

This Can Happen to Me: The Importance of Activity-Target Congruence in Driving Consumer's Response to Arousal-Inducing Stimuli

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Abstract

We investigate the effectiveness of arousal-inducing marketing activities. The results from a series of three experiments, involving both positive and negative contexts, show that consumers' perceived congruence with the elements of the marketing activity (e.g., the degree of ad character-viewer similarity) increases the level of the engendered emotion, which drives the persuasiveness of the message (documented through both self-reported and behavioral measures). Moderated-mediation analyses reveal that high-arousal levels increase consumers' reliance on affective information processing especially when consumers feel congruent with the stimulus source of arousal. This, in turn, boosts the activity's effectiveness through the elicited affect-laden path. These findings reveal the importance of diverse representation of characters in marketing communications especially when it concerns psychologically arousing content. Managers can use these insights to design more effective activities.

Keywords: *Advertising; Arousal; Congruence*

Track: Advertising & Marketing Communications