

Guilty or Not Guilty that Is the Question: Effect of Guilt Relieving Opportunity on
Consumer-Brand Relationships

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Abstract

This research focuses on guilt as a post-feeling of dishonest consumer behavior. It tests whether exposure to the guilt stimulus and guilt-relieving action change the strength of the relationship between guilt and brand attachment. Study 1 shows that dishonest consumers' post feelings of guilt decrease consumers' attachment. Study 2 reveals that when consumers are frequently exposed to the guilt stimulus, the adverse effects on consumers' attachment get deeper. Since Study 1 and Study 2 reveal that brand attachment suffers from guilt, Study 3 deals with overcoming this detrimental side-effect. Results of Study 3 demonstrates that guilt-relieving action lessens feelings of guilt and enhances relief so that consumers rebuild the brand attachment. This research indicates that, in dishonesty situations, consumers tend to see the brands as a source of self-betrayal reminder that threatens their inner balance and lead to brand avoidance. Therefore, providing guilt-relieving opportunities may help to recover damaged brand attachment.

Keywords: *dishonesty; guilt; attachment*

Track: Consumer Behaviour