpreted in light of the predictions made. The dissertation concludes with a more general evaluation of the research findings, including a discussion of their implications, the limitations of the present work, and directions for future investigation.
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

2.0 Overview

This chapter begins with a description of two closely related marketplace phenomena which, together, provide the major impetus for this dissertation: (1) the pervasiveness of implication in advertising, and (2) the willingness of consumers to accept these implications in spite of the fact that they are often inconsistent with what is literally claimed by the ad. It then reviews current consumer theory, which regards people as savvy, skeptical users of advertising information, along with empirical research indicating that consumers are highly suspicious of advertisers and their claims. Next, it goes on to describe a possible means of reconciling these apparently contradictory findings: the theory of conversational implicature (Grice, 1975). This theory offers an appealing explanation for how and why people make inferences that go beyond the literal meaning of utterances in interpersonal communication. The chapter concludes with an extensive discussion of trust, which conversational implicature theory suggests is central to the inference-making process. This forms the conceptual link to Chapter III, in which these disparate literatures are integrated and formal hypotheses specified.

2.1 The Use of Implication in Advertising

Empirical evidence indicates that advertisers rely heavily on implication to convey their messages to consumers, and that the use of implied claims has been increasing (e.g., Shimp, 1983; Westen raps, 1978; Bogart, 1978). One content analysis of television advertising actually found that less than half of all ads contain specific, verifiable claims about the product (Resnik and Stern, 1977). Other studies, which used individual assertions as the basic unit of analysis,
reported comparable findings for both television (Shimp, 1979) and magazine advertising (Marquez, 1977).

Such heavy reliance on implication in advertising begs explanation, especially in light of the fact that the meaning of an implication is, by definition, less clear than that of a simple claim. A number of authors (e.g., Armstrong and Russ, 1975; Fryer, Pollay, and Zaichowsky, 1977) have suggested that this tendency is at least partly attributable to advertisers' desire to avoid running afoul of regulation designed to eliminate factual misrepresentations, and blatant falsehoods in commercial messages: It is widely (but, for the most part, erroneously) presumed that messages which make no specific claims are less vulnerable to prosecution.

Research has also uncovered several more substantive advantages to implications. First, there appear to be significant processing benefits to implied advertising claims. Studies have shown that omitting the conclusion of a message can produce deeper message processing and improve recall (Kardes, 1988; Sawyer and Howard, 1991; Stayman and Kardes, 1992). In addition, the use of implications appears to facilitate the advancement of creative goals (Stern, 1992), in that interesting, attention-grabbing advertising campaigns often describe product benefits in a roundabout way. Finally, practical limitations may limit the extent to which advertising claims can be expressed in a wholly unambiguous manner. Ads are generally expected to achieve many different objectives, including capturing consumers' attention, inducing a positive response to the product, and maintaining consistency with the broader campaign or brand image. Limitations on broadcast time and/or print space have the effect of constraining managers' abilities to achieve these goals while also making claims with clear and unambiguous meaning.
2.2 The Tendency to “Go with the Gist”

A necessary precondition for the effectiveness of implication in advertising is the willingness of consumers to infer meaning from ads beyond what is actually stated (e.g., Preston, 1967; Shimp, 1978; Russo, Metcalf and Stephens, 1981). Studies conducted across a broad range of test conditions and types of products, using a variety of measurement instruments, have repeatedly demonstrated that when consumers process an ad’s literal claims, they often perceive additional implied content which subsequently plays a significant role in shaping their decision-making and behavior (Harris, Dubitsky, and Bruno, 1983; Monaco and Kaiser, 1983). Some two decades ago, Preston (1983) identified a need for empirical research on this phenomenon, stressing the importance of understanding both its causes and effects:

People do not respond to implications solely on their probability as predicted on a strict logical, objective basis. Instead, they respond to what they want to see conveyed, or...to what seems reasonable to expect that the communicator is trying to say. This appears to be a ripe area for further study. (p. 291)

In fact, some of the earliest work on consumer inference-making was undertaken by Preston and his colleagues, who found that consumers draw inferences from ads which are not logically justified (Preston, 1967). Interestingly, they also found that people were particularly likely to “read between the lines” and infer meaning that was not literally stated in cases where the original message was presented in the form of advertising: Similar content presented in the guise of a newspaper article, corporate memorandum, or business letter also prompted inferences, but did so to a lesser degree (Preston and Scharbach, 1971). While the reasons for this are not clear, one possible explanation is that advertising is inherently a less formal, more conversational kind of written communication, from which precision may not be expected.
The response of regulatory bodies to deceptive advertising implicitly recognizes consumers' tendency to go beyond the literal claims of ads. The United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC), for instance, defines deceptive advertising not in terms of the truth or falsity of the literal claims, but rather its ability to induce consumer beliefs that differ from objective reality (FTC, 1983; Rotfeld and Preston, 1981). This policy was developed on the strength of evidence showing that false statements do not necessarily lead to deception, and that claims that are factually correct can still mislead (e.g., Harris, Dubitsky, and Thompson, 1979). Research has shown that advertising claims often interact with the knowledge consumers already have stored in memory, resulting in inferences about the product that may not be warranted (Aaker, 1974; Gardner, 1975; Harris, Dubitsky, and Bruno, 1983). It bears noting, however, that there is nothing inherently faulty about these inferences – the ad becomes deceptive only if the product fails to live up to them. Thus, while discussion of deceptive ads has focused on their negative repercussions for consumer welfare, their effectiveness is equally noteworthy as evidence of consumers' propensity to accept the implications of advertisers.

Inferring meaning beyond an ad’s literal claims is clearly quite common, but appears to be especially pronounced when the ad makes clear and specific implications: For instance, individuals asked to judge the truthfulness of product claims in radio commercials were found to respond to implied claims as though they had been directly asserted (Searleman and Carter, 1988). Studies have also shown that, regardless of age, consumers are as readily influenced by implied advertising claims as they are by claims that are directly asserted (Rebok, Montaglione, and Bendin, 1988). When presented with incomplete comparisons – i.e., comparisons in which the comparative referent is not specified – consumers not only tend to make the completion mentally, but later act as though the claim had been stated (Shimp, 1978).
2.2.1 **Insensitivity to Implied vs. Stated Claims**

One of the reasons that implication in advertising is so persuasive may simply be that consumers are not particularly good at distinguishing between claims that are stated and those that are merely implied. Shimp and Preston (1981), for instance, maintain that evaluative claims (i.e., claims that express subjective impressions about the product, rather than objective data about its features or benefits) succeed because consumers fail to recognize that there is no testable claim being made about the product:

> Consumers...are prone to interpret evaluative claims as constituting factual claims. It is a process of implication in which the consumer accepts an unstated factual claim as being the implied meaning of the stated evaluative claim. (p. 24)

Empirical evidence supports the notion that consumers often fail to recognize that implied claims were not literally stated. Harris (1977), for instance, found that individuals did a relatively poor job of discriminating between asserted and implied claims under most real-life conditions. Conversely, he also found that performance was greatly improved by explicit instructions to discriminate between assertions and implications.

Memory may also play an important role. Several studies have shown that people do not remember information as it was literally presented to them, but instead recall the inferences they constructed during comprehension. This has been demonstrated across a variety of information formats, including simple sentences (Brewer, 1977), complex sentences (Harris, 1974), brief stories (Johnson, Bransford, and Solomon, 1973), leading questions (Loftus, 1975; Loftus, Miller, and Burns, 1978), as well as advertisements (Harris, 1977; Harris, Dubitsky, and Thompson, 1979; Harris, Dubitsky, Perch, Ellerman, and Larson, 1980; Bruno, 1980; Bruno and Harris, 1980).
2.2.2 What Happens when Consumers Know a Claim Was Implied?

A critical issue, then, is whether lack of sensitivity to the fact that a claim was merely implied (rather than stated) fully explains the propensity of consumers to accept the implied meaning of ads. While there has been no research which directly addresses this question, some guidance may be found in work on the effects of processing effort on judgment accuracy. Generally speaking, studies have found that careful processing can increase the accuracy of consumer judgment (e.g., Payne, Bettman, and Johnson, 1993; Bettman, Luce, and Payne, 1998). However, others have found that this effect depends on the processing demands of the ad claim. Johar (1995), for instance, found that greater processing reduced consumers’ tendency to make invalid inferences from inconspicuous-qualification claims, but increased it for incomplete-comparisons. In the latter case, careful thinking about the advertiser’s message apparently prompted consumers to “fill in the blanks” and make the intended (but erroneous) inference.

Work by Pechmann (1996) on consumer overgeneralization of specific advertising claims also strongly suggests that insensitivity to the limited informational value of implied advertising claims cannot fully explain consumers’ propensity to accept such claims. Her studies examined consumer response to ads containing disclosures which explicitly stated that a comparative claim about a particular product applied only to that product, and did not refer to other, similar products. Despite being presented with this information, consumers accepted the overall message that the ad seemed to be trying to convey, and inferred that the specific claim was representative of the advertiser’s product line as a whole.

2.2.3 Advertising Puffery

Notwithstanding the apparent robustness of consumers’ tendency to accept the implications of advertisers, there appears to be one instance where consumers do not always play
along. Known as “puffery,” these are claims that are regarded as so obviously exaggerated and/or unbelievable that consumers are unlikely to accept them (Preston, 1997). From a legal perspective, the FTC has historically granted advertisers a kind of poetic license to make such claims by treating them as a form of allowable exaggeration. Puffery frequently incorporates superlatives such as “greatest,” “best” and “finest” to convey the merits of the product, and is exemplified by such well known taglines as Bayer Aspirin’s “the wonder drug that works wonders” and Nestlé’s assertion that they make “the very best.” Under the most recent revision of the Uniform Commercial Code in 1996, current advertising legislation in the United States continues to permit the use of puffery. Similar rules are in effect in Canada and other countries.

One reason why consumers may not be duped by puffs is that they realize that the purpose of advertising is to “put the product’s best foot forward” rather than to provide a comprehensive list of weaknesses as well as strengths, and consequently accept such claims as a supremely optimistic view of the product. As Garfinkel (1983, p. 179) noted, “advertising is successful only when it correctly communicates those qualities of the product or service which make it attractive in the first place.” Yet several studies have shown that even puffery is often believed by consumers (Cunningham and Cunningham, 1977; Rotfeld and Rotzoll, 1980). Indeed, research by Rotfeld and Rotzoll (1981) found that, just as with other kinds of advertising implication, consumers did not distinguish puffery from fact-based assertions, and were equally likely to believe both types of claims.

2.2.4 Summary

Evidence from both the marketplace and the research lab suggests that consumers regularly infer meaning from ads beyond what is actually stated. However, the reasons for this behavior remain unclear. Almost certainly, one factor is consumer insensitivity to the fact that
implied claims were not actually stated. Yet consumers have also been shown to draw inferences from advertising in situations where they (a) are motivated to scrutinize these claims carefully, or (b) have direct information that the implication does not necessarily hold. This suggests that consumers are not necessarily accepting these implications out of ignorance. Rather, it may be that consumers are choosing to accept the implication being made by the ad.

What may be most surprising about consumers' willingness to accept advertising implications is that such behavior appears to contradict the notion that people are cynical of advertisers, fearful of being misled, and wary of the tactics marketers use to persuade. Ads that seem to say something about the product, but fail to support the insinuation with specific claims, invite the attribution that such claims are absent because they are untrue, and would seem to represent the kind of marketing device that skeptical consumers should question. This apparent contradiction suggests that a deeper understanding of consumer skepticism toward advertising is needed.

2.3 The Consumer as Skeptical, Active Thinker

Research on advertising effectiveness has traditionally focused on the effects of message quality, source credibility, and executional elements on persuasion and purchase behavior. This approach implicitly assumed that consumers process advertising messages in a relatively straightforward fashion: viewing the ad, responding to it emotionally, assessing the probability that its claims are accurate, and ultimately forming attitudes and beliefs regarding the ad and product. In contrast, it is now widely supposed that consumers regard marketing as a highly choreographed effort to persuade them, and view ads through the lens of an extensive base of personal knowledge and beliefs about how commercial persuasion operates. This implies that consumers – when sufficiently motivated and able – will go beyond mere evaluation of the
source, claims, and executional elements of an ad, and engage in sophisticated attributional
processes about what the marketer is trying to achieve and why specific advertising elements
were used. This paints a portrait of a much more thoughtful and skeptical consumer than
previously imagined – an individual that is not merely a passive information processor, but a key
player in the process by which ads acquire their meaning.

2.3.1 The Persuasion-Knowledge Model

The most thorough and influential articulation of this perspective is the Persuasion
Knowledge Model (PKM; Friestad and Wright, 1994; 1995; 1999; Wright, 2002), a broad
conceptual framework that expanded upon Wright’s (1985) earlier notion of “schemer schemas”.
The PKM holds that each consumer possesses an extensive repertoire of marketplace expertise,
which they draw upon as necessary to cope with persuasion attempts. This “persuasion
knowledge” consists of beliefs about such matters as the potential goals of marketers, the tactics
they use to influence consumers, the psychological mediators they seek to manipulate, and the
effectiveness and fairness of various persuasion tactics. It is seen to perform a variety of
important functions, including focusing the consumer’s attention on particular aspects of the ad,
helping them to make sense of the message, offering insight into the ad’s likely effects,
providing guidance on how best to respond, and helping them to evaluate the effectiveness of
their response. Significantly, the PKM maintains that people’s primary goal is not to resist
persuasion, but rather to maintain control over the situation in order to ensure that their actions
are driven by their own needs rather than those of the marketer.

Persuasion knowledge is believed to originate from a variety of sources, including first-
hand interaction with marketers, observation of marketers’ interactions with others,
conversations with other people about their experiences, and media reports about marketing.
These personal experiences intermingle with a “folk model of persuasion” – widely held, constantly evolving beliefs about the marketing persuasion process that spread through society and are passed down from each generation to the next. As an individual gains experience dealing with persuasion attempts, their persuasion knowledge becomes more refined, and they become better able to understand and deal with such attempts.

According to Friestad and Wright, persuasion knowledge is accessed, at least in part, whenever consumers face an advertisement or other form of persuasion attempt. However, several different variables are seen to influence the extent to which they do so. Consistent with previous research on depth of processing (e.g., Hunt, Smith, and Kernan, 1989), for instance, individuals are presumed to be more motivated to access their persuasion knowledge when an ad contains elements that are unexpected, or inconsistent with their existing beliefs. Persuasion knowledge is also more likely to play a role when the consumer has ample cognitive capacity available, and when the possibility of ulterior motives is salient (Campbell and Kirman, 2000) due to chronic accessibility or environmental cues. Conversely, situational constraints, such as distractions in the environment, or disguising of a tactic by the advertiser, will tend to limit the consumer’s ability to draw on their persuasion knowledge.

A central proposition of the PKM is that when a person identifies an agent’s action as a persuasion tactic rather than an incidental element of the interaction, the result is a “change of meaning” that alters the way the target interprets and responds to the persuasion attempt. The action in question could be the way in which the product claims are presented, the emotional tone of the ad, the choice of colors used, the presence of a celebrity spokesperson, the media vehicle in which the ad appears, or virtually any other aspect of the advertisement. What is critical is that the consumer’s construal of the action is fundamentally changed when he or she concludes that it was deliberately chosen by the advertiser in order to persuade them.
once seen as innocuous and accepted at face value now acquires a second level of meaning. In the case of an ad that seems to imply more than is literally stated, for instance, the consumer may notice that a literal claim was not made, infer that the advertiser was unable to make the claim because it is not true, and consequently conclude that they should not make the inference. Furthermore, if the consumer believes that the use of implication was a deliberate attempt to mislead, employed for the purpose of encouraging invalid inferences, with serious consequences for those who are duped, he or she may also conclude that the marketer is dishonest and respond especially negatively to the ad and/or the product. Importantly, these effects are driven by the consumer believing that a particular tactic has been used. This implies on the one hand that they will not occur if the consumer does not recognize the presence of a tactic, and on the other that they may occur even if it was not the marketer's intention to employ the tactic in question.

2.3.2 Consumer Attitudes toward Marketing and Advertising

Although the PKM was the first model to formally conceptualize consumers as active, skeptical thinkers about marketing tactics, it was inspired by earlier research that found that consumers are not only aware of the persuasive intent of advertising, but also highly suspicious of advertisers and their motives. Surveys have consistently shown that consumers hold relatively negative views of marketers and regard advertising as untrustworthy (Gaski and Etzel, 1986). Indeed, consumers not only report a high degree of skepticism toward advertising claims, but also a powerful distrust of advertiser motives (Boush, Friestad, and Rose, 1994), reflecting a widespread belief that advertisers intentionally seek to deceive.

Research by Schutz and Casey (1981), for instance, found that more than half of consumers perceived most or all mail and telephone advertising as misleading, while 38% thought that the same was true of television advertising. Two-thirds of respondents agreed that
most advertising directed at children was seriously misleading, with 45% holding this view of advertising aimed at older persons. Calfee and Ringold’s (1988) review of personal interview data found similarly strong evidence that consumers are deeply skeptical of advertising claims. Their subsequent examination of six decades of survey data revealed that about 70% of consumers think that advertising is often untruthful, seeks to persuade people to buy things they do not want, and should be more strictly regulated (Calfee and Ringold 1994). Interestingly, this analysis also found that consumers believe that advertising provides valuable information.

Using a different methodology, Pollay and Mittal (1993) grouped heads of households into clusters based on their beliefs and attitudes regarding advertising. Their analysis categorized 39% of households as critical cynics (view advertising as largely false and corruptive), 7% as deceptiveness wary (acknowledge some benefits to advertising, but do not trust it), and 16% as degeneracy wary (regard advertising as deceptive, and believe that it undermines social values). Only 38% of respondents were classified as content consumers – individuals who regard advertising as both truthful and informative.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the perception that advertisers use unfair tactics to persuade consumers is particularly strong among adolescents (Boush, Friestad, and Rose, 1994; Mangleberg and Bristol, 1998). It is also interesting to note that increased levels of education have been associated with lower levels of trust in advertising, but increased trust in more objective sources such as Consumer Reports (Boush, Kim, Kahle, and Batra, 1993). Subsequent studies have also shown that greater knowledge of advertiser tactics is associated with increased skepticism toward advertising, and that trust in sources of product information is positively correlated with consumer conformity, but not general cynicism (Boush, Kim, Kahle, and Batra, 1993). Overall, this suggests that distrust of advertising reflects a skeptical, discerning mindset.
rather than a uniformly cynical one. This is consistent with the view espoused by Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998; 2000) in their scale of consumer skepticism toward advertising.

2.3.3 Sources of Consumer Suspicion

The idea that exposure to false advertising claims can lead consumers to adopt a negative posture towards advertising in general was originally proposed by Pollay (1986), who argued that the effects of deceptive advertising are both serious and broad. He maintained that the distortions which are perceived to be part of advertising in everyday life “turn us into a community of cynics, [who] doubt advertisers, the media, and authority in all its forms” (p. 29).

While awareness of the existence of deceptive advertising has undoubtedly contributed to the general level of public cynicism toward advertising, there are also particular circumstances in which consumers are likely to be unusually suspicious. For instance, some product categories – such as used cars – may evoke heavy suspicion due to past incidents of deceptive advertising and their association with high-pressure sales tactics (Sujan, Bettman, and Sujan, 1986). Specific firms may be regarded as particularly untrustworthy for similar reasons. Events such as major product failures – whether directly experienced or merely heard about in the media – may also shake consumer confidence and place people in a suspicious frame of mind. Finally, some individuals have been found to be chronically cynical about marketers, either by virtue of an inborn inclination or as a result of past experiences (Boush, Kim, Kahle, and Batra, 1993; Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998). In their study of the consequences of this negative view of advertisers, Mizerski, Pucely and Patti (1986) found that lack of confidence in the truth and accuracy of commercial messages had a significant negative impact on brand attitudes and brand affect resulting from specific ads.
Ads need not even be objectively misleading for consumers to become suspicious. Newell, Goldsmith and Banzhaf (1998) found that the mere perception that an ad was deceptive was enough to create negative feelings toward advertising, irrespective of whether the ad was objectively misleading. And Koslow (2000) found that consumers sometimes adopt a suspicious mindset simply to resist the hidden tactics and persuasive efforts of advertisers. In other words, consumer skepticism may evolve simply as a defensive coping and reactance response to advertising attempts.

Cialdini (1999) has offered a broader characterization of the kind of manipulative behavior that may lead consumers to be suspicious of marketers:

"Smugglers of influence...know quite well what the principles [of influence] are and how they work, but they import them illicitly into influence situations in which they do not naturally reside; the target therefore does not get helpful direction from the principles as to the wisdom of complying with a request. The immediate outcome is that, typically, only one party benefits – the influence agent. However, the influence target, who has not profited from the exchange, should be unreceptive to future influence attempts by the agent, reducing the agent's long-term outcomes. (p. 93)"

Suspicion may also be evoked by specific executional elements of advertisements. Campbell (1995), for example, has found that attention-getting tactics can prompt consumers to infer that the advertiser is trying to manipulate them. Incorporating images in an ad that are inherently involving to the audience, but fit poorly with the product, seemed to induce perceptions of imbalance between the cost-benefit incurred by the advertiser and that incurred by the consumer. This appeared to activate persuasion knowledge and encouraged consumers to question the advertiser's motives. Other studies have found that consumers may interpret overly powerful guilt appeals in advertising as an attempt to manipulate them, resulting in suspicion of the advertiser and their motives (Cotte, Coulter, and Moore, 2004).
One way of conceptualizing consumer views of marketers is as a kind of stereotype – a quick mental model of what a “typical” marketer is like. A widely held stereotype is that of the “shady marketer,” exemplified by such archetypes as the slick used car salesman, telemarketing scams, high-pressure infomercials, and direct mail declaring that “you may already be a winner!” Research by Ritchie and Darke (2000) has found evidence that deception by one marketer evokes this kind of negative stereotype, prompting consumers to make the generalization that no advertising can be trusted. In addition, they found that deception can undermine the credibility of other advertising sources, creating a negative bias on consumer response to messages from third party marketers that had no history of dishonesty.

2.3.4 Summary

When asked for their opinion of advertising, most consumers express skepticism regarding the ads themselves, along with suspicion of the motives of advertisers. Moreover, academics generally agree that modern consumers are savvy thinkers, wise to the fact that marketers carefully design ads to persuade in ways that are not always immediately apparent. It has been argued that this awareness, when made salient, fundamentally changes the way in which consumers interpret the ads they see. It is therefore interesting that people nonetheless “cooperate” with advertisements that seem to say things without actually saying them. This suggests two things: first, that there must be some reason why consumers are generally so willing to play along with advertisers, and second, that a factor which produces a “change of meaning” might be capable of undermining such cooperation.
2.4 The Construction of Meaning in Human Communication

Linguistics provides a rich theoretical basis for understanding how humans communicate through language, and thus a potentially useful lens through which to understand consumers' willingness to "go with the gist" of ads. A fundamental premise advanced in this literature is that comprehension does not consist of passive extraction of meaning from words, but active construction of meaning which takes context into account. When trying to understand what a speaker means by a particular utterance, individuals not only consider the statements which precede and follow it, they also draw on their knowledge of who is making the statement, where it is being said, and when it is being said. In the following section, this phenomenon will be explored more fully.

2.4.1 Natural Language is Ambiguous

Notwithstanding the virtues ascribed to precision and completeness in popular lore, what individuals mean is rarely fully captured by what they actually say. Natural language consists largely of statements whose literal meaning is either ambiguous or inconsistent with their intended meaning (Schober, 1993). In spite of this, listeners generally still manage to discern what was meant. The key to this success seems to lie in the human capacity for inference. Listeners must not only choose which of several possible meanings to ascribe to the speaker's actual statements, they must also fill in missing information in order to complete the picture. Research has shown that listeners use what they know about the goals of the conversation, the speaker's background, the speaker's knowledge of them, and social norms governing conversation in order to formulate their best guess about what the speaker intended to communicate (Grice, 1975; Clark and Clark, 1977; Sperber and Wilson, 1986).
Although such heavy reliance on inference results in occasional misinterpretation, this seems preferable to the alternative. Complete elimination of ambiguity from everyday speech would not only be difficult, it would require such a high level of detail as to be thoroughly impractical. One need only imagine the complex series of instructions that would be needed to explain such simple tasks as mowing a lawn or driving an automobile to grasp the costs in time and effort associated with perfect verbal clarity. This helps to make the point that going beyond the information given is not only a defining aspect of how people communicate, it is also a sensible solution to the human need to exchange ideas quickly and efficiently.

2.4.2 The Cooperative Principle

Although it is instructive to realize that human beings rely on inference to make sense of the utterances of others, this does not actually answer the question of how they do so. On what basis do individuals decide which interpretation to give to an ambiguous phrase? How do they know that a certain piece of shared knowledge should be assumed, despite being left unsaid? When does a statement that says one thing imply the opposite? Clearly, for inference to function effectively, there must be rules that govern how messages are designed and interpreted.

A large body of psycholinguistic thought, commonly referred to as the theory of conversational implicature, suggests that interpersonal communication is guided by specific social norms and by inferences and assumptions based on these norms. Specifically, it maintains that communication operates on the basis of an implicit assurance that speakers will take into consideration the purpose of the conversation and the preexisting knowledge of the listener when choosing which information to include and which to exclude in their utterances. This has been varyingly referred to as the guarantee of relevance (Sperber and Wilson, 1986) and the cooperative principle (Grice, 1975). Grice specified four maxims that speakers must observe to
put this general principle into practice: (1) speakers should be given as much information as possible, except for information listeners are likely to possess or take for granted already (maxim of quantity); (2) speakers should not say anything they know to be false or for which they lack adequate evidence (maxim of quality); (3) information should only be presented if it has a direct bearing on the topic of discussion (maxim of relevance), and; (4) information should be presented as simply and as clearly as possible (maxim of manner). Listeners deduce the implicit meaning of phrases by assuming that the speaker is being “cooperative” by observing these maxims, while speakers craft messages whose accurate interpretation depends on listeners’ willingness to make the cooperativeness assumption. Empirical research provides strong support for this notion (e.g., Hilton, 1995; Schwarz, 1994; Schwarz, Strack, Hilton and Naderer, 1991; Wyer and Gruenfeld, 1995).

A good example of the application of the cooperative principle occurs when a speaker provides information that seems unimportant or inappropriate for the discussion at hand. Listeners tend to weigh such information heavily, not because the information seems inherently important, but because they have a reasonable expectation that communicators have provided it for a reason. Consider the following exchange:

Ann: Did David pass his economics exam?
Beth: He certainly has been playing a lot of video games lately.

In a strictly logical sense, Beth’s response in this exchange is a non sequitur that fails to answer the original question. Making the assumption that Beth is a cooperative speaker, however, one can reasonably infer that she (a) does not know the results, but (b) believes that David may have failed the exam as a consequence of spending too much time playing video games rather than studying. In a similar fashion, when asked what they did yesterday, people tend to focus on
things that fall outside of the normal routine of getting out of bed, brushing one's teeth, showering, shaving, eating breakfast, and so on. To mention any of these activities is therefore to imply that they were somehow unpredictable or unusual, giving them special meaning.

Grice (1975) and others also make the critical observation that the cooperative principle presupposes that communicators wish to be correctly understood (Cole, 1978; Levinson, 1983). However, there are circumstances under which communicators are motivated by other objectives, such as a desire to purposely mislead or confuse, to socially ingratiate themselves, to be humorous, and so on. This may result in messages that flout conversational maxims and cause listeners to make invalid inferences. Unscrupulous communicators, in particular, may utter phrases that say one thing, but imply another, in hopes of intentionally misleading their audience. Conversely, aware that not all speakers are cooperative, listeners do not always assume that the maxims are being observed. When cues tip them off to the possibility of an uncooperative speaker, evidence has shown that individuals may cease to make the inferences that typify the normal meaning-making process, and instead favor an interpretation which closely approximates the literal meaning of the message (Grice, 1975).

2.4.3 Summary

Conversational inference theory suggests that people “read between the lines” and accept implications as fact because it is generally functional to do so. Constraints associated with everyday communication make it impractical for individuals to be completely precise about what they mean. Instead, communication seems to be governed by “rules of conversation” (Grice, 1975), tacit conventions which oblige communicators to be relevant, truthful, informative and clear. Widespread adherence to these rules makes it reasonable for listeners to assume that speakers mean what they seem to mean.
This is interesting in light of the popular view that rational people should operate only on the information explicitly given to them in judgment tasks (a perspective often attributed to Kahneman and Tversky [1973; 1974] but more properly characterized as an interpretation others have given to their work). Viewed as a social phenomenon, rather than a mere exercise of logic, going beyond the information given is not a mistake, but rather an adaptive solution to the need to communicate large volumes of information in a limited amount of time. As Hilton (1995) has argued, "failure to recognize the role of conversational assumptions in governing inference processes can lead rational responses to be misclassified as errors and their source misattributed to cognitive shortcomings in the decision maker." Although Schwarz and his colleagues (Strack, Schwarz, and Wanke, 1991; Schwarz, 1994; 1996) first advanced this argument with respect to the over-reliance of experimental subjects on non-diagnostic person information at the expense of base-rate information, the principle may also apply more broadly.

2.5 Advertising as Communication

Although marketing and consumer research generally conceptualize advertising as a tool for effecting attitude change and motivating purchase, it can also be viewed as a form of communication – albeit one in which the identity of the "speaker" is not always apparent. Research on the phenomenon of everyday conversation thus offers a possible basis for understanding why consumers go along with the gist of ads. The traditional perspective of consumers' proclivity for going beyond the literal meaning of an ad is that they are committing an error in judgment: Why, after all, would a rational person read more into ads than was actually stated, when the goal of advertisers is to induce purchase by making the product sound as attractive as possible? The answer may be that consumers are simply employing the same inferential processes that have proven so successful in helping them to deal with everyday
communication. In this instance, however, the message has taken the form of an ad and the listener has been labeled a "consumer".

2.5.1 Advertiser Violation of the Cooperative Principle

By the logic just described, consumers exposed to advertising messages can be seen as applying the same rules that govern other forms of social discourse: taking for granted that the information provided is both relevant and accurate, and using this assumption as the basis for inferring the intended meaning of the advertiser's message. In short, consumers may be accepting the implications of advertisers because they are fulfilling the role of cooperative listener, as is required of them in order to make effective communication possible.

For advertisers, however, fulfilling the responsibilities of a cooperative speaker is not always a simple task. As can be seen in the marketplace, advertisers occasionally violate conversational norms by including irrelevant information or omitting things that should have been mentioned. Some no doubt do this unwittingly, while others do it deliberately as a means of misleading consumers.

One of the special challenges facing advertisers is that they do not always know who their audience will be, what information they already have, and what assumptions they are inclined to make. Choosing what information to provide in an ad thus requires familiarity with the audience in order to identify what will or will not be informative. This is not always easy, since both the audience and their knowledge base may change over time. Moreover, advertisers have a strong incentive to promote the positive features of their products, and downplay the negatives – something that can conflict with the principles of conversational relevance.

An example may help to illustrate this point: Until the early 1970s, advertising for air conditioners had focused exclusively on cooling power, which had traditionally been the most
important point of differentiation. But when electricity costs rose sharply in 1973, energy
efficiency emerged as a second critical attribute. Research found that advertisements which
failed to mention the air conditioner's efficiency rating prompted consumers to infer that all air
conditioners must be equally efficient. Yet significant differences in efficiency existed,
prompting charges that the ads were misleading. Such advertising was eventually deemed to
constitute an unfair and deceptive practice by the FTC, over the protests of advertisers who
maintained that both their motives and actions were benign (Cohen, 1974; Garfinkel, 1983).

In another prominent case, H&R Block once advertised that one of the 17 reasons to
choose them to help prepare tax returns was that they accompanied taxpayers to the Internal
Revenue Service in case of an audit. While true, the benefit was entirely generic since
government regulations obligated tax preparers to accompany clients to audits. Consumers,
however, assumed that, since the company had specifically mentioned it in their ads, the service
was unique to H&R Block (Garfinkel, 1983). In essence, the firm neglected its obligations as a
cooporative communicator by failing to recognize (or perhaps conveniently forgetting) that most
customers were unaware of the regulation, and would consequently perceive that the ad was
stating that the service was a special advantage of using H&R Block.

In any event, evidence suggests that most advertisers are aware of the basic principles of
conversational implicature (Cotte and Ritchie, in press), and that unscrupulous firms violate the
cooperativeness principle in an effort to mislead consumers. The vast majority of deceptive
advertising cases involve ads that mislead consumers through the use of implication, not literal
falsehoods (Harris, Dubitsky, and Bruno, 1983).
2.5.2 Logical vs. Pragmatic Implications

The linguistics literature distinguishes two types of implications that communicators may make. Those that follow logically and necessarily from an utterance and leave little or no room for interpretation are termed logical implications. Those that merely suggest another piece of information (however strongly), but for which the implied statement is not a necessary consequence, are pragmatic implications (see Cole, 1978, and Levinson, 1983, for an overview). In employing the latter, speakers expect their listeners to “understand what was meant” in spite of the fact that it was not literally stated. Shimp (1983, p. 200) illustrated the distinction nicely:

Direct Assertion: “Brand X golf ball has a unique new construction.”
Logical Implication: No other golf ball is constructed the same way.
Pragmatic Implication: This new golf ball is better than others because of its unique new construction.

Although the claim says nothing about the ball’s superior performance, it seems reasonable for consumers to “read between the lines” and make an inference to that effect because the advertiser has no other obvious reason to convey information about its unique construction to consumers. It is even conceivable that a knowledgeable golfer might develop specific beliefs about how the ball is likely to differ, and what specific benefits it might provide (e.g., more durable, travels farther, flies straighter). Interestingly, while an ad containing such a claim could be deceptive, it need not be so since the accuracy of the inference depends on the product. The broader point is that consumers are likely to accept what the ad seems to be saying.

Part of the room for interpretation in the above claim lies with the meaning of the term “unique” and its connotation of superiority – in many ways a subjective question. Yet claims may be entirely objective, and yet still imply things with which consumers are likely to cooperate. By way of example, consider the following:
Direct Assertion: "Brand Y cereal contains 100% natural ingredients."
Logical Implication: It has no preservatives or other chemical substances.
Pragmatic Implication: It is healthier for you than cereals that are not 100% natural.

Here, the literal claim is objectively verifiable, in that the cereal is either composed entirely of natural ingredients or it is not. But because product “naturalness” alone does not confer any particular benefit, consumers are likely to infer that the advertiser mentioned it in the ad because it is a reasonable indicator that the product is healthier and more nutritious. As with the golf ball claim, prominent mention of the cereal’s natural ingredients in an ad does not make sense unless this is somehow germane to the purchase decision. Consumers are likely to recognize this when interpreting the literal claim being made, and therefore add meaning that goes beyond the information given.

Shimp (1978) demonstrated this phenomenon in a laboratory setting with a study of ads containing incomplete comparative claims such as “Mennen goes on warmer and drier.” Participants were assigned to one of three groups, and then asked whether they agreed that the advertiser was actually claiming something more specific. Each group received a different specific claim to consider – that Mennen went on warmer and drier than: (a) any other deodorant on the market; (b) other deodorants made of chemicals, or (c) a lot of other spray deodorants. In each case, over 50% of respondents agreed that the advertiser had intended to make the more specific claim. While this is a curious finding (logically, the advertiser could not have intended all these things simultaneously) one interpretation is that participants “knew” the ad was claiming more than it literally stated, but were insufficiently familiar with the product category to be certain what that claim was. When offered a specific option by a credible marketing researcher, they not only “went along” with the advertiser, but the researcher as well.
2.5.3 How Do People Process Pragmatic Implications?

While most individuals are able to logically distinguish insinuation from assertion, evidence suggests that, in practice, people tend to treat pragmatic implications as being "functionally equivalent" to assertions. Harris (1977), for instance, presented experimental participants with a series of ads, some containing a direct assertion and others a pragmatic implication, and then asked whether the claim in each ad was true, false, or of indeterminate truth value. Subjects given no specific instructions rated pragmatically implied claims as true roughly 80% of the time, while 60% believed such claims to be true even when told not to interpret mere implications as though stated. Similar results were found in subsequent advertising studies (e.g., Harris, Dubitsky, and Thompson, 1979), and in studies that examined juror interpretation of pragmatically implied statements in a courtroom setting (Harris and Monaco, 1978).

Interestingly, it also appears that motivational and perceptual biases can affect the nature of the inferences consumers draw from advertising (Monaco and Kaiser, 1983). When presented with two competing topics, individuals tended to see implications in the message favoring the one they preferred or expected. This finding reinforces the notion that meaning is actively constructed, rather than passively interpreted. It is also consistent with work showing that information that supports a preferred conclusion is examined less critically than information than information that contradicts it (Ditto and Lopez, 1992).

2.5.4 What Do People Do when Information Is Missing?

Although the information presented in ads is often quite brief, people seem to evaluate advertised products based on whatever information is presented to them. They may even make assumptions about information that communicators fail to mention. The theory of conversational
implicature is instructive for understanding how consumers make sense of such missing information, since their assessment of the product is likely to depend on their inferences about why the information was excluded. Two possible attributions exist: (1) the information was excluded because the product is weak on that attribute, or; (2) the information was excluded because the advertiser felt it was not necessary to mention it. This is especially true when the overall ad conveys a general message about the product that seems to imply something about the missing attribute.

Houghton, Kardes, Sanbonmatsu, Ho, and Posovac (1998) investigated the extent to which the tendency to form strong judgments on the basis of weak evidence stems from conversational inferences and assumptions about the intent of the communicator, or insensitivity to the limitations of the presented evidence. In their study, participants began by reading a product review that omitted information about several key attributes. They were then asked to provide an overall product evaluation, assess the product on presented and omitted attributes, and indicate why they believed the article had failed to provide information on the omitted attributes. Order of measurement served as a factor in the study: For some participants, the attribution and attribute-rating questions preceded the overall evaluation measure – thereby highlighting the limitations of the information in the article – while in other cases they were asked afterward.

Results supported the hypothesis that consumers are generally insensitive to information limitations: For the most part, participants failed to recognize that important attribute information was missing unless they had first been prompted by the attribution question. Yet despite the strength of these findings, Houghton and his colleagues were quick to point out that their procedure had not yet resolved the question of conversational inference, and its role in consumer information processing. As they noted: “Ironically, the high degree of insensitivity to limitations of evidence observed in the present study may have blocked or prevented the occurrence of
Gricean attributional reasoning processes” (p. 50). In short, the importance of conversational norms to consumer inferences about missing information needs to be more fully investigated.

2.5.5 **Summary**

Many claims made by advertisers take the form of pragmatic implications, which depend on the active construction of meaning. Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that consumers’ willingness to go beyond the literal meaning of ads is a manifestation of a more general process through which people make meaning in interpersonal communication. It therefore seems reasonable to try to understand consumer processing of advertising implications through the lens of conversational implicature. Importantly, this theory has identified trust as a critical variable: Individuals should only be willing to “fill in the blanks” if they have faith that the speaker’s motivation is to communicate his or her ideas accurately. This suggests that consumers, normally so willing to accept the “gist” of an ad, may restrict themselves to the literal meaning of ad claims in situations where they do not trust the motives of the marketer. The next section explores the trust concept more fully, and explores its relevance to conversational inference.

2.6 **Trust**

Trust is widely regarded as a significant human phenomenon, and has been the subject of scholarly attention in such diverse fields as economics (Williamson, 1993; Valley, Moag, and Bazerman, 1998), political science (e.g., Cole, 1973; Feldman, 1983; Citrin and Muste, 1999) sociology (e.g., Luhmann, 1979; Barber, 1983; Lewis and Weigert, 1985), and psychology (e.g., Deutsch, 1958; Rotter, 1971; Webb and Worchel, 1986), as well as marketing and consumer behavior. As mentioned, it is also critically important in interpersonal communication, since the willingness of individuals to make inferences depends on their confidence that the speaker is
observing the cooperative principle: In other words, they must trust the person speaking to them. Given the consequences of trust for the effectiveness of implication in advertising, it is worth considering this construct in some detail.

2.6.1 Definitions of Trust

Despite (or perhaps because of) the broad applicability of the trust construct, there has been little consensus on what it is or how it should be operationalized. Hosmer (1995) lamented that “there appears to be widespread agreement on the importance of trust in human conduct, but unfortunately there also appears to be equally widespread lack of agreement on a suitable definition of the construct” (p. 380). On the other hand, many authors regard multiple conceptualizations of trust as both inevitable and desirable. Bigley and Pearce (1998), for instance, have argued that the broad scope of trust-related research makes a single definition impractical, and suggest that the goal should instead be to ensure that similar types of problems are studies using similar definitions of trust.

While some view trust as a state of mind, others regard it as a behavior. This latter view is favored by many decision theorists and economists, who define trust as the act of making of a risky investment, where the payoff depends on the actions of an agent whose behavior is beyond the investor’s control (Arrow, 1974; Axelrod, 1984; Coleman, 1990). For some (e.g., Sen, 1977; Telser, 1980), this implies that trust is the product of straightforward mental calculus: One should “trust” another individual when their incentive to cooperate is greater than their incentive to defect. This bespeaks a view of humans as strict utility maximizers, and has been labeled “calculative trust” (Craswell, 1993) or “trust as prudence” (James, 2002). Most behaviorists, however, dismiss such a conceptualization as trivial, in that it eliminates the element of vulnerability which they feel gives trust its meaning (Williamson, 1993). They favor an
alternative definition, in which individuals are deemed to have “trusted” if they cooperate with another actor who lacks the incentive to cooperate. In other words, trust exists when individuals make themselves vulnerable to someone or something, in spite of the fact that this other agent would benefit by taking advantage of them. This view of trust has been referred to as “personal trust” (Craswell, 1993) or “trust as hope” (James, 2002).

Though the behavioral approach has its adherents, trust is more commonly characterized as a cognitive construct. Deutsch (1958), for instance, defined it as the expectation that another actor will behave in a certain way, under circumstances where their failure to do so would knowingly harm the truster. Rotter (1971) offered a similar conceptualization, describing trust as an expectation that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another party can be relied upon. However, he drew a critical distinction between specific and generalized trust, noting that, while trust is often based on information or personal experience regarding the specific target in question, individuals may also trust others with whom they have little or no direct experience. For instance, many people trust “policemen” and “doctors”, or even intangible entities such as “government”, “the Catholic church” and “well-known brands”. According to Rotter, this latter form of trust stems from generalization of one’s experiences with specific stimuli to the broader categories to which these stimuli belong and, ultimately, to other members within those categories.

Whether behavioral or cognitive, nearly all definitions of trust entail the individual voluntarily placing him or herself in a situation where personal well-being depends on the intentional behavior of the agent being trusted. At the core of the concept is the willingness to be vulnerable at the hands of another, based on the expectation that the other party will not use the opportunity to inflict harm or deny them some gain. Trust therefore involves the following specific conditions:
(1) The truster is willing to take an action whose outcome depends on the intentional behavior of another party;

(2) The outcome involves something that is valued by the truster;

(3) There is a reasonable possibility that the other party will not behave as desired, and the truster is aware of this fact, and;

(4) The truster has no practical means of enforcing the behavior of the other party.

In brief, then, to trust means relying on others not to take advantage of you, and to be trustworthy means not taking advantage of those who trust you (James, 2002).

An individual’s level of trust in a particular actor has been found to be a joint consequence of their general propensity to trust others, and their perception that the specific actor in question is worthy of being trusted (McAllister, 1995; Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, 1995). Propensity to trust is a relatively stable personality characteristic that has its foundations in the belief that people are basically honest, fair, and dependable. It is closely related to both an individual’s cultural values (Doney, Cannon, and Mullen, 1998) and general beliefs about human nature (Wrightsman, 1964), and has been shown to predict cooperative behavior across a variety of situations (Schlenker, Helm, and Tedeschi, 1973; Rotter, 1980; Goto 1996). An individual’s propensity to trust influences his or her perceptions by serving as a kind of filter through which that person perceives, interprets, and makes attributions for the actions of others (Mayer et al., 1995). Research has shown that people not only vary in their general propensity to trust (Wrightsman, 1964), but also in their inclination to trust particular types of actors, such as politicians (Citrin and Muste, 1999) and advertisers (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998).

The perceived trustworthiness of a particular target, meanwhile, is specific to the target, and involves an assessment of the other actor’s motives, intention and character (Tyler and Lind,
1992), including such traits as fairness and reliability (Butler, 1991). Mayer et al. (1995) propose a more formal framework that regards perceived trustworthiness as a product of the truster’s beliefs that the target in question possesses the ability to deliver on their promises (Good, 1988; Sitkin and Roth, 1993), the benevolence to want to do good (Butler, 1991; Larzelere and Huston, 1980), and the integrity to actually fulfill promises that have been made (Ring and Van de Ven, 1992; Butler, 1991). When an individual is unfamiliar with the target in question, these perceptions tend to be held with little confidence, and influenced primarily by the target’s reputation and/or the person’s past dealings with similar targets. Conversely, when the individual has had personal dealings with the target, direct experience will tend to play a dominant role. Beliefs about trustworthiness (or lack thereof) that are the product of long, meaningful, and regular interaction will tend to be particularly strong and enduring.

In marketing, the nature of trust has been studied primarily in the context of relationships between vendors and their customers (e.g., Moorman, Deshpandé and, Zaltman, 1993; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Ganesan, 1994; Doney and Cannon, 1997; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999). As in the broader literature, debate exists among marketing scholars as to whether trust should be characterized in cognitive or behavioral terms. Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) advocate the former, and define the construct as “confidence in the exchange partner’s reliability and integrity,” while Moorman, Deshpandé and, Zaltman (1993, p. 82) lean toward the behavioral view, describing it as “a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence.” Regardless, the spirit of these two definitions is consistent with the broader literature: both regard trust as an expectation that the partner will not exploit vulnerabilities in the relationship, and both view trustworthiness as a consequence of the other party’s expertise, reliability, and benevolence.
2.6.2 Trust and Distrust

While early trust-related research focused on the positive expectancies associated with trust, more recent work has begun to examine the nature of its relationship with distrust (e.g., Sitkin and Roth, 1993). Exploring the precise nature of distrust has also been fertile ground, with particularly extensive research conducted on the relationship between suspicion and attributional processes (Fein, Hilton, and Miller, 1990; Hilton, Fein, and Miller, 1993; Fein and Hilton, 1994; Fein, 1996). Others have focused on the consequences for behavior when the level of distrust is particularly intense (Kramer, 1995; 1998; 1999; 2002; Kramer and Wei, 1999).

Trust and distrust are generally deemed to represent opposite ends of a unidimensional, bipolar scale measuring the strength and valence of a person’s expectations regarding the behavior of another actor. Lewicki et al. (1998) characterize them as states of relative certainty, with trust the expectation that the actor will behave in a way that supports one’s interests, and distrust the expectation that their behavior will not support these interests. The midpoint of this scale thus corresponds to a state in which the individual has no particular expectations about the actor in question – neither trusting nor distrusting. Implicitly, this definition asserts the notion that lack of trust is not distrust, and lack of distrust is not trust – a matter that has been the subject of some debate (Lewicki et al., 1998).

Fein et al. (1990) propose a slightly different definition, describing distrust/suspicion as a state of mind in which the individual (a) believes that another person’s behavior may be motivated by objectives that they wish to conceal, and (2) actively entertains multiple hypotheses about the motives for the other person’s behavior. According to this view, suspicious people tend to draw inferences about the actor’s true disposition that reflect a relatively sophisticated style of attributional processing. Kramer (1998), meanwhile, argues that there are rational and irrational forms of distrust. Rational distrust is a negative expectancy about another’s behavior
that is grounded in one's past interaction with them, and is roughly proportional to the severity of past transgressions. Irrational distrust, meanwhile, is an exaggerated propensity to question the motives and benevolence of others that can arise even in the absence of specific experiences that justify it.

While most research implicitly assumes that a person possesses a single level of trust-distrust toward a given target, Lewicki et al. (1998) maintain that individuals may hold several different (and not necessarily consistent) views of another actor. Thus, one person may trust another in some contexts but distrust them in others. However, the co-existence of strong trust and strong distrust would seem to represent a rare situation. More commonly, an individual is likely to exhibit cases of (1) high trust / low distrust, (2) high distrust / low trust, or (3) low trust / low distrust. The latter case is likely to be common when an individual has very little information about the target on which to base their assessment.

From a functional perspective, trust and distrust provide a means by which rational actors can manage social complexity and uncertainty (Luhmann, 1979). Trust-distrust is frequently conceived as a kind of heuristic, which provides the individual with an efficient way of making judgments about the sincerity of another's actions or the truthfulness of their claims. In addition to being a low-effort means of assessing risk, it also helps to reduce perceptions of risk. Trust allows specific undesirable conduct to be removed from consideration, and allows desirable conduct to be seen as more certain. Distrust allows undesirable conduct to be seen as more certain, spurring the rational individual to take protective action.

2.6.3 Trust as the Baseline State

An important question for the present research is whether trust represents the natural baseline state for human beings: Do individuals have an innate tendency to trust, and then cease
to trust when they acquire information which suggests they should not? Or are they reluctant to make themselves vulnerable, beginning to trust only when presented with information that suggests the other party will not exploit them. This is a difficult question to answer conclusively because experience begins to shape a person’s willingness to trust at an early age. Moreover, the propensity to start by trusting no doubt depends on the situation and whether conditions are similar to prior instances in which the individual had bad experiences.

Despite these obstacles, several authors have argued that the natural inclination of human beings is to trust unless they have reason not to. Spinoza (1982), for instance, argued that accepting an idea occurs automatically as part of the process of understanding it, while rejection occurs subsequently and only with effort. This idea has been endorsed by Gilbert (1991; 1992) who, along with his colleagues (Gilbert, Krull, and Malone, 1990; Gilbert, Tafarodi, and Malone, 1993) found empirical evidence to support this view. Studies have also shown that individuals who observe or learn about the behavior of someone about which they have little or no prior information have a robust tendency to draw inferences that take behavior at face value (Ross, 1977; Gilbert and Jones, 1986). This is perhaps evidence of a natural inclination to trust that things are what they seem. The tendency to begin by trusting even appears to be adaptive: In a series of computer simulations, Axelrod (1984) found that a policy of initial cooperation, followed by action that mirrored the other player’s move, led to an optimal outcome under most conditions. Trusting was the superior default strategy, in spite of its associated risks, because it laid the groundwork for subsequent, mutually reinforcing cooperation that profited both parties.

2.6.4 Consequences of Distrust/Suspicion

Research suggests that a suspicious state of mind can produce two very different effects on information processing: In some instances, it seems to prompt individuals to pay greater
attention to the underlying merits of persuasive arguments. In others, it leads them to discount, or at least place lesser weight on, information they receive. This duality of response is consistent with two of the basic motivations identified by cognitive psychologists: the desire to form an accurate worldview (accuracy motive), and the desire to protect the self against threat (defense motive).

Accuracy goals seem to prevail when suspicion is induced via a disclosure that a message source has been dishonest in the past. A number of studies (e.g., Schul, 1993; Priester and Petty, 1995; 2003) have found that claims made by “untrustworthy” sources are carefully elaborated, while claims from more trustworthy endorsers are uncritically accepted. Such information-based manipulations appear to produce a kind of “cold” suspicion, in which the disclosure functions by alerting individuals to the increased risk that claims will be invalid.

Evidence also suggests that this extra scrutiny generally serves its intended purpose: Studies by McCormack and Levine (1990) have shown that suspicion can significantly improve a person’s accuracy in detecting deception. In a similar fashion, suspicion has been found to enhance the ability of individuals to accurately interpret social situations. In particular, it seems to overcome the correspondence bias – the widespread tendency to disregard situational constraints and regard the actions of others as an indicator of their personality or attitudes. Research by Fein and his colleagues (Fein, Hilton, and Miller, 1990; Hilton, Fein, and Miller, 1993) found that suspicious individuals were more apt to consider alternative explanations for behavior, and thus more likely to account for external incentives or constraints.

Conversely, suspicion seems to evoke defense motives when it arises as a result of actual deception. In their examination of the effects of misleading advertising, for instance, Ritchie and Darke (2000) asked study participants to evaluate an advertised product, based on an ad that was specifically designed to elicit positive responses. Subjects rated the product favorably – as
intended – only to learn that an impartial testing agency (Consumer Reports magazine) had found the product to be of poor quality. Across five experiments, such advertiser deceit was found to yield powerful negative consequences when participants were exposed to subsequent ads: When presented with ads from the marketer that had fooled them, individuals actively counterargued claims and, relative to controls, formed more negative product attitudes. More interestingly, subjects who had been deceived expressed elevated suspicion of advertising in general, and tended to discount claims from unrelated marketers – even when those marketers sold very different products and possessed a well-known brand.

Research by Kramer and his colleagues (Kramer, 1998; Kramer and Hanna, 1998) lends further support to the idea that defensiveness can prompt individuals to generalize their suspicion beyond the initial wrongdoer – even when not objectively warranted. Their studies found that suspicious individuals often over-attributed hostile intentions to others, and overestimated the degree to which others conspired to coordinate influence attempts. Such people also exhibited signs of a confirmation bias that underweighted objectively diagnostic information, and produced final judgments that tended to verify their initial suspicions.

Overall, then, research suggests that suspicion can play an important role in persuasion, both as an influence on the level of processing and as a potential source of bias. Perhaps more interesting, however, is the finding that a suspicious mindset can have extremely broad effects, often coloring the individual’s response to parties who had no particular connection with the source of the suspicion. This suggests that the transgressions of one advertiser can have serious consequences for others, especially in cases where these other marketers are using ads that rely on the willingness of consumers to make cooperative inferences.
2.6.5 Summary

Trust is the willingness to make oneself vulnerable at the hands of another. While people differ in their tendency to trust, and the level of risk associated with trusting in a particular situation is also a factor, it appears that the general human inclination is to begin by trusting, but to cease doing so when they encounter evidence that trust is not warranted. Empirical evidence has shown that situations which cause an individual to feel highly suspicious toward a particular target tend to undermine this baseline tendency to trust, even toward other targets. In light of the critical role of trust in inference-making, it seems reasonable to suppose that a suspicious mindset would compromise the normal communication process.
3.0 Overview

Like other forms of human communication, advertising routinely relies on implication. And since the literal and implied meanings of an ad often differ, consumers must frequently interpret the meaning of advertisements. Empirical evidence has shown that consumers usually accept what an ad insinuates, despite the fact that advertisers are known for taking creative liberties when crafting their messages in order to generate favorable product attitudes. To date, no satisfactory rationale has been found for this puzzling, yet important, aspect of consumer behavior.

The central thesis of this dissertation is that an explanation for the consumer’s apparent cooperativeness in interpreting the meaning of advertisements can be found in the psycholinguistics literature, and more specifically in Grice’s (1975) theory of conversational implicature. This theory maintains that everyday conversation between individuals relies on implication because stating things explicitly is cumbersome and inefficient. To avoid this fate, Grice argues, humans have developed a set of tacit “rules” which oblige speakers to craft messages that mean what they seem to mean, and listeners to accept that apparent meaning even when it is inconsistent with what is literally said. The system apparently works well since (a) speakers do, in fact, tend to observe the “rules” that govern the use of implication, and (b) the end result is communication that is more efficient and engaging (Grice, 1975; Sperber and Wilson, 1986; Higgins, 1992). It therefore seems reasonable to hypothesize that consumers’ ready acceptance of advertiser implications may simply be one manifestation of a more general reliance on a strategy that serves human beings well under other circumstances.
Grice and his adherents maintain that people normally assume that speakers are observing the norms of interpersonal communication – being truthful, presenting ideas clearly, providing as much relevant information as possible, and omitting facts that the listener knows or could reasonably take for granted. This implicit faith is seen to be what allows them to “go beyond the information given” and make inferences about what the speaker intended. When such trust is undermined, Grice contends that listeners suspend their presumption that the rules are being followed, and cease to treat the speaker’s implications as if stated.

Given that public opinion polls have repeatedly shown that people hold advertisers in low regard, consumers’ willingness to accept advertising implications is certainly consistent with the notion that some more general behavioral strategy may be at work. That consumers’ negative beliefs about advertisers do not seem to influence their response to individual ads suggests that, under normal circumstances, such thoughts are not salient in their minds. Rather, the default mode seems to be one in which consumers construe ads as simple attempts to communicate, rather than as persuasion attempts. Some kind of trigger seems to be needed to activate their “schemer schemas” and jolt them into the skeptical, active mindset (see Friestad and Wright, 1994) in which they question the advertiser’s motives, suspend their natural assumption that the rules of conversation are being followed, and cease to make cooperative inferences.

Virtually any event that prompts a suspicious mindset would seem to have the potential to provide such a trigger, especially when it relates specifically to marketing or advertising. One such phenomenon was identified by Darke and Ritchie (2004), whose research looked at what happens when an individual discovers that he or she has been deceived by an ad. Feeling fooled in this manner was found to have powerful effects on trust: Predictably, it generated intense distrust of the marketer who lied to them, and led individuals to actively counterargue any subsequent persuasive claims from that source. More interestingly, it also evoked a “shady
"marketer" stereotype that made participants suspicious toward advertising in general and more inclined to dismiss ad claims without thinking about them or considering their merits. (Further testing found that the manipulation did not influence mood, or other related variables.) Inducing suspicion in this manner should presumably prompt consumers to suspend their assumption that a particular advertiser is a cooperative communicator and, as a result, cause them to believe only what an ad literally states. To the extent that the consumer's persuasion knowledge characterizes the implication as a deceptive tactic, such an experience may even prompt the individual to make an entirely different inference – namely, that the marketer is making implied rather than explicit claims with the intention of deceiving them. Clearly, either of these outcomes is problematic for marketers, since it means that implied claims will, at best, fail to persuade and, at worst, have a negative effect on attitudes.

While the preceding logic is appealing on its face, its validity must be established empirically. To test these ideas, I sought out different ways in which advertisers might suggest things about products, with the goal of testing whether consumers would indeed behave as the theory suggests they should – going along with the overall "gist" of the ad under normal circumstances, but ceasing to cooperate when trust in the advertiser is undermined. A search of the marketing literature suggested two practices – missing information and qualified claims – that were not only common, but had also been studied as situations where consumers seem to make relatively complex cooperative inferences.

3.1 Missing Information

Substantial empirical work has been conducted to investigate what consumers do when information about a particular attribute is unavailable. In most instances, studies have explored this question in the context of a complex decision-making environment, in which information
about the attribute values of a broad range of products is offered to consumers in tabular format, and participants are encouraged to engage in mental calculus to estimate the value of the missing attribute (e.g., Huber and McCann, 1982; Johnson and Levin, 1985; Ross and Creyer, 1992; Broniarczyk and Alba, 1994). Less attention has been paid to the consequences of missing information in more conventional advertising formats, and virtually none to the process by which consumers form evaluations based on inferences about the reasons why the information is lacking (Houghton et al., 1988 is a notable exception).

Although advertising should ideally contain as much relevant product information as possible, there are legitimate explanations for why information about a particular attribute might be left out of an ad. Among other things, advertisers want to avoid overburdening their audience, and thus may mention only the information they consider most important. As well, many ads form part of a broader campaign in which each individual advertisement conveys only part of the overall message. Consequently, ads often imply something accurate about a product, but fail to provide sufficient information to substantiate the claim unambiguously.

On the other hand, such information may be left out of an ad for more sinister reasons. It is not unheard of, for instance, for advertisers to try to convey an unrealistically positive impression of their product by focusing on dimensions where it performs well and downplaying ones on which competitors are superior. In extreme cases, critical information may even be omitted in hopes that consumers will evaluate the product based solely on attributes mentioned in the ad, or infer that the product contains some feature it does not (see Ross and Creyer, 1992).

The theoretical reasoning advanced earlier suggests that consumers ordinarily assume that an advertiser is being a cooperative communicator. Thus, when information about a particular feature is missing, but the ad implies that the product possesses it, one would expect consumers to respond as though the attribute claim had actually been stated. More specifically, I
expect consumers to (a) infer that the advertised product possesses the feature and (b) form an evaluation of the product that is as favorable as the one formed when the ad directly states that the product has the attribute.

Expectations are quite different when trust in the advertiser has been undermined. Under these conditions, consumers should be mindful of the fact that advertisers have an ulterior motive and aware that the advertising message may not conform to the norms of everyday conversation. They should therefore be less willing to accept the gist of the advertiser's message, more likely to believe only those claims that are explicitly stated, and potentially more inclined to see missing information as a device used to create an overly favorable impression of the product. Consequently, I expect that suspicious consumers will refuse to make the inference if an ad merely implies – rather than specifically states – that an advertised brand offers a particular attribute. This should lead to more negative attitudes when information is missing, as a result of the lack of trust in the advertiser's motives. This can be expressed more formally as follows:

H1: When an ad contains missing information, attitudes formed by generally suspicious individuals will be less positive than attitudes of non-suspicious controls; suspicion will have a smaller effect when the ad contains full information.

H2A: Generally suspicious individuals will have a lower level of specific trust in the advertiser, relative to non-suspicious controls.

H2B: When an ad contains missing information, the effect of general suspicion on attitudes will be mediated by the level of specific trust in the advertiser.
H3: When an ad contains missing information, beliefs about the degree to which the product offers the attribute in question will be less positive among generally suspicious individuals than among non-suspicious controls; suspicion will have a smaller effect when the ad contains full information.

H4: When an ad contains missing information, valenced thoughts will be less positive among generally suspicious individuals than among non-suspicious controls; suspicion will have a smaller effect when the ad contains full information.

3.2 Qualified Claims

Qualified claims are ones where the advertiser specifies (typically in smaller print at the bottom of the page) that a claim does not generalize beyond the particular product or situation to which it refers. They represent an interesting phenomenon because, despite the qualification, the gist of such ads is that the specific claim is descriptive of something broader – i.e., other product attributes, or other items in the product line. For instance, if an ad from a rental car company boasts that the firm charges 20% less than rivals for weekday rentals, consumers may infer that the company offers a similar price advantage for weekend rentals, even if the fine print states that the comparison was intended to apply only to the product mentioned in the ad. Since the ad makes no explicit claim about weekend rentals, this inference may or may not be valid.

A charitable interpretation of qualified claims is that the advertiser is trying to be clear that exceptions could apply to a rule that is generally true. A more cynical view is that the advertiser has emphasized an appealing – but atypical – aspect of its product offering in hopes that consumers will wrongly assume it is representative of other relevant dimensions. In recent years the U.S. Federal Trade Commission has lent credence to the former interpretation by
mandating the use of qualifications in cases where exceptions exist to a general claim. Yet media critics and consumer advocacy groups have raised concerns that qualified claims actually allow advertisers to make grandiose implied claims with relative impunity, since the ads technically provide full disclosure (Muehling and Kolbe, 1997).

While both views have merit, a related and equally important question is how consumers actually respond to such claims. This issue was explored in some depth in a study by Burke, DeSarbo, Oliver, and Robertson (1988), who exposed consumers to a series of pain reliever ads that included qualified claims, a straightforward version of the claim, and no information. They found that qualified claims prompted more favorable beliefs and attitudes than either of the control conditions. However, their procedure was constrained with respect to external validity: they used a partially within-subjects design that asked participants to rate multiple versions of the ad, and posed their questions at the time of exposure to the ads – suppressing the normal thought process and potentially biasing response. Despite these limitations, however, their findings offer reasonable evidence of the persuasiveness of qualified claims.

Pechmann (1996) employed a more naturalistic procedure in her examination of consumers' tendency to draw general inferences from comparative pricing claims. She exposed subjects to modified versions of a United Parcel Service (UPS) ad, which accurately stated that UPS charged $10 – less than any other firm – for delivery of a letter by 10:30 the next morning. Omitted from the ad, however, were price comparisons for the company's other products (afternoon delivery, parcel delivery, and package pickup) along with data indicating which company was least expensive overall. Despite these informational shortcomings, subjects who saw the ad not only inferred that UPS was less expensive overall, but also that its prices were lower for products that were not mentioned. Remarkably, they persisted in drawing such conclusions even when the ad included a qualifier which explicitly disclosed that the comparison
referred only to morning delivery and not to other offerings. Since UPS charged more than rivals for these other services, such generalizations were not only ill-advised, but invalid.

These findings suggest that consumers normally treat qualification as a mere technicality that can be ignored, and seemingly imply that little can be done to prevent consumers from making risky generalizations. Yet when viewed in the broader context of consumer inference-making, it seems likely that such generalizations depend on an implicit willingness to trust the advertiser. When consumers are suspicious, one would expect them to pay stricter attention to what is literally being claimed, and be reluctant to make the general inference. It is even possible that some suspicious individuals might regard the qualified claim as a deliberate attempt to mislead, and respond particularly negatively. More formally:

H5: When an ad contains a qualified claim, attitudes formed by generally suspicious individuals will be less positive than attitudes of non-suspicious controls; suspicion will have a smaller effect when the ad does not contain a qualified claim.

H6A: Generally suspicious individuals will have a lower level of specific trust in the advertiser, relative to non-suspicious controls.

H6B: When an ad contains a qualified claim, the effect of general suspicion on attitudes will be mediated by the level of specific trust in the advertiser.

H7: When an ad contains a qualified claim, beliefs about the degree to which the product offers the attribute in question will be less positive among generally suspicious individuals than among non-suspicious controls; suspicion will have a smaller effect when the ad does not contain a qualified claim.
H8: When an ad contains a qualified claim, *valenced thoughts* will be less positive among generally suspicious individuals than among non-suspicious controls; suspicion will have a smaller effect when the ad does not contain a qualified claim.
CHAPTER IV
Research Methodology

4.0 Overview

An experimental study was conducted to assess the hypotheses presented in Chapter III. This study manipulated participants’ level of suspicion toward advertising, and then examined the effects on consumer response to (a) an ad which made a claim by implication, and (b) a similar control ad in which the claim was directly stated. The primary dependent measures included participants’ attitudes toward the product, their beliefs about key product attributes, their level of trust in the advertiser, and the overall valence of their thoughts. This chapter describes the general methodology used, beginning with a general discussion of the research participants and the overall experimental design. The experimental procedure is then explained more fully, with a detailed description of the suspicion manipulation, the nature of the target ads, and the dependent measures.

4.1 Research Participants and Study Design

A total of 95 students from an introductory marketing class at the University of British Columbia served as participants in this study. They received course credit in exchange for their participation.

In essence, the study was two experiments in one. The basic design was a 2×2 between-subjects study that crossed suspicion (High vs. Low) with implied claim (Present vs. Absent). This latter factor entailed including or excluding an advertising tactic that implied, but did not state, something positive about the product in question. This made it possible to examine the
effects of suspicion on response to implied claims, while also providing a baseline comparison to confirm that these effects depended on the presence of the implied claim.

To provide a degree of conceptual replication, the study was set up to examine these effects across two different implied claim tactics (missing information, qualified claim). This introduced an additional layer of complexity to the design: Specifically, participants were exposed to two different target ads – a missing information ad (see Figure 4A-1), and a qualified claim ad (see Figure 4B-1) – each of which had a corresponding control version in which the tactic had been eliminated (see Figures 4A-2 and 4B-2). To minimize the chances of guessing the experimental hypotheses, each participant received the treatment version of one ad and the control version of the other. Order of presentation for the two ads was counterbalanced and determined randomly, and was included as a factor in subsequent analyses to ensure that it had not interacted with the variables of interest.

4.2 Procedure

Participants completed the study in pairs, separated by dividers. Each pair was randomly assigned to a Suspicion condition. Random assignment for Type of Tactic and Order of Presentation was done individually.

4.2.1 Manipulation of Consumer Suspicion

Upon arrival at the research lab, participants were told that they would be completing two short studies, and that the first involved evaluating a print advertisement for a product they might have reason to buy in the foreseeable future. The purpose of this initial study was to administer the suspicion manipulation. The experimenter gave subjects an advertisement that described a brand of business luggage (JetLiner; see Figure 4-1). This ad contained three positive claims
about the luggage, along with a personal endorsement from the president and CEO of Amazon.com, and was designed to elicit favorable product evaluations. The claims were made intentionally vague so that the experimenter could later suggest the advertiser had exaggerated the merits of the product in order to be deceptive.

Next, the experimenter handed participants a brief one-page questionnaire instructing them to rate the appeal and effectiveness of the advertisement, and then evaluate the luggage itself (see Appendix 1A). They were permitted to keep the advertisement while completing these ratings. Specifically, they were asked to provide an overall rating of JetLiner luggage, an assessment of the product attributes specifically mentioned in the ad (durability, accessibility of pockets, convenience of carrying handles, and general quality), and an opinion on how well-suited JetLiner luggage was to the needs of frequent business travelers. Since the objective was to elicit positive evaluations, scales were labeled so that all but the lowest numerical score were associated with evaluations that could be construed as favorable. Possible responses to the first question were 1=awful, 2=fair, 3=average, 4=good, 5=very good, and 6=excellent. Similarly, options for the second and third questions were 1=very low, 2=fair, 3=average, 4=above average, 5=high, and 6=very high. Analyses confirmed that the ad was successful in creating generally positive ratings of JetLiner luggage, and that no participants rated the product below average.

The experimenter then administered the suspicion manipulation to participants assigned to that condition. Following a brief glance at each participant’s evaluations of the luggage, he obtained verbal agreement that they considered JetLiner luggage to be superior, or at least equal to its competitors. The experimenter then informed participants that the brand was actually one of the worst on the market, and that airlines had identified it as the brand most likely to break in the course of normal use. To ensure that participants would attribute the deception to the advertiser rather than the spokesperson, he further explained that the ad was part of a cross-
promotion between Amazon.com and one of their suppliers (JetLiner), and that the Amazon CEO had been unaware of the product's poor quality when he agreed to appear in the ad. Those in the control condition (no suspicion) did not receive any feedback about the product or their responses.

4.2.2 Main Experiment

Participants were then sent to a second location to complete an “unrelated” study with a new experimenter. She explained that the purpose of the study was to test their ability to remember information presented in print advertising. This cover story was used to ensure that participants would pay careful attention to the advertising claims across all experimental conditions. It was important that participants read the information carefully so that they would be clear on what was literally being stated versus what was merely being implied: The intent of this study was to determine whether consumers would accept the implied meaning of the ad, even when fully aware that this differed from what was literally being claimed.

Participants were given the first ad, and allowed as much time as they desired to read it before the ad was removed. As they viewed the ad, participants were asked to write down any thoughts or feelings that came to mind (see Appendix 1B). They then completed a short questionnaire (see Appendices 1C and 1D) that measured their attitudes toward the brand, the inferences they made about the attribute associated with the implied ad claim, and their recall of statements made in the ad (included to support the cover story). The same procedure was used for the second ad. After participants had completed the second questionnaire, they received a final set of questions that measured their beliefs regarding the trustworthiness of the two advertisers and their general level of skepticism toward advertising (see Appendix 1E). Finally, they completed an open-ended suspicion probe followed by a check of the suspicion
manipulation (see Appendix 1F), and were subsequently debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Materials: Missing Information Ad

The missing information ad depicted three similar-looking portable CD players offered by a fictitious electronics retailer. All three were described as being programmable, with a super bass system. However the target product (a Sanyo model) was depicted in a manner that suggested it was on promotion. It had a larger photo and larger descriptive text than the other two brands, and was priced $10 lower ($57 vs. $67). The experimental version of this ad (see Figure 4A-1) featured a large graphic beside the target brand identifying the Sanyo as a “feature item,” while similar graphics beside the other two indicated that they offered 40 seconds of anti-shock protection. In the control version (see Figure 4A-2), all three graphics claimed 40 seconds of anti-shock protection.

The experimental version was specifically designed to suggest, but not state, that the target product (Sanyo) was of comparable quality to the remaining two models in the ad – i.e., that its lower selling price was due to promotion rather than product inferiority. This was done via several subtle cues: First, the brand names associated with all three CD players – Aiwa, Panasonic, and Sanyo – were similar in prestige and overall product line quality. Second, apart from the Sanyo model’s anti-shock protection (which was left unspecified as part of the missing information manipulation), the features listed for all three players were identical. Third and finally, the Sanyo player was visually prominent in the ad and was labeled as a “feature item” – two practices that are typically, though not necessarily, signals of promotional pricing. The overall intent was for participants to notice that the advertiser had given the Sanyo model special prominence in the ad, that the Sanyo model cost $10 less than two similar reference products
featured in the ad, and that the advertiser's statement that Sanyo was a "feature item" had resulted in the omission of information about the amount of anti-shock protection offered.

Given the general cooperativeness of consumers, it was anticipated that they would normally accept the advertiser's insinuation that the offer constituted a "good deal" and form relatively positive attitudes toward the target product. In practical terms, this would amount to believing that the overall quality of the Sanyo model was comparable to the other two players in the ad, and that the $10 price advantage was a promotional discount. It was also conceivable that the more thoughtful individuals might make a specific cooperative inference at the attribute level and conclude that the level of anti-shock protection was identical for all three players. Although this was not a necessary consequence of the theory, it would be entirely consistent with it, and would occur if participants actively entertained explanations for why the anti-shock information was omitted.

Suspicious consumers, on the other hand, were expected to exhibit a less charitable response to the ad. Stripped of their implicit trust in marketers, the prediction was that they would seize on the fact that the advertiser had not actually stated that $57 was a special price and that the Sanyo model offered anti-shock protection. Given such a literal interpretation, the logical conclusion would be that the Sanyo model is simply a low-quality CD player for a low price. Resulting product attitudes should consequently be much less favorable than those expressed by non-suspicious consumers, who are presumably more willing to give the advertiser the benefit of the doubt.

As noted, the control version of the ad was simply a full-information version of the same ad, in which the anti-shock information was stated directly. Since the information was provided outright – and thus did not depend on cooperative inference-making – suspicion was expected to have little effect on consumer response to this version.
Materials: Qualified Claim Ad

Stimuli for the qualified claim ad were based on materials successfully used by Pechmann (1996) to study the phenomenon of consumer inference-making in an advertising context. Her research demonstrated that specific price comparisons usually prompt consumers to draw (potentially faulty) conclusions about the overall pricing levels of firms, and that such overgeneralization persists even when the ad includes a disclosure which specifies that the comparison applies only to the featured products.

The ads used in the present study consisted of an appeal to switch to UPS courier service. With the exception of minor changes to the ad copy, graphics, and specific prices quoted, they were identical to the stimuli used in Pechmann’s (1996) work. The experimental version (see Figure 4B-1) claimed that UPS’s efficiency allowed them to offer guaranteed 10:30 a.m. delivery anywhere in the U.S. for $15, while FedEx charged $18. At the bottom of the page, the advertiser explicitly stated that the comparison did not refer to other services such as 5:00 p.m. delivery or pick-up charges. The control version (see Figure 4B-2) made the identical claim of efficiency, but mentioned only UPS’s price for 10:30 delivery with no reference to prices charged by FedEx and no accompanying qualification.

The critical feature of the experimental version was its insinuation that UPS’s overall prices were lower than those of competitors. The headline urged readers to “switch to UPS,” while the ad copy praised the company’s “efficiency” and warned that customers who use another courier “may be paying too much.” In this context, a statement that UPS cost $3 less than FedEx for 10:30 a.m. delivery seemed to suggest that this comparison was representative of prices in general and that UPS cost less than its major competitors. Despite the accompanying qualifier, which clarified that the $15 vs. $18 price advantage applied only to a single product, the gist of the ad was that consumers could expect to save money by switching to UPS.
Normal, cooperative consumers were expected to look at the ad and draw precisely this conclusion. Although they would understand that specific prices differ across products, and that UPS might not be cheapest for every product, the expectation was that they would accept the advertiser's implication that they would pay less overall by switching to UPS. And since the ad claimed that the $15 price for 10:30 a.m. delivery was "the lowest of any company," they should presumably infer that UPS had lower overall prices than its major competitors - not merely FedEx. These beliefs should, in turn, lead to more favorable evaluations of the product.

Conversely, it was felt that suspicious individuals would be less cooperative. Disabused of the usual consumer tendency to accept things at face value, they were expected to refrain from making the inference, and instead carefully consider the limitations expressed in the qualification. In particular, it was felt they would consider it meaningful that the advertiser had implied, but not actually stated that UPS's prices were cheaper overall: Since the advertiser could make a stronger case by asserting this claim directly, it was reasoned that a suspicious individual would construe its mere implication as a sign that the claim was not true. As a result, thoughts and attitudes should be less favorable than those of non-suspicious consumers.

The control ad was needed as a standard of comparison against which responses to the implied claim could be judged. Consequently, it stated the pricing claim in the simplest way possible. Since no cooperation is needed to accept the "gist" of a claim that is directly asserted, it was expected that there would be little or no effect of suspicion among individuals exposed to this version of the ad.

4.3 Dependent Measures

Attitude toward the Product. After reading each ad, respondents began by providing their overall evaluation of the advertised product. They used seven-point scales (1 to 7) to rate the
product on the following items: bad-good, unappealing-appealing useless-useful, low quality-high quality, and negative-positive. These responses were subsequently averaged to form an index of attitude towards the product (α = .91 for both products).

Inferences based on the Implied Advertising Claim. Immediately following each set of attitude questions, participants were asked for their beliefs about the product attribute associated with the implied advertising claim. For the CD ad, this involved the value of the missing attribute – the amount of anti-shock protection offered by the Sanyo CD player. Participants chose from the following four options: none, between 0 and 40 seconds, 40 seconds, and more than 40 seconds. In the case of the UPS ad, the attribute of interest was UPS’s overall prices. Participants used a seven-point scale (−3 = much cheaper; +3 = much more) to indicate what they believed about UPS’s overall prices relative to major competitors.

Trust in the Advertiser. After participants had completed their responses to the attitude and inference measures for the second ad, they received an additional set of questions asking them to rate the trustworthiness of the two advertisers. They used seven-point scales (1 to 7) to rate the following items: untrustworthy-trustworthy, unreliable-reliable, and not credible-credible. These responses were averaged to form an index of advertiser trustworthiness (α = .93 for CD advertiser; α = .90 for UPS).

Deceptiveness of the Luggage Ad. Finally, participants were asked questions to confirm that they had recognized the deceptiveness of the luggage ad. This was done after the experimental suspicion probe so that participants would not suspect a connection between the two parts of the study until they had completed all other questions. First, they reported on nine-point scales (1=not at all; 9=extremely) the degree to which they considered the luggage ad to have been misleading, deceptive, truthful and honest. These were averaged to form a single
measure of deceptiveness ($\alpha=.95$; reverse scoring of the latter two items). Next, participants were asked whether they felt fooled and tricked by the ad, again using additional nine-point scales. These two items were also averaged to create a single score of suspicion ($r = .96$).

**Thoughts.** As mentioned, participants were asked to write down thoughts or feelings that came to mind as they were viewing the ad. These thoughts were first reviewed to identify instances where multiple ideas had been recorded on a single line, or where a single idea had been expressed over multiple lines; these were noted so that they would be treated as individual thoughts for purposes of subsequent analysis. Each thought was then coded as being positive, negative or neutral in valence, and pertaining to either the advertiser, the product, the ad’s execution, or something else. A second coder repeated this procedure to establish reliability. The two coders differed on 4% of the total thoughts classified, with inconsistencies resolved by mutual agreement. Total thoughts were then calculated by summing the total number of relevant thoughts listed by each participant (thoughts with no obvious connection to the study were excluded). In addition, an index of valenced thoughts – an overall measure of the positivity/negativity of participants’ thoughts as they read the ad – was calculated by subtracting the total number of negative thoughts regarding advertiser and product from the total number of positive thoughts (thoughts pertaining to the ad’s execution or other topics were excluded).
Figure 4-1
Stimulus Used in Suspicion Manipulation

Why does this man own JetLiner \(^\text{\textregistered}\) luggage?

As CEO of Amazon.com, Jeff Bezos travels nearly 100 times a year. So he knows quality luggage when he sees it.

JetLiner \(^\text{\textregistered}\) bags are designed especially for frequent business travelers like Jeff, with big pockets in all the right places, and convenient carrying handles exactly where you need them.

They're also built to last, with a rugged frame and an exterior made from scuff resistant nylon.

To succeed in business you demand a lot from yourself. Why settle for less from your luggage?

JEFF BEZOS
President & CEO, Amazon.com

JetLiner
Luggage that means business.
Figure 4A-1

Missing Information Stimulus

(Experimental Version: Missing Information)
Figure 4A-2
Missing Information Stimulus
(Control Version: No Missing Information)
Figure 4B-1
Qualified Claim Stimulus
(Experimental Version: Qualified Claim)

You should switch to UPS.

If you’re not using the UPS Next Day Air Letter to send your urgent documents, you may be paying too much.

Our efficiency lets us guarantee overnight delivery anywhere in the U.S. by 10:30 a.m. for $15. The lowest of any company.*

So the next time you have an urgent need to send an urgent document, be sure to choose the UPS Next Day Air Letter. Because at UPS, we run the tightest ship in the shipping business.

* These comparisons refer only to prices for package delivery by 10:30 a.m. They do not refer to prices for delivery by 5 p.m., or to prices for package pickup.

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Figure 4B-2
Qualified Claim Stimulus
(Control Version: No Qualified Claim)

If you're not using the UPS Next Day Air Letter to send your urgent documents, maybe you should start.

Our efficiency lets us guarantee overnight delivery anywhere in the U.S. by 10:30 a.m. for $15.

So the next time you have an urgent need to send an urgent document, be sure to choose the UPS Next Day Air Letter. Because at UPS, we run the tightest ship in the shipping business.

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CHAPTER V

Results

5.0 Overview

This chapter describes the results of the initial study. It begins with a discussion of the preliminary analyses, which consisted of several manipulation checks. This is then followed by results for the main dependent measures for (a) the missing information ad, and (b) the qualified claim ad. Finally, these results are discussed with respect to the hypotheses presented in Chapter III.

5.1 Preliminary Analyses

The creation of a generally suspicious mindset was important for its role in undermining specific trust in the advertisers responsible for the ads that research participants were later asked to judge. Results indicated that the suspicion manipulation had the desired effect. Individuals in the suspicion condition perceived the luggage ad as significantly more deceptive ($M = 7.31$) than control participants ($M = 3.92$; $t(93)=13.30$, $p<.001$). They also reported feeling fooled ($M = 7.13$), relative to controls ($M = 3.12$; $t(93)=11.31$, $p<.001$). Additional analyses confirmed that this measure was not affected by either of the advertising tactic manipulations, and that neither of the tactic manipulations interacted with suspicion.

Since the goal of this research was to examine the effects of suspicion on cooperative inference-making, rather than the degree of message scrutiny, it was useful to know whether participants knew what the ads had literally stated versus what they merely implied. In the case of the missing information (CD player) ad, 44 (94%) of the 47 participants who received the treatment ad recognized, when asked, that the ad had never actually stated that the Sanyo CD
player offered anti-shock protection. In the case of the qualified claim (UPS) ad, the situation was somewhat less straightforward. While 29 (62%) of the 47 individuals who received the treatment ad recognized that UPS had not actually claimed that their prices were generally lower than competitors, the remaining 18 (38%) said they believed it had. This proportion did not depend on the level of suspicion – both suspicious and non-suspicious participants were equally likely to respond that the ad had not explicitly made a claim about overall prices. This suggests two possible explanations: either this latter group failed to recognize that the claim had not been stated, or they perceived the ad’s implication as pragmatically equivalent to a direct assertion.

5.2 Main Dependent Measures: CD Player Ad (Missing Information)

Since initial analyses revealed no order effects, this variable was dropped. The following results are for a 2 (suspicion) × 2 (missing information) analysis of variance.

Attitude toward the Product. An ANOVA for brand attitude revealed significant main effects of suspicion (F(1,88)=4.13, p<.05) and missing information (F(1,88)=13.91, p<.001) in the expected directions (see Table and Figure 5A-1). High suspicion participants held less favorable attitudes than low-suspicion controls (Ms = 4.25 vs. 4.63), while individuals who saw the missing information ad were less positive than those who saw the control ad (Ms = 4.09 vs. 4.79). There was also a marginally significant suspicion × missing information interaction (F(1,88)=3.76, p<.10). A planned contrast confirmed that this interaction was attributable to the difference between participants in the high-suspicion / missing information condition and those in the remaining three cells (t(88)=4.51, p<.001, representing 91.3% of the between-groups variance). Suspicious consumers reacted more negatively (M = 3.71) to missing information than did either non-suspicious controls (M = 4.46) or participants for whom the anti-shock level was specified (Ms = 4.78 for suspicious participants; 4.80 for controls).
Beliefs about the Amount of Anti-shock Protection Offered. As previously mentioned, the control version of the CD ad directly stated that the Sanyo player offered 40 seconds of anti-shock protection. Of the 47 participants who received this control ad, only two (both in the high suspicion condition) failed to identify the level of anti-shock protection correctly. However, a more interesting question was whether the suspicion manipulation prompted any differences in beliefs among the 47 individuals who received the treatment (i.e., missing information) version of the ad. A Pearson chi-square test revealed no significant differences in the pattern of responses across the two suspicion groups ($\chi^2(3) = 2.145, p > .50$; see Figure 5A-2). Interestingly, regardless of the level of suspicion, most participants believed the amount of anti-shock protection lay somewhere between 0 and 40 seconds – less than the two comparison brands pictured in the ad, but present nonetheless.

Trust in the Advertiser. An ANOVA for perceived advertiser trustworthiness (see Table and Figure 5A-3) revealed significant main effects for both suspicion ($F(1,88)=4.18, p<.05$) and missing information ($F(1,88)=18.76, p<.001$). Suspicious participants reported lower levels of trust ($M = 4.12$) than controls ($M = 4.54$), and participants who saw the ad with missing information trusted the retailer less ($M = 3.88$) than those who saw the ad which specified the amount of anti-shock protection ($M = 4.78$). The interaction was not significant.

Valenced Thoughts. An ANOVA for valenced thoughts relating to the ad claims, product or advertiser revealed a main effect of missing information ($F(1,88)=6.21, p<.05$), as participants who saw the ad without anti-shock information expressed more negatively valenced thoughts ($M = -.29$) than controls ($M = .24$) (see Table and Figure 5A-4). There was also a marginally significant suspicion $\times$ missing information interaction ($F(1,88)=3.54, p<.10$). A planned contrast confirmed that, as with attitudes, this was driven by the difference between participants in the high-suspicion / missing information condition and individuals in the other three cells.
(t(88)=2.82, p<.01, representing 78.6% of the between-groups variance). Suspicious consumers had more negatively-valenced thoughts (M = −.54) in response to missing information than did either non-suspicious controls (M = −.04) or participants for whom the anti-shock level was specified (Ms = .39 for suspicious participants; .09 for non-suspicious controls).

Mediation Analysis. To determine whether the effects on attitudes were mediated by trust in the CD advertiser and/or valenced thoughts, an analysis of covariance was conducted in which the latter variables were treated as covariates. Results indicated that trust in the advertiser was significant in this role (F(1,85)=29.31, p<.001), while the valenced thoughts measure was not (F(1,85)=1.35, p>.20) (see Table 5A-5). Including the covariates reduced the suspicion main effect to non-significance (F(1,85)=1.04, p>.30), but produced a significant suspicion × missing information interaction (F(1,85)=6.66, p<.05).

A second analysis of covariance, using only trust in the advertiser as a covariate, produced similar results. The effect of advertiser trust on attitudes was significant (F(1,85)=30.75, p<.001), the main effect of suspicion was reduced to non-significance (F(1,85)=1.24, p>.20), and the previously marginal interaction became significant (F(1,85)=7.76, p<.01).

5.3 Summary of Findings: CD Player Ad (Missing Information)

Results were consistent with expectations for the critical attitude variable, but not for participants' beliefs about the value of the missing attribute or for mediation by trust in the CD retailer. The suspicion × claim interaction on product attitudes suggests that the global evaluation of less suspicious participants who saw an ad with missing information was just as positive as that of individuals exposed to an ad which directly stated that the CD player had 40
seconds of anti-shock protection. Conversely, suspicion undermined the attitudes of those who received an ad with missing information.

These findings support the general notion that suspicion can undermine consumer willingness to make cooperative inferences. It is therefore interesting that this effect was not replicated in participants' beliefs regarding the value of the missing attribute – anti-shock protection. This suggests that there is likely some other reason why non-suspicious participants who saw the missing information ad rated the target product as highly as those who knew that it offered 40 seconds of anti-shock protection.

One possible explanation is that low-suspicion participants may have gone along with the advertiser's general implication that the product was of equal quality to the reference brands, without specifically considering anti-shock protection. When later asked what the ad had said regarding anti-shock, they would then have recognized that the ad had contained no information about this attribute. A related but conceptually distinct explanation is that participants might have made the expected inference about anti-shock while forming their attitudes, but "corrected" this belief when specifically asked about anti-shock in the questionnaire. In other words, the posing of the anti-shock question may have prompted participants to more carefully consider what the ad had actually said about the attribute.

Since attitude effects were not mediated by valenced thoughts, it seems that the cooperative process was relatively heuristic in nature – i.e., participants appear to have responded to the ad in a holistic way, rather than explicitly considering what they believed or felt about the advertiser's claims. It is also consistent with prior research on the effects of generalized suspicion, which found that it influences attitudes via a heuristic process rather than by inducing active counterarguing (e.g., Ritchie and Darke, 2000; Darke and Ritchie, 2004).
Finally, it must be acknowledged that a potential confound existed with the manipulation of missing information in this ad: In addition to excluding information about the amount of anti-shock, the treatment ad also added a statement indicating that the CD player was a “feature item”. This was done in order to increase the plausibility of the ad, and was felt to be innocuous since the product’s relatively low price and visual prominence in the ad already indicated that it was a feature. Nevertheless, it is not possible to be certain that the effects attributed to missing information were not a consequence of explicitly stating that the item was a feature.

5.4 Main Dependent Measures: UPS Ad (Qualified Claim)

Attitude toward the Product. A 2 (suspicion) x 2 (ad claim) x 2 (order) analysis of variance for the attitude index revealed a significant main effect of suspicion (F(1,87)=4.90, p<.05) in the predicted direction. Neither the ad claim manipulation nor any of the interactions were significant. However, there was an unexpected three-way claim x suspicion x order interaction (F(1,87)=4.17, p<.05), indicating that the results depended on whether participants saw the UPS ad immediately following the suspicion manipulation or after rating the other ad (a delay of some 10 minutes). This suggested that the effects of suspicion may have dissipated for participants who saw the UPS ad last, or that previous exposure to the CD player ad may have raised the suspicions of individuals assigned to the non-suspicious control condition.

Consequently, the data were split according to placement of the ad, and two follow-up ANOVAs were conducted. For participants who had seen the UPS ad first, the predicted suspicion x ad interaction was found; for those who saw it second there were no significant effects. Further analysis showed that all significant effects occurred when the ad was first. Hence, the following analyses refer only to those participants who saw the ad immediately following the suspicion manipulation.
For this more focused analysis, there was a marginally significant claim \times suspicion interaction ($F(1,41)=3.61, p<.10$). The pattern of means matched predictions (see Table and Figure 5B-1): While suspicious participants formed more negative attitudes toward the product when the claim was qualified (Ms = 4.60 vs. 5.43 for less suspicious participants), suspicion had no significant effect on the control ad (Ms = 5.19 vs. 5.12 for less suspicious participants). A planned contrast between the two qualified claim groups was significant ($t(41)=2.47, p<.05$, representing 96.5% of the between-groups variance) indicating that, as expected, the interaction was driven by the differential response of suspicious and non-suspicious participants to the qualified claim.

**Beliefs about Overall Prices.** Analysis of participants' impressions about UPS's overall prices relative to competitors did not reveal any significant effects. However, it is worth noting that the general pattern of means was consistent with the results for the attitude variable (See Table and Figure 5B-2), suggesting that the statistical test may have lacked adequate power.

**Trust in the Advertiser.** Finally, a 2 (suspicion) \times 2 (ad claim) ANOVA was conducted on perceived advertiser trustworthiness (see Table and Figure 5B-3). Significant main effects were found for both suspicion ($F(1,41)=7.77, p<.01$) and ad claim ($F(1,41)=5.79, p<.05$). There was also a significant two-way interaction ($F(1,41)=6.40, p<.05$), whereby the suspicion manipulation increased distrust in UPS among participants who received the qualified claim ad (Ms = 3.90 vs. 5.33 for less suspicious controls), but had no impact among participants who saw the ad in which the claim was directly stated (Ms = 5.23 for high-suspicion participants vs. 5.30 for less suspicious controls). The planned contrast between the two qualified claim groups was significant ($t(41)=3.73, p<.01$, representing 74.7% of the between-groups variance).

**Valenced Thoughts.** An ANOVA for valenced thoughts relating to the product or advertiser found a main effect of qualified claim ($F(1,41)=12.83, p<.01$), as participants who saw
the treatment ad expressed more negatively valenced thoughts \( (M = -0.48) \) than controls \( (M = 0.82) \) (see Table and Figure 5B-4). This lack of either a suspicion \( \times \) ad interaction or a main effect of suspicion indicated that the effects of the experimental manipulations on attitudes were not mediated by cognitive elaboration. In addition, valenced thoughts did not mediate the suspicion \( \times \) ad interaction, whether on their own or in a more comprehensive mediation analysis that included both valenced thoughts and advertiser trust.

**Mediation Analysis.** To determine whether the effect of qualified claim on product attitudes was mediated by either (a) trust in the advertiser and/or (b) valenced thoughts, an analysis of covariance was conducted in which these two variables were included as covariates (see Table 5B-5). Trust in the advertiser proved significant in this role \( (F(1,39) = 15.72, p < .001) \), while valenced thoughts did not \( (F(1,39) = 1.44, p > .20) \). Including these two covariates in the analysis rendered the suspicion \( \times \) claim interaction non-significant, and there were no other significant effects.

A second analysis of covariance was then conducted in which only trust in the advertiser was included as a covariate. As before, it was significant in this role \( (F(1,40) = 16.76, p < .001) \), and its inclusion reduced the interaction to non-significance. Overall, then, there was good evidence that the interactive effect of generalized suspicion and claim type was mediated by trust in the advertiser responsible for the second ad.

5.5  **Summary of Findings: UPS Ad (Qualified Claim)**

The unanticipated order effect aside, results for the qualified claim ad were generally consistent with expectations. As predicted, the qualified claim proved convincing for non-suspicious participants, but not for suspicious participants. This effect was shown most clearly on the key attitude variable: The pattern of results indicates that response to the qualified claim
depended on whether participants had been made to feel suspicious, while response to the control ad did not. This is consistent with the notion that suspicion caused these individuals to suspend their natural tendency to make cooperative inferences. It may also have prompted a more dramatic change in the meaning of the qualified claim, from a sign of honesty and candor to an indication of duplicity.

Findings on ratings of advertiser trust paralleled the effects on attitudes. The relative lack of trust among suspicious participants who received the qualified claim, but not those who saw the control ad, is telling in that it offers further evidence that suspicion prompts consumers to interpret qualified claims in a very different light than they otherwise would.

The results for beliefs about overall prices are more difficult to interpret. While the general pattern appears to mirror the attitude variable, the absence of significant effects, coupled with the small sample size (due to the exclusion of participants who saw the UPS ad second), precludes the drawing of strong conclusions. The attitude data offer good evidence that overall response to the ad was consistent with predictions, so it is somewhat surprising that participants did not show signs of having made the more specific inference about pricing. Consequently, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions on what actually drove the attitude effects.

It seems clear that non-suspicious participants who received the treatment ad made a general cooperative inference that this was a "good" product. Less certain is whether this inference was formed independently of any consideration of prices, or preceded by an attribute-level inference that was subsequently corrected when participants were asked specifically to report their beliefs about pricing – an attribute they had seen addressed in the fine print of the ad. Given the central role played by price in this ad, the latter explanation would seem to be more likely. On the other hand, lack of mediation by valenced thoughts suggests that this inference, if it occurred, was relatively fleeting and far from top-of-mind.
The order effect, while curious, does not appear to be a major concern given that the results were consistent with predictions for participants who saw the UPS ad first. While it is impossible to provide a definitive explanation, the lack of significant effects among individuals who saw the UPS ad second may have been due to passage of time, as the effects of the suspicion manipulation waned over that period. Alternatively, the order effect might have been a consequence of participants' prior exposure to the CD player ad, which may have prompted a change in mindset among research participants in the nominally non-suspicious condition, prompting them to behave more like suspicious participants.

5.6 Overall Summary of Study Findings

Overall, results from this study provide good initial support for the notion that consumers respond to implied claims as though they were actually stated because they are behaving as cooperative listeners whose goal is to ascertain the advertiser's intended meaning. For two different kinds of implications (missing information and qualified claim), participants who saw an ad that suggested something positive about a target product were just as favorably inclined toward that product as those who received a similar ad that stated the claim directly. However, individuals who were in a generally suspicious state of mind were significantly less positive about the product if the ad implied the claim rather than stating it. In the case of the qualified claim ad, there was also evidence that this effect was mediated by their level of trust in the advertiser responsible for the ad.

Results on the attitude measure indicate that non-suspicious participants were willing to believe what the advertiser seemed to be saying even if it was never stated. While it is conceivable that participants were prompted to recognize this distinction only when asked, past research has shown that consumers tend to recall implied claims as having been stated unless
they make the distinction at the time. Coupled with the fact that the results are consistent with predictions, the empirical evidence favors the conversational implicature explanation.

Another interesting finding is that suspicion had little or no effect on participants' response to the control versions of the ads. Thus, suspicion did not simply exert a general negative bias on processing, but came into play primarily when the ad made its claims by implication. While this is consistent with the conversational implicature explanation offered, it is also conceivable that suspicious participants seized on the use of implication (or some closely related aspect of the ad) as evidence of trickery on the part of the advertiser, prompting them to downgrade their attitudes. In other words, less favorable product attitudes among participants exposed to the missing information and qualified claim ads may have been the result of a negative response to the tactic, rather than participants' reluctance to "go along" with the advertiser's implication. It is quite plausible – and perhaps even probable – that this would occur in tandem with the phenomenon suggested by conversational implicature, making the two phenomena difficult to tease apart experimentally. In any case, it seems reasonable to argue that conversational implicature must be at least part of what is occurring, since the Persuasion Knowledge Model itself does not, on its own, explain why an individual would accept implied claims in the first place.

5.7 Unanswered Questions

While the findings from this first study shed some light on the process by which implied advertising claims persuade, and the role of trust and suspicion in consumer information processing, they also raise some interesting questions.

First, although undermining trust prompted participants to respond negatively to both treatment ads, this effect was not mirrored in specific beliefs about the product attribute to which
the implication related. For instance, most of the non-suspicious participants who saw the missing information ad believed that the Sanyo CD player offered between zero and 40 seconds of anti-shock protection, just as suspicious participants did. Yet in spite of this, their attitude toward the product was significantly more positive, approaching levels reported by participants who were told that it offered 40 seconds. Similarly curious results were found for the qualified claim, although the small sample size in this latter case may have precluded the detection of significant effects.

While there is no definitive explanation for these non-findings on the belief measures, several distinct possibilities come to mind. First, it is conceivable that the questions regarding specific beliefs were not sufficiently sensitive to distinguish real differences in the inferences made by suspicious and non-suspicious consumers. Alternatively, it may be that specific inferences were not actually responsible for these effects. As previously suggested, non-suspicious participants who received the treatment versions of the ads may simply have gone along with the advertiser’s general implication that the product was somehow better, without making the more specific inference. A third possibility is that participants might have made the specific inference, and subsequently “corrected” it when asked specific questions regarding their beliefs about whether the product actually offered the attribute. Although it is difficult to distinguish empirically between the final two explanations, it should be noted that doing so is not critical to the broader theory being tested.

An alternative interpretation of the first study’s results is that the two treatment ads (i.e., those containing implied claims) simply constituted weaker arguments than their corresponding control versions. Since one of the known effects of distrust is greater message elaboration, it is possible that participants in the high-suspicion condition reacted more negatively to the treatment ads because they scrutinized these arguments more carefully. However, this is less satisfying
than the cooperative inference explanations previously proposed, given that the effects of suspicion on attitudes were not mediated by valenced thoughts for either ad. If the critical difference between the treatment and control ads was argument strength, as detected by greater message elaboration, one would have expected to find evidence of mediation.

A second question is why there was an order effect in the case of the qualified claim (UPS) ad but not the missing information (CD player) ad. One possibility is that something about the missing information ad induced suspicion among participants in the non-suspicious control group, thereby suppressing any differences in their response to the qualified claim ad when this was viewed second. An alternative explanation is that the strength of the manipulation may have waned over time, and was insufficient to undermine trust in the advertiser when the qualified claim ad was presented second. In any case, since this effect was only found for the qualified claim ad, this suggests that some difference between the two ads played a role.
Table 5A-1
Analysis of Variance for
Attitude toward the Product (Sanyo CD Player):
Missing Information Ad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.405</td>
<td>4.128</td>
<td>.045 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.476</td>
<td>13.913</td>
<td>.000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion x Type of Claim</td>
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<td>3.105</td>
<td>3.764</td>
<td>.056 a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>72.586</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90.977</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level
a Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 5A-1
Attitude toward the Product (Sanyo CD Player):
Missing Information Ad

![Graph showing attitude towards the product with low and high suspicion levels and control ad versus missing information ad](image-url)
Beliefs about Amount of Anti-Shock Protection Offered by the Sanyo CD Player: Missing Information Ad (Treatment Version)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>treatment</th>
<th>control</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(high suspicion)</td>
<td>(low suspicion)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between 0 and 40 s</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 40 s</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test of difference due to level of suspicion: $\chi^2(3) = 2.145$, $p > .50$
Table 5A-3
Analysis of Variance for
Trust in the Advertiser (Electronics City):
Missing Information Ad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
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<td>4.204</td>
<td>4.180</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
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<td>18.871</td>
<td>18.764</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
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<td>.751</td>
<td>.389</td>
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<td>Error</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88.502</td>
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<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>112.332</td>
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* Significant at the p < .05 level
a Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 5A-3
Trust in the Advertiser (Electronics City):
Missing Information Ad
Table 5A-4
Analysis of Variance for
Valence of Product/Advertiser-Related Thoughts:
Missing Information Ad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
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<td>.218</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.651</td>
</tr>
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<td>Type of Claim</td>
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<td>6.207</td>
<td>.015 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
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<td>3.742</td>
<td>3.535</td>
<td>.063 a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>94.219</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>104.903</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level
a Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 5A-4
Valence of Product- and Advertiser-Related Thoughts:
Missing Information Ad
Table 5A-5
Analysis of Covariance for
Attitude toward the Product (Sanyo CD Player):
Missing Information Ad

(a) Covariates: “Trust in the Advertiser” and “Valenced Thoughts”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust in the Advertiser</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18.129</td>
<td>29.314</td>
<td>.000    *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valenced Thoughts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>1.349</td>
<td>.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.642</td>
<td>1.038</td>
<td>.311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.394</td>
<td>2.254</td>
<td>.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Missing Information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.117</td>
<td>6.657</td>
<td>.012    *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>52.568</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90.794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level

(b) Covariate: “Trust in the Advertiser”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust in the Advertiser</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19.095</td>
<td>30.752</td>
<td>.000    *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>1.235</td>
<td>.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.545</td>
<td>2.489</td>
<td>.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Missing Information</td>
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<td>7.764</td>
<td>.007    *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>90.794</td>
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<td></td>
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* Significant at the p < .05 level
Table 5B-1
Analysis of Variance for Attitude toward the Product (UPS Overnight Delivery):
Qualified Claim Ad

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
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<td>2.648</td>
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<td>Type of Claim</td>
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<td>.204</td>
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<td>.569</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspicion x Type of Claim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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<td>25.400</td>
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<tr>
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<td>29.328</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 5B-1
Attitude toward the Product (UPS Overnight Delivery):
Qualified Claim Ad

![Attitude toward the Product](image)
Table 5B-2
Analysis of Variance for
Beliefs about Overall Prices Relative to Competitors (UPS Overnight Delivery):
Qualified Claim Ad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>p-value</th>
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<td>.721</td>
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<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
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<td>.594</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level  
* Significant at the p < .10 level  

Figure 5B-2
Beliefs about Overall Prices Relative to Competitors (UPS Overnight Delivery):
Qualified Claim Ad

![Overall Prices Diagram](image-url)
Table 5B-3
Analysis of Variance for
Trust in the Advertiser (UPS Overnight Delivery):
Qualified Claim Ad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Error</td>
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</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level

Figure 5B-3
Trust in the Advertiser (UPS Overnight Delivery):
Qualified Claim Ad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust in the Advertiser</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advertising Claim
control ad qualified claim

Suspicion
- - low
- - - high
Table 5B-4
Analysis of Variance for
Valence of Product- and Advertiser-Related Thoughts

Qualified Claim Ad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<td>.357</td>
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<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level

Figure 5B-4
Valence of Product- and Advertiser-Related Thoughts:
Qualified Claim Ad
Table 5B-5
Analysis of Covariance for
Attitude toward the Product (UPS Overnight Delivery):
Qualified Claim Ad

(a) Covariates: "Trust in the Advertiser" and "Valenced Thoughts"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust in the Advertiser</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>.000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valenced Thoughts</td>
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<td>1.435</td>
<td>.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.549</td>
<td>1.241</td>
<td>.272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td>.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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<td>17.264</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>44</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level

(b) Covariate: "Trust in the Advertiser"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>p-value</th>
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<tr>
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</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level
CHAPTER VI

Follow-Up Study

6.0 Overview

The first study produced several important findings. First, the response of low-suspicion (i.e., control) participants to both the missing information and qualified claim ads was consistent with prior research on the effectiveness of implication in advertising, lending further weight to the notion that consumers normally tend to believe what ads imply and not merely what they say. In particular, their responses to the UPS ad replicated those of Pechmann (1996) by showing that consumers are not easily deterred from cooperative inference-making even in the face of explicit efforts to prevent it. These participants accepted the advertiser’s general implication that UPS was superior to rival courier companies, even when this was qualified with a disclosure that the specific price comparison cited as evidence did not apply to the company’s other products.

A more important contribution of the initial experiment, however, was its demonstration that suspicion can undermine cooperative inference-making, and the related evidence that such cooperativeness depends on trust. Given that no other mechanism has been shown to counteract this tendency, the effectiveness of this manipulation raises some interesting questions. Chief among them is whether any factors exist which can enhance cooperative inference-making. This question is of great practical importance because it would offer a potential remedy for managers who face situations where consumers may be suspicious of advertising. From a theory-building standpoint, it would help to shed additional light on the precise role of trust in cooperative inference-making.
6.1 Investigating the Influence of Brand Reputation

Given the importance of trust in cooperative inference-making, one such factor may be the cultivation of a reputable brand. Brands have long been recognized as repositories of consumer trust that can be used by firms to improve business performance: Among other things, they have been found to make consumers more likely to believe advertising claims (Goldberg and Hartwick, 1990), more loyal to a specific manufacturer (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), and more willing to pay a premium for the guarantee of quality that a brand represents (Del Rio, Vazquez, and Iglesias, 2001). It therefore seems reasonable to argue that firms faced with suspicious consumers should be able to protect themselves via a strong brand, grounded in perceptions of integrity and dependability. However, it is not entirely clear how brand reputation might influence consumer response when ads seem to suggest more than they literally claim.

One possibility is that a reputable brand enhances the “benefit of the doubt” that consumers are willing to give such ads, irrespective of their pre-existing level of suspicion. This would imply that pre-existing suspicion and brand trust should have additive effects, and that both will interact independently with type of claim. Support for this view comes from Chaiken and Maheswaran (1994), who showed that when individuals are presented with an ambiguous message, their interpretation of that message can be influenced by heuristic cues such as source credibility. In the context of the present research, the trustworthiness of the advertiser’s brand could serve as just such a cue, helping to shape the meaning that consumers ascribe to the “ambiguous” message conveyed by the implied advertising claim.

A second possibility is that a reputable brand may help to preserve the cooperativeness of consumers in cases where pre-existing suspicion would otherwise have compromised it. In other words, a sufficiently reputable brand may serve to thwart the “change of meaning” described by
Friestad and Wright (1994) in their Persuasion Knowledge Model. This implies a three-way interaction between pre-existing suspicion, brand trust, and claim type.

It is also conceivable that the positive effects of a reputable brand are independent of either generalized suspicion or the type of advertising claim. That is to say, it may be that a reputable brand makes consumers more likely to believe any ad, ambiguous or not—and that this effect will hold regardless of whether the consumer is in a suspicious frame of mind.

Finally, it is possible that a reputable brand provides little or no defense against the effects of priming negative attitudes and beliefs toward marketers, since prior research has found the consequences of such an experience to be quite powerful. In a series of experiments, Ritchie and Darke (2000; Darke and Ritchie, 2004) found that a reputable brand could not overcome the powerful defensive bias produced by a generally suspicious frame of mind. Suspicious individuals who were exposed to an advertisement for an answering machine developed more negative attitudes than control participants, even when the ad contained highly persuasive claims and the retailer had a well-known and reputable brand. Such results suggest that the protection afforded by a brand may not be sufficient to preserve consumer cooperativeness.

A second motivation for the follow-up study was to validate and extend the findings of the first experiment. Although results from this initial research were supportive of the premise that trust plays a critical role in shaping the meaning consumers infer from advertising, a number of questions remained. In the case of the qualified claim ad, for instance, effects were consistent with predictions among participants who saw the ad first, yet disappeared among those for whom it was the second ad. It therefore seemed useful to replicate the basic effect. In addition, the mechanism by which consumers actually “go along” with the implications of advertisers was not clear. The follow-up study made it possible to investigate whether consumers make specific
inferences about individual attributes when "going with the gist," or merely a general inference about the overall attractiveness of the product.

6.1.1 Hypotheses

The following formal propositions were developed to specify the expected role of brand reputation. Where possible, these are strict predictions. However, since the theory occasionally allowed for more than one possible relationship, some of these propositions are structured as alternative hypotheses.

In light of the results of the first study, general suspicion was again expected to have a more pronounced influence in situations where the meaning of the ad is logically ambiguous – i.e., when the advertiser relies on the consumer to "know what was meant" rather than stating ad claims explicitly. More formally:

H9: General suspicion toward marketers will have a more negative effect on product attitudes when the meaning of an ad is ambiguous (versus straightforward).

The consequences of brand reputation were not so clear-cut. On one hand, it seemed reasonable to expect that its effects would mirror those of suspicion, such that having a reputable brand would be particularly important in situations where discrepancies exist between the literal and apparent meaning of an ad:

H10a: A reputable brand will have a more positive effect on product attitudes when the meaning of an ad is ambiguous (versus straightforward).
On the other hand, it was also conceivable that a well-known brand would simply encourage consumers to respond positively to all advertising, and that the magnitude of this effect would not depend on the degree of ambiguity of the ad:

H10b: A reputable brand will have a positive effect on product attitudes regardless of whether the meaning of an ad is ambiguous or straightforward.

As for the relationship between generalized suspicion and brand trust, there seemed to be two likely possibilities. First, it was conceivable that the two factors would simply operate independently of one another. Alternatively, there was reason to expect that a reputable brand would preserve consumers' cooperativeness against the negative effects of generalized suspicion:

H11a: The effects of general suspicion and reputable brand will be additive.

H11b: The effects of general suspicion on response to an ambiguous ad will be attenuated when the advertiser has a well known brand.

Finally, as noted, it was expected that all of these effects would be mediated by trust:

H12: The preceding effects will be mediated by the level of trust in the advertiser.
In addition, the study raised a number of interesting questions relating to the nature of the processing involved in these effects: Would it be systematic, and thus mediated by thoughts, or more heuristic in nature? While conversational inference theory does not offer clear direction on this issue, the broader literature supports a number of possibilities. For instance, it seemed likely that trust would operate as a source credibility cue (e.g., Bochner and Insko, 1966), yet it was also entirely possible that it would positively bias thoughts evoked by the ad claims (e.g., Chaiken and Maheswaran, 1994). Similarly, it was conceivable that the effects of suspicion would be mediated by thoughts (e.g., Priester and Petty, 1995), but equally plausible that they would not be (e.g., Ritchie and Darke, 2000; Darke and Ritchie, 2004). In light of this uncertainty, no specific predictions were made. However, measures were included to examine all possibilities.

6.2 Pretest

Prior to the main follow-up study, a pretest was conducted to identify a courier company that could serve as the unfamiliar brand, and to confirm that the UPS brand was, in fact, highly reputable. A group of 37 undergraduate business students was recruited to evaluate various courier companies as part of a marketing class. Using 7-point scales, they indicated how familiar they were with each courier company (1=not at all familiar; 7=very familiar), and how trustworthy they considered the company to be (1=not at all trustworthy; 7=very trustworthy).

Analysis showed that UPS was rated as both highly familiar (M=5.73) and highly trustworthy (M=6.00). Based on the results of the pretest, TNT Global Express was selected as the unfamiliar brand since that company was not only rated as unfamiliar (M=1.81) and low in trustworthiness (M=2.41), but also had a three letter name that was visually and syllabically similar to UPS. Evaluations of the UPS brand were significantly higher than TNT on both the
familiarity ($t(36)=9.76, p < .001$) and trustworthiness ($t(23)=8.06, p < .001$) scales. Of note, some 13 participants did not provide a rating for TNT on the trustworthiness scale. Subsequent questioning revealed that they had not felt familiar enough with the company to offer an assessment of its trustworthiness – a state of mind that is conceptually similar to "low trust" as commonly defined.

6.3 Materials

To capitalize on experience gained in the initial study, the qualified claim (UPS) ad again served as the target ad for the follow-up experiment. Apart from the manipulation of brand, then, participants faced essentially the same situation as in the original experiment. However, it was necessary to alter the nature of the ad claim in order to avoid problems of interpretability. In the initial study, the ad had implied that the company offered lower overall prices than FedEx. But because reputable brands typically have a high-quality / high-price positioning, it was conceivable that a claim of lower prices would actually seem more credible coming from an unfamiliar source. Consequently, the claim was changed to one of on-time delivery – an attribute that is not only important to consumers, but also something on which performance could plausibly vary across a courier company’s product line. Use of a non price-based claim was also useful in that it would add to the generalizability of the overall findings of the dissertation.

Several additional minor changes were also made to minimize potential problems: The service used for the comparison was 4:00 p.m. delivery rather than 10:30 a.m. delivery, adjustments were made to the ad copy to ensure consistency with the new claim, and the reference to "the tightest ship in the shipping business” was removed since this slogan is associated specifically with UPS. To manipulate brand, alternate versions of both the treatment (qualified claim) and control
(no qualified claim) ads were created in which the advertiser was changed from UPS (reputable brand) to the less well-known TNT (unfamiliar brand). As in the initial study, care was taken to ensure that these ads were otherwise identical to one another (see Figures 6-1 [A] through [D]).

6.4 Participants and Study Design

The study consisted of a 2×2×2 between subjects design, with two levels of suspicion (High, Low), two types of ad (Qualified Claim, No Qualified Claim), and two levels of advertiser reputation (Reputable Brand, Unfamiliar Brand). As in the first study, the main dependent measures were attitudes and cognitive responses. A total of 178 introductory marketing students served as participants in the study, and received course credit in exchange for their participation.

6.5 Procedure

The experimental procedure was similar to the first study, except that the missing information ad was not included. This was done to eliminate concerns regarding contamination, as may have occurred in the original study when half of all participants evaluated the qualified claim ad after first evaluating the missing information ad. In addition, a number of supplementary measures (described below) were added to the questionnaire to clarify issues that were either raised or left unaddressed by the first experiment. All of the key dependent measures considered in Study 1 – attitudes, trust in the advertiser, and cognitive responses – were assessed in a similar fashion in the second study.

Participants began by indicating their attitude toward the ad and product, their level of confidence in their product evaluation, and their likelihood of purchase. In a noteworthy
departure from the original study, participants were asked to provide thought listings after these measures.

Next, participants indicated their beliefs about the advertiser’s on-time delivery performance relative to FedEx. In particular, they assessed delivery performance for the advertised product (4:00 p.m. letter delivery) as well as two other products (10:30 a.m. letter delivery, and parcel delivery) to which the claim of superior on-time performance did not necessarily apply. (These two products were the ones specifically mentioned in the qualification in the treatment version of the ad.) Participants were then asked to provide their best estimate of the advertiser’s overall on-time delivery performance – the most direct measure of the product claim that was implied by the treatment version of the ad.

After they had provided responses to these main measures, participants were asked to indicate whether the ad had either stated or implied that the advertised brand (UPS or TNT) had better overall on-time performance than FedEx. This was done to gauge whether individuals who saw a treatment version of the ad had deliberately chosen to go along with its implied claim, or had simply failed to realize the claim had not explicitly been made. They were also asked to confirm that they had noted and understood the basic factual claim made in the ad – that the advertised brand provided 97% on-time performance for 4:00 p.m. letter delivery. This was followed by a set of questions which asked about price (for 4:00 p.m. letters, 10:30 a.m. letters, parcels, and overall prices) in order to explore whether participants had made any price-related inferences based on the performance claim.

Participants then completed a series of measures designed to assess their level of trust in the advertiser (either UPS or TNT). They used 9-point scales (1=completely disagree; 9=completely agree) to evaluate the advertiser on three different trust-related dimensions (untrustworthy-trustworthy, unreliable-reliable, not credible-credible).
To measure processing effort and familiarity with the product, participants were asked to indicate the level of effort they had devoted to processing the ad. Using a 7-point scale, they reported the degree to which they had tried to (a) memorize, (b) think about, and (c) understand the information given (1=not at all hard, 7=extremely hard). They were then asked (a) how familiar they were with courier services in general, (b) how familiar they were with the advertiser (UPS or TNT), and (c) how much actual experience they had buying courier service from that company.

In the final part the questionnaire, participants completed a number of battery items, including the skepticism-toward-advertising scale (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998), self-monitoring scale (Snyder, 1974), and a subscale from the Big Five personality inventory designed to measure agreeableness-openness. They then completed a suspicion probe designed to ensure they had not guessed the purpose of the study. Finally, as a direct check of the suspicion manipulation, all participants were asked about the luggage ad from the first part of the study. They used 9-point scales (1=not at all; 9=extremely) to indicate whether they felt the ad had been misleading, deceptive, truthful, and honest, and whether they had felt fooled and tricked by the luggage advertiser.

6.6 Results

6.6.1 Preliminary Analyses

As in the initial study, the suspicion manipulation had the desired effect. Individuals in the suspicion condition perceived the luggage ad as significantly more deceptive (M = 7.38) than control participants (M = 3.65; t(176)=19.89, p<.001). They also reported feeling more fooled (M = 6.45 vs. 2.72; t(176)= 13.37, p<.001). As would be expected given that the manipulation
check related to the initial luggage advertisement and not the target ad, there were no significant
main or interactive effects of suspicion with either of the other two experimental factors.

The self-report measure of processing effort revealed no significant effects. Among other
things, this provided some evidence that the suspicion manipulation did not prompt participants
to knowingly think more carefully about the ad. The overall mean on this measure was 4.40, a
score that lies meaningfully, if not substantially, above the midpoint on the 7-point scale. It thus
appears that, across all conditions, participants thought relatively carefully about the ad.

As in the first study, there was a need to confirm that participants were generally aware
of what the target ad had stated versus merely implied. In particular, it was helpful to verify two
things: First, that participants who “went with the gist” of the treatment ad had done so despite
having recognized that the ad had not literally made the claim. And second, that perceptions
about what had been claimed versus implied had not been influenced by any of the
manipulations – most notably suspicion.

Of the 87 participants who received a treatment (i.e., qualified claim) version of the ad,
76 (87%) recognized that the ad had not literally claimed that on-time delivery for the advertised
brand was superior to FedEx across the company’s entire product line, while 11 (13%) believed
that it had been. Although efforts were made to word the question clearly, it is difficult to be
certain whether the latter group had failed to scrutinize the claim carefully enough, or merely
concluded that the implication was sufficiently strong that it amounted to a “virtual” assertion.

A final manipulation check involved asking participants what they believed about the
advertiser’s 4:00 p.m. on-time delivery, relative to market leader FedEx (see Table and Figure 6-2).
Though both versions of the advertising claim specifically mentioned the advertiser’s 97%
rate of on-time delivery for letters guaranteed by 4:00 p.m., the treatment ad explicitly stated that
the advertiser beat FedEx on this dimension while the control ad did not. Analysis confirmed a
main effect of ad, $F(1, 169) = 75.76, p < .001$, with individuals who received the treatment ad more likely to believe that 4:00 p.m. on-time performance was superior to FedEx ($M = 1.89$) than those who saw an ad that lacked this explicit comparison ($M = -.29$).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was also a main effect of brand on this measure, $F(1, 169) = 28.62, p < .001$, with the familiar UPS ($M = 1.46$) believed to offer better 4:00 p.m. on-time performance than the lesser-known TNT ($M = .13$). Suspicion also had a marginal effect, $F(1, 169) = 3.72, p < .10$, with high-suspicion participants expressing less favorable beliefs ($M = .56$) than controls ($M = 1.04$). Finally, there was a small but significant three-way interaction, $F(1, 169) = 3.89, p = .05$. Among participants who received the treatment version of the ad (i.e., the one with the qualified claim), suspicion produced less favorable beliefs about the rate of 4:00 p.m. on-time delivery when TNT was the source ($M_s = .73$ vs. $1.73$ for low-suspicion), but had little effect when the ad came from UPS ($M_s = 2.62$ vs. $2.46$ for low-suspicion). Meanwhile, among those who saw the control ad, suspicion had little effect on beliefs when the ad was attributed to TNT ($M_s = -.90$ vs. $-1.04$ for low-suspicion), but a negative effect when it came from FedEx ($M_s = .08$ vs. $.86$ for low-suspicion).

### 6.6.2 Main Dependent Measures

**Attitude toward the Product.** There was a large main effect of brand, $F(1, 170) = 21.08, p < .001$, with participants more favorably inclined when the ad came from UPS ($M = 5.20$) rather than TNT ($M = 4.50$). Although no other effects were significant, the overall pattern of means for this measure was consistent with the notion that a reputable brand can preserve trust in the face of generalized suspicion (see Table and Figure 6-3). Moreover, the planned contrast between the two means that had been expected to differ – high-suspicion participants versus low-suspicion
controls, among individuals who received the ambiguous ad from the unfamiliar retailer – was significant ($t(42)=2.77, p<.05$).

**Trust in the Advertiser.** Significant main effects were found for both brand, $F(1,170) = 32.670, p <.001$, and type of claim, $F(1,170) = 11.360, p =.001$ (see Table and Figure 6-4). As expected, the highly regarded UPS brand was rated as more trustworthy ($M=5.89$) than the less familiar TNT ($M=4.69$), while participants who saw the control ad rated the advertiser as more trustworthy ($M=5.64$) than those who saw the version containing the qualified claim ($M=4.93$). There was also a marginally significant three-way interaction, $F(1,170) = 3.269, p =.10$: When the ad was attributed to TNT, suspicion prompted less favorable responses to the treatment ad ($M=4.02$ vs. $4.61$ for low-suspicion participants) but not the control ad ($M=5.15$ vs. $4.97$ for low-suspicion participants). On the other hand, when the ad was attributed to TNT, suspicion had a negative effect on trust in the case of the control ad ($M=5.93$ vs. $6.51$ for low-suspicion participants) but not the treatment ad ($M=5.64$ vs. $5.47$ for low-suspicion participants).

**Beliefs about Overall On-Time Delivery, Relative to FedEx.** Brand had a significant and large effect on this variable, $F(1,169) = 20.327, p <.001$, with participants judging on-time delivery performance to be better when the advertiser was UPS ($M=.08$) versus TNT ($M=-.85$) (see Table and Figure 6-5). There was also a significant effect of claim type, $F(1,169) = 5.262, p <.05$. The treatment version of the ad – whose qualified claim made specific reference to the advertiser’s 4:00 p.m. on-time delivery performance relative to FedEx – generated more favorable (though still negative) evaluations of the company’s overall delivery performance ($M=-.15$) than the control ad, in which FedEx was not mentioned ($M=-.62$). There was also a marginal effect of suspicion, $F(1,169) = 3.361, p <.10$, with suspicious individuals offering less favorable evaluations of on-time performance ($M=-.57$) than non-suspicious controls ($M=-.19$).
Beliefs about On-Time Delivery of Other Products. Participants were also asked what they believed about how the advertiser's on-time performance compared to FedEx for 10:30 a.m. delivery (see Table and Figure 6-6) and parcel delivery (see Table and Figure 6-7) – the two products named in the fine print of the claim qualification. For 10:30 delivery, the only significant result was a large main effect of brand, $F(1,169) = 28.31$, $p < .001$: Unsurprisingly, estimates were less optimistic for the unfamiliar TNT brand ($M = -2.31$) than for the relatively well-known and trusted UPS ($M = -0.87$).

Findings were similar for beliefs about on-time delivery of parcels, $F(1,169) = 32.17$, $p < .001$. Brand had a large effect, with participants more pessimistic about performance when the advertiser was TNT ($M = -1.78$) versus UPS ($M = -0.38$). There was also a small but significant suspicion effect, $F(1,169) = 6.34$, $p < .05$, with less favorable estimates coming from high-suspicion individuals ($M = -1.39$ vs. $-0.77$ for less suspicious controls).

Valenced Thoughts. Significant main effects were found for both brand, $F(1,170) = 14.88$, $p < .001$, and claim type, $F(1,170) = 23.54$, $p < .001$, while the effect for suspicion was marginal, $F(1,170) = 3.36$, $p < .10$ (see Table and Figure 6-8). Consistent with expectations, valenced thoughts were more negative when the ad came from the unfamiliar TNT brand rather than the trusted UPS ($M = -1.16$ for TNT vs. $-0.34$ for UPS), when participants saw treatment rather than the control ad ($M = -1.26$ for the treatment ad vs. $-0.23$ for the control ad), and when participants had earlier been exposed to the suspicion manipulation ($M = -0.94$ for high-suspicion participants vs. $-0.55$ for controls).

Skepticism Toward Advertising. For the SKEP scale measure, there was a large main effect of suspicion, $F(1,169) = 7.98$, $p < .01$ (see Table and Figure 6-9). Consistent with expectations, participants who experienced the suspicion manipulation expressed a higher degree of general skepticism toward advertising ($M = 3.45$) than those in the control condition ($M = $
The effect of ad type was marginal, $F(1,169) = 3.55, p < .10$, with the control ad producing a greater level of skepticism ($M = 3.41$) than the treatment ad ($M = 3.24$). There were also two marginal interactions: In the suspicion $\times$ brand interaction, $F(1,169) = 3.38, p < .10$, the suspicion manipulation produced greater differences in skepticism among participants who saw an ad attributed to the unfamiliar brand ($Ms = 3.54$ for suspicious participants vs. 3.12 for low-suspicion controls) than among those who saw an ad from the reputable brand ($Ms = 3.37$ for suspicious participants vs. 3.28 for low-suspicion controls). Similarly, in the brand $\times$ ad interaction, $F(1,169) = 3.27, p < .10$, response to the type of ad differed among persons who believed the message came from an unfamiliar brand ($Ms = 3.16$ for the treatment ad vs. 3.49 for the control ad) but not among those who thought it had come from a reputable brand ($Ms = 3.32$ for the treatment ad vs. 3.33 for the control ad).

**Mediation by Advertiser Trust and Skepticism Toward Advertising.** Prior analyses suggested that the effect of brand reputation on attitudes may have been mediated by trust. In addition, there was good evidence that the suspicion manipulation strongly influenced participants’ general skepticism toward advertising (SKEP). To clarify the role of these two variables in mediating the effects of the manipulations on the two main dependent variables, they were used as covariates in a series of analyses of covariance.

In the first ANCOVA, the dependent variable was attitudes toward the product (see Table 6-10). Trust in the advertiser was a significant covariate ($F(1,167) = 61.06, p < .001$), as was skepticism toward advertising ($F(1,167) = 4.34, p < .05$). Including these two covariates in the analysis reduced the main effect of brand to marginal significance ($F(1,167) = 3.22, p < .10$). It also had the effect of rendering significant the main effect of ad type ($F(1,167) = 7.78, p < .01$). Given the relatively large effect of trust in the advertiser, a second analysis of covariance was conducted in which trust was the only covariate used. As before, it was significant in this role.
(F(1,169)=72.95, p<.001), and its inclusion reduced the main effect of brand to non-significance while at the same time raising the effect of ad type to significance. This was strong evidence that the effect of brand reputation was mediated by specific trust in the advertiser, with general skepticism toward advertising playing a relatively minor role.

Similar analyses of covariance were subsequently conducted using beliefs about overall delivery performance as the dependent measure (see Table 6-11). Trust in the advertiser proved significant as a covariate (F(1,166)=35.41, p<.001), while SKEP was not (F(1,166)=1.39, p>.10). The inclusion of these two covariates rendered non-significant the previously marginal effect of suspicion (F(1,166)=1.74, p>.10), greatly reduced the significance of the brand effect (F(1,166)=4.58, p>.05), but increased the significance of the ad type effect (F(1,166)=13.78, p<.001). A second ANCOVA which used only advertiser trust as a covariate produced similar results. The covariate was significant (F(1,168)=41.67, p<.001), and its inclusion rendered non-significant the previously marginal effect of suspicion (F(1,168)=2.55, p>.10), greatly reduced the significance of the brand effect (F(1,166)=4.19, p>.05), but increased the significance of the ad type effect (F(1,166)=16.46, p<.001). Overall, this evidence suggests that trust in the advertiser partially mediated the effects of suspicion and brand on beliefs about the advertiser’s overall delivery performance.

Mediation by Valenced Thoughts. To investigate whether the effects on the key dependent variables were the result of heuristic processing or biased systematic processing, additional ANCOVA was conducted in which valenced thoughts were employed as the covariate. Mediation by valenced thoughts would suggest an effortful process of evaluating the ad, while the absence of such mediation would suggest a more superficial, heuristic process.

For the analysis of product attitudes (see Table 6-12) the valenced thoughts covariate was significant (F(1,169)=6.61, p<.02), and resulted in a slight drop in the significance of the brand
effect ($F(1,169)=14.03$, $p<.001$). It also caused the previously non-significant main effect of ad type to become marginal ($F(1,169)=3.39$, $p<.10$). Since the reduction in the significance of the brand effect was relatively small, it seems that the influence of brand reputation on attitudes was a largely heuristic effect. That said, it also appears that there may have been some individuals whose thoughts were biased by consideration of the advertiser’s brand.

In the parallel analysis of beliefs about overall on-time delivery performance (see Table 6-13), the valenced thoughts covariate was significant ($F(1,168)=9.06$, $p<.01$), reduced the previously marginal suspicion effect to non-significance ($F(1,168)=2.10$, $p>.10$), slightly attenuated the significance of the large brand effect ($F(1,168)=12.85$, $p<.001$), and increased the significance of the ad type effect ($F(1,168)=10.52$, $p<.01$). Although thoughts may have played a minor role in the effects of suspicion and brand reputation on beliefs, it seems that these effects were largely heuristic in nature.

### 6.7 Summary of Findings from the Follow-up Study

The key dependent variables in the follow-up study were participants’ attitudes toward the product and their beliefs about whether the advertiser provided better overall on-time delivery performance than FedEx. While results were compatible with the theory, they fell short of providing strong additional support for it.

On the key attitude measure, brand had a powerful effect that swamped other variables. In hindsight, this is perhaps unsurprising. Despite its global delivery network and popularity among corporate customers, TNT operates no retail operations in North America and engages sparingly in consumer advertising. Conversely, UPS and FedEx both advertise heavily, with ads which reassure consumers of their reliable nationwide service. Since the student participants in this study had relatively little experience using courier services (when asked on a 1-7 scale where
1 = "no experience at all" and 7 = "a great deal of experience," the mean score was 1.40), they were likely unaware that TNT is a major courier company. Hence, their responses may have been driven – at least in part – not only by concern about TNT’s sincerity in making these claims, but also by doubts about its ability to offer a level of service comparable to FedEx.

While the interactions were not significant, it is interesting to note that the general pattern of means for the attitude measure matched pre-experimental predictions and that a planned contrast comparing the two critical means indicated that this difference was significant: Among participants who saw the treatment ad, suspicion appeared to negatively influence attitudes when the marketer was unknown, but not when it had a reputable brand. Conversely, there were no apparent differences across suspicion conditions for individuals who received the control ad. Though it is important not to overinterpret such evidence, this is generally supportive of the phenomenon, and leaves open the possibility that stronger manipulations or a larger sample size might have succeeded in demonstrating the predicted effects.

That the interactions were not significant, however, is somewhat surprising in light of the findings of Study 1. One possibility is that participants who saw the control ad may have felt that it, too, was trying to imply something about on-time delivery relative to the market leader. If so, then the control condition may still have involved some inference on the part of the consumer. In other words, they may have "gone with the gist" of the control ad under low-suspicion, while refusing to cooperate under high-suspicion. This is interesting, since it serves to highlight not only the inherence of implication in human communication, but also the marketing challenge of making advertising claims without implying something broader.

A second objective of the follow-up study was to shed light on the question of whether consumer cooperativeness involves specific inferences on the part of consumers, or some more general kind of cooperation. A noteworthy finding of the initial experiment was the absence of
significant effects on specific beliefs, but significant findings on the attitude measure. This suggested two reasonable explanations. On one hand, low-suspicion participants who received the treatment ad might simply have been going along with the general implication that the product was better, without actually making a more specific inference. Alternatively, they might have been making the specific inference, and “corrected” it when the researcher specifically called their attribute beliefs into question by asking about them.

The follow-up experiment does not resolve this issue, since the absence of significant suspicion × ad or brand × ad interactions on the attitude measure renders moot the questions of how or why such interactions might have occurred. Consequently, this is a matter that remains to be pursued. In light of evidence that cooperative inference-making occurs among consumers, it will be important to determine the degree of specificity at which these inferences are formed so as to better understand the attitudes and behaviors that individuals adopt toward products.

Despite their limitations, results on the overall belief measure do afford an interesting insight. The finding of two main effects but no interaction signals that generalized suspicion and brand reputation have essentially similar effects on consumers, but in opposite directions: The former diminished the willingness of consumers to accept the ad, while the latter increased it. While this outcome may initially seem unsurprising, it is worth remembering that two other alternatives seemed plausible prior to the study: brand could have insulated the advertiser against the effects of generalized suspicion, or it could have provided little or no defense against the negative effects of suspicion. The finding of two main effects indicates that a reputable brand is neither a panacea nor a dead duck. Even when consumers were suspicious, there was still some benefit to having a well-regarded brand. Conversely, brand did not mute the negative effects of suspicion, suggesting once again that the effects of suspicion are quite powerful. What remains unclear is whether these effects are universal, or limited to ads that are ambiguous in their
meaning. As noted, there is reason to believe that participants may have perceived both treatment and control ads as having a meaning that went beyond what was literally claimed.

Results on the measure of advertiser trustworthiness offer limited insight, but it is worth noting that the two significant main effects were predicted and in the expected direction. Brand had a predictably large influence on participants' trust in the advertiser, with UPS prompting more favorable ratings than the relatively unfamiliar TNT. This measure was also influenced by claim type, with the control ad generating significantly more favorable responses than the treatment version. This was likely due to the qualification included in fine print at the bottom of the treatment ad, which, as noted, could be construed as a deliberate attempt to mislead.

More interesting is the fact that the marginal three-way interaction detected on the advertiser trust measure did not carry over to the two main dependent measures, attitudes and beliefs about overall on-time delivery. This suggests a potential "disconnect" between the trust measure and the outcome variables: It appears that individuals who claimed to trust the advertiser failed to do so when pressed to actually come to a decision about the product. This is an interesting phenomenon that merits further study.

Finally, it is interesting to consider the results of the valenced thought measure. Previous suspicion studies have found the effect of generalized suspicion to be essentially heuristic: After consumers feel deceived by one advertiser, they tend to discount claims made by other marketers without considering whether or not the claims make a strong or a weak case for the product. The results of this study indicate that such a phenomenon occurred here as well, but also suggest that generally suspicious consumers may occasionally be prompted to think more carefully about the advertising claims they are dismissing.
If you're not using the UPS Next Day Air Letter to send your urgent documents, maybe you should start.

Our efficiency lets us deliver documents anywhere in the U.S. by 4:00 p.m. with 97 percent on-time performance. The best of any company.*

YOU SHOULD
SWITCH TO UPS.

So the next time you have an urgent need to send an urgent document, be sure to choose the UPS Next Day Air Letter. Because at UPS, we're in business to serve your business.

* This comparison refers specifically to on-time performance for delivery of 4:00 p.m. next-day air letters. It does not refer to 10:30 a.m. next-day air letters, or to parcels.
If you're not using the UPS Next Day Air Letter to send your urgent documents, maybe you should start.

Our efficiency lets us deliver documents anywhere in the U.S. by 4:00 p.m. with 97 percent on-time performance.

So the next time you have an urgent need to send an urgent document, be sure to choose the UPS Next Day Air Letter. Because at UPS, we're in business to serve your business.

© 2001 United Parcel Service of America, Inc.
If you’re not using the TNT Next Day Air Letter to send your urgent documents, maybe you should start.

Our efficiency lets us deliver documents anywhere in the U.S. by 4:00 p.m. with 97 percent on-time performance. The best of any company.*

So the next time you have an urgent need to send an urgent document, be sure to choose the TNT Next Day Air Letter.

Because at TNT, we’re in business to serve your business.

* This comparison refers specifically to on-time performance for delivery of 4:00 p.m. next-day air letters. It does not refer to 10:30 a.m. next-day air letters, or to parcels.

© 2001 TNT Global Express USA, Inc.
Figure 6-1(D)
Unfamiliar Brand Stimulus
(Control Version: No Qualified Claim)

If you’re not using the TNT Next Day Air Letter to send your urgent documents, maybe you should start.

Our efficiency lets us deliver documents anywhere in the U.S. by 4:00 p.m. with 97 percent on-time performance.

YOU SHOULD SWITCH TO TNT.

So the next time you have an urgent need to send an urgent document, be sure to choose the TNT Next Day Air Letter. Because at TNT, we’re in business to serve your business.

© 2001 TNT Global Express USA, Inc.
Table 6-2
Analysis of Variance for
Beliefs about 4:00 p.m. On-Time Delivery Performance, Relative to Fed-Ex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
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<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Suspicion</td>
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<td>3.715</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
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<td>Type of Claim</td>
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<td>208.141</td>
<td>75.758</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>Suspicion × Brand</td>
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<td>.356</td>
<td>.129</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
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<td>.177</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.918</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>10.696</td>
<td>3.893</td>
<td>.050</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>770.960</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level
a Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 6-2
Beliefs about Advertiser’s 4:00 p.m. On-Time Delivery Performance, Relative to Fed-Ex
### Table 6-3
Analysis of Variance for Attitude toward the Product

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Suspicion</td>
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<td>1.558</td>
<td>1.508</td>
<td>.221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
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<td>21.775</td>
<td>21.076</td>
<td>.000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
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<td>1.014</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>.323</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand</td>
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<td>.497</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
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<td>Brand × Type of Claim</td>
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<td>.449</td>
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<td>Error</td>
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<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>175.633</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level

### Figure 6-3
Attitude toward the Product

![Attitude Toward the Product](image1)

**Attitude Toward the Product**

- **Brand = TNT**
  - Control ad: 4.48
  - Qualified claim: 4.83

- **Advertising Claim**
  - Low: 5.09
  - High: 5.40

![Attitude Toward the Product](image2)

**Attitude Toward the Product**

- **Brand = UPS**
  - Control ad: 4.23
  - Qualified claim: 5.29

- **Suspicions**
  - Low
  - High
Table 6-4
Analysis of Variance for
Trust in the Advertiser

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>.333</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
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<td>63.906</td>
<td>32.670</td>
<td>.000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
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<td>22.220</td>
<td>11.360</td>
<td>.001 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.994</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
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<td>.002</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level
a Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 6-4
Trust in the Advertiser

![Graphs showing the effect of suspicion and advertising claim on trust in the advertiser for brands TNT and UPS.](image-url)
Table 6-5
Analysis of Variance for
Beliefs about Advertiser's Overall On-Time Delivery Performance, Relative to Fed-Ex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
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<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<td>Brand</td>
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<td>38.400</td>
<td>20.327</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
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<td>9.941</td>
<td>5.262</td>
<td>.023    *</td>
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<td>Suspicion × Brand</td>
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<td>3.305</td>
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<td>Brand × Type of Claim</td>
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* Significant at the p < .05 level
* Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 6-5
Beliefs about Advertiser's Overall On-Time Delivery Performance, Relative to Fed-Ex
Table 6-6
Analysis of Variance for Beliefs about Advertiser's 10:30 a.m. On-Time Delivery Performance, Relative to Fed-Ex

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<td>28.311</td>
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<td>Type of Claim</td>
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<td>.060</td>
<td>.807</td>
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* Significant at the p < .05 level
a Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 6-6
Beliefs about Advertiser's 10:30 a.m. On-Time Delivery Performance, Relative to Fed-Ex
Table 6-7

Analysis of Variance for
Beliefs about Advertiser’s Parcel On-Time Delivery Performance, Relative to Fed-Ex

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<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
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<td>86.697</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
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<td>.356</td>
<td>.552</td>
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<td>.017</td>
<td>.897</td>
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* Significant at the p < .05 level
a Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 6-7

Beliefs about Advertiser’s Parcel On-Time Delivery Performance, Relative to Fed-Ex
Table 6-8
Analysis of Variance for Valenced Thoughts

<table>
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<th>Source</th>
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<td>Brand</td>
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<td>Type of Claim</td>
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* Significant at the p < .05 level

* Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 6-8
Valenced Thoughts
Table 6-9
Analysis of Variance for Skepticism toward Advertising

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<th>p-value</th>
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<td>Brand × Type of Claim</td>
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* Significant at the p < .05 level
a Significant at the p < .10 level

Figure 6-9
Skepticism toward Advertising
Table 6-10
Analysis of Covariance for Attitude toward the Product

(a) Covariates: “Trust in the Advertiser” and “Skepticism toward Advertising”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<td>.039    *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.106</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
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<td>.642</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.994</td>
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<td>Error</td>
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* Significant at the p < .05 level
a Significant at the p < .10 level
(b) Covariate: “Trust in the Advertiser”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
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<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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</thead>
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</tr>
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<td>.410</td>
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<td>.114</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.69</td>
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<td>.314</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>122.676</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>202.842</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level
Table 6-11

Analysis of Covariance for
Beliefs about Advertiser’s Overall On-Time Delivery Performance, Relative to Fed-Ex

(a) Covariates: “Trust in the Advertiser” and “Skepticism toward Advertising”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust in the Advertiser</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>54.126</td>
<td>35.42</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skepticism Toward Advertising</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.125</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.660</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.995</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>.034*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.062</td>
<td>13.78</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.185</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.321</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>253.690</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>377.727</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level
(b) Covariate: “Trust in the Advertiser”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust in the Advertiser</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>63.448</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>.000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.883</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.378</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.042 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.071</td>
<td>16.46</td>
<td>.000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.468</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>255.816</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>378.102</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level

*a Significant at the p < .10 level
### Table 6-12

#### Analysis of Covariance for Attitude toward the Product

Covariate: "Valenced Thoughts"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valenced Thoughts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.613</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>.011 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.771</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.027</td>
<td>14.03</td>
<td>.000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.387</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.067 a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.940</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.339</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>169.021</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>202.842</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level

a Significant at the p < .10 level
**Table 6-13**

Analysis of Covariance for Beliefs about Advertiser's Overall On-Time Delivery Performance, Relative to Fed-Ex

Covariate: “Valenced Thoughts”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valenced Thoughts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.340</td>
<td>9.06</td>
<td>.003 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.785</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.169</td>
<td>12.85</td>
<td>.000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18.976</td>
<td>10.52</td>
<td>.001 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.230</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.946</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion × Brand × Type of Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>302.924</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>378.102</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the p < .05 level
CHAPTER VII

General Discussion

7.0 Overview

Overall, this research provides reasonable support for the notion that conversational norms are one reason why consumers go beyond the information given and accept what ads imply rather than merely what they say. Across two separate experiments and three different target advertisements, ads which suggested – but did not actually assert – something positive and important about the advertised product were just as effective as ads which stated their claim directly. When feelings of general suspicion toward marketers were induced, however, ads which used implied claims generally produced less favorable product evaluations than ones which stated their claim outright. There was also evidence that this effect was mediated by trust. Taken together, this pattern of results suggests that one reason consumers accept the implied claims of advertisers is their innate tendency to behave as cooperative listeners.

Although the overall weight of evidence supports the experimental hypotheses, inconsistencies in some of the findings and some unexpected null effects in the follow-up study leave a number of questions unresolved. Further investigation will be needed to provide a clearer demonstration of the phenomenon, and to explain precisely how and under what circumstances consumers infer meaning from implied advertising messages.

7.1 Discussion of the Overall Findings

The initial study produced some intriguing findings, and made a strong case for the notion that consumers engage in cooperative inference-making. Participants not only went along with advertisers' implications, there was also evidence that this behavior depended on trust:
Persons who were made to feel suspicious toward marketers developed less favorable product attitudes when ad claims were implied rather than stated – an effect for which there was evidence of mediation by trust in the specific advertiser responsible for the ad. Moreover, this pattern of findings held for two very different ads across two very different products. Despite signs that insensitivity to informational limitations may also have played some role, the overall weight of the evidence indicated that participants were engaging in cooperative inference-making, and that this process was disrupted when trust was undermined.

The follow-up study sought to replicate the initial experiment and extend its findings by exploring the potential effects of a reputable brand on cooperative inference-making. Results from this study were less helpful in shedding light on the phenomenon: The overall pattern of means for the product attitude variable matched predictions, but only the main effect of brand was statistically significant. This was surprising in light of the findings of Study 1, and suggested that apparently trivial changes to the stimulus materials had actually been more meaningful. Ironically, the fact that two similar sets of ads could lead to such different responses may be evidence of the very mutability of meaning that this dissertation sought to study. It also suggests that studying this phenomenon is likely to be a tricky matter.

The null effect of suspicion in the follow-up study was especially noteworthy given that prior uses of this manipulation have produced consistent effects on product attitudes (Ritchie and Darke, 2000; Darke and Ritchie, 2004). While it is conceivable that the suspicion manipulation failed in this case, a more likely explanation is that participants experienced something in the experimental procedure – perhaps in the ad itself – that induced a suspicious mindset among ostensibly “low suspicion” participants. Similarly, the lack of effects due to claim type suggests that participants may have perceived implied meaning even in the “control” ad, which sought to state its claim directly. As noted, human beings have a tendency to infer meaning beyond what
is literally stated. This result thus serves as an important reminder that it is the listener – not the speaker – who judges whether discrepancies exist between a statement’s literal and implicit meanings. More broadly, these considerations are important because they caution against assigning too much weight to the lack of significant effects in the second study.

It is noteworthy that suspicion and brand both produced significant effects on the more specific belief measure (overall on-time delivery performance) in the follow up study, given that similar measures showed no effects in the initial experiment. It appears that the phenomena of interest in these studies are somewhat fickle, in that their influence is not entirely consistent from one situation to the next. This aside, it is noteworthy that the influence of suspicion on beliefs in the second study did not seem to depend on whether the claim was stated or implied, lending credence to the notion that participants perceived some kind of implication in the control ad.

While conversational implicature seems to be a plausible interpretation of the findings, it is important to acknowledge the existence of at least two alternative explanations. The first is the prospect that the effects found in the first study were spurious, and that suspicion does not undermine implied claims more than stated claims. This poses a challenge to the theory because cooperative inference-making should logically depend more heavily on trust, and results from both studies indicate that trust was undermined by the suspicion manipulation. While this possibility cannot be ruled out, it seems to be a less plausible account of the findings, since the first study produced results that were not only statistically significant, but consistent with theory-driven predictions and replicated across two separate ads.

A second possibility is that the effects found in the first study were not due to implication at all, but rather to some other difference between the treatment and control ads. In short, the treatment ads used in the initial study might each have contained some idiosyncratic feature – absent in the corresponding control ads – that prompted a negative response among suspicious
participants. For instance, the CD player treatment ad indicated that the target product was a "feature item," and suspicious participants might have seized upon this as a sign that the marketer was trying to deceive them. Similarly, the treatment version of the UPS ad included fine print at the bottom of the page which qualified the ad claim – something that could have triggered inferences of manipulative intent and negatively influenced product attitudes.

As with the first alternative account, however, there are a number of reasons why this represents a less satisfying account of the findings than cooperative inference: First, the latter explanation is more parsimonious because it offers a common rationale for the findings for both of the stimulus ads in Study 1. Second, the "feature" of the UPS ad that seems most likely to have promoted negative responses among suspicious consumers is its claim qualification, yet this also formed part of the ad that produced null effects in the follow-up study. Third and finally, the presence of these potentially problematic "features" did not affect the attitudes of non-suspicious participants which, if anything, were more favorable among those who saw the treatment ads. Since some individuals are chronically suspicious of advertisers, and would presumably have responded negatively to such features even if assigned to the low-suspicion control condition, this seems to favor the conversational implicature explanation.

7.2 Limitations of the Research

The limitations of this research stem primarily from unexpected complexity in the findings and the existence of several alternative explanations that cannot definitively be ruled out by the experimental design or the available data. While these matters have been partly addressed in earlier discussions of the overall findings, this section expands on their implications for broader conclusions that can be drawn from this research.
One source of concern is that it was not clear that all participants knew that the advertiser's insinuations were not directly asserted. This is noteworthy because cooperative inference-making presumes that individuals are conscious – at least on some level – of the fact that they are cooperating. In the initial experiment, slightly more than a third of respondents who saw the treatment version of the qualified claim ad said they thought the advertiser had stated what it had merely implied. In the second study, which reworded the question to be more precise about what was being asked, this proportion shrank to 13%. In some cases, then, what was assumed to be the cooperativeness of participants could have been insensitivity to the informational limitations of the ad.

Although this does not invalidate the findings, it does suggest that the results of these studies may be "muddy," in that there could have been two different phenomena at work. A potential remedy was to identify those respondents who wrongly believed that the implied claim was actually stated, and then conduct a statistical analysis which excluded them. For the qualified claim ad used in Study 1, it was difficult to draw meaningful conclusions because so few participants remained in the analysis after also accounting for the order effect. In the case of both the missing information ad from the initial experiment and the qualified claim ad used in the follow-up study, excluding these participants did not produce a meaningful change in the results.

Another issue involves the conditions under which suspicion undermines consumer cooperation with implied advertising claims. Although the target ad used in the follow-up study was based on the UPS advertisement from the initial experiment, results from the latter study produced a different set of significant effects. It is difficult to draw strong conclusions about the reasons for this difference. On the one hand, the pattern of findings on product attitudes from the latter experiment was certainly consistent with that of the initial study, suggesting that the suspicion manipulation may simply not have been powerful enough in the latter case to
undermine participants' willingness to cooperate with the advertiser. On the other hand, this manipulation managed to influence specific beliefs and was identical to the one used in the original study – suggesting some other explanation.

One question that remains unanswered by this research is whether consumer cooperativeness with advertising implications is a conscious or implicit process. In the initial study, for instance, non-suspicious participants went with the gist of both treatment ads while suspicious participants did not. Both groups were aware, when asked, that the advertiser had not literally made the claim – a fact which confirms that their attitudes were not based on ignorance of what had been asserted. However, it is possible that this knowledge influenced participants at a subconscious level, and that they only actively considered it when prompted by the experimenter's question. More subtle methods will be needed to clarify the mechanism underlying consumer cooperativeness and determine whether it operates on a conscious and/or a subconscious level.

The role of specific beliefs in consumer cooperativeness has also not been fully resolved. In the first study, for instance, significant results were found for the global product attitude measure, but not for beliefs about the particular attribute that was the subject of the implication. This seemed to indicate that consumer cooperativeness occurs at a global level rather than at the level of specific beliefs. However, the findings of the follow-up study suggest that the story may not be so simple: Significant results on the beliefs measure in that latter experiment raise the possibility that specific beliefs may play some role after all. Overall, then, these two studies do not permit strong conclusions to be drawn on this matter.

Another important question raised by these studies is the durability of the effects of encounters with deceptive marketers: How long do these effects persist? Previous research has demonstrated that being fooled by a marketer raises a consumer's suspicions, but these studies
have found that such effects may persist in some cases and wane in others. When the qualified claim ad was presented second in the first study, for instance, suspicion had no significant effect on key dependent variables. Yet suspicion continued to impact attitudes in the case of the missing information ad, even after the delay and distraction associated with completing the questionnaire for the initial advertisement. It remains unclear why the effects persisted in one case but not the other and, more specifically, whether this was at least partly attributable to the type of implied claim.

While an effort was made in the second study to specifically consider the role of a reputable brand in consumer cooperativeness, this research shed only modest light on this issue. There is clear evidence that brand can affect the way consumers construe implied advertising claim but the ability to draw more specific conclusions is limited by the lack of effects on product attitudes, coupled with effects on beliefs which did not match expectations.

As has been noted, there are also alternative accounts for the experimental findings that, while less satisfying than the theory advanced here, cannot be definitively ruled out due to limitations of the experimental design. For instance, it is possible that the effects detected in the first study were due to some idiosyncratic feature of the ads that interacted with suspicion, rather than suspension of participants' willingness to cooperate with the implication. This seems implausible, for reasons that have already been discussed, but nonetheless remains a possibility.

It is also conceivable that suspicion may simply have prompted participants to consider evidential limitations which they had perceived subconsciously but not accounted for when forming their product attitudes. In other words, it may be that individuals in the high suspicion condition recognized from the outset that the claim in the treatment ad had not actually been stated, while those in the low-suspicion condition noted this fact only when specifically asked whether the claim had been stated or merely implied. This prospect seems unlikely, however,
given that participants were instructed to read the ad carefully (and later stated that they did so), and did not raise it as a concern during the post-experimental debriefing.

A third alternative is that consumers generally expect that the regulatory system will protect them from misleading implied claims, and that the true effect of the "suspicion" manipulation was merely to inform them that such a presumption was not warranted (either in the experimental context, or more generally). However, faith in the regulatory system was not mentioned in any of the thought protocols, suggesting that this issue was not in the minds of participants as they evaluated the ads. Previous research findings also support this view: Studies by Johar and Simmons (2000) furnished participants with concurrent disclosures, which, while always encoded, were only used to correct invalid inferences under high-capacity conditions. If acceptance of implied claims were driven simply by faith in the regulatory system, mere awareness that advertisers can mislead through implication should have been sufficient to deter cooperation. Moreover, it should be noted that this explanation is not really a rival in a strict sense, since faith in the system essentially reflects a broader willingness to trust.

Finally, as with most research, experimental demand was a potential concern in these studies. It is possible that participants may simply have been "going along" with the gist of the implied ad in the non-suspicion condition out of a desire to be helpful to the researcher. In the suspicion condition, conversely, they may have ceased to go along because they were given information by the experimenter that suggested they should not go along. However, there are reasons to believe this was not what occurred.

First, many steps were taken to sever any appearance of connection between the two studies. The suspicion manipulation and the main experimental stimuli were presented as separate, unrelated studies, and were conducted in a context (a marketing subject pool) in which legitimately separate studies were frequently run sequentially. In keeping with the norm in such
instances, participants moved to a new room in a different part of the building to complete the so-called “second study”, where they met a different experimenter, completed a new human subjects consent form, and received materials that were very different in appearance. As a result, there was little reason to conclude that the suspicion manipulation administered in the “first study” had any particular relevance to the advertising they saw in the “second study.” To the extent that they concluded that having been previously deceived by the luggage ad should be taken into account when they saw subsequent ads in an unrelated context, this would not be a demand effect; rather, it is precisely the circumstances the manipulation was intended to create.

7.3 Theoretical, Managerial and Policy Implications of the Research

First and foremost, this research offers a credible theoretical explanation for consumers’ willingness to accept implied advertising claims even when they should not. In so doing, it sheds light on a potential mechanism by which deceptive advertising may mislead, and opens the door to an extensive body of theory previously untapped in marketing research. It also draws overdue attention to the potentially fluid meaning of ads, and to the important role played by consumer cooperativeness in shaping their construal of advertising. Finally, it suggests two novel and significant public policy implications: first, that a suspicious mindset may be able to improve consumer welfare under certain circumstances, and second, that advertisers who include qualifications to specify the limitations of their claims may actually pay a price for their forthrightness.

The view of consumer information processing as a social process, and not merely an exercise in logic, has only recently begun to take root in the marketing research literature. The Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad and Wright, 1994) provided the impetus for this evolution by making the case that consumers think not just about what marketers tell them, but
also why they say the things they do. Because of the sheer scope of what it seeks to address,
however, the PKM speaks in broad strokes rather than specific detail. In the case of implied
advertising claims, it argues merely that there are circumstances under which consumers are
likely to give thought to why a claim was implied rather than stated. This leaves unanswered
such issues as why consumers go along with the implication under normal circumstances, what
factors prompt them to consider the advertiser's motives for using implication, and how they
process implied claims once the question of motives has been made salient. By drawing on
conversational implicature theory, this dissertation helps to address these issues by fleshing out
some implications of the PKM, demonstrating how its principles apply to a phenomenon that is
not only theoretically interesting, but also an important practical matter faced everyday by
marketers.

The findings of Study 1 also provide some evidence of the mutable meaning of ads.
Academics and practitioners alike have long recognized that the same advertisement can mean
different things to different people, but this merely acknowledges the existence of variance in the
population. More interesting is the prospect that phenomena may exist which change the
meaning of an ad across the population, and the related possibility that some kinds of ads may be
more prone to such a change in meaning than others. Although this notion was raised in general
terms by the Persuasion Knowledge Model, it was not explored with respect to its consequences
for implication in advertising. The studies presented here represent the first step in such an
exploration.

Among the more interesting findings of this dissertation was its demonstration that a
suspicious mindset can overcome consumers' tendency to accept implied advertising claims.
While additional research is needed to determine the extent to which this depends on the
intensity of the suspicion, the specificity of the implication, and the plausibility of the implied
claim, the existing findings are interesting in light of the fact that previous research has failed to identify conditions under which consumers cease to engaging in inference-making. Interestingly, this also suggests a potential remedy for firms that must deal with suspicious consumers – namely, that they should be explicit in their claims, and avoid ads which depend upon the consumer’s willingness to “go along”.

This research also offers some useful insights for public policymakers. Most interestingly, it suggests that suspicion may be of some value as a means of helping consumers to avoid being misled. In the first study, for instance, most participants recognized that the advertiser’s claim had not actually been stated, but only those in the high suspicion condition developed less favorable attitudes as a result. Although this is not direct evidence that suspicion prompted a decision not to make the inference, it certainly makes a strong circumstantial case. Such findings suggest that suspicion may play a “functional” role – a contrast with previous research, which found that it caused consumers to denigrate ad claims indiscriminately.

Finally, this work has implications for public policy regarding the compulsory inclusion of qualifications to specify the limitations of advertising claims. In recent years, the FTC has shown an inclination to require such qualifications, with the intention of discouraging consumers from making invalid inferences. Yet studies (e.g., Pechmann, 1996) have shown that most non-suspicious consumers still “go along” with the gist of such ads in spite of such qualifications. The research presented here indicates that suspicious consumers respond to qualifications by not merely correcting for the faulty inference, but by responding even more negatively to the ad. It therefore appears that, in certain situations, firms who add qualifications to their claims in order to avoid misunderstandings may actually suffer for their honesty. Consequently, this research raises serious questions as to whether the inclusion of qualifications is a reasonable solution to the problem of invalid inference-making by consumers.
7.4 **Directions for Future Research**

For obvious reasons, the immediate priority for future research must be to resolve the inconsistencies between the results of the first and second studies. This is necessary so that confident conclusions can be drawn about the role of conversational inference in consumer information processing. Once these issues have been settled, more substantive follow-up research can be conducted to further explore the phenomenon.

7.4.1 **Resolving Issues in the Existing Studies**

Although the initial experiment was not entirely free of problems, it provided reasonably good support for the basic theory. It was therefore surprising that the follow-up study did not reproduce these effects more exactly. Since a number of methodological explanations could reasonably account for this, it would be helpful to conduct an additional study to specifically address these issues. Three changes to the experimental design seem particularly critical.

First, since some participants appear to have been confused about whether the qualified claim ad stated or implied its claim, a new ad should be found that specifically avoids this problem. The qualified claim ad used in the existing studies was selected, in large part, because this research was conceptually inspired by Pechmann’s (1996) findings. However, since the headline and copy of this ad were rather forcefully worded, they may have been strong enough to seem like an assertion. In hindsight, then, focusing on qualified claims may not have been the best choice for a rigorous exploration of cooperative inference-making. An ad whose “gist” is more clearly implied rather than stated should make it easier to determine whether or not participants are consciously cooperating with the advertiser, and distinguish the effects of cooperative inference-making from those of insensitivity to information limitations.
Second and relatedly, the “implied vs. stated” question will need to be worded more carefully. As has been noted, there is a wide gap between what constitutes an assertion in the strict logical sense versus the way the term is understood in everyday life. Several authors (e.g., Harris, 1977; Harris, Dubitsky, and Thompson, 1979) have suggested that individuals may treat strong and unambiguous implications as though stated, despite knowing that they are not assertions in a strict logical sense. Thus, it may be that participants who responded that the claim had been stated were aware that this was not technically true, yet dismissed this as a trivial distinction. That is to say, they might simply not have realized that the “implied vs. stated” question was asking them to distinguish between “what was literally said” and “what was obviously meant.”

Third and finally, a more suitable control advertisement will be needed. The purpose of the control ad in this research was to demonstrate that suspicion is more likely to undermine product attitudes when the ad insinuates a claim rather than stating it directly. Consequently, it was not critical that the stated claim in the control ad be identical to the implied claim in the treatment ad. This leaves the door open to a number of different possibilities, each with its own pros and cons. One option is for the control ad to make a strong, positive claim that directly stated what the treatment ad had merely implied. This makes it possible to test whether the beliefs and attitudes of “cooperative” individuals are similar to those of consumers who had complete information. Another is to use a control ad that made a “non-claim” by mentioning the brand and picturing the product, but saying little else. Such an approach would provide baseline attitudes and beliefs against which the incremental persuasiveness of the treatment ad could be measured.

The control ad that was chosen for the initial two studies fell somewhere between these two extremes, repeating the facts stated in the treatment ad without asserting what the treatment
ad had merely insinuated. It appears that this created some unanticipated problems in the second
study. While the intent had been to present participants with an ad whose meaning was clear and
unambiguous, response to several measures showed that the control ad produced greater
differences across suspicion conditions than the treatment ad. This may be an indication that
participants were reading additional meaning into the control ad, compromising its value as a
control stimulus. Such problems could be minimized in future studies by using either (or both)
of the alternative control conditions described above.

As these new stimuli and measures are developed, it will be important to engage in
extensive pre-testing to calibrate the materials and avoid concerns such as the ones that seem to
have beset Study 2. Among other things, in-depth interviews should be conducted to poll
consumers on how they are interpreting the ads and the questions being asked. This would help
to ensure that results from subsequent tests of the theory will be more definitive, despite the
inherent ambiguity associated with research on inference and meaning-making.

7.4.2 New Directions for Investigation

Once issues associated with the existing studies have been resolved, there are a variety of
more substantive questions that merit further investigation. First and most obviously, it will be
important to identify other kinds of implied advertising claims that exhibit the kind of mutable
meaning seen here, and determine whether some are more subjective in their meaning – and
therefore more sensitive to the effects of suspicion and trust – than others. Although it is
difficult to offer an exhaustive list, some possibilities include meaningless attributes (e.g.,
Carpenter, Glazer and Nakamoto, 1994), incomplete comparisons (e.g., Johar, 1995), and
conclusion omission (Sawyer and Howard, 1991). Determining whether and how the meaning of
such advertising techniques can be influenced by suspicion and reputable brands would offer
some indication of precisely how broad the implications of the present findings are and whether there are other moderating factors that also need to be considered. In addition, such knowledge would provide both advertisers and policymakers with valuable guidance for the preparation of effective yet honest marketing communications.

On a broader level, there is also an opportunity to draw more fully on the notions of conversational implicature and “rules of conversation” as a means of informing marketing theory. The work described here has merely begun the process by demonstrating the importance of the consumer’s willingness to “go along” with the advertiser. Future research should examine issues that relate more specifically to the rules themselves. For instance, which of the rules of conversation do brands violate most often? Which violations lead to the most inaccurate inferences? Which violations are most susceptible to suspicion? Answers to these questions would move beyond merely demonstrating the effects, and provide deeper and more meaningful insight into the mechanisms involved.

In addition, a variable of interest that was measured but not reported here was participants’ chronic skepticism toward advertising (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998). Although it produced no meaningful pattern of effects in the present study, previous work by Ritchie and Darke (2000; Darke and Ritchie, 2004) suggests that ad skepticism can produce similar effects to the state suspicion that was induced experimentally in this research. One possibility for future research is to look only at individuals who are particularly high or particularly low on this measure and see whether it produces comparable effects.

Finally, it is worth noting that this research was conducted using ads that contained straightforward, verbal claims. As is widely acknowledged, a substantial proportion of modern advertising conveys claims through nonverbal, visual imagery (Scott, 1993; Phillips, 1997). One way of construing such visual claims is as a form of implication – an assertion about the product
that is suggested, but not actually stated. It would be interesting to know whether the effects of suspicion also extend to such advertising, since the implied claims it contains are nonverbal and far less specific. Ads for many cigarette brands, for example, portray smokers that have recently engaged in physical activity as a way of implying that smoking is consistent with an active lifestyle. Similarly, beer ads often include attractive, bikini-clad models, as a means of sending the not-so-subtle message that drinkers of the brand in question are capable of attracting such women. Suspicion might induce the same kind of “change of meaning” for this kind of tactic as it did for the qualified claim and the missing information, transforming it from an innocuous feature of the ad to an intentional attempt to mislead. On the other hand, there may be something fundamentally different about a claim that is never verbalized, since such claims may be processed differently than verbal claims, and the meaning of pictures seems to be inherently less precise. Consequently, it seems possible that these ads would possess a kind of immunity against suspicious consumers. This, of course, remains an empirical question.


APPENDIX 1-A
Questionnaire Used to Set up Suspicion Manipulation in Initial Study

ADVERTISING STUDY

Now we'd like to get your general impressions based on the advertisement you just saw. On the following page, we'll ask you some questions about the ad itself, and about the product it mentioned. Please answer all questions.

Sex: (please CIRCLE one)    Male    or    Female

Age:   _______
1. First, we would like your evaluation of the Advertisement you just saw.

a) Please tell us what you thought of this advertisement, relative to other ads.

Not interesting 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Interesting
Not appealing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Appealing
Not creative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Creative

b) What is your overall evaluation of this advertisement?

Extremely poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely good

2. Next, we would like your evaluation of the product, JetLiner Luggage.

a) Overall, how would you rate JetLiner Luggage?

Awful Fair Average Good Very good Excellent
1 2 3 4 5 6

b) Please give us your impression of JetLiner Luggage on the scales below:

Ruggedness / durability 1 2 3 4 5 6
Accessibility of pockets 1 2 3 4 5 6
Convenience of handles 1 2 3 4 5 6
General quality 1 2 3 4 5 6

c) Overall, how well-suited do you think JetLiner Luggage is to the needs of the frequent business traveler?

Not well-suited Somewhat well-suited Well-suited Very well-suited Extremely well-suited
□ □ □ □ □
APPENDIX 1-B

Thought Listing Sheet Used in Initial Study
(Completed by Participants as They Read Each Target Ad)

MEMORY STUDY

As you read the ad, please write down any thoughts or feelings that cross your mind. These could be about the ad itself, the advertiser, the product, or anything else.

- State your thoughts as concisely as possible.
- Write each thought on a separate line

Remember – read the ad carefully. Once you are done, the ad will be taken away. We will then ask you detailed questions about what you have read.
APPENDIX 1-C

Main Questionnaire Used in Initial Study – Missing Information Ad

MEMORY STUDY

1. Overall, what is your opinion of the advertisement you just saw?

   BAD 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  GOOD
   UNPLEASANT 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  PLEASANT
   AWFUL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  NICE
   BORING 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  INTERESTING
   NEGATIVE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  POSITIVE

2. Based on this ad, how would you rate the product being advertised?

   BAD 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  GOOD
   UNAPPEALING 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  APPEALING
   USELESS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  USEFUL
   LOW QUALITY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  HIGH QUALITY
   NEGATIVE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  POSITIVE

3. If you were looking for a portable CD player, how likely is it that you would consider buying the Sanyo CD player featured in the ad?

   NOT AT ALL LIKELY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  EXTREMELY LIKELY

4. How interested would you be in learning more about this Sanyo CD player?

   NOT AT ALL INTERESTED 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  EXTREMELY INTERESTED

5. What amount of anti-shock protection do you think the Sanyo CD player offered?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NONE</th>
<th>BETWEEN ZERO AND 10 SECONDS</th>
<th>BETWEEN 10 AND 40 SECONDS</th>
<th>MORE THAN 40 SECONDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Now, we would like you to reproduce, as accurately you can, exactly what the ad said about the anti-shock protection offered by the Sanyo CD player.

**IMPORTANT!**

Please write down only what was actually stated in the ad. Do not include things the ad seemed to be saying, even if they were strongly implied.

---

7. Consider the following statement:

The Sanyo CD player offers 40 seconds of anti-shock protection.

Was this:

- [ ] DIRECTLY STATED IN THE AD
- [ ] IMPLIED IN THE AD, BUT NOT STATED
- [ ] NEITHER IMPLIED NOR STATED
- [ ] DON'T KNOW / DON'T RECALL

8. What price was being charged for each of the CD players in the ad? (CHECK ONE.)

**AIWA XPR210**

- [ ] $57
- [ ] $67
- [ ] $77

**PANASONIC P5**

- [ ] $57
- [ ] $67
- [ ] $77

**SANYO CD156**

- [ ] $57
- [ ] $67
- [ ] $77
9. What features did each CD player offer? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIWA XPR210</th>
<th>PANASONIC P5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Anti-Shock Protection</td>
<td>□ Anti-Shock Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Programmability</td>
<td>□ Programmability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Bass Enhancement</td>
<td>□ Bass Enhancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Car Adapter Kit</td>
<td>□ Car Adapter Kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ CD-R / RW playable</td>
<td>□ CD-R / RW playable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SANYO CD156</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Anti-Shock Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Programmability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Bass Enhancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Car Adapter Kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ CD-R / RW playable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Line-out Jack for Home Stereo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 10–11 relate to the information you read in the Consumer Reports article.

10. What product feature did the Consumer Reports article identify as most important when choosing a CD player?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAMMABILITY</th>
<th>ANTI-SHOCK PROTECTION</th>
<th>BASS ENHANCEMENT</th>
<th>CAR ADAPTER KIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. According to Consumer Reports, how much should you expect to pay for...

(a) A portable CD player with 40 seconds of anti-shock protection?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$30</th>
<th>$45</th>
<th>$70</th>
<th>$100</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW / DON'T RECALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) A portable CD player with 10 seconds of anti-shock protection?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$30</th>
<th>$45</th>
<th>$70</th>
<th>$100</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW / DON'T RECALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. While you were reading this ad...

(a) How hard did you try to memorize the information given?
   
   NOT AT ALL  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  EXTREMELY HARD
   HARD

(b) How hard did you try to think about the information given?
   
   NOT AT ALL  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  EXTREMELY HARD
   HARD

(c) How hard did you try to understand the information given?
   
   NOT AT ALL  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  EXTREMELY HARD
   HARD

13. Now, please think carefully about the product information provided in the ad.
To what degree do you agree with the following statements:

(a) There was enough information in the ad for me to make a reasonable evaluation of the product.
   
   NOT AT ALL  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  VERY MUCH SO
   
   The information in the ad was presented clearly.
   
   NOT AT ALL  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  VERY MUCH SO
   
   The information provided in the ad was relevant.
   
   NOT AT ALL  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  VERY MUCH SO
   
   The information provided in the ad was truthful.
   
   NOT AT ALL  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  VERY MUCH SO
### APPENDIX 1-D

Main Questionnaire Used in Initial Study – Qualified Claim Ad

#### MEMORY STUDY

1. Overall, what is your opinion of the advertisement you just saw?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNPLEASANT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWFUL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BORING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   GOOD

   PLEASANT

   NICE

   INTERESTING

   POSITIVE

2. Based on this ad, how would you rate the product being advertised?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAPPEALING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USELESS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW QUALITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   GOOD

   APPEALING

   USEFUL

   HIGH QUALITY

   POSITIVE

3. If you actually needed to send an urgent document, how likely is it that you would use UPS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL LIKELY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   EXTREMELY LIKELY

4. How interested would you be in learning more about the UPS Next Day Air delivery service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL INTERESTED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   EXTREMELY INTERESTED
5. Please tell us what you believe about UPS’s prices, relative to FedEx (Federal Express).

(a) Price for Next Day **10:30 am** (morning) delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MUCH CHEAPER</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT CHEAPER</th>
<th>SLIGHTLY CHEAPER</th>
<th>ABOUT THE SAME</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT MORE</th>
<th>SLIGHTLY MORE</th>
<th>MUCH MORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Price for Next Day **5:00 pm** (afternoon) delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MUCH CHEAPER</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT CHEAPER</th>
<th>SLIGHTLY CHEAPER</th>
<th>ABOUT THE SAME</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT MORE</th>
<th>SLIGHTLY MORE</th>
<th>MUCH MORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) **Pick-up Charge** (for shipper to come to your home / office and pick up package)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MUCH CHEAPER</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT CHEAPER</th>
<th>SLIGHTLY CHEAPER</th>
<th>ABOUT THE SAME</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT MORE</th>
<th>SLIGHTLY MORE</th>
<th>MUCH MORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) **Overall Prices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MUCH CHEAPER</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT CHEAPER</th>
<th>SLIGHTLY CHEAPER</th>
<th>ABOUT THE SAME</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT MORE</th>
<th>SLIGHTLY MORE</th>
<th>MUCH MORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Now, we would like you to reproduce, as accurately you can, exactly what the ad said about UPS's pricing.

IMPORTANT!

Please write down only what was actually stated in the ad. Do not include things the ad seemed to be saying, even if they were strongly implied.

7. Consider the following statement:

Generally speaking, UPS's prices are lower than those of its major competitors.

Was this:

- [ ] DIRECTLY STATED IN THE AD
- [ ] IMPLIED IN THE AD, BUT NOT STATED
- [ ] NEITHER IMPLIED NOR STATED
- [ ] DON'T KNOW / DON'T RECALL
10. (a) The pricing information in the ad referred to a **specific service** offered by UPS. What was this service? (Please be specific.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>DELIVERY</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 PM</td>
<td>DELIVERY</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PACKAGE PICK-UP</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DON'T KNOW / DON'T RECALL</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) What **price** was UPS charging for this service?

$5  $15  $18  $28  DON'T KNOW / DON'T RECALL

[ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]

11. While you were reading this ad...

(a) How hard did you try to **memorize** the information given?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hardness</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Extremely Hard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) How hard did you try to **think about** the information given?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hardness</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Extremely Hard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) How hard did you try to **understand** the information given?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hardness</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Extremely Hard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Now, please think carefully about the product information provided in the ad. To what degree do you agree with the following statements:

(a) There was **enough information** in the ad for me to make a reasonable evaluation of the product.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Very Much So</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>HARD</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) The information in the ad was presented **clearly**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Very Much So</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HARD</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) The information provided in the ad was **relevant**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Very Much So</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HARD</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) The information provided in the ad was **truthful**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Very Much So</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HARD</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 1-E

Questionnaire Administered following Completion of Main Questionnaires in Initial Study

MEMORY STUDY

What was the name of the advertiser in the FIRST ADVERTISEMENT you saw?

“ELECTRONICS CITY” (SANYO CD PLAYER)  “UPS” (NEXT DAY AIR DELIVERY)

Now, thinking specifically about this advertiser...

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

   “This advertiser tried to manipulate me.”
   COMPLETELY DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 COMPLETELY AGREE

   “This advertiser tried to make their product sound better than it really was.”
   COMPLETELY DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 COMPLETELY AGREE

2. On the items below, please indicate your opinion of this advertiser:

   UNTRUSTWORTHY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 TRUSTWORTHY
   UNRELIABLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 RELIABLE
   NOT CREDIBLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 CREDIBLE
   INEXPERT 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 EXPERT
   NOT LIKABLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 LIKABLE
What was the name of the advertiser in the SECOND ADVERTISEMENT you saw?

“ELECTRONICS CITY” (SANYO CD PLAYER)  “UPS” (NEXT DAY AIR DELIVERY)

Now, thinking specifically about this advertiser...

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

   “This advertiser tried to manipulate me.”
   COMPLETELY
   DISAGREE  1 2 3 4 5 6 7 COMPLETELY
   AGREE

   “This advertiser tried to make their product sound better than it really was.”
   COMPLETELY
   DISAGREE  1 2 3 4 5 6 7 COMPLETELY
   AGREE

2. On the items below, please indicate your opinion of this advertiser:

   UNTRUSTWORTHY  1 2 3 4 5 6 7 TRUSTWORTHY
   UNRELIABLE     1 2 3 4 5 6 7 RELIABLE
   NOT CREDIBLE    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 CREDIBLE
   INEXPERT        1 2 3 4 5 6 7 EXPERT
   NOT LIKABLE     1 2 3 4 5 6 7 LIKABLE
In general, while you were reading the two ads in this study...

a) How concerned were you of the possibility the advertiser might try to mislead you?

| NOT AT ALL CONCERNED | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | EXTREMELY CONCERNED |

b) How careful were you to ensure that the claims being made were accurate?

| NOT AT ALL CAREFUL | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | EXTREMELY CAREFUL |

c) How concerned were you about the truthfulness of the ad as a whole?

| NOT AT ALL CONCERNED | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | EXTREMELY CONCERNED |
Next, a few questions about advertising in general…

Please read each of the statements below, and CIRCLE the number (from 1 to 5) that best describes your level of agreement. Remember, we are interested in your opinion – there are no right or wrong answers.

(a) We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising.
   
   DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 AGREE STRONGLY
   STRONGLY

(b) Advertising’s aim is to inform the consumer.

   DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 AGREE STRONGLY
   STRONGLY

(c) I believe advertising is informative.

   DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 AGREE STRONGLY
   STRONGLY

(d) Advertising is generally truthful.

   DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 AGREE STRONGLY
   STRONGLY

(e) Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products.

   DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 AGREE STRONGLY
   STRONGLY

(f) Advertising is truth well told.

   DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 AGREE STRONGLY
   STRONGLY

(g) In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised.

   DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 AGREE STRONGLY
   STRONGLY

(h) I feel I’ve been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements.

   DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 AGREE STRONGLY
   STRONGLY

(i) Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.

   DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 AGREE STRONGLY
   STRONGLY
Final Question...

Please explain, in your own words, what you think this study was about. What do you think we hoped to find out by having you do this study? Write a short description in the space below:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Thanks for participating!

PLEASE DO NOT MENTION ANYTHING ABOUT THIS STUDY TO ANYONE.

Our results depend on participants having no information about the study prior to taking part

PLEASE PLACE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE FACE-DOWN ON YOUR DESK TO INDICATE THAT YOU HAVE FINISHED.
APPENDIX 1-F

Suspicion Manipulation Check Used in Initial Study
(Administered Following Completion of All Other Questions)

ADVERTISING STUDY
WRAP-UP QUESTIONS

Please think back to the advertisement you saw for JetLiner Luggage

1. Please give us some final impressions of the ad for JetLiner Luggage:

Not at all misleading 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely misleading
Not at all deceptive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely deceptive
Not at all truthful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely truthful
Not at all honest 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely honest

2. To what extent did the ad for the JetLiner Luggage make you feel...

a) fooled:
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much so

b) tricked:
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much so

Thank you for your help.
APPENDIX 2-A

Questionnaire Used to Set up Suspicion Manipulation in Follow-Up Study

ADVERTISING STUDY

Now we'd like to get your general impressions based on the advertisement you just saw. On the following page, we'll ask you some questions about the ad itself, and about the product it mentioned. Please answer all questions.

Sex: (please CIRCLE one)  Male  or  Female

Age:  ________
1. First, we would like your evaluation of the Advertisement you just saw.

   a) Please tell us what you thought of this advertisement, relative to other ads.

      Not interesting  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Interesting
      Not appealing  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Appealing
      Not creative  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Creative

   b) What is your overall evaluation of this advertisement?

      Extremely poor  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Extremely good

2. Next, we would like your evaluation of the product, JetLiner Luggage.

   a) Overall, how would you rate JetLiner Luggage?

      Awful  Fair  Average  Good  Very good  Excellent
      1      2      3      4      5        6

   b) Please give us your impression of JetLiner Luggage on the scales below:

      Ruggedness / durability  1  2  3  4  5  6
      Accessibility of pockets  1  2  3  4  5  6
      Convenience of handles  1  2  3  4  5  6
      General quality  1  2  3  4  5  6

   c) Overall, how well-suited do you think JetLiner Luggage is to the needs of the frequent business traveler?

      Not well-suited  □
      Somewhat well-suited  □
      Well-suited  □
      Very well-suited  □
      Extremely well-suited  □
APPENDIX 2-B

Questionnaire Used in Follow-Up Study
To Detect Priming of Deception-Related Thoughts and Measure Affect
(Administered Following Suspicion Manipulation)

WORD PUZZLE CHALLENGE

One letter is missing from each of the following word fragments.

For each item, please indicate the first word that comes to your mind by filling in the missing letter:

1. __OVE
2. TR __ CK
3. BO __ US
4. HUR __
5. SO __ R
6. HIDEOU __
7. PAI __
8. SHAD __
9. W __ RM
10. __ARK
11. W __ ND
12. __OOK
13. SCA __
14. POLI __ E
15. C __ EAT
16. S __ ICK
17. TI __ ED
18. P __ ST
19. CURTAI __
20. __ ECEIVE
21. STA __ E
22. FO __ L
23. HER __
24. PHON __
25. __ ICE
26. __ OY
27. GREE __
28. __ IE
29. STR __ NG
30. __ RAFTY
**PERSONAL FEELING QUESTION**

How are you feeling right now?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Good</td>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Bad</td>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Happy</td>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Sad</td>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Angry</td>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Calm</td>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Irritated</td>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Satisfied</td>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2-C

Main Questionnaire Used in Follow-Up Study

QUESTIONNAIRE

“UPS Next Day Air Letter” Ad

1. Overall, what is your opinion of the advertisement you just saw?

| BAD       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | GOOD |
| UNPLEASANT| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | PLEASANT |
| AWFUL     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | NICE |
| BORING    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | INTERESTING |
| NEGATIVE  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | POSITIVE |

2. Based on this ad, how would you rate the product being advertised?

| BAD       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | GOOD |
| UNAPPEALING| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | APPEALING |
| USELESS   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | USEFUL |
| LOW QUALITY| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | HIGH QUALITY |
| NEGATIVE  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | POSITIVE |

(b) How confident are you that this evaluation is accurate?

| NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | EXTREMELY CONFIDENT |

3. If you actually needed to send an urgent document, how likely is it that you would choose UPS?

| NOT AT ALL LIKELY | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | EXTREMELY LIKELY |

STOP!
PLEASE RAISE YOUR HAND
TO LET THE RESEARCHER KNOW THAT YOU HAVE REACHED THIS POINT.
4. Now we'd like you to write down any thoughts or feelings that crossed your mind while reading the ad. These could be about the ad itself, the advertiser, the product, or anything else.

- Please state your thoughts AS CONCISELY AS POSSIBLE.
- Write EACH THOUGHT ON A SEPARATE LINE

You have three (3) minutes to complete this task.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

9. 

10. 

STOP!
PLEASE RAISE YOUR HAND
TO LET THE RESEARCHER KNOW THAT YOU HAVE REACHED THIS POINT.
5. Please tell us what you believe about UPS’s on-time delivery performance, relative to FedEx (Federal Express).

(a) On-time performance for 4:00 pm letter delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UPS</th>
<th>MUCH WORSE</th>
<th>BOTH ABOUT THE SAME</th>
<th>UPS</th>
<th>MUCH BETTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) On-time performance for 10:30 am letter delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UPS</th>
<th>MUCH WORSE</th>
<th>BOTH ABOUT THE SAME</th>
<th>UPS</th>
<th>MUCH BETTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) On-time performance for parcel delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UPS</th>
<th>MUCH WORSE</th>
<th>BOTH ABOUT THE SAME</th>
<th>UPS</th>
<th>MUCH BETTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) Overall on-time delivery performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UPS</th>
<th>MUCH WORSE</th>
<th>BOTH ABOUT THE SAME</th>
<th>UPS</th>
<th>MUCH BETTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Now, we would like you to reproduce, as accurately you can, exactly what the ad said about UPS's on-time delivery performance.

IMPORTANT!
Please write down only what was actually stated in the ad.
Do not include things the ad seemed to be saying, even if they were strongly implied.

7. Consider the following statement:

For all of the courier services UPS sells, UPS's on-time delivery performance is better than FedEx's.

Was this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPLICITLY STATED IN THE AD</th>
<th>IMPLIED IN THE AD, BUT NOT STATED</th>
<th>NEITHER IMPLIED NOR STATED</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW / DON'T RECALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. (a) The on-time delivery information in the ad referred to a particular service offered by UPS. What was this service? (Please be specific.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10:30 AM</th>
<th>4:00 PM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LETTER DELIVERY</td>
<td>LETTER DELIVERY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARCEL DELIVERY</td>
<td>DON'T KNOW / DON'T RECALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) What percentage of the time did UPS claim to be on-time for this service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>72%</th>
<th>89%</th>
<th>97%</th>
<th>100%</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW / DON'T RECALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Now we would like to know what you believe about UPS's pricing, relative to FedEx.

(a) Price for 4:00 pm letter delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UPS PRICE</th>
<th>PRICES</th>
<th>UPS PRICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUCH WORSE (MORE EXPENSIVE)</td>
<td>BOTH ABOUT THE SAME</td>
<td>MUCH BETTER (LESS EXPENSIVE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Price for 10:30 am letter delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UPS PRICE</th>
<th>PRICES</th>
<th>UPS PRICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUCH WORSE (MORE EXPENSIVE)</td>
<td>BOTH ABOUT THE SAME</td>
<td>MUCH BETTER (LESS EXPENSIVE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) Price for parcel delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UPS PRICE</th>
<th>PRICES</th>
<th>UPS PRICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUCH WORSE (MORE EXPENSIVE)</td>
<td>BOTH ABOUT THE SAME</td>
<td>MUCH BETTER (LESS EXPENSIVE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) Overall prices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UPS PRICE</th>
<th>PRICES</th>
<th>UPS PRICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUCH WORSE (MORE EXPENSIVE)</td>
<td>BOTH ABOUT THE SAME</td>
<td>MUCH BETTER (LESS EXPENSIVE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

"UPS tried to manipulate me with this ad."

| COMPLETELY DISAGREE | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | COMPLETELY AGREE |

"UPS tried to make their product sound better than it really was."

| COMPLETELY DISAGREE | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | COMPLETELY AGREE |

11. On the items below, please indicate your opinion of UPS:

UNTRUSTWORTHY | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | TRUSTWORTHY
UNRELIABLE | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | RELIABLE
NOT CREDIBLE | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | CREDIBLE

12. While you were reading this ad...

a) How concerned were you of the possibility the advertiser might try to mislead you?

| NOT AT ALL CONCERNED | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | EXTREMELY CONCERNED |

b) How careful were you to ensure that the claims being made were accurate?

| NOT AT ALL CAREFUL | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | EXTREMELY CAREFUL |

c) How concerned were you about the truthfulness of the ad as a whole?

| NOT AT ALL CONCERNED | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | EXTREMELY CONCERNED |
13. While you were reading this ad…

(a) How hard did you try to memorize the information given?

| NOT AT ALL HARD | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | EXTREMELY HARD |

(b) How hard did you try to think about the information given?

| NOT AT ALL HARD | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | EXTREMELY HARD |

(c) How hard did you try to understand the information given?

| NOT AT ALL HARD | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | EXTREMELY HARD |

14. How knowledgeable would you say you are about this product category (i.e., courier services)?

| NOT AT ALL KNOWLEDGEABLE | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | EXTREMELY KNOWLEDGEABLE |

15. (a) How familiar would you say you are with this particular courier company (i.e., UPS)?

| NOT AT ALL FAMILIAR | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | EXTREMELY FAMILIAR |

(b) How much experience have you had buying courier services from UPS?

| NONE AT ALL | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | A GREAT DEAL |
Next, a few questions about advertising in general...

Please read each of the statements below, and CIRCLE the number (from 1 to 5) that best describes your level of agreement. Remember, we are interested in your opinion – there are no right or wrong answers.

(a) We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising.

(b) Advertising’s aim is to inform the consumer.

(c) I believe advertising is informative.

(d) Advertising is generally truthful.

(e) Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products.

(f) Advertising is truth well told.

(g) In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised.

(h) I feel I’ve been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements.

(i) Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.
Now, we’d like to know a bit about you…

The statements below concern your personal reactions to a number of different situations. No two statements are exactly alike, so please consider each statement carefully before answering.

If a statement is TRUE or MOSTLY TRUE of you, circle the “T” next to the question. If a statement is FALSE or NOT USUALLY TRUE of you, circle the “F” next to the question.

T  F  1. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people.
T  F  2. My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.
T  F  3. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like.
T  F  4. I can only argue for ideas which I already believe.
T  F  5. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information.
T  F  6. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain people.
T  F  7. When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.
T  F  8. I would probably make a good actor.
T  F  9. I rarely seek the advice of my friends to choose movies, books, or music.
T  F 10. I sometimes appear to others to be experiencing deeper emotions than I actually am.
T  F 11. I laugh more when I watch a comedy with others than when alone.
T  F 12. In groups of people, I am rarely the center of attention.
T  F 13. In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons.
T  F 14. I am not particularly good at making other people like me.
T  F 15. Even if I am not enjoying myself, I often pretend to be having a good time.
T  F 16. I’m not always the person I appear to be.
T  F 17. I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone else or win their favor.
T  F 18. I have considered being an entertainer.
T  F 19. In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect me to be rather than anything else.
T  F 20. I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting.
T  F 21. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.
T  F 22. At a party, I let others keep the jokes and stories going.
T  F 23. I feel a bit awkward in company and do not show up quite as well as I should.
T  F 24. I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for a legitimate end).
T  F 25. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them.
Now, we’d like to know a bit about you...

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who **likes to spend time with others**?

Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
<th>Disagree a little</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree a little</th>
<th>Agree Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I See Myself as Someone Who...

_____ 1. Tends to find fault with others

_____ 2. Is original, comes up with new ideas

_____ 3. Is helpful and unselfish with others

_____ 4. Is curious about many different things

_____ 5. Starts quarrels with others

_____ 6. Is ingenious, a deep thinker

_____ 7. Has a forgiving nature

_____ 8. Has an active imagination

_____ 9. Is generally trusting

_____ 10. Is inventive

_____ 11. Can be cold and aloof

_____ 12. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences

_____ 13. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone

_____ 14. Prefers work that is routine

_____ 15. Is sometimes rude to others

_____ 16. Likes to reflect, play with ideas

_____ 17. Has few artistic interests

_____ 18. Likes to cooperate with others

_____ 19. Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature

Please check: Did you write a number in front of each statement?
Final Question

Please explain, in your own words, what you think this study was about. What do you think we hoped to find out by having you do this study? Write a short description in the space below:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thanks for participating!

PLEASE DO NOT MENTION ANYTHING ABOUT THIS STUDY TO ANYONE.

Our results depend on participants having no information about the study prior to taking part

PLEASE PLACE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE FACE-DOWN ON YOUR DESK TO INDICATE THAT YOU HAVE FINISHED
APPENDIX 2-D
Suspicion Manipulation Check Used in Follow-Up Study
(Administered Following Completion of All Other Questions)

ADVERTISING STUDY
WRAP-UP QUESTIONS

Please think back to the advertisement you saw for JetLiner Luggage.

1. Please give us some final impressions of the ad for JetLiner Luggage:
   a) Was the JetLiner luggage ad misleading?
      NOT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO
   b) Was the JetLiner luggage ad deceptive?
      NOT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO
   c) Was the JetLiner luggage ad truthful?
      NOT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO
   d) Was the JetLiner luggage ad honest?
      NOT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO

2. To what extent did the ad for the JetLiner Luggage make you feel...
   a) fooled:
      NOT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO
   b) tricked:
      NOT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 VERY MUCH SO

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.