

When Less is More: Understanding Consumers' Reaction to Minimalist Appeals

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Cite as:

Liu (Joyce) Jingshi, Chen Wei-fen (2023), When Less is More: Understanding Consumers' Reaction to Minimalist Appeals. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 52nd, (112775)

Paper from the 52nd Annual EMAC Conference, Odense/Denmark, May 23-26, 2023



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Abstract

Minimalism, an emerging theme of lifestyle marketing that encourages people to live on fewer possessions, manifests prevalently in marketing communications that appeal to prosocial ideals such as environmental sustainability (e.g., Patagonia's well-known "Buy less" and "Don't buy this jacket" campaign). However, consumers' reaction to minimalism as a marketing appeal remains under-researched. We investigate how minimalist appeal is received differently across consumers' socioeconomic status (SES hereafter) backgrounds. Four studies yield converging evidence that consumers of low SES (vs. middle or high SES) show distaste for such an appeal, because they value quantity over quality in daily consumption. However, low SES consumers become more favorable toward a minimalist brand appeal when the merits of minimalism are quantified in marketing communications. Implications for class-based consumer behavior and market segmentation for minimalist brands are discussed.

Subject Areas: *Branding, Consumer Behaviour*

Track: Consumer Behaviour