



The carryover effect of national identity activation on consumers' evaluations of ads with patriotic appeals



Hyejin Bang^a, Jinnie Jinyoung Yoo^{b,*}, Dongwon Choi^c

^a School of Journalism and Mass Communication, The University of Kansas, United States

^b Department of Global Business Administration, College of Business Administration, Gachon University, 1342, Seongnamdaero, Sujeong-gu, Seongnam-si, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea

^c Department of Advertising and Public Relations, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, The University of Georgia, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Patriotic appeals
National identity
Group-emotion
Regulatory-focus framing

ABSTRACT

This study examined how the activation of national identity (NI) in diverse contexts influenced how consumers subsequently evaluated ads featuring patriotic appeals. Specifically, this study proposed that the activation of NI through different priming contexts would influence the comparative persuasiveness of patriotic ad messages framed by two different regulatory foci. Findings from this study suggest that (a) when a negative NI prime (Study 1) aroused fear (vs. sadness), consumers responded more favorably to patriotic ads with a prevention-focused (vs. promotion-focused) patriotic appeal and that (b) when a positive NI prime (Study 2) aroused happiness or relief, consumers showed more favorable attitude toward the promotion-focused (vs. prevention-focused) patriotic appeal. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

1. Introduction

Using patriotic appeals in marketing communication messages is not a new approach. Many advertisers have tried to capture the hearts and minds of consumers by embedding patriotic cues in their campaigns, especially around the time of major national events (McMellon & Long, 2006). For instance, Coca Cola recently jumped on the patriotic bandwagon by releasing a limited edition can for Independence Day; the can featured a red, white, and blue exterior and the words “I’m proud to be an American” (Garcia, 2016). Nevertheless, little is known about the mechanism through which consumers respond to different patriotic ad messages when national identity (NI) is cued.

Being members of multiple social groups, most individuals possess multiple social identities. Among them, NI can be “switched on” and become momentarily salient through nation-related contextual cues, such as national tragedy or triumph (Carvalho & Luna, 2014; Yoo & Lee, 2016). When NI is salient, the sense of national membership increases, and citizens become more concerned about the welfare of their nation (Kramer & Brewer, 1984).

However, in practice, marketers and advertisers need to be careful when relying on patriotic appeals to connect with potential customers because patriotic messages have often been criticized by consumers and generated counterproductive results (McMellon & Long, 2006). For example, AT & T’s “Never forget” tweet on 9/11 was bombarded with

thousands of hate tweets, while the “Born on 9/11” campaign executed by 9/11 Day garnered favorable reactions (Gianatasio, 2015). These opposite reactions suggest that the mere presence of patriotic cues in ads does not guarantee the success of patriotic advertising. Consumer responses to patriotic ad can vary depending on what the ad says and the circumstances in which the ad is released.

During and after momentous national events, the citizens of the United States tend to unite as a nation, but they might share different types of group-based emotions (e.g., sadness vs. fear) depending on the situation in which NI is activated (group-emotion theory: Dumont, Yzerbyt, Wigboldus, & Gordijn, 2003; Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007). For instance, an American woman who typically sees herself as a “nice mom” who takes care of her sons every day might become “a U.S. citizen” with a strong emotional surge of sadness during the 9/11 memorial, temporarily setting aside her identity as a mom. On another occasion, however, when Megan is watching a news report about an imminent natural disaster or terror threat on U.S. soil, she again embraces her social identity as “a U.S. citizen” with a strong feeling of fear. Marketers need to understand how different emotional experiences might change the way consumers perceive and respond to ads with a patriotic theme. Although a few studies have shown that, in general, NI activation can positively influence consumer evaluation of ads with a patriotic appeal (e.g., Carvalho & Luna, 2014; Yoo & Lee, 2016), none have considered the probability that discrete emotions

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: hjbang@ku.edu (H. Bang), jinniyoo@gachon.ac.kr (J.J. Yoo), dc47864@uga.edu (D. Choi).

evoked through NI priming can impact consumer responses to patriotic ads.

Discrete group-based emotions shape individual goal orientation, action tendencies, and behavior (Bless & Fiedler, 2006), in turn influencing consumer reactions to differently framed patriotic messages. According to Higgins (1997, 2002), individuals tend to pursue goals (e.g., national welfare) following one of two distinct goal orientations: Promotion or Prevention. People with a promotion focus tend to facilitate national advancement and accomplishment, while those with a prevention focus tend to protect national welfare by avoiding negative consequences. Regarding the effect of discrete emotions on goal orientation, individuals in a state of dejection (e.g., sadness) tend to be promotion-focused, while those in a state of agitation (e.g., fear) tend to be prevention-focused (Higgins, 1997; Raghunathan & Pham, 1999). However, recent studies have suggested that negative and positive emotions are asymmetrically related to motivation—that is, distinct positive emotions are not uniquely associated with a specific motivational inclination (Leone, Perugini, & Bagozzi, 2005).

Given these findings, the current study examined how NI activation through both negative (sadness vs. fear) and positive (happiness vs. relief) emotional priming might affect the persuasiveness of patriotic ad messages using different regulatory frames.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, while previous studies have shown that NI activation resulted in favorable evaluation of patriotic ads (Carvalho & Luna, 2014; Yoo & Lee, 2016), the study extends the previous findings by investigating the role of emotional context in which NI is switched on. Second, addressing the role of emotion in goal regulation, this study examines how different message strategies influence consumers' evaluation of patriotic ads depending on the discrete negative or positive emotions elicited by NI activation. Third, in a broader context, this study contributes to research on emotion by confirming the asymmetric effect of positive and negative emotions on goal regulation.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

2.1. Social identity salience

People identify themselves with multiple social groups (e.g., gender, religion, nationality, and ethnicity), which likely have different levels of importance in defining their self-concept (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Kramer & Brewer, 1984). According to social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 2010), membership in a specific social category can become relatively dominant and salient, while other identities might stay intact as a result of contextual factors and social interactions (Reed, 2002). A number of studies have shown that exposure to social contexts associated with a particular social category can successfully activate the related social identity (Moskalenko, McCauley, & Rozin, 2006; Xu, Shim, Lotz, & Almeida, 2004). Once a particular social identity is activated, depersonalization of self occurs, meaning that individuals perceive themselves as members of the specific social group (Hogg et al., 1995). The “socially constructed self” guides the way individuals think and behave. Identifying with a particular group, people are more likely to engage in behavior that supports the values and goals of that group to promote its welfare (Kuppens, Yzerbyt, Dandache, Fischer, & Van Der Schalk, 2013; Xu et al., 2004).

2.2. National identity activation and patriotic consumption

NI is the one among many co-existing and overlapping social

identities (Citrin, Wong, & Duff, 2001). It refers to an individual's feeling of belonging, love, and attachment to a national community (Carvalho & Luna, 2014). Previous studies have shown that contextual or stimulus cues associated with a home country, such as national tragedy, a natural disaster, or national triumph, can play a role as an identity prime, switching on NI (Carvalho & Luna, 2014; Yoo & Lee, 2016). In particular, media content can serve as a contextual cue not only to reinforce, but also to trigger, NI. Carvalho and Luna (2014), for example, showed that exposure to a news report about a natural disaster (i.e., severe weather conditions in Brazil) made Brazilian NI momentarily salient.

Once NI is activated, people are likely to behave in a manner that supports national goals, interest, and welfare due to the emotional significance that NI carries (Sharma, Shimp, & Shin, 1995; Yoo & Lee, 2016). People with salient NI, therefore, tend to overestimate the quality or efficacy of domestic products and choose those products over better foreign alternatives in order to improve national welfare and secure the nation's survival (Sharma et al., 1995). Furthermore, when NI is salient, individuals are likely to experience enhanced sensitivity to stimuli linked with NI (Dimofte, Forehand, & Deshpande, 2003) because they prefer brands that resonate with their self-concept, personality, or identity (Krishen & Sirgy, 2016). By the same token, previous studies have suggested that NI activation leads consumers to evaluate ads featuring patriotic cues more favorably (Carvalho & Luna, 2014; Yoo & Lee, 2016).

2.3. Group-based discrete emotion aroused by NI activation

Previous studies on the impact of emotion on consumer decision making have generally focused on affective states of different valence (i.e., positive vs. negative), assuming that all positive or all negative emotions are equivalent (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2000). According to appraisal theories of emotion (Lazarus, 1999), however, each emotion is defined by its own distinct core relational theme, and each emotion can influence information processing and decision making differently (Higgins, 1997; Raghunathan & Pham, 1999). In the context of patriotic advertising, therefore, discrete negative or positive emotions elicited by NI primes are expected to influence differently how consumers process patriotic ad messages and make decisions.

Previous studies have suggested that identity salience is a required precondition for group-based emotion and that group-based emotion can go beyond mere positive or negative feelings (Dumont et al., 2003; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). For instance, Dumont et al. (2003) showed that people reported a higher level of *fear* when the victims of 9/11 were categorized as in-group members (i.e., Westerner or American) compared to when they were outside the groups. Moreover, Dutch people reported the shared feeling of *guilt* after being exposed to a story about their nation's unfavorable history (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998), while participants in Dumont et al. (2003) reported the group-based feeling of *fear* after being exposed to a story about 9/11. Therefore, although media context regarding national events might commonly act as “triggers” for NI activation, people might experience group emotions depending on the media context in which that activation occurs (e.g., 9/11 memorials evoking “sadness” vs. imminent natural disaster on U.S. soil evoking “fear”).

2.4. Regulatory focus theory: promotion vs. prevention

Grounded on the general hedonic principle that human beings tend to seek pleasure and avoid pain, regulatory focus theory proposes two

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5109483>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5109483>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)