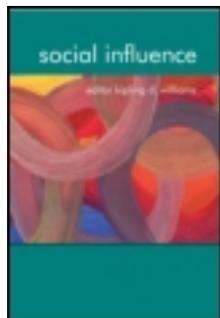


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Not so personal: The benefits of social identity ad appeals with activation in advertising

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Selecting the most effective advertising appeals is a major challenge for marketers and advertisers. This research addresses this challenge by examining the moderating effect of activation, an advertising technique that invites individuals to engage in a motor activity in order to reveal the ad message, on ad appeal type (name, social identity, and general appeals) in leveraging ad evaluations. The results of three studies show that ad appeals referring to individuals' social identity, especially in the presence of activation, enhance product evaluations and actual product choices. The findings also suggest that privacy concerns play a mediating role in determining these effects.

Keywords: Social identity; Activation; Ad appeal; Privacy concern; Personalization.

Marketers and advertisers invest enormous efforts to identify effective advertising appeals that will not only attract individuals' attention but also encourage them to buy the advertised products. In this research, we examine appeals that potentially meet these criteria by exploring individuals' responses to ad appeals that differ in their level of personalization and the presence or absence of activation. Specifically, we extend existing knowledge on the effectiveness of personalization levels of advertising appeals (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Beak & Morimoto, 2012; Yu & Cude, 2009) by examining three levels of personalization: general appeals, which represent low or no personalization; social identity appeals, which represent a moderate level of personalization; and name appeals, which represent a high level of personalization. The research also integrates the personalization stream of research with the literature that addresses novel advertising techniques, focusing on activation (Goldenberg & Mazursky, 2001, 2008; Steinhart, 2012), a technique that invites the viewer to engage in a physical action in order to reveal the advertising message.

We propose that when an ad appeals to the individual's social identity, it is perceived more positively and generates stronger product evaluations than a

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general appeal ad with low or no personalization or an ad that addresses the individual by name. This prediction considers the potential psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966) that may be triggered by a name appeal approach that creates a sense of privacy invasion (Beak & Morimoto, 2012; Okazaki, Li, & Hirose, 2009; Phelps, D'Souza, & Nowak, 2001; Yu & Cude, 2009). Specifically, we expect a social identity appeal ad to generate a relatively high sense of personalization (compared with general ad appeal) with a relatively low sense of privacy invasion (compared with name appeal).

This expectation gained initial support from field data we collected from 60 individuals who belong to a specific social group (members of a religious community center). At our request, a tourist agency sent a genuine offer by email to the community center's members, promoting a specific family vacation package. The email offer addressed the members either by their name or by their social group, or in a general manner, and was otherwise identical. Recipients of the offers were invited to purchase the advertised vacation. As expected, 25% of the recipients who received a name appeal replied with a negative response, whereas no negative responses arrived from recipients of the social identity or general appeal offers. More interestingly, 25% of the recipients who received social identity appeals sent positive responses, whereas no positive responses arrived from recipients in the general appeal or name appeal conditions. Furthermore, two recipients of the social identity ad actually purchased the advertised vacation.

This research also explores the role of activation in enhancing the effect of ad appeals. The activation technique is designed to increase the viewer's engagement with the ad by inviting the person to perform an action in order to reveal an advertisement's message (Goldenberg & Mazursky, 2001, 2008). According to Celsi and Olsen (1988), when individuals are highly engaged, their focus, attention, and comprehension processes are more likely to be enhanced. Bloch, Sherrell, and Ridgway (1986) found that increased engagement affected the extent of comprehension and resulted in an increase in time spent on information processing. Following this research, we assume that activation will increase engagement with the ad, and consequently heighten the ad's positive or negative impact on viewer product evaluations, dependent on ad appeal type.

We next discuss the current literature on ad appeals and on activation, and offer a synthesis of these two streams of research.

AD APPEALS

Marketers use different types of ad appeals to attract consumers' attention (Cline, Altsech, & Kellaris, 2003; Donovan & Henley, 1997; Mogilner, Aaker, & Penigton, 2008; Witte, Berkowitz, Cameron, & McKeon, 1998). Personalization in ad appeals involves addressing consumers using their individual profile information (Nowak, Shamp, Hollander, & Cameron, 1999). Marketers

incorporate this information, such as gender, lifestyle, or prior purchases into ads (Nowak, Price, & Lewis, 1995). For example, messages may be personalized by incorporating the individual's name (name appeal), or the individual's culture, beliefs, or place of work (social identity appeal) into the ad. In this research, we focus on appeals that represent three levels of personalization (Beak & Morimoto, 2012; Nowak et al., 1999; Saaksjarvi & Pol, 2007; Yu & Cude, 2009): (1) name appeal, in which individuals are addressed by name, representing a high level of personalization (Beak & Morimoto, 2012; Yu & Cude, 2009); (2) social identity appeal, which creates a moderate level of personalization using social identification characteristics, such as religion, workplace, age, gender, and place of residence (Turner, 1982); (3) general appeal, which represents a low level of personalization by presenting a message not directed at a specific individual or group (Rotfeld, 2006).

Personalized advertising has become more feasible over the years, thanks to new developments such as technologies that enable the collection and processing of personal information, that facilitate the delivery of personalized messages (Beak & Morimoto, 2012; Saaksjarvi & Pol, 2007; Yu & Cude, 2009; Yuan & Tsao, 2003). However, it is not clear whether individuals respond favorably to tailored ad appeals. Research has shown that advertising based on personalized appeals is generally more effective than mass advertising (Nowak et al., 1995, 1999; Pavlou & Stewart, 2000), particularly when the personalized message offers a customized service or product based on the individual's purchase history. Other evidence, however, suggests that individuals may perceive personalized appeals in a negative manner because of privacy concerns (Beak & Morimoto, 2012; Okazaki et al., 2009; Phelps et al., 2001; Yu & Cude, 2009). For example, Joinson, Woodley, and Reips (2007) showed that participants were less willing to share personal information when approached by name than when approached using their group identity. Furthermore, we assume that personalized appeals may be perceived as artificial, such as when a personalized appeal offers a noncustomized product or service. Specifically, individuals may consider a personalized appeal for a noncustomized offer as a mere marketing tactic for offering an identical item to everyone, rather than a truly personalized offer.

THE DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS OF AD APPEALS

This research proposes that ad appeals focusing on individuals' social identity generate more favorable product evaluations than name appeal ads and general appeal ads. Our predictions are based on psychological reactance theory (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 1981), which offers a comprehensive understanding of how and why people resist unsolicited advertising appeals. This theory posits that whenever people perceive an offer as restricting or threatening their behavioral freedom, they tend to experience reactance and are motivated to modify their attitudes and behaviors in a manner that reaffirms their freedom and autonomy.

Recent research (Beak & Morimoto, 2012; White, Zahay, Thorbornsen, & Shavitt, 2008) indicates that personalized advertising may trigger advertising avoidance because such ad messages contain too much personal information. Inclusion of extensive personal information in an ad often threatens individuals' sense of privacy and perceived ability to avoid surveillance by firms. When individuals are approached by name, they may become more concerned about other personal information in the marketer's possession. Thus, we propose that name appeal ads trigger psychological reactance because of a heightened sense of privacy invasion (Joinson et al., 2007). This heightened sense of privacy invasion should reduce engagement with an ad.

In comparison, social identity ads allow people to express their social identity through group-related products, which may in turn enhance their sense of group belonging. When one is addressed as a group member, such as "Dear Student" or "Dear Soccer Fan," greater cooperation with an appeal is elicited (Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008). For example, Goldstein et al. (2008) showed that appeals that addressed individuals' social identity generated greater cooperation than a standard environmental message (an appeal requesting hotel guests to cooperate in recycling towels in hotel rooms). We expect that social identity appeals will increase a recipient's motivation to read an ad. This is because the recipient should feel that the ad is relevant, which will promote cooperative interest, but the ad will not be perceived as being personally invasive. Social identity appeals should increase recipient engagement with an ad. Finally, we see no reason to expect that a general ad appeal will heighten recipients' sense of privacy invasion and reactance. We formally predict:

H1a: Name appeals are likely to generate greater perceived privacy concerns and less engagement with an ad, compared with social appeals and general appeals

Furthermore, a social identity appeal should have the benefit of motivating individuals into action by triggering their group identity (Goldstein et al., 2008). We extend this linkage between social identity and motivation to engage in an action by examining the effect of ad appeals in the presence of an activation technique.

ACTIVATION IN ADVERTISING

Previous research has demonstrated that physical action can affect attitudes toward different types of content (Niedenthal, Barsalou, Winlielman, Krauth-Gruber, & Ric, 2005; Wells & Petty, 1980). Therefore, systematically integrating such motor activities into advertising media can make these advertisements more effective. One method of integration is to invite the individual to perform a motor activity that simulates an overall favorable attitude toward the advertised product,

with no relevance to the message itself. For example, an advertisement for a product could be designed with the text placed vertically on the page, thereby forcing viewers to nod their heads (simulating agreement) while reading it (Strack, Martin, & Stepper, 1988; Wells & Petty, 1980).

This research focuses on activation, in which an association is created between the motor activity itself and the advertising message (Goldenberg & Mazursky, 2001, 2008; Steinhart, 2012). Activation promotes engagement with an advertisement by inducing viewers to perform a motor activity that highlights the advertisement's message. More precisely, the results of the motor activity executed while viewing the advertisement echo the message conveyed in the advertisement. This should result in an increase in engagement with the ad. We, therefore, predict the following:

H1b: Engagement with an ad including activation will be greater than engagement with an ad with no activation

ACTIVATION'S MODERATING EFFECT ON AD APPEALS

Activation is proposed to moderate the effect of ad appeals on product evaluations. In the case of a social identity appeal, we expect activation to boost the favorable aspects of such an appeal and enhance evaluations. Past studies show that activation can cause individuals to evaluate products more positively (Goldenberg & Mazursky, 2001, 2008). Both social identity appeals and activation are expected to increase engagement with an ad. These matching factors are expected to interact and favorably influence individuals' responses to the ad.

In the case of a name appeal, we expect that activation will make unfavorable aspects of the appeals even more salient. Presumably, when the offer itself is not personalized (as is the case in this research), a name appeal inviting individuals to perform an action to reveal a conveyed message will heighten their awareness of the privacy shortcomings of this type of appeal, and lead to less favorable product evaluations. Finally, following past research (Goldenberg & Mazursky, 2008), a general ad appeal combined with activation is expected to have a positive effect on evaluations, due to increased positive engagement with the ad. We expect to replicate this effect.

H2: A social identity appeal ad is more likely to enhance product evaluations and the probability of choosing the advertised product than a name appeal or a general appeal, in the presence of activation than in the absence of activation

H3: Privacy concern mediates the joint effect of appeal type and activation on product evaluation

Figure 1 presents a scheme of H3.

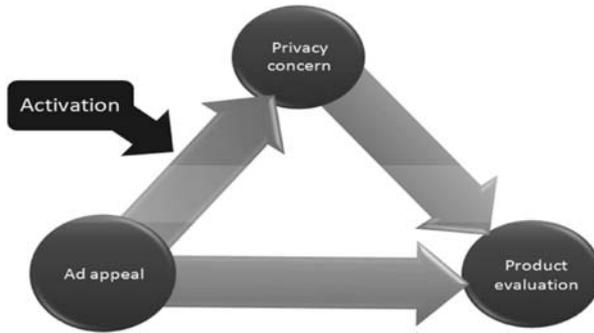


Figure 1. Scheme of H3.

STUDY 1

Study 1 tests whether name appeals trigger more privacy concerns than other appeal types, as predicted in H1a. Study 1 also tests for increased engagement with ads as a function of activation and appeal type, as predicted in H1a and H1b.

Method

Participants and design

Ninety male participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 26.8$) were paid to take part in an online study. We focused on participants who belong to identifiable social groups (e.g., students). Due to the nature of the product in this study (an inexpensive razor), we addressed only male participants. The ad either invited them to perform a physical action to reveal the advertising message or directly conveyed the message with no activation.

Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the sample. Participants were randomly assigned to the research conditions, which consisted of a 3 (ad appeal: name or social identity or general) \times 2 (activation or no activation) between-subjects design.

All participants were active members of an online panel that had authorized access to their personal information such as first name or academic status.

TABLE 1
Demographic characteristics of the sample (Study 1)

Education	86.7% undergraduate students and 13.3% graduate students
Socioeconomic status	28.9% with average income and 71.1% under average income

Stimuli selection

Study 1 used a modified version of an actual online ad for a shaving razor, which was not familiar to residents of the country. The original ad used the message “Shave time, shave money.” For this study, we created three versions of headlines (name appeal, social identity appeal, and general appeal) and two versions of the ad (activation or no activation) (see Appendix A). We also added the message “Shaving does not have to be expensive” to all ads. The main purpose of the ad was to inform participants that they could buy a high-quality razor for only \$1 instead of the standard price of \$25 for razors of comparable quality.

Activation conditions

One half of the participants viewed an ad that included activation. These participants viewed an image of a \$25 razor and were invited to “shave” its price by clicking on the razor in the ad. Clicking on the razor caused the razor to move and “shave” the price, exposing the new price of \$1. The remaining half viewed the ad with no activation: they saw the final frame of the activation condition ad, including a caption stating that the price has changed.

Ad appeal conditions

The name appeal contained reference to participants’ first names. The social identity appeal contained reference to participants’ student identity. The text of the general appeal ad contained no reference to any affiliation of any kind. We confirmed the manipulation of appeal types in a pilot study among 20 male students (Table 2). We also confirmed the activation manipulation in a pilot study among 46 male participants (Table 3).

Procedure and measures

Participants were informed that the study was designed to explore individuals’ attitudes and perceptions regarding products and services. All participants viewed

TABLE 2
Manipulation checks of ad appeal conditions—Studies 1–3

	<i>Study 1</i>	<i>Study 2</i>	<i>Study 3</i>
General appeal	$M = 4.35^{**}$	$M = 3.95^{**}$	$M = 3.20^*$
Social identity appeal	$M = 6.00$	$M = 5.81$	$M = 4.29$
Personal appeal	$M = 4.9^{**}$	$M = 4.00^{**}$	$M = 3.78^*$
<i>N</i>	20	21	35

Note: *Significant at $p \leq .05$ level (two tailed); **Significant at $p \leq .01$ level (two tailed).

TABLE 3
 Manipulation checks of activation conditions—Average perceived required action

	<i>Activation</i>	<i>No activation</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Study 1	$M = 4.26$	$M = 2.48$	46	$p < .01$
Study 2	$M = 5.70$	$M = 2.23$	115	$p < .01$
Study 3	$M = 4.26$	$M = 2.48$	115	$p < .05$

identical ads that differed only by appeal and activation. We measured the time each participant spent viewing the ad, which served as a measure of engagement.

After viewing the ad, participants rated the extent of their privacy-related concerns on three items (“When I receive personalized advertising from an advertiser, I am worried about what other information about me they also have,” “I believe my information can be accessed by all advertisers if they want it,” and “I feel my privacy has been violated”) based on the scale of Yu and Cude (2009). Responses were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The three items consistently measured the same underlying construct ($\alpha = .83$) and were, therefore, averaged into a single privacy index.

Results

Privacy concerns

An ANOVA of the average privacy index as a function of appeal type and activation yielded a significant main effect for appeal type ($F_{(2,89)} = 8.36$, $p < .001$). Participants’ privacy concern index was significantly higher in the name appeal condition ($M = 4.50$) than in the general ad appeal condition ($M = 2.81$, $t_{(53)} = 4.19$, $p < .001$) and in the social identity appeal condition ($M = 3.50$, $t_{(57)} = 2.31$, $p < .05$). Post hoc tests further revealed that there was a marginally significant difference between participants’ privacy concerns in the social identity appeal condition and the general appeal condition ($t_{(64)} = 1.83$, $p = .07$). There was no significant main effect for activation ($F_{(1,89)} = 1.85$, $p = .18$), and no significant interaction effect between appeal type and activation ($F_{(2,89)} = 0.97$, $p = .39$).

Engagement

An ANOVA was conducted on time spent processing the ad as a function of appeal type and activation. We found a significant main effect for activation ($F_{(1,89)} = 22.20$, $p < .001$): participants spent more time looking at ads in the activation condition ($M = 22.34$) than at ads in the no activation condition ($M = 12.34$). Furthermore, although we found no significant main effect for

appeal type ($F_{(2,89)} = 2.17, p = .12$), post hoc tests revealed significant differences between the appeal conditions. Specifically, participants spent less time looking at ads in the name appeal condition ($M = 14.45$) than at ads in the social identity appeal condition ($M = 20.12, t_{(57)} = 2.62, p < .05$) or at ads in the general appeal condition ($M = 18.51, t_{(53)} = 1.98, p = .053$). We found no significant difference in time devoted to the general appeal ($M = 18.51$) and the social identity appeal ads ($M = 20.12, t_{(64)} = 0.58, p = .56$). The interaction between appeal type and activation conditions was not significant ($F_{(1,89)} = 0.21, p > .1$).

The results of the first study offered initial support for our predictions by showing the potential negative outcomes (in terms of privacy concerns) of using a name appeal compared with a social identity appeal or a general appeal. These findings also shed light on the positive outcomes of activation, in terms of engagement with the ad.

STUDY 2

The second study examined the integrative effect of activation and ad appeal type on individuals' product choices.

Method

Participants and design

One hundred and fifteen participants volunteered to take part in this study (55% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 33$). We focused on participants who belong to an identifiable social group (working students). Participants were randomly assigned to the following research conditions: 3 (ad appeal: name or social identity or general) \times 2 (activation or no activation) between-subjects design. All participants consented in advance to permit the researchers to access their personal information (private name and academic status) for the purpose of the experiment.

Stimuli

Each participant was exposed to one of six print ads for herbal tea, which were developed for the purpose of this research.

Activation conditions

In the activation condition, the text introduced a teaser (Feeling pressured? Want to reverse the situation?). The answer appeared at the bottom of the ad, written upside down. Hence the viewer had to turn the ad upside down to read it.

In the no-activation condition, the text was not reversed, and participants could read the message on the bottom of the page easily, without turning the page upside down (Appendix B).

Ad appeal conditions

The name appeal contained reference to participants' first names. The social identity appeal contained reference to participants' status as working students. The text of the general ad appeal did not refer to any type of personal status or group affiliation.

A pretest among 21 volunteer participants confirmed the appeal type manipulation (Table 2). Moreover, as expected, activation manipulation was also confirmed (Table 3).

Procedure and measures

When introduced to the study, participants were informed that the study was designed to explore attitudes and perceptions toward ads. Each participant was then presented with one of the six versions of the print ad. After viewing the ad and completing a brief series of filler questions, participants were told that they were welcome to take one of two products as a token of appreciation for their participation: either the advertised tea or a tea bag of a different brand. The two brands were pretested to ensure there was no inherent preference toward any brand. Specifically, we asked participants to rate their overall evaluation of each product on a 7-point scale from 1 (*very low*) to 7 (*very high*). The *t*-test results confirmed our expectations that participants were indifferent toward the brands ($M = 5.63$ vs. $M = 5.65$, respectively; $t_{(39)} = 0.074$, $p > .1$).

Results

Choice measures

A crosstabs analysis of the number of participants who chose the advertised product, as a function of appeal type and activation, revealed a significant two-way interaction between activation and brand choice ($\chi^2_{(1,48)} = 5.87$, $p = .05$). In line with H2, participants in the social identity appeal condition were more likely to choose the advertised brand in the presence of activation ($N = 9_{(11)}$, 81.8%) than in the absence of activation ($N = 2_{(11)}$, 18.2%); participants in the social identity appeal condition in the presence of activation were also more likely to choose the advertised brand than participants in the name appeal condition, both in the presence of activation ($N = 6_{(14)}$, 42.9%) and in the absence of activation ($N = 8_{(14)}$, 57.1%). Finally, participants in the social identity appeal in the presence of activation were more likely to choose the advertised brand than

participants in the general appeal condition with activation ($N = 9_{(23)}$, 39.1%) or with no activation ($N = 14_{(23)}$, 60.9%).

These results emphasize the favorable effect of social identity appeal in the presence of activation on consumers' choices.

STUDY 3

Study 3 examined participants' product evaluations, and explored a possible explanation, via privacy concerns, for the moderating effect of activation on ad appeal in predicting these evaluations.

Method

Participants and design

One hundred and fifteen participants were paid to take part in the research (71% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 34$, residents of a major metropolitan city) and were randomly assigned to conditions, which consisted of a 3 (ad appeal: name or social identity or general) \times 2 (activation: with or without) between-subjects design. Table 4 provides a detailed demographic profile of the sample. As in Study 1, all participants were active members in an online panel that had authorized access to their personal information.

Stimuli

We developed an ad for a Smart car specifically for this research (Appendix C). Each ad included a name appeal, a general appeal, or a social identity appeal; two versions (with and without activation) were developed for each appeal type.

Activation conditions

In the activation condition, participants viewed a partial ad containing an image of a Smart car and an extremely small parking space. Participants were invited to

TABLE 4
Demographic characteristics of the sample (Study 3)

Education	10.3% high school level, 19% over high school level, 69.9% academic level, and 0.9% did not complete high school
Profession	5.2% unemployed, 51.9% salaried employees, 22.4% students, and 20.5% self-employed
Socioeconomic status	28.4% with average income, 23.3% above average income, and 48.3% below average income

click on the ad to see how the car could be parked in the available space shown in the ad. By clicking on an arrow in the ad, participants revealed the message conveyed in the ad, and were exposed to a unique parking technique that is relevant only to Smart cars. In the no activation condition, participants viewed the final frame of the activation ad, which illustrated a unique parking solution for a Smart car. Manipulation checks confirmed the activation manipulation (Table 3).

Ad appeal conditions

The name appeal referred to participants' first names. The social identity appeal referred to participants' status as residents of a major metropolitan city. The text of the general appeal did not refer to any type of personalization. Manipulation checks confirmed our expectations (Table 2).

Procedure and measures

The procedure was identical to the procedure used in Study 1. However, in this study we also asked participants to rate (1) their overall evaluation of the advertised product (Please rate your overall evaluation of the product) on a 7-point scale from 1 (very low) to 7 (very high) and (2) the extent of their privacy concerns, using a specific item taken from Yu and Cude (2009) (Please rate to what extent you are concerned that the marketer has access to your personal information).

Results

Product evaluations

An ANOVA of product evaluation as a function of appeal type and activation revealed a significant two-way interaction of appeal type and activation ($F_{(2,109)} = 4.58, p < .05$). We found that in the activation condition, product evaluations in the social identity appeal condition ($M = 5.44$) were more favorable than in the name appeal condition ($M = 4.10, t_{(35)} = 3.33, p < .01$) and were marginally more favorable than in the general appeal condition ($M = 4.55, t_{(34)} = 1.65, p = .10$). In contrast, in the no activation condition, no significant differences were found between product evaluations in the social identity appeal ($M = 4.56$), in the general appeal ($M = 4.17$), and in the name appeal conditions ($M = 5.05$). These results generally support H2. The marginal difference between the effect of the social identity and general appeals may be in line with past research that reported a favorable impact of activation when accompanied by a general appeal.

Privacy concerns

An ANOVA of privacy concerns as a function of appeal type in the presence or absence of activation revealed a significant main effect of appeal type

($F_{(2,109)} = 22.53, p < .01$). In line with H1a, across activation conditions, perceived privacy concerns were greater in the name appeal condition ($M = 4.28$) than in the general appeal condition ($M = 1.50, t_{(73)} = 7.26, p < .001$) and were marginally greater than in the social identity appeal condition ($M = 3.50, t_{(77)} = 1.65, p = .10$). The latter marginal effect suggests that consumers also experienced some degree of an invasion of privacy when the advertiser identified them using their social group affiliation.

Moderated mediation analyses

Moderated mediation analyses using recommended bootstrapping mediation tests (e.g., Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007) were performed with 5000 replications, where the dependent variable was product evaluation, the independent variable was appeal type, the moderator was the presence or absence of activation, and the mediator was represented by privacy concerns. In line with H3, we found the following: privacy concerns mediated the effect of appeal type on product evaluations only in the presence of activation (95% CI: .005 to .30), whereas the mediation effect of privacy concerns was not significant in the absence of activation (95% CI: $-.005$ to .42).

The results of the third study not only highlighted the moderating effect of activation on ad appeals in determining product evaluations but also offered evidence of the underlying path of this effect via privacy concerns.

DISCUSSION

The impact of ad appeal types on individual preferences and evaluations is well recognized, as is the favorable effect of activation on product evaluations. This research combines these two streams of research and provides new insights on their interactive effect.

We hypothesized that a personalized appeal based on reference to social identity would generate less intense privacy concerns than a personalized appeal using a viewer's first name, and therefore, a social identity appeal would generate more favorable evaluations toward the advertised product than toward a name appeal. Moreover, we expected this effect to be stronger in the presence of activation. Indeed, the results of Study 1 showed that privacy concerns were heightened in the name appeal condition than in other appeal conditions. Study 2 showed that the boost in positive evaluations in the social identity appeal condition carried over to participants' actual product choices. Finally, in Study 3, we demonstrated the mediating effect of privacy concerns in determining the joint effect of ad appeal and activation on product evaluations.

This research extends existing knowledge by examining personalized ad appeals in two subcategories: name appeal and social identity appeal. Although past research has studied the effects of personalized ad appeals and general ad

appeals, no distinction has been previously made between specific types of personalized ad appeals. Howard and Kerin (2004) and Rodgers and Thorson (2000) used first names to represent personalized ad appeals, whereas Nowak et al. (1999) examined a personalized ad appeal that included the individual's name and group affiliation. In this research, we distinguished between two levels of personalized appeals: (1) use of a first name (Bob) and (2) use of a social identity (working and studying?).

In our studies, we used mass-produced consumer products in which the same product was offered to everyone. In future research, it is important to explore the effect of appeal types on customized product offerings as well.

Future research might also consider exploring additional categories of social identity, such as workplace, nationality, or ethnic identity. It could examine individual differences that might affect the interaction between social identity appeals and activation (Hagerty & Williams, 1999). For example, a sense of belonging, which represents a dispositional need for affiliation and close relationships (Lee & Robbins, 1995), might be expected to moderate the effect of social identity appeals. Specifically, we expect that when individuals possess a stronger sense of belongingness, a social identity appeal may lead to more favorable ad and product evaluations, while evaluations might not be affected or might even be negatively affected among individuals with a low sense of belongingness.

This research has important practical implications. At present, advertisers have access to a broad range of advanced advertising techniques, such as the activation technique, that allow them to incorporate technologically sophisticated methods and personal details about their consumers into ad appeals. Therefore, it is important for advertisers to understand the relative effectiveness of appeal types and activation. Based on the findings in this research, advertisers may be advised to avoid approaching consumers using their first names, but instead lean more toward addressing their social identity, such as place of residence, country, or academic status. Moreover, they are advised to apply sophisticated techniques when approaching consumers in a general manner or when addressing their social identity.

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APPENDIX A. Razor ads

An ad for inexpensive razor including a name appeal, with and without activation



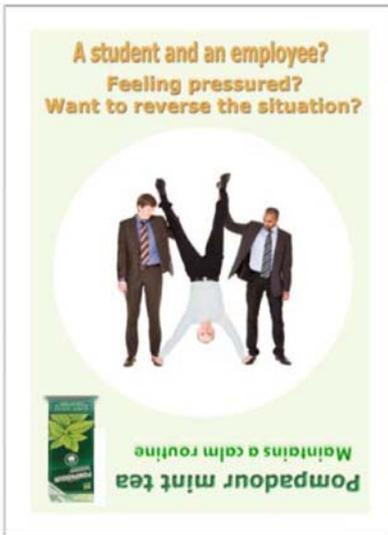
A. Name appeal with activation



B. Name appeal without activation

APPENDIX B. Herbal tea ads

Ad for herbal tea including a social identity appeal, with and without activation:



A. Social identity appeal with activation



B. Social identity appeal without activation

APPENDIX C. Smart car ads

An ad for a Smart car including a general appeal, with activation (a click on the arrow reveals the conveyed message) and without activation:



A. General appeal with activation



B. General appeal without activation