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I'M Just Trying to Help: How Volunteers' Social Media Posts Alter Support For Charitable Organizations

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We find that the facial expression a volunteer makes in a social media appeal for an organization impacts both perceptions of the volunteer and support intentions. Results show that humorous facial expressions lead to lower perceptions of volunteer sincerity and reduced likelihood of supporting the referenced charitable organization.

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When Cause-Related Marketing Hinders Rather Than Helps

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Paper #1: When the Face of Need Backfires: The Impact of Facial Emotional Expression on the Effectiveness of Cause-Related Advertisements

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Paper #2: I'm Just Trying to Help: How Volunteers' Social Media Posts Alter Support for Charitable Organizations

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Paper #3: Don't Tell Me Who I Am! When and How Assigning Consumers an Identity Backfires

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Paper #4: Consumer Perceptions of Environmental 'Win-Wins'

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SESSION OVERVIEW

Consumers have more outlets for supporting charitable causes than ever before. Between the more than 1.5 million charitable organizations in the United States alone (NCCS 2016) and the increasing number of for-profit companies engaging in cause-related marketing initiatives, competition for consumer support is fierce. Thus, it is important to understand the effectiveness of cause-related marketing efforts. Recent work is beginning to document that some cause-related appeals might inhibit rather than increase donor support (e.g., Simpson, White, and Laran 2018). However, there are several unexplored ways in which organizations might be unknowingly reducing consumer support. This session highlights the newest research that examines when and why commonly-used cause-related appeals backfire.

First, **Kang, Leliveld, and Ferraro** examine how the facial expression of a victim in cause-related advertisements can decrease the effectiveness of such appeals. They find that advertisements featuring a victim with a sad facial expression leads consumers to perceive the organization's manipulative intent. This finding provides an important caveat to the literature encouraging organizations to use sympathy-evoking images of victims.

Daniels, Kristofferson, and Morales also focus on how facial expressions can affect contributions to charitable organizations; however, they focus on the facial expression of an organization's volunteer rather than the expression of victim. Volunteers frequently post images of themselves performing volunteer work, either of their own volition or at the request of the charity, and often these images include humorous facial expressions. The authors find that such humorous facial expressions are at odds with the serious nature of most causes supported by non-profit organizations, and lead to perceptions of volunteer insincerity, which spillover and reduce support for the referenced organization.

Next, **Castelo, Kristofferson, Main, and White** provide evidence that assuming a consumer's identity in a charitable request (e.g., Hi Animal Lover!) leads to reactance, and lowers the effective-

ness of the appeal, even if the assumed identity is correct. This effect is particularly pronounced for individuals who strongly hold the assigned identity. In other words, by assuming a donor's identity, charitable organizations are driving those who should be their largest contributors away. Further, this finding provides a novel setting where activating an identity leads to identity-inconsistent behavior.

Makov and Newman show that backfire effects extend to social initiatives put forth by for-profit companies. Specifically, they show that a company's sustainability initiatives can cause negative consumer reactions if they lead to increased profits. This effect is driven by a psychological divide between market and communal relationships and holds even when the organization's actions are truly in line with expressed environmental goals.

Taken together, the four papers (all in advanced stages) demonstrate that frequently-occurring cause-marketing appeals can backfire. In doing so, we not only offer new theoretical insights into cause-related marketing, but also provide practical implications to ensure that cause-related appeals provide the positive impact necessary to encourage consumer support. While this session will certainly appeal to researchers interested in prosocial behaviors, we also expect those interested in other areas such as emotions, identity, persuasion knowledge, and social influence to find the session valuable.

When the Face of Need Backfires: The Impact of Facial Emotional Expression on the Effectiveness of Cause-Related Advertisements

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In cause-related advertisements that encourage consumer support for charitable causes either by donation or by CRM purchase (i.e., the purchase of a product is linked to support for charitable causes), organizations often display the image of a victim, whose facial expression may vary. Small and Verrochi (2009) showed that an image of a sad-faced (vs. happy-faced or neutral-faced) victim increased sympathy towards the victim, increasing donations. Thus, there appears to be a benefit of displaying a sad-faced image.

However, little research examines the potential negative effects of sad facial expression. We address this gap by demonstrating that a sad-faced (vs. happy-faced or neutral-faced) image evokes consumer inference of the organization's manipulative intent, defined as "consumer inferences that the advertiser is using inappropriate or manipulative tactics" (Campbell 1995). We build on several research streams to make this proposition. First, consumers have a chronic goal to maintain positive feelings and to improve negative feelings (e.g., sadness; Lazarus and Folkman 1984). When consumers encounter a sad-faced image, they may perceive that the organization is forcing them to experience a negative, aversive emotion to achieve its self-interested goal (increasing fundraising/purchase). Second, research in anthropology suggests that organizations' practice of displaying images of others' suffering (e.g., sadness) is viewed as trivializing that suffering as an attention-grabbing hook (Kleinman and Kleinman 1996). Hence consumers will infer more manipulative intent from the sad-faced image.

We propose that the inference of manipulative intent, along with sympathy (Small and Verrochi 2009), mediate the effect of facial expression on ad effectiveness, measured by ad evaluation, organization evaluation, and helping intention (CRM purchase and donation).

Reflecting different characteristics of the effectiveness measures and mediators, we draw different predictions for ad/organization evaluations than for helping intentions. One relevant difference is that helping behavior (vs. ad/organization evaluations) is more directly related to the motivation to enhance the welfare of victims (Bagozzi and Moore 1994). However, all three effectiveness measures are related to how consumers perceive the organization. For example, consumers' inferences that an organization is manipulative reduces their ad/organization evaluation, and their willingness to support the organization by purchasing a product (Campbell 1995). Because inference of manipulative intent is the consumer's response towards the organization, while sympathy is the consumer's response to the victim, we expect that inference of manipulative intent will impact ad/organization evaluations and helping intentions, while sympathy will only affect helping intentions. Importantly, the effects of sympathy and manipulative intent on helping intentions operate in opposing directions with sympathy increasing helping intentions and manipulative intent reducing helping intentions.

We hypothesize that a sad-faced (vs. happy-faced or neutral-faced) image will lower ad/organization evaluations (H1) due to mediation by manipulative intent (H2). Inference of manipulative intent and sympathy will mediate the effect of facial expression on helping intentions, but in opposing directions, which may produce no effect of facial expression on helping (H3). We expect the proposed effects to be the same for advertisements by for-profit and nonprofit organizations because consumers perceive both organizations are persuasion agents, who can be manipulative to achieve their goals (Cotte et al. 2005; Seu and Orgard 2014).

Three studies tested H1-H3 using cause-related advertisements by for-profit and nonprofit organizations, using images of different children. In these studies, participants viewed a one-page advertisement with the image of a child with specific facial expression. Study 1 used a CRM advertisement by for-profit organization, which stated that proceeds from the purchase of a granola bar would be donated to hungry kids. The image of a child with either a happy, neutral, or sad expression was displayed. Study 2 generalized the findings to a non-profit CRM context using a 2(facial expression: neutral, sad) x 2(organization type: for-profit, nonprofit) between-subjects design. Study 3 further generalized the findings by including a condition where the non-profit organization solicited a donation.

In all studies, ad/organization evaluations were significantly lower in the sad (vs. neutral and happy) conditions (H1). There was no difference between neutral and happy conditions. For ad/organization evaluations, only the inference of manipulative intent significantly mediated (H2). For helping intentions, the effect of facial expression was not significant. This was because the indirect effects of inference of manipulative intent and distress were both significant but in opposite directions (H3). Moreover, in studies 2-3, the interaction between facial expression and organization/ad type was not significant, suggesting that the facial expression effects hold in advertising by for-profit and nonprofit organizations. We ruled out several alternative explanations (warmth and competence of the organization, outcome efficacy, and attractiveness of a child).

In studies 4-5, we provide more support for the manipulativeness mechanism by examining two theoretically relevant moderators. Skepticism towards CRM reflects consumers' tendency towards disbelief of CRM claims. More skeptical consumers are more likely to perceive a potentially suspicious tactic (e.g., sad-faced image) as manipulative (Kirmani and Zhu 2007). Thus, the negative effect of sad facial expression should be larger for consumers with higher skepticism towards CRM. As expected, study 4 revealed a significant interaction between facial expression (sad vs. happy) and

skepticism towards CRM on ad/organization evaluation and helping intentions. Cause centrality captures whether the advertisement is cause-focused or product-focused. Cause-focused ads feature the cause (e.g., victim's image) at the focal point of the advertisement and the promoted product at the secondary point, while product-focused ads feature the product at the focal point and the cause at the secondary point (Chang 2012). When the organization positions the cause element as the focal point, consumers will infer that the organization intentionally focused consumers on the sad-faced image, and infer high manipulative intent. Thus, the negative effect of sad facial expression should be stronger in the cause-focused (vs. product-focused) ad. As expected, study 5 revealed a significant interaction between facial expression and cause-centrality on ad/organization evaluations.

Overall, we provide a comprehensive framework of the effect of facial expression by considering the effects of two mediators and by identifying two moderators. By doing so, we uncover a nuanced effect that sad facial expression produces negative effects on ad/organization evaluations but weaker effects on helping intention.

I'm Just Trying to Help: How Volunteers' Social Media Posts Can Impact Support for Non-Profits

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Nonprofits lean heavily on social media to raise awareness and funds for their causes (M+R 2017). One common approach is to encourage supporters to share their experiences with the cause to help raise awareness amongst their social networks. Often supporters respond by posting an image of themselves engaging in volunteer work on behalf of the organization on their personal social media accounts. These secondhand appeals promote the charitable organization but do not have the oversight and planning of organization-sponsored promotional appeals. Thus, research investigating the impact and effectiveness of these secondhand appeals is needed.

Previous work in the prosocial domain has examined how sad facial expressions of identifiable victims in promotional appeals can increase support for charities by eliciting greater feelings of sympathy (e.g., Small and Verrochi 2009). However, no research has yet examined how the facial expressions of a volunteer might impact consumer responses. We focus instead serious and smiling volunteer expressions compared to humorous facial expressions, which are used quite frequently on social media to increase the favorability of response (Porter and Golan 2006; Ipsos 2013). Specifically, we argue that because humor does not align with the seriousness of issues addressed by charities, consumers will view volunteer's humorous images as insincere, leading to reduced support for the organization.

Study 1 examines how participants respond to volunteer social media posts featuring either a humorous, serious, or smiling facial expression. Mturk workers (n=224) participated in a 3-cell (Expression: serious, smiling, humorous) between-subjects design. Participants were told that they were going to view a social media post from someone who recently volunteered with the organization HandsOn—a (fictitious) charity whose mission is to help clean up and repair local community property. Participants then saw an Instagram post of the volunteer. In the post, the volunteer either had a serious expression, smiled, or stuck her tongue out for the respective conditions.

After viewing the secondhand appeal, participants responded to questions regarding both the volunteer and the charitable organization. Participants first rated to what extent the volunteer was selfish and insincere ($\alpha=.86$). Next, participants were asked to rate how

likely they were to donate and volunteer for HandsOn, as well as how much they would like to learn more about HandsOn ($\alpha=.86$).

Participants believed the volunteer was significantly more insincere in the humorous condition compared the smiling condition ($p=.001$) and serious condition ($p=.001$). The smiling and serious conditions did not differ from one another ($p=.45$). Similarly, participants were less likely to support HandsOn in the humorous expression condition compared to the smiling expression condition ($p=.04$) and serious expression condition ($p=.005$). Again, the smiling and serious conditions showed no differences ($p=.46$). Thus, a humorous secondhand appeal from an individual who spent time volunteering with the charity led observers to *reduce* their intentions of supporting the organization. As predicted, the volunteer's insincerity mediated the pathway between facial expression and support of the organization.

Study 2 examines whether this negative spillover consequence holds in the both non-profit and for-profit contexts. We predict that the negative effects of a humorous facial expression will only hold in a non-profit context, as insincerity and selfishness are more at odds with the warmth associated with non-profits than the competence associated with for-profits (Aaker et al. 2010).

Mturk participants ($n=401$) completed a 2 (Expression: smiling, silly) \times (Company: for-profit, non-profit) between-subjects design. Participants read about a company called Jessie's Kitchen. In the non-profit (for-profit) condition, Jessie's Kitchen offered cooking classes for a \$30 donation (fee). The food made in each class was donated to local families in need (enjoyed by the class). Participants responded to the same volunteer insincerity ($\alpha=.84$) measures as study 1. The behavioral intention measures from study 1 were adapted for Jessie's Kitchen and to fit either the for-profit or non-profit context. Additionally, because both non-profit and for-profit organizations are interested in increasing customer interaction, we included the participant's likelihood of "liking" the picture on Instagram in our intentions index ($\alpha=.86$).

As predicted, participants in the non-profit conditions were significantly less likely to want to support Jessie's Kitchen in the humorous expression condition compared to the smiling expression condition ($p=.03$). However, in the for-profit condition there was no difference between support intentions across expression ($p=.73$). Similarly, participants in the non-profit conditions directionally thought the volunteer was more insincere in the humorous condition compared the smiling condition ($p=.11$). In the for-profit conditions, perceptions of insincerity did not differ across expression ($p=.25$).

In our final study, we examine a second boundary condition—the amount of information participants have about the volunteer's commitment to the cause. Undergraduate participants ($n=290$) participated in a 2 (Expression: silly, smiling) \times 2 (Additional info: yes, no) between-subjects study. The procedure was nearly identical to that of the non-profit conditions from study 2 with two notable changes. First, in the additional information conditions, participants were given more information behind the individual's reasons for volunteering. Second, instead of the previous intentions measures, participants were told that Jessie's Kitchen was attempting to raise funds by selling products featuring their logo. Participants viewed an image of a mug with Jessie's Kitchen's logo, and rated how much they would be willing to pay for it.

Participants in the no additional information conditions felt the volunteer was significantly more insincere in the humorous condition compared the smiling condition ($p=.03$). In the additional information conditions, perceptions of insincerity did not differ across expression ($p=.44$). Participants in the no additional information conditions were willing to pay less for the mug in the humorous

expression condition compared to the smiling expression condition ($p=.06$). There was no difference in the additional information conditions ($p=.62$). As expected, volunteer insincerity mediated the relationship between facial expression and WTP when no additional information was present, but not when additional information was available.

Across three studies, we take the first step in understanding how volunteer's social media posts might affect support for charitable organizations. We find initial support for our hypothesis that humorous expressions can lead to negative consequences for both the volunteer and the organization.

Don't Tell Me Who I Am! When and How Assigning Consumers an Identity Backfires

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Past research suggests that while individuals often have chronically accessible aspects to their identity (Oyserman 2009), different identities can be activated by elements of the decision context (e.g., Forehand & Deshpandé 2001; White & Dahl 2007). Each identity that an individual holds is associated with different behavioral demands and expectations (Grover and Hui 1994). The salience of a particular identity can influence individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Forehand, Deshpandé, & Reed II 2002). Indeed, research supports the notion that a salient identity dominates working memory at a given point in time (Bhattacharya & Sen 2003) and is more likely to affect behavior than an identity that is not salient (Burke 1980).

Given the importance of identity in predicting behavior, we were interested in situations in which a charitable organization assigns an identity to a consumer. We refer to this as identity assignment. For example, imagine you donate to the ASPCA and receive a letter describing you as an animal lover. You may or may not actually hold this identity, but this identity is being inferred by the charity. Organizations who make such assumptions may be attempting to induce identity-consistent behavior in an effort to increase support for their cause, although we suggest that sometimes this strategy will backfire.

Theoretically, this phenomenon is tied to self-verification theory which relies on three important assumptions (Swann 2011). First, over time, patterns of behavior emerge that become part of a person's stable self-view. Second, these self-views provide to the individual a sense of coherence in their identity. Third, these feelings of consistency and coherence cause people to work towards maintaining these self-views. What is novel about the current research, however, is that in the case of identity assignment, we predict that as opposed to responding in an identity consistent manner, consumers will do the opposite. This prediction would be in contrast to self-verification theory as it would demonstrate a situation in which a positively viewed identity leads to a negative downstream consequence. Further, identity-based motivation theories (Oyserman 2009) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) would predict that when one's identity becomes activated, that person should act consistently with their identity. We demonstrate a situation in which this is not the case. We reveal a backfire effect wherein people become less likely to behave in line with the activated identity. We demonstrate this occurs due to reactance, which is defined as the tendency to be less likely to agree to request because one's own feelings of autonomy and freedom to choose are threatened in some way (Brehm 1972).

Study 1 examined whether identity assignment can backfire and reduce identity-consistent choices. Participants ($n=271$) were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: Identity Assignment

vs. Control. Participants were asked to evaluate an appeal from an animal protection charity: The Humane Society. The letter outlined its mission and provided basic facts. Furthermore, participants in the identity assignment condition were presented with an additional line of text: "We know you are an animal lover, and that you are passionate about caring for animals and their welfare." After completion, participants completed five items indicating their behavioral intentions to support the charity (e.g., volunteer, sign a petition). Finally, participants completed measures to assess reactance to identity assignment (e.g., "I do not like that I am being told how I feel about animals"). Participants in the identity assignment condition expressed significantly higher reactance responses to the appeal than participants in the control condition ($p = .023$), and were less likely to support the charity in the future ($p = .017$). Mediation analysis showed that increased reactance mediated the relationship between identity assignment condition and subsequent decreased support.

Study 2 investigated whether this backfire was, counterintuitively, most pronounced among those with stronger identities, and ruled out a general positive attribution as an alternative explanation. Participants ($n=256$) were assigned to conditions in a 3 (Assigned Identity, General Internal Attribution, Control) \times continuous (Identity Strength) design. Participants in the control and identity assignment evaluated the same letters from Study 1. The appeal in the general attribution condition was: "We know that your values and the kind of person you are makes you passionate about caring for animals and their welfare". Participants next completed the behavioral support items from Study 1. The 3 \times continuous interaction emerged ($p = .047$), and was driven by the identity assignment \times control interaction ($p = .012$). For those with high (+1.63SD) [low. -.76 SD] identity strength, the assigned identity leads to lower (higher) cause support than the control condition. No effect emerged in the general internal attribution condition.

Study 3 delved deeper into the psychological reactance proposed to drive this backfire effect. We reasoned that this identity inconsistent behavior results from the perception that the organization is taking unfair advantage of the consumer's identity in the solicitation request. Participants ($n=256$) were assigned to conditions in a 3 (Identity Assign, Identity Assign+appeal, Control) \times continuous (Identity Strength) design. The cover story and manipulations were consistent with previous studies, but participants in the identity assign + appeal condition received an additional appeal that donations were needed or animals might suffer. We hypothesized this condition would amplify experienced reactance. To assess reactance, participants indicated agreement with the following item: The Humane Society is taking advantage of my attitudes about animals to get me to donate". Participants then provided perceptions of the Humane Society using a four-item index. Results revealed the predicted interaction ($p = .015$), showing that those with strong identities (+.28 SD) perceived the organization was taking advantage of them for gain, which in turn lowered overall perceptions of the organization ($b = -.05$, CI95: $-.108, -.001$, Process Model 7).

We investigate the novel phenomenon of identity-assignment, and show that when an organization assigns to a consumer an identity based on past support behavior, those who hold this identity engage in identity-inconsistent behaviors. We show this backfire effect is due to the perception that the organization is attempting to take advantage of their beliefs for gain.

Consumer Perceptions of Environmental 'Win-Wins'

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Many organizations across a wide range of industries have sought to align their financial goals with environmental ones by identifying strategies that maximize profits while minimizing environmental impacts. Although such 'win-win' strategies are generally thought to reflect positively on companies employing them, in a series of 3 studies we find that people tend to respond negatively to the notion of profiting from environmental initiatives. In fact, observers may evaluate environmental win-wins less favorably than profit-seeking strategies without environmental benefits.

We suggest that this negative response results from a fundamental psychological divide between social relationships that are perceived as communally-oriented versus those that are perceived as market-oriented (hereafter, 'communal' and 'market'). Previous research has demonstrated that communal versus market relationships invoke fundamentally different norms for behavior (e.g., Clark and Mills 1979; Newman and Cain 2014). Specifically, when a communal relationship is established, profits can "taint" the positive value associated with pro-social behavior by violating the norm that one should give without receiving something in return. In market contexts, however, this norm is not present and thus it may be perfectly acceptable to profit from one's actions (Holmes, Miller, and Lerner 2002).

Indeed, past research has demonstrated that blurring the lines between communal and market relationships lowers evaluations of individuals and organizations who behave pro-socially and may even reduce individuals' likelihood of helping others (e.g., Newman and Cain 2014, Vohs, Mead, and Goode 2006). Yet given the differences between pro-social behavior such as charitable giving, and environmental initiatives of for-profit organizations (e.g. no identifiable victim, time discrepancies), it remains unclear if such win-wins are evaluated under the same norms as pro-social behavior.

We examine the distinction between communal and market norms, and how they affect perceptions of companies profiting from environmental win-wins in a series of 3 studies.

Study 1, examined whether an environmental win-win is evaluated less favorably than a 'business as usual' approach. 375 MTurk Participants were presented with a fictitious newspaper article that discussed real advertisements used by the outdoor apparel company, Patagonia. In the environmental conditions, participants read about Patagonia's pro-environmental 'Don't buy this jacket' campaign, in which the company argued that to help the environment, individuals should consume less. In the control conditions, participants read about a more standard 'Try on adventure' campaign, which highlighted the performance capabilities of Patagonia products. The newspaper article either highlighted that the ad campaign resulted in increased profits (which it did; Stock 2013), or an increase in brand recognition (reputational benefit). Thus, the factors of ad type (environmental vs. control) and benefit (monetary vs. reputational) were fully crossed in a 2X2 between-subjects design. Participants then rated the company on several dimensions (moral, ethics, like, approve, trust, manipulative(R), selfish (R), buy, competent).

We found that Patagonia received significantly lower evaluations when the environmental advertisement resulted in profits ($M=5.41$) than when the control advertisement resulted in profits ($M=6.32$), $p < .001$). In contrast to the profit conditions, when the benefit was reputational, participants had equivalent ratings of the company in both the environmental ($M=5.96$) and control ad conditions ($M=6.18$, $p = .28$).

In Experiment 2 we directly test the hypothesis regarding communal versus market norms. 244 Mturk participants were primed to a specific norm (communal/market exchange) with a short writing exercise. Then, participants read about a sustainability initiative in which trash collectors would institute a new pricing model that encourages waste reduction ('pay-as-you-throw'). Half of the participants read the initiative had environmental benefits (environmental benefit only), while for the other half read that the initiative was profitable for the company and also environmental (win-win). Thus, the factors of priming task (communal vs. market) and benefit type (environmental benefit only vs. win-win) were fully crossed in a 2X2 between-subjects design. Participants then rated the company's morality.

Participants primed with communal norms, gave the company significantly lower evaluations in the win-win condition ($M=5.22$) compared to the environmental benefit only condition ($M=6.89$, $p<.001$). However, participants primed with market norms, gave the company equivalent evaluations in the win-win ($M=6.55$) and the environmental benefit only ($M=6.37$) conditions ($p=.61$). Further comparison of the two win-win conditions indicated that profits led to significantly lower evaluations of the company when participants were primed with communal norms vs. market norms, ($p<.001$, $d=.67$).

Experiment 3 tested whether differences in mere temporal order would engender a similar negative win-win effect. Initial categorization of an event may strongly affect the processing of subsequent information such that people tend to resist re-categorizing the event even when they encounter conflicting information (Markman 1987, 1989; Moreau, Markman, and Lehmann 2001). Therefore, we hypothesized that even when people are exposed to identical information about an organization, they may have very different evaluations depending on which benefits are encountered first.

123 participants read two pages containing identical information about the company Patagonia. Half of the participants first read that the company was a very good environmental actor, and on a subsequent page read that the company was also very profitable. The other half of participants first read the information in the reverse order. Participants then rated the company on the same dimensions as in Experiment 1.

Results indicated a significant effect of information order on company evaluations ($p=.011$ $\eta^2=.05$). As predicted, Patagonia was evaluated significantly more positively when participants first read about how they were profitable before reading about their environmental efforts ($M=7.15$) compared to reading about their environmental efforts first ($M=6.45$).

Together these studies suggest that the risk of eliciting negative public response following the adoption of green business practices, is not limited to "greenwashing" or other forms of disinformation previously examined (Delmas and Cuerel Burbano 2011; Walker and Wan 2012). Hence, even if an organization's actions are truly in line with the environmental goals professed and no 'greenwashing' is involved, it is still at risk of drawing a negative reaction if these activities are not carefully communicated. We show that this negative backlash can be avoided by reframing the efforts as market-oriented, or by simply altering the order in which individuals encounter information regarding the initiative.

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