

MARKETING MORAL EXEMPLARS: THE IMPACT OF THE SUPERHERO CONCEPT ON PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

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Cite as:

Guha Sarkar Bibek, Jaikumar Saravana (2025), MARKETING MORAL EXEMPLARS: THE IMPACT OF THE SUPERHERO CONCEPT ON PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, (130371)

Paper from the 16th Annual Fall EMAC Conference, Istanbul, Turkey, September 17-19, 2025



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Abstract

Superheroes, often portrayed as moral exemplars, are widely used in marketing contexts to inspire prosocial behaviour. Yet, the real-world effectiveness of the superhero concept in fostering prosocial actions among consumers remains underexplored. Through four interconnected studies, this paper investigates how the superhero concept can be leveraged in marketing communications to enhance consumer prosociality. Study 1 qualitatively explores the concept, identifying moral elevation as a key driver. Study 2 shows how exposure to and value congruence with superheroes promote prosociality. Studies 3 and 4 employ controlled and field experiments to establish causality between superhero priming and prosocial actions. The results offer theoretical insights and practical implications for marketing communication and consumer well-being, demonstrating how brands can harness superhero narratives to activate prosocial behaviour.

Track: Marketing Communication (including digital) and Branding