

LESSONS FROM USRI: CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR EDITION

EMPATHY AND BRAND SIZE

There's detective work involved.

- Like how evidence and clues guide a detective's work, researchers review and identify papers related to their case and let the literature review guide the direction of their research.
- This is how our review played out:
 - Self-brand distance > power distance belief > anger and punishment > empathy
- And this the research question that came out of it:
 - How does a consumers' level of trait empathy affect their response to brand transgressions in light of public backlash from consumers?



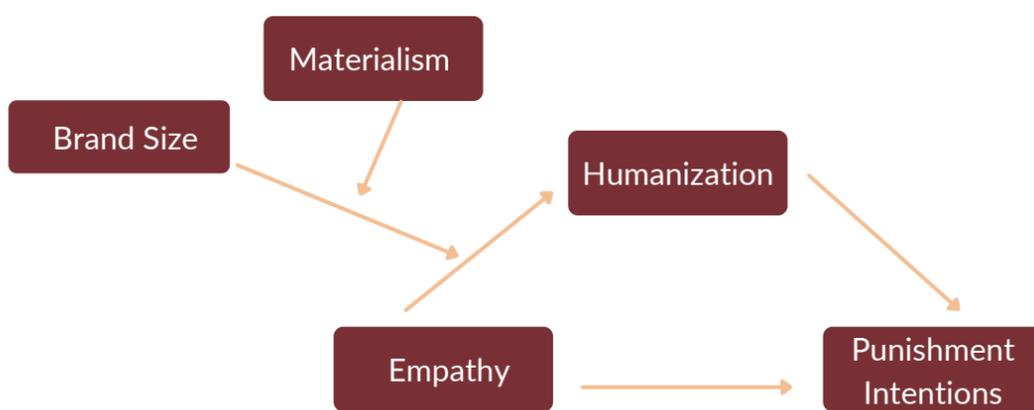
There's creativity in research.

- To make innovative contributions, researchers constantly live in a state of wondrous possibilities by asking novel questions and making educated hypotheses. Our study 1 hypotheses are:
 - H1: Following a brand transgression, high-empathizers will punish small (vs. large) brands less and help small (vs. large) brands more whereas for low-empathizers brand size will have no effect on punishment or helping behaviour.
 - H2: The conditional effect of brand size on punishment and helping intentions will be mediated by humanization such that high empathizers will humanize small (vs. large) brands more in light of a brand transgression leading to lower punishment and greater helping behaviour.



It's all a big puzzle.

- Researchers contribute to the existing body of literature on a particular topic by investigating how various pieces of information fit together. This is done by:
 - Identifying possible mediators and moderators



- Referencing the work of other puzzlers (researchers)
 - For example, by looking at how other researchers define brand transgression or manipulate small and large brand sizes
- Satisfying their curiosity
 - Study 2 of our research stemmed from being curious about whether materialism had an effect on consumer's likelihood to punish a brand.

It takes time.

- Our research is currently undergoing ethics review. In the meantime, below is a summary of our research project. Stay tuned for our findings!

Recent studies explore how empathy towards victims of brand transgressions influences consumer perceptions and increases punishment behaviour towards the transgressing brand. The literature also investigates the influence of brand size on forgiveness, perceptions of power and expectations following a brand transgression. The purpose of the current study is to investigate how the size of a brand determines whether high-empathy consumers empathize with the victim vs. the brand in light of a brand transgression. Ultimately, we seek to inform positioning strategies that decrease consumer punishment of the transgressing brand. We predict that, when a small brand faces a transgression, high empathizers will humanize the brand more, ally themselves to the brand, and engage in less punishing behaviours.