



Not all negative emotions lead to concrete construal



Nivriti Chowdhry^{a,*}, Karen Page Winterich^b, Vikas Mittal^a, Andrea C. Morales^c

^a Jones Graduate School of Business, Rice University, 6100 Main Street, MS 531, Houston, TX 77005, United States

^b Smeal College of Business, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802, United States

^c W. P. Carey School of Business, Arizona State University, Main Campus, PO Box 874106, Tempe, AZ 85287, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

First received on January 20, 2015 and was

under review for 1 month

Available online 11 June 2015

Replication Editor: Donald R. Lehmann

Keywords:

Construal level

Emotion

Valence

Disgust

Happiness

Brand extension

ABSTRACT

Labroo and Patrick (2009) show that positively- (negatively-) valenced emotions are associated with a relatively more (less) abstract construal. However, similarly valenced emotions may differ on other dimensions, impacting construal level. Replicating Labroo and Patrick (2009), happiness is associated with a relatively more abstract construal than sadness. Extending their findings, disgust is associated with a relatively more abstract construal than sadness. This difference in construal level results in disgust and sadness impacting brand-extension judgments differently.

© 2015 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Labroo and Patrick (2009) argue that positive (negative) emotional valence results in a relatively more (less) abstract construal. This occurs because positive emotions signal benign situations, leading individuals to increase psychological distance from the situation. In contrast, negative emotions signal threatening situations, leading people to reduce psychological distance.

Replicating Labroo and Patrick's (2009) findings, we show that happiness (sadness) is associated with a relatively more (less) abstract construal. In addition, we show that disgust, which is commonly experienced by consumers (Morales & Fitzsimons, 2007), is similar to happiness but different from sadness, causing a relatively more abstract construal. Finally, in a follow-up study, we demonstrate that disgust and sadness differentially influence brand-extension judgments. In addition to its theoretical contribution, this research addresses a Tier-1 Priority of Marketing Science Institute (2014)—understanding how consumers' emotions influence their decisions.

2. The construal level of disgust

Labroo and Patrick (2009) operationalize emotions broadly, using positive and negative valence (i.e., happiness versus sadness). However,

similarly-valenced emotions do not necessarily evoke similar responses. For example, similar to sadness, disgust is a negatively-valenced emotion, but different from sadness, disgust triggers a “shut out and get away” response to harmful and aversive stimuli (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985, p. 833); a response to disgust is typically “manifested in distancing from some object, event, or situation” (Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 2000, p. 638). In summary, an emotional state of disgust signals a situation from which one should withdraw. Consequently, disgust should be associated with a relatively more abstract construal (Bar-Anan, Liberman, & Trope, 2006).

3. Study 1

This study replicates Labroo and Patrick's (2009) finding that happiness leads to a relatively more abstract construal than sadness, but also shows that disgust, like happiness, results in a relatively more abstract construal than sadness.

3.1. Participants and procedure

We used a between-subjects design with emotion as a single, four-level factor: happiness, disgust, sadness, and neutral (N = 154 undergraduates). The specific measures and variables are detailed in Web Appendix A.

3.1.1. Emotion condition

Following past studies, participants wrote an essay describing a day in their life that elicited the most happiness, sadness, or disgust. The

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 713 348 3862.

E-mail addresses: nivi@rice.edu (N. Chowdhry), kpw2@psu.edu (K.P. Winterich), vmittal@rice.edu (V. Mittal), acmorales@asu.edu (A.C. Morales).

neutral condition asked participants to describe a typical evening. Manipulation checks are detailed in Web Appendix A.

3.1.2. Level of abstractness

Consistent with Labroo and Patrick (2009, Study 1a), we established an index using ten items from Vallacher and Wegner's (1989) personal agency questionnaire. Participants chose either a global or contextual description for ten specific activities. A global (contextual) response is consistent with abstract (concrete) construal. The proportion of global or abstract descriptions chosen formed an index (from 0 to 1) measuring the level of abstractness. A higher score represents a higher level of abstractness.

3.2. Results

3.2.1. Level of abstractness

An ANOVA indicated that the emotion condition impacted abstractness ($F(3, 150) = 3.84, p < .01$). Results are summarized in Fig. 1. Specifically, participants in the happiness condition had a higher level of abstractness than those in the sadness condition ($M_H = .68; M_S = .60; t = 1.74, p < .05$ one-tailed). Participants in the disgust condition also demonstrated a higher level of abstractness than those in the sadness condition ($M_D = .71; M_S = .60; t = 2.49, p < .01$ one-tailed). The level of abstractness did not differ between participants in the happiness and disgust conditions ($M_H = .68; M_D = .71; t = .79, p = .40$).

Participants in the happiness condition demonstrated a higher level of abstractness than those in the neutral condition ($M_H = .68; M_N = .59; t = 2.05, p < .05$ one-tailed). Participants in the disgust condition also demonstrated a higher level of abstractness than those in the neutral condition ($M_D = .71; M_N = .59; t = 2.90, p < .01$ one-tailed). The level of abstractness did not differ between participants in the sadness and neutral conditions ($M_S = .60; M_N = .59; t = .15, p = .88$).

3.3. Discussion

This study replicates Labroo and Patrick's (2009) finding that happiness is associated with a higher level of abstractness than sadness. It also shows that two negatively-valenced emotions differ in construal (disgust is associated with a higher level of abstractness than sadness), while a positively- and a negatively-valenced emotion engender the same level of abstractness (happiness and disgust).

4. Study 2

What are the marketing implications of abstract processing based on specific emotions? To further establish the difference between sadness

and disgust (two negatively-valenced emotions), and explore the marketing implications of abstract processing, we conducted Study 2.

We argue that an abstract construal leads people to see more similarity between two concepts than a concrete construal. When an abstract construal is evoked through increased psychological distance (Bar-Anan et al., 2006), people are likely to use higher-order categories and sort items into broader categories (Liberman, Sagristano, & Trope, 2002). Research shows that higher-order categories typically enable people to see more similarities between unrelated concepts (e.g., Barsalou, 1985).

Based on this logic, we expect that disgust (due to a relatively more abstract construal) will lead to greater similarity judgments for brand extensions than sadness (due to a relatively less abstract construal). To the extent that brand extensions of successful brands benefit from being judged as more similar to parent brand (Monga & John, 2010), this would be an important finding.

4.1. Participants and procedure

We used a between-subjects design with emotion as a single, two-level factor: sadness and disgust ($N = 110$ online participants). The specific measures and variables are detailed in Web Appendix B.

4.1.1. Emotion manipulation

The emotion manipulation was the same as in Study 1. The manipulation check is detailed in Web Appendix B.

4.1.2. Similarity judgments

In this task, adapted from Monga and John (2010), participants saw pictures of a wallet and table lamp and rated the similarity of the wallet or table lamp to other products by car companies (1 = Extremely dissimilar; 7 = Extremely similar).

An ANOVA on similarity judgments with emotion as the predictor and product type as a covariate was significant ($F(1, 216) = 6.88, p < .05$). As shown in Fig. 2, disgust led to higher similarity judgments than sadness ($M_D = 3.44$ vs. $M_S = 2.77$).

4.2. Discussion

We demonstrate that participants who are primed to experience disgust are more likely to rate two otherwise unrelated objects as similar relative to participants who experienced sadness. We argue that this effect is due to the difference in construal level associated with each emotion; specifically, disgust is associated with a relatively more abstract construal whereas sadness is associated with a relatively less abstract construal.

5. General discussion

We replicate Labroo and Patrick's (2009) finding that happiness is associated with a higher level of abstractness than sadness. Extending their finding, we show that (1) disgust is associated with a higher level of abstractness than sadness, and (2) disgust and happiness engender the same level of abstractness. For marketing managers, we show that disgust and sadness—because of differences in construal level—can differentially influence similarity judgments of brand extensions.

We focus on similarity judgments as similarity forms the basis of multiple strategic processes in marketing (see Shepard & Arabie, 1979 for a review). Managerially, the concept of similarity is also related to fit, especially when examining brand extensions (Keller & Lehmann, 2006).

One unexamined issue relates to the arousal dimension of emotions. Both happiness and disgust may have relatively higher level of arousal than sad and neutral emotional states. Thus, research is needed to compare emotions that may be similar in valence but differ on arousal (and

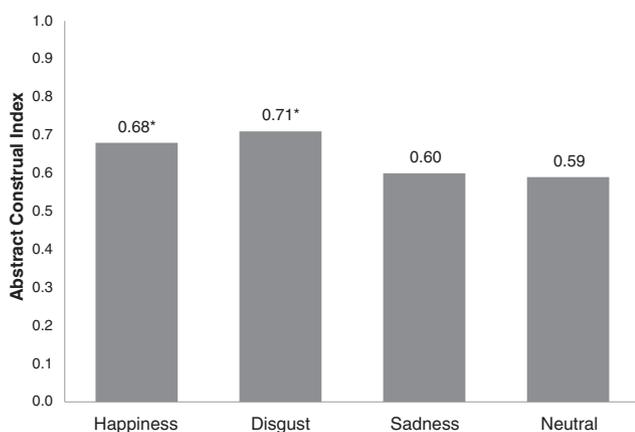


Fig. 1. Abstract construal by emotion (Study 1). Significance compared to sadness condition: * $p < .05$, one-tailed. Note: Labroo and Patrick (2009, Study 1a) reported index of abstractness of 0.60 for happiness, 0.17 for sadness, and 0.34 for neutral.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات