

Grateful and elevated or angry and contemptuous? The role of moral emotions in consumer responses to brand activism

Eliana Esposito

Technische Hochschule Mittelhessen

Stefanie Wannow

Technische Hochschule Mittelhessen

Martin Haupt

Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen

Cite as:

Esposito Eliana, Wannow Stefanie, Haupt Martin (2022), Grateful and elevated or angry and contemptuous? The role of moral emotions in consumer responses to brand activism. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 51st, (107034)

Paper from the 51st Annual EMAC Conference, Budapest, May 24-27, 2022



Grateful and elevated or angry and contemptuous? The role of moral emotions in consumer responses to brand activism

Abstract

Consumers increasingly call brands to drive policy changes by taking an ‘activist’ stance on socio-political issues. Although brand activism mainly uses moral emotions to prompt discussions and change, research has largely neglected to analyze the role of moral emotions. Building on Haidt’s moral emotion framework, this research analyzes how consumers’ elicited moral emotions and their personal involvement with a societal cause affect consumer responses towards activist brands. In an experiment with two current controversial issues, we measured people’s agreement with the brand’s stand and its impact on moral emotions and subsequent attitudinal reactions. Respondents’ (dis-) agreement with the brand’s stance led to more (negative) positive responses, mediated by negative vs. positive moral emotions, respectively. A higher personal involvement with the issue increased this effect. Implications for theory and brand managers are derived.

Keywords: *brand-activism; moral-emotions; involvement*

Track: Product and Brand Management