

Department of Marketing



Research Seminar Series | April 12th, 1-3pm | TC.3.12

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Differential Impacts of God and Religion on Prosocial Intentions

This research shows that the two most prevalent religious constructs – God and religion – differentially impact cognition. Activating thoughts about God (vs. religion) triggers a relatively more abstract (vs. concrete) thinking. Consequently, after exposure to God (vs. religion), consumers comply more with donation requests that are abstractly (vs. concretely) framed or that involve higher (vs. lower) psychological distance. When donation requests involve multiple dimensions of distance simultaneously, these effects hold for low or high distance on both dimensions. When multiple dimensions differ on distance, however, the level of mental construal – and, the proposed effect – is moderated by cultural orientation. Among Westerners (vs. non-Westerners), an increase in distance on social (vs. temporal) dimension exerts significantly higher mental abstraction. Consequently, priming God (vs. religion) leads Westerners to respond more favorably to requests that involve high social yet low temporal (vs. high temporal yet low social) distance. This effect reverses among non-Westerners.

Overall, these findings significantly contribute to research on the role of religion in consumer behavior by developing a construal-based model of the psychological impacts of religion and God, and to construal level theory by revealing the moderating role of culture on the impact of different dimensions of psychological distance on mental construal.