

Abstract

This study investigates how brands can use counteremotions to face a mishap in addition to appropriately addressing the issues with common countermeasures. We propose that positive counteremotions, in addition to countermeasures, are more effective in improving brand judgment compared to countermeasures alone. Moreover, we attempt to improve our understanding of how combinations of emotions influence our judgement. We pursue the concept of specific and non-specific counteremotions (Brendl et al., 2013) and test whether specific counteremotions are more effective in improving brand judgement than unspecific ones. We manipulated participants by presenting twitter posts evoking negative emotions after a brand mishap (anger & sadness), furthermore we evoked positive counteremotions (gratitude & joy) and analyzed the between-subjects effects for brand judgement. Our findings indicate that countermeasures are not effective in improving brand judgment after a mishap. Furthermore, we show that a positive counteremotion (either gratitude or joy), in addition to a countermeasure, is more effective in improving the brand's attitude than a countermeasure alone, when paired with a distressed brand and especially, when paired with the emotion sadness. However, we are not able to show that a specific counteremotion, compared to a non-specific one, is more effective in doing so. Our findings help brands to more effectively address a mishap, especially when associated with the emotion sadness.

Hypothesis

Companies often face a situation where their brand's image suffer due to a crisis or a mishap, such as environmental damage (BP oil spill), violations of law designed to control air pollution (Volkswagen emission scandal) or contaminated food. Companies usually make a public statement to address the mishap by e.g. apologizing, paying for the caused damage, offering replacements or discounts. Even though common countermeasures might be effective and perceived as appropriate, people may remain with negative feelings towards the brand. Tybout et al. (1981) even suggest that countermeasures that focus directly on the brand's mishap leading to negative emotions by the customers are often insufficient. Schwarz & Clore (1983) suggest that people observe their current mood state when making a judgment, which leads to more favorable judgements under positive moods compared to negative moods. Therefore, we propose the following:

H1: Pairing a distressed brand with a (specific or non-specific) positive counteremotion, in addition to a countermeasure, is more effective in improving the brand's attitude, compared to pairing it with a countermeasure alone.

Cognitive Appraisal in Emotion

The Impact of Counteremotions on Consumer Judgement

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July 20, 2020

Furthermore, Brendl et al. (2013) suggest that when a brand suffers a crisis, which causes a negative emotion, addressing it with a specific counteremotion towards the brand may be an effective way to improve attitudes towards the brand. We pursue this concept and derive based on the appraisal framework from Ortony et al. (1988) pairs of specific counteremotions (anger x gratitude; sadness x joy) and non-specific ones (anger x joy; sadness x gratitude). Furthermore, we hypothesize the following:

H2: Pairing a distressed brand with a specific positive counteremotion, in addition to a countermeasure, is more effective in improving the brand's attitude compared to pairing it with a non-specific positive counteremotion, in addition to a countermeasure.

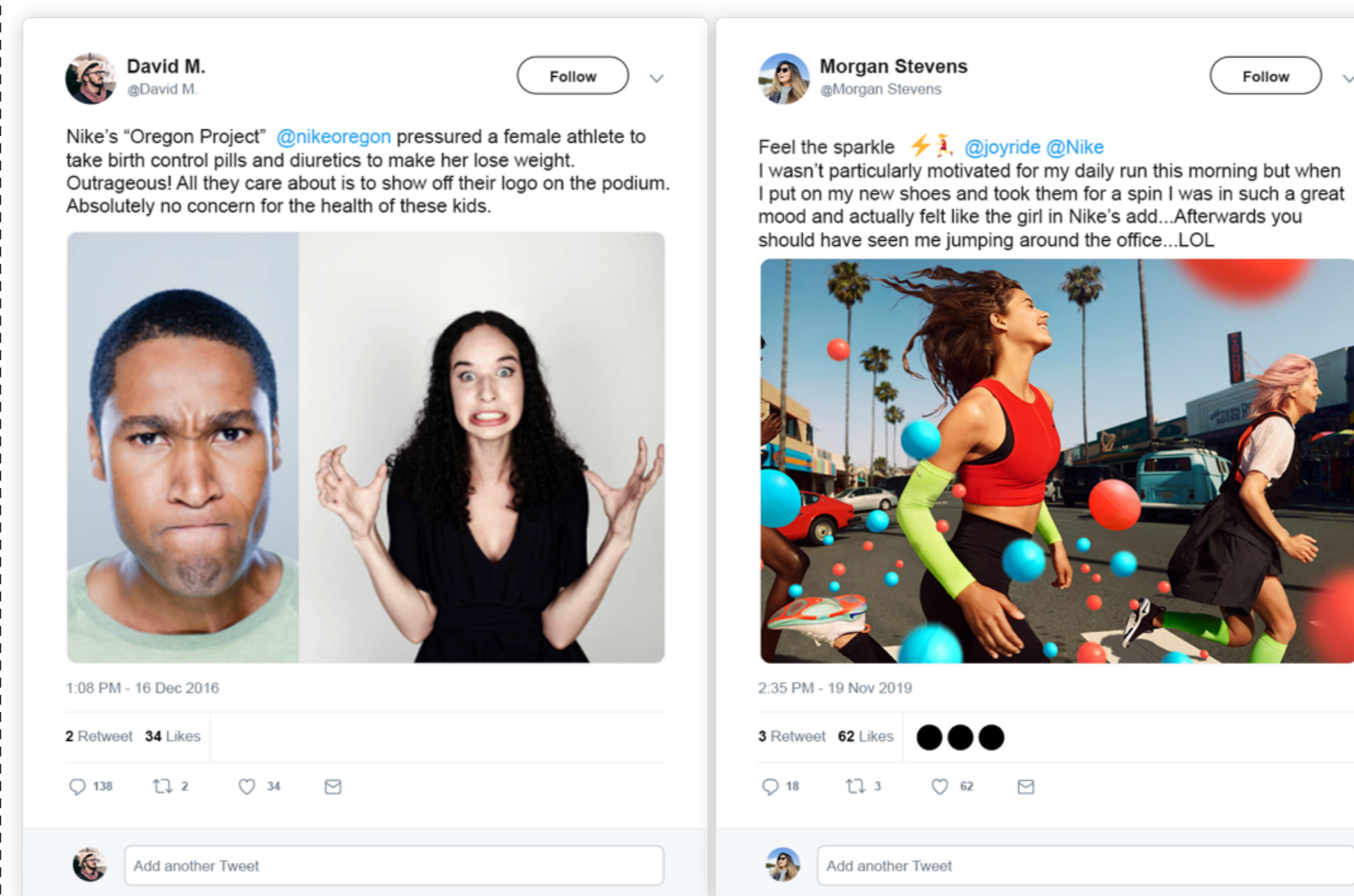
The Nike Counteremotion Study

The experiment was varied between-subjects in a 2x4 design of type of negative emotion (anger vs. sadness) x type of counter (control vs. none vs. gratitude vs. joy) (see Table below).

		Counter			
		Control	None	Gratitude	Joy
Negative Emotion	Anger	-	countermeasure	countermeasure	countermeasure
		-	-	counteremotion (specific)	counteremotion (non-specific)
	Sadness	-	countermeasure	countermeasure	countermeasure
		-	-	counteremotion (non-specific)	counteremotion (specific)

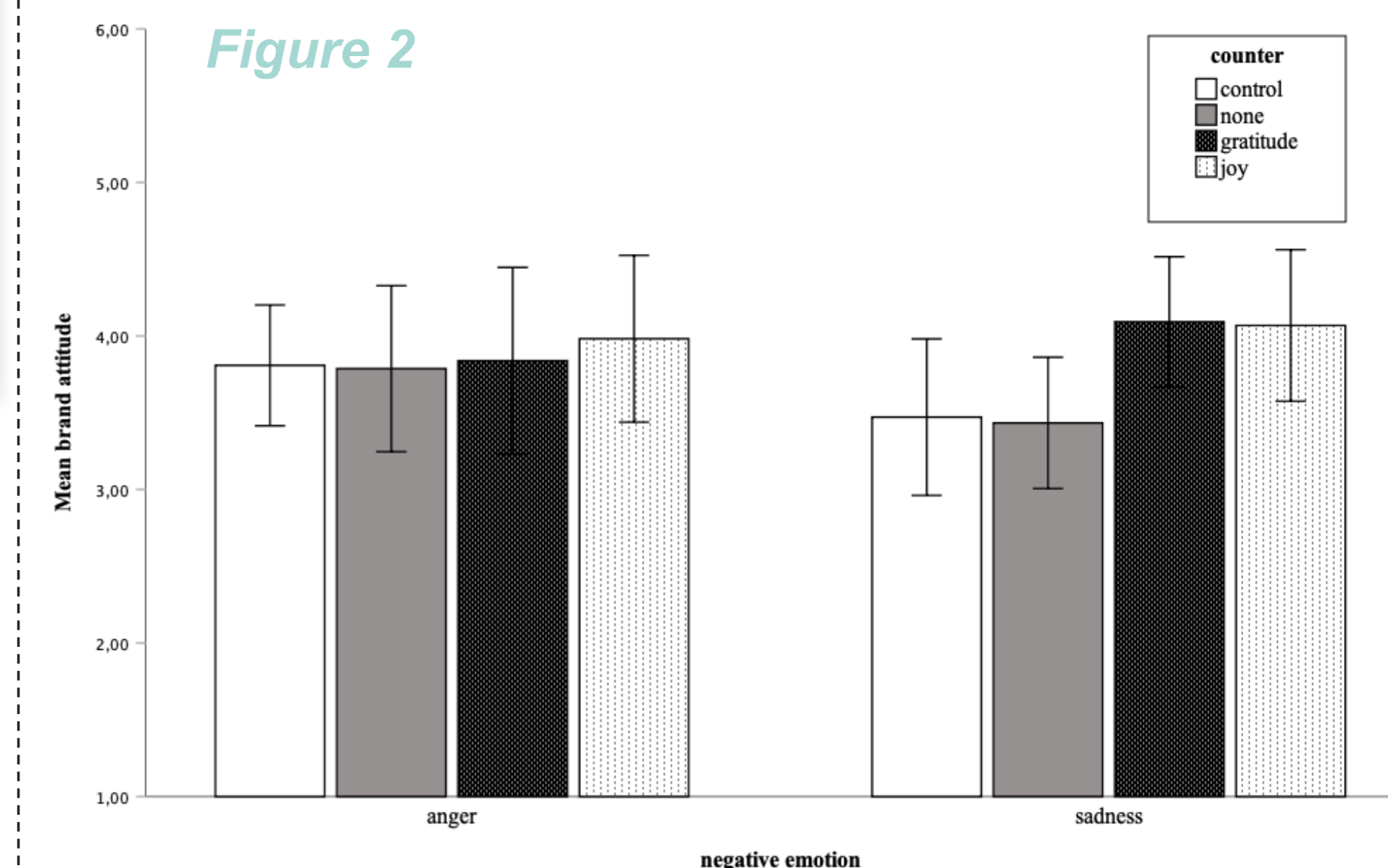
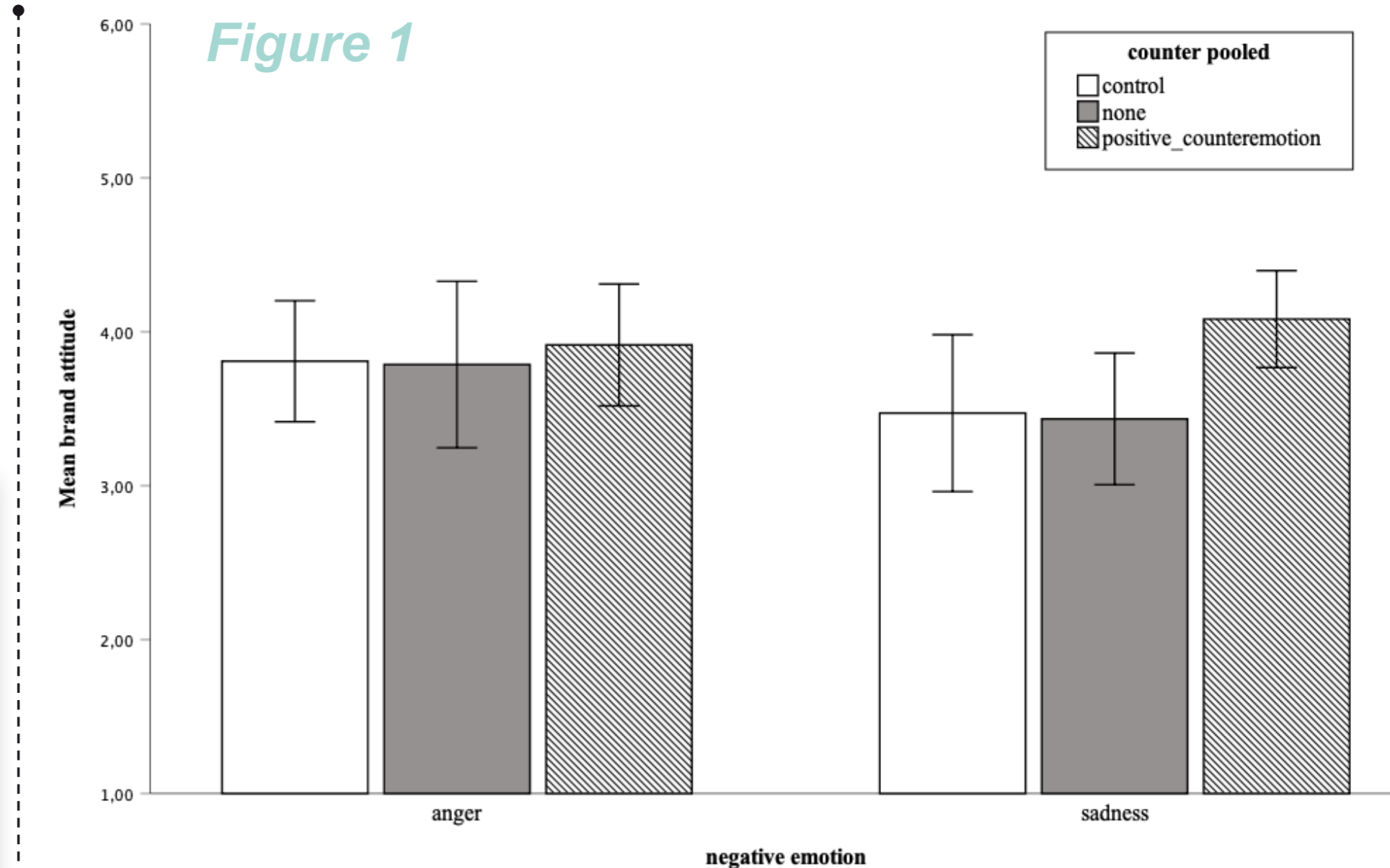
Negative emotion was manipulated by presenting three twitter posts, concerning a mishap by Nike, evoking either the emotion anger or sadness. The four levels within counter consisted of different manipulations. Participants within counter levels gratitude, joy and none read an action addressed by the brand Nike as a countermeasure in regard to their mishap. In addition, counter levels gratitude and joy were manipulated by presenting three twitter posts, concerning the brand Nike, evoking either the positive counteremotion gratitude or joy, respectively. Participants within counter level none only received the countermeasure, while the counter level control received neither a countermeasure nor a positive counteremotion manipulation.

Three dependent variables opinion, buying intention and recommendation served as indication for participants' attitude towards the brand Nike and were measured at the end of the survey on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely/very negative) to 6 (very likely/very positive). Below there are two examples of twitter manipulations (anger on the left & joy on the right).



Results & Discussion

For the analysis we conducted between-subjects ANOVAs. The analysis revealed that the logical arguments by Nike, namely the countermeasure, had no effect on participant's evaluation of the brand for both negative emotion conditions anger and sadness. However, pairing the countermeasure with a positive emotional manipulation, we find a positive effect on brand judgement. This effect is even stronger for participant's in the sadness condition (see Figure 1). However, we were not able to show that a specific counteremotion, compared to a non-specific one, is more effective in improving brand judgment after a mishap (see Figure 2). This research can be useful not only to brands but for corporations in general, governments, non-profit organizations, or individuals whose reputations suffer from a negative event that can be associated with sadness to appropriately address their issues in addition to common countermeasures.



References

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