

The Coincidental Encounter Effect in Brand Biographies

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Abstract

Brands increasingly narrate their origins and evolution through brand biographies as means to connect with consumers and increase brand equity. While most prior research on brand biographies has focused on how brands evolve and overcome disadvantage through sheer resilience, no prior research has investigated how the circumstances that led the brand to be born influence consumer evaluations. Three experiments investigate how consumers react to brand biographies indicating a planned vs. coincidental origin. Results indicate that consumers high in need for cognition are more persuaded by coincidental (vs. planned) biographies, as their need for effortful thinking is satisfied by the opportunity to make causal connections that coincidences afford. We provide process evidence showing that subtle cues helping to validate or casts doubt on the causal connection moderates the effect for consumers high in need for cognition. Further, if the causal connection is explained by the brand, consumers high in need for cognition react indifferently. The findings have relevant implications for brand storytelling and the craft of brand biographies.

Keywords: *brands; coincidence; need-for-cognition*

Track: Consumer Behaviour