

How Mortality Salience Hurts Brands with Different Personalities

Antonios Stamatogiannakis

IE Business School - IE University

Polina Landgraf

University of Virginia

Haiyang Yang

Johns Hopkins Carey Business School

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Abstract

From pandemic outbreaks to crimes and terrorism, consumers often experience mortality salience (MS). We examine how MS-increasing events impact brand evaluations. We propose that under MS consumers avoid experiencing change. Because consumers perceive brands with an exciting personality to be more closely associated with the notion of change than brands with other types of personality, the onset of MS is more likely to hurt exciting than other brands. Six empirical studies, including a large-scale secondary data study, confirm these propositions. We discuss the theoretical implications of our findings, and provide insights for brand management in an era full of crises.

Keywords: *Mortality salience, brand personality, brand evaluations*