

# I Have a Bad Feeling About This: How the Law of Similarity Shapes Consumer Responses to Photo Customization

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## **Abstract**

Despite its growing popularity as an important source of gifts and branded promotional giveaways, the impact of photo customization on the actual consumption experience is relatively unknown. The current research draws on sympathetic magical thinking, specifically the law of similarity, to propose that in the context of nondurables, photo customization can lead to negative consumer responses that inhibit consumption. We contend this occurs because consumption ruins the image of the person depicted on the photo-customized product, which produces feelings of wrongness and consequently reduces consumption. While people may acknowledge that physically compromising a photo-customized product through consumption cannot cause harm to the depicted individual, the law of similarity suggests it may still alter responses to these products, as it holds that images are non-arbitrary equivalents of their referents. Across six studies, we elucidate the negative impact of photo customization, pinpoint the theoretical mechanism driving the effect, and identify managerially-relevant moderators.

**Keywords:** *Customization; Consumption; Irrational Beliefs*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour