

Loneliness and Consumer Responses to Advertising for Ordinary versus Extraordinary Experiences

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Abstract

Consumers engage in a range of experiential consumptions, from extraordinary experiences that are rare and exceptional, to ordinary experiences that make up everyday life. Research has documented the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary experiences. However, little is known about how loneliness influences consumers' perceptions of ordinary versus extraordinary experiences, and how it affects their responses to advertisements for these different types of experiences. A pilot study that analyzes a national secondary dataset first reveals that engagement of ordinary leisure activities is positively associated with loneliness and negatively associated with happiness. A set of correlational and experimental studies further demonstrate that compared to nonlonely consumers, lonely consumers extract and expect more happiness from extraordinary (vs. ordinary) experiences. It follows that lonely consumers are willing to spend more time and money on experiences with an extraordinary appeal than an ordinary one. These results suggest that advertisements featuring extraordinary appeals are more likely to attract lonely consumers.

Keywords: extraordinary ad appeal, happiness, loneliness

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