

The Source of Magic: Focal Attention Drives the Direction and Content of Contagion

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Abstract

Extant research in the areas of magical thinking and essence transfer have mostly focused on the effect of contagion on a target option or person, and has thus implicitly assumed that essence transfer is one-directional; namely, from a designated source to a designated target option, with both designations presumed by the researcher. We propose that the direction of essence transfer, and thereby the particular essence that is transferred, depends on the option that receives initial attentional resources. Specifically, we predict that contagion spreads from left to right, consistent with the reading direction of English and with research showing that individuals attend first in their visual field to the location where the writing system starts. Three studies tested our proposition and confirm that the direction (and thereby content) of essence transfer depends on which option receives initial attentional resources.

Subject Areas: *Attitude, Consumer Behaviour, Retailing*

Track: Consumer Behaviour