Why ‘Fast Food’ Triggers ‘Mcdonald’S’ and ‘Burgerking’ Triggers ‘Fast Food’: Antecedents of Brand Typicality and the Relationship Between Category and Brand

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Very typical brands are assumed to be categorized faster upon a brand cue (brand-to-category direction) and to be recalled faster upon a category cue (category-to-brand direction) than less typical brands. We, however, propose that brand typicality effects are asymmetric in the brand-to-category and category-to-brand direction. We examine to what extent two different antecedents of brand typicality drive this asymmetry, namely family resemblance (FR) and frequency of instantiation (FOI). Three studies examine the relationship between FR and FOI, and their impact on the link between brand and category, in a context of real brands. The findings reveal that FR is more important in determining how fast a brand is categorized given a brand cue, whereas FOI is more influential in determining the speed of brand recall in the presence of a category name.

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To test this hypothesis, we employ meta-analytic techniques to synthesize the findings of extant fear appeal research. Drawing on Terror Management Theory (Greenburg, et al., 1986), we distinguish between studies that used death as a threatened consequence from studies that did not. Studies included in the analysis are coded for the nature of threatened consequence and the degree to which the recommended message conflicts with the cultural worldview of the sample. To assess the moderating influence of nature of threat, effect sizes across a 2x2 experimental design (mortality salient vs. mortality non-salient threat) and (consistent cultural worldview vs. inconsistent cultural worldview) will be compared.

The purpose of this meta-analysis is not to settle any dispute among competing theoretical approaches. Instead, we offer a complimentary theoretical perspective to supplement extant understanding of fear appeal efficacy. Specifically, exploring the efficacy of fear appeals from the perspective of TMT contributes to fear appeal research in at least two ways. First, the categories of death and non-death-related consequences are discrete. Comparatively, there are no broadly accepted standards for what constitutes a high fear appeal, a moderate fear appeal, or a low fear appeal (Keller 1999). Fear communications differentiated by the qualitative nature of the threatened consequence avoids the debate over the constitution of fear levels. Second, this meta-analysis extends the theoretical domain of fear appeal research by offering TMT as an additional framework from which to examine the efficacy of fear-based communications. The TMT perspective allows future inquiry to examine the nature of fear as a factor moderating fear appeal outcomes thereby extending current research beyond the one-dimensional level of fear paradigm.

References

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