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Effects of national identity salience on responses to ads[☆]Sergio W. Carvalho^{a,*}, David Luna^{b,1}^a Rowe School of Business, Dalhousie University, Canada^b Baruch College, City University of New York, USA

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the effect of national identity salience on responses to ads in two contexts: national identity activated through media context, and national identity activated through advertising appeals. The results remain consistent with the idea that heightening national identity leads individuals to react more positively to representations of that identity. The salience manipulations serve to influence respondents' evaluations of ads and purchase intentions. Respondents present more favorable evaluations of ads and intentions to purchase the advertised products when the ads explicitly pair the advertised product with national identity symbols or rhetoric, as compared to when no such explicit pairing occurs. Further, the activation of individuals' national identity through media context affects the response to embedded ads, even when those ads do not explicitly pair the product with national symbols or rhetoric.

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1. Introduction

This research seeks to investigate the way national identity salience influences responses to ads in two contexts: national identity activated through media context, and national identity activated through advertising appeals. For that purpose, the paper describes a research study that adds insight to a recent stream of consumer research on the interplay of social identity and consumption (Bolton & Reed, 2004; Briley & Wyer, 2002; Forehand, Deshpande, & Reed, 2002) and to a well-developed stream of advertising research on the effect of media context on responses to embedded ads (Cauberghe, De Pelsmacker, & Janssens, 2010; Coulter & Punj, 1999; Dahlén, 2005; De Pelsmacker, Geuens, & Anckaert, 2002; Poncin, Pieters, & Ambaye, 2006; Potter, LaTour, Braun-LaTour, & Reichert, 2006).

Most consumer research on identity focuses on the activation of a specific social identity directly through advertising appeals (i.e., ads containing explicit links to a specific social identity). This stream of research still needs to investigate how prior activation of a social identity (for example, through media context) influences responses to embedded ads. At the same time, most advertising research on the impact of media context on advertising responses focuses on context-induced

involvement or context-induced emotions (Coulter & Punj, 1999), not on context-induced identity. A decided lack of research concerning the effect of media-activated national identity on responses to embedded ads remains. The current study combines the existing knowledge of those two distinct research streams with the aim of advancing the theoretical understanding and practical applicability of both areas.

Consider the following scenario: A Brazilian woman named Isabelle reads an ad about a Brazilian product in a magazine, but the fact that this item originates from Brazil fails to influence her evaluation of the product. Why? Because Isabelle's Brazilian identity remains nonactivated. If, instead, the ad displays the words *Proud to be Brazilian*, would this activation of Isabelle's Brazilianness influence her response to the ad? The consumer research literature on identity leads to the prediction that the activation of Isabelle's Brazilian identity would influence her attitude and behavior toward both the ad and the advertised product. First, the activation of Isabelle's Brazilian identity may lead to a more positive evaluation of the ad and to the advertised product through a social categorization process (Dimofte, Forehand, & Deshpande, 2003). That is, the ad's emphasis on the identity match between Isabelle and the product might lead Isabelle to categorize that ad and product as associated with her in-group (i.e., Brazil). Since the activation of an individual's in-group membership usually leads a person to feel a sense of obligation to in-group members (Briley & Wyer, 2002), Isabelle might engage in what identity theorists call *in-group favoritism behavior* (Brown, Collins, & Schmidt, 1988) by giving higher evaluations for her in-group members (in this case, the ad's explicit pairing of the advertised product to her Brazilian identity).

Now, consider another scenario: Suppose Isabelle reads a news report that explicitly mentions Brazil within the text. One can expect

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that this report will activate Isabelle's Brazilian identity. In that case, if she sees an ad for a product immediately after reading the report, even if the ad fails to explicitly link that product with Brazil, would the prior activation of her Brazilian identity influence her response to the embedded ad? Consumer research on identity salience leads to the prediction that once the news report activates Isabelle's Brazilian identity, this identity salience may have an effect on her interpretation of the embedded ad, as well as on her subsequent response to that ad (Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Turner, 1987).

The current research demonstrates that when national identity becomes salient (through advertising appeal or media context), this identity salience positively influences consumers' response to ads and to the advertised products. That is, explicitly pairing products with national symbols and/or rhetoric in advertising serves to activate consumers' national identity and consequently generates more favorable responses to the paired ads and to the advertised products. More interestingly, the research findings of this paper show that the activation of national identity through media context positively influences consumer attitudes towards ads and towards the advertised products, even when the ads lack an explicit pairing of the products with national symbols or rhetoric. This effect of national identity salience on attitude towards ads and advertised products takes place in part because consumers react positively to the media context that makes their national identity more prominent—resulting in more favorable affective response to and higher attitude toward the media context.

In providing these insights concerning the influence of national identity salience on consumers' response to ads and advertised products, this research makes three important contributions. First, findings from this research generalize the existing conceptual understanding of how consumers react to marketing strategies that activate one of their relevant social identities by documenting the fact that pairing products with consumers' national identity positively influences the way consumers react to those products. Second, and more importantly, in a simultaneous examination of the effects of the activation of national identity (through both the advertising appeal and the context surrounding the advertisement on consumers' response to ads and the advertised products), an interesting perspective emerges on the dynamics involved in using national identity in marketing strategies. Third, and perhaps most importantly, this research advances the understanding of the dynamics underlying the influence of media context on consumer reactions to embedded ads by examining the mediating roles of affective response to and attitude toward the media context when that media context activates a specific, relevant, social identity (in this case, national identity). Together, these findings represent important implications for marketing managers, which will be touched upon at the end of this article.

2. Theoretical model and hypotheses development

2.1. National identity: the sense of oneness with the nation

At a basic level, individuals recognize and accept the fact that they belong to a nation. This perception of national self-categorization often serves as a way for individuals to express themselves to the external world. Social psychologists commonly refer to this form of expression as the part of the individual's self-concept called national identity (Terhune, 1964).

As part of the self-concept, national identity serves as a form of social identity (Keane, 1994). A sense of national identity provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world by helping individuals gain a sense of distinctiveness in a globalized and complex setting. The set of ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic, and legal–political components of individuals' national identity helps them develop an authentic sense of self and gain a better understanding of their own beliefs, motives, values, attitudes and behavior (Smith, 1991). For Thompson (2001), the communal values of a nation serve to shape citizens'

behavior. Thompson explains that “individuals are perceived as behaving in a certain way because their belief in collective national values ensures that they do so” (2001, p.25).

Social psychologists have demonstrated that a specific social identity can be momentarily salient as a result of a variety of factors, such as stimulus cues, context or situation, and individual differences (e.g., Forehand et al., 2002). For instance, in order to activate a specific cultural orientation in bicultural respondents, Hong, Morris, Chiu, and Benet-Martinez (2000) used a variety of cultural icons, such as cultural symbols (the American flag, the Chinese dragon and the like), folklore figures (Superman and Stone Monkey), famous people (Marilyn Monroe and a well-known Chinese opera singer), and landmarks (the Capitol Building or the Great Wall of China). The results of this study showed that Westernized Chinese students in Hong Kong behaved more as “Westerners” when first exposed to American icons and more as “Easterners” when first exposed to Chinese icons. Research on social identity salience also demonstrates that the activation of a specific identity through stimulus cues may lead people to behave in accordance with that identity (e.g., present a more favorable evaluation of stimulus linked to that identity). Lau-Gesk (2003) uses cultural cues embedded in persuasion appeals to activate culture and then influence respondents' evaluation of the targeted persuasion appeals. Lau-Gesk activates respondents' Western cultural disposition with individually focused persuasion appeals and respondents' Eastern cultural dispositions with interpersonally focused persuasion appeals. That study's findings demonstrate that the activation of the respondents' cultural disposition (Western vs. Eastern) leads to a more favorable reaction towards the targeted persuasion appeals (individually focused vs. interpersonally focused). In a similar fashion, Forehand et al. (2002) use spokesperson ethnicity in advertising in order to activate ethnic identity. Upon activation of their Asian identity, Asian participants responded most positively to Asian spokespeople and Asian-targeted advertising.

2.2. Activation of national identity through media context

Communication research indicates that national media traditionally play an important role in the development, enhancement, and activation of national identity (Anderson, 1983; Entman, 1991, 1993; Rivenburgh, 1997, 2000). The media reinforce national identity through daily broadcasts of issues directly related to the nation (national tragedies, social events, internal conflicts, and external threats) and by perpetuating national symbols, rhetoric, and rituals.

The media activate national identity by selecting particular aspects of a perceived reality that can be linked to national identity and by making these aspects more prominent in the news text (Entman, 1993). Such mentions serve not only to activate national identity but also to lead the audience to respond in a given way, both to the content of the news report and to the medium itself. In the present research, the term *affective response* refers to overall feelings in response to a news report's content (e.g., sadness, concern, sorrow), and *attitude toward the article* refers to evaluative judgments regarding the qualities of the news report (e.g., interest, usefulness).

According to identity theorists such as Tajfel and Turner (1979), when a relevant social identity becomes salient, individuals increasingly identify with the in-group that identity represents. As national identity carries some level of emotional significance for all members of the nation, the reporting of negative and positive events linked to a given country will likely affect feelings in a congruent way (affective response). Billing (1995, as cited in Thompson, 2001) proposes that reports of tragedies that occur in the home country stir sympathies more deeply than do reports of tragedies of even greater magnitude that occur in other places. Thus, consistent with the theory on identity salience, one can expect that exposing individuals to news reports about their own country will lead to a much stronger affective response to the content of those reports than would exposing them to news reports about someplace else. Further, stories linked to the audience's national identity raise more

interest and higher positive response than do stories about other places (Rivenburgh, 1997, 2000). Hence, a news report on home country events will likely receive higher evaluations (higher attitude toward the article) than would a news report about something that took place somewhere else. In this paper, researchers use a tragedy as the context of the national identity activation, since negatively arousing news items appear to particularly enhance information processing (attention, cognitive allocation of resources to encoding and storage), leading the audience to experience an increased response to the news (see Grabe, Lang, Zhou, & Bolls, 2000 for a more in-depth explanation of this effect). Researchers expect that people will naturally present strong responses to reports of tragedy and that those responses will be significantly stronger for reports that highlight people's own national identity in the news report than they would be for reports that do not make any explicit reference to that identity. Further, researchers also expect that the stronger the affective response to the news report's content, the higher the evaluation of the news report. Henceforth, the term 'national identity (NI) activated' will refer to situations that experimentally activate national identity by making national identity prominent in a news report text; 'NI nonactivated' refers to situations that do not activate national identity in the news report. The above rationale leads to the following predictions:

H1a. Affective response: Exposing individuals to news reports about a tragedy that took place in the home country (NI activated) will lead those individuals to feel more concern, sadness, and sorrow for the people who suffered loss (higher affective response) in that tragedy than would exposing individuals to news about a tragedy that took place elsewhere (NI nonactivated).

H1b. Attitude toward the article: Exposing individuals to news reports about a tragedy that took place in the home country (NI activated) will lead to higher evaluations of the article than would exposing individuals to news about a tragedy that took place elsewhere (NI nonactivated).

H1c. Partial mediation effect: The higher the affective response to the content of the news, the higher the attitude toward the article.

2.3. Activation of national identity through advertising appeal and responses to ads

A considerable amount of research in advertising demonstrates that consumers tend to respond more positively to ads that include cues that link those ads to consumers' ethnic memberships (Dimofte et al., 2003; Forehand & Deshpande, 2001). For example, previous research shows that the use of actors of the same ethnicity or the use of respondents' ethnic language increases evaluation of ads (see Dimofte et al., 2003, for a review). Parallel to these findings, research on the country-of-origin effect demonstrates that consumers are often biased in favor of home country products and give higher evaluations to those products over foreign alternatives (e.g., Papadopoulos, Heslop, & Bamossy, 1990). Verlegh (2007) shows that this bias is in part driven by consumers' need for self-enhancement. That is, the motivation to maintain a self-positive image leads consumers to be favorably biased toward members (e.g., home country products) who share with them the same identity (e.g., national identity).

Although no research exists that assesses the impact of national identity salience on the evaluation of ads, evidence shows that consumers tend to respond positively to national identity appeals in advertising. For example, advertisers in the United States are well aware of the positive emotional response the American flag produces (Lee, Hong, & Lee, 2003; Stearns, Borna, & Oakenfull, 2003), and for this reason, advertisers quite often use national symbols in their appeals. Therefore, one can expect that the pairing of products with national symbols or rhetoric will activate individuals' national identity. Furthermore, this state of identity salience will likely lead those individuals to feel a sense of obligation to their nation (Briley & Wyer, 2002) and, consequently, to

positively influence both their attitude toward the ads (Aad) and their purchase intention. Specifically, the above rationale leads to the following hypothesis:

H2. The explicit inclusion of national symbols or rhetoric in ads positively affects respondents' (a) evaluation of ads (Aad), and (b) purchase intention.

2.4. Activation of national identity through media context and responses to ads

The previous section outlines three potential responses to media context (i.e., NI salience, affective response, and attitude toward the article). This study now turns to the investigation of the impact of those potential reactions on Aad and purchase intention. The primary proposition: The activation of national identity through media context results in an increase in Aad and purchase intention.

Dimofte et al. (2003) suggest that an individual with a salient social identity tends to experience a heightened sensitivity to stimuli associated with the in-group or out-group identity. Tajfel (1981) calls this reaction the accentuation effect. This increased sensitivity may be due to the association of the social identity with self-categorization (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Once the social identity (and, by extension, self-identity) emerges, this awareness exerts a priming effect on perceptions linked to the identity. Scholars such as Hinkle and Brown (1990), and Turner (1987) propose that the activation of a particular personal relevant identity results in a quasi-priming effect on associated perceptions, as well as on behavior. In a study by Gurin and Markus (as cited in Dimofte et al., 2003), gender identity salience influences the way participants process subsequent gender information and seem to affect participants' evaluations of in-group and out-group members. Thus, one can assume that once a news report of a national tragedy evokes and makes salient the audience's national identity, the audience members may easily make a national association with a product depicted in an embedded ad, even if the link is not explicitly made.

However, the activation of the audience's national identity through the news report will not likely incur any additional effect on the evaluation of embedded ads that explicitly include national symbols. According to the in-group favoritism behavior phenomenon studied on social identity research (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Turner, 1987), explicitly linking the ad to the audience's national identity should, in and of itself, trigger higher evaluations. For this reason, context-activated national identity should not have any significant effect on the audience's evaluation of ads explicitly paired with the audience's national identity. In this paper, the term 'explicit NI ads' refers to ads that contain explicit links to the audience's national identity, while 'implicit NI ads' refers to ads that do not present any explicit links to the audience's national identity but are assumed to be linked to NI by consumers. These assumptions lead to the following hypothesis:

H3. The activation of national identity through media context (NI salience) positively affects respondents' (a) evaluation of ads and (b) purchase intention for implicit NI ads but not for explicit NI ads.

2.4.1. The roles of affective response and attitude toward the article

Attitude toward the article differs from affective responses to the article's content. Attitude toward the article represents an overall evaluation of the article itself. Following Coulter's (1998) argument, this overall evaluation of the article should be distinguished from any emotional responses the article evokes. That is, individuals might have a positive attitude toward an article and deem the article important and credible even when the content of that article induces them to a negative feeling state. Prior studies suggest that attitude toward the article positively influences evaluations of embedded ads and the advertised products (Murry, Lastovicka, & Singh, 1992). Schumann (1986), for instance,

shows that ads embedded in well-liked programs receive higher evaluations than do ads embedded in disliked programs. Also, Coulter (1998) suggests that attitude towards the media context serves as a better predictor of Aad and purchase intention than does affective response to the content of the media context. Thus, because stories linked to people's national identity evoke greater interest, one can expect that reports about people's own nation will receive higher overall evaluations (higher attitude toward the article) than will reports about other places (as hypothesized in H1b). Further, this positive evaluation will likely have a positive effect on Aad and purchase intention. In addition, since the current research predicts that affective response acts as a mediator to the effect of NI salience on attitude toward the article, one can expect that any effect of affective response on Aad and purchase intention will be completely overshadowed by the effect of attitude toward the article when both predictors exist in the models.

In sum, the current research proposes that both affective response and attitude toward the article partially mediate the effect of NI salience on Aad and purchase intention, but that attitude toward the article remains the dominant mediator. Baron and Kenny (1986) propose that if a variable fails to establish a sufficient condition for the relationship between the predictor and the criterion to occur, this variable should not be considered a full mediator but, rather, a potent mediator. That is, this variable partially but not completely accounts for the relationship between the predictor and the criterion. The present research then suggests that because national identity constitutes a strong part of one's self-concept, the direct influence of this identity should be superior to the influences of affective reaction and attitude toward the article. Hence, neither affective response nor attitude toward the article should be a sufficient condition for the effect of NI salience on Aad and purchase intention. Further, as the current research predicts that NI salience will not impact evaluations of explicit NI ads (Hypothesis 3), one can expect these mediational effects to occur only for the evaluation of implicit NI ads. Thus, for implicit NI ads (but not for explicit NI ads):

H4a. Both affective response and attitude toward the article (combined with NI salience) significantly predict Aad and purchase intention.

H4b. NI salience acts as a better predictor of Aad and purchase intention than both affective response and attitude toward the article, and attitude toward the article acts as a better predictor than does affective response.

H4c. Attitude toward the article mediates the effect of NI salience on Aad and purchase intention.

Fig. 1 depicts the relationships posited in the predictions of the effect of national identity salience on consumers' evaluations of embedded ads and intentions to buy the advertised products.

3. Experiment

3.1. Research design

Hypotheses testing involved an experiment using a 2 (NI salience: activated vs. nonactivated) × 2 (NI ad appeal: explicit vs. implicit) × 3 (product replication: perfume, backpack, jeans) mixed-model design, where NI salience and NI ad appeal were manipulated between subjects, and product replication was manipulated within subjects. Respondents consisted of 179 undergraduate students majoring in business in a large Brazilian university. Two cases were discarded due to missing values. The final sample contained 94 men (53%) and 83 women (47%), all of them of Brazilian origin. The average age of participants was 24 years.

3.1.1. Procedure

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions. Respondents received two booklets and learned that each of the booklets pertained to a different study. The first booklet contained an article about a severe weather condition in Brazil or in South America (NI activated or NI nonactivated). Following exposure to the first booklet, respondents received a questionnaire that measured their affective response to the content of the news and their overall evaluation of the article (attitude toward the article). The second booklet contained a set of three experimental ads (explicit NI ads or implicit NI ads) and two filler ads. The order of the ads varied, but all three experimental ads appeared in the same condition. Following exposure to each ad, the students responded to a set of questions that measured the dependent variables of Aad and purchase intention.

3.1.2. Stimuli

The article stimuli presented a report of a tragedy caused by severe weather conditions in which three people died, 38 were injured, and 2000 lost their homes. Respondents in the NI-activated condition were told that this tragedy happened in the east coast of Brazil and that the people who died were Brazilian fishermen. Respondents in the NI-nonactivated condition were told that the tragedy happened in the east coast of South America and that the people who died were South American fishermen. The explicit NI ads condition consisted of a set of three ads explicitly pairing products with different national symbols (e.g., Brazilian flag) and/or national rhetoric (e.g., the best of Brazil). The implicit NI ads condition did not explicitly pair the products with any national symbols and/or national rhetoric, but they did present some peripheral cues that could link those products to the Brazilian identity, such as the use of national colors and the fact that the brand names were in Portuguese, the Brazilian national language (see the ad stimuli in the Appendix A). All stimuli, articles, and ads used the native language of the respondents, Portuguese, for the purpose of the current research.

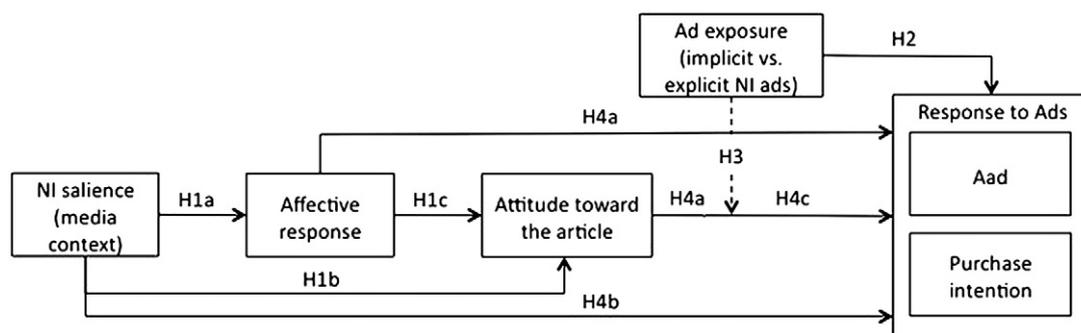


Fig. 1. Model for the effect of national identity salience on responses to ads.

3.1.3. Measures

In the first booklet, following the exposure to the article stimulus, respondents answered a set of questions specifically developed to measure their affective reaction to the article's content. This set of questions comprised three seven-point items anchored with not at all/extremely that asked how concerned, how sad and how much they feel sorry with the news that Brazilians (South Americans) died due to the severe weather condition. An average score across these three items was calculated to provide an overall assessment of the affective response of each respondent (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$). A follow-on set of questions asked the respondents to evaluate the article (attitude toward the article) and comprised five seven-point semantic differential items anchored with informative/not informative, not credible/credible, not interesting/interesting, not useful to me/very useful to me, and not well-written/well written (adapted from Menon, Block, & Ramanathan, 2002). An average score across these five items was calculated to provide an overall evaluation of the article (attitude toward the article) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$). Following the evaluation of the article, respondents answered a set of text comprehension questions to ensure that they had paid attention to the most important aspects of the text (e.g., the location and the effects of the severe weather condition).

The second booklet, positioned as a separate study, presented the ads. Following exposure to each ad, respondents answered a set of questions about that specific ad and their intention to purchase the advertised product. First, eight seven-point semantic differential items were used to assess respondents' evaluations of the ad, anchored with bad/good, dislike/like, unfavorable/favorable, uninteresting/interesting, negative/positive, poor quality/excellent quality, unconvincing/convincing, and unbelievable/believable (adapted from Grossbart, Muehling, & Kangun, 1986; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). An average score across these eight items was calculated to provide an overall evaluation of the ad (Aad) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$). A follow-on question measured the purchase intent of the products featured in the stimuli ads (e.g., Assuming that the price was right, would you consider purchasing this product?), comprising a seven-point semantic differential item anchored with definitely no/definitely yes. The final set of measures asked some demographic questions such as gender, age, and citizenship.

3.1.4. Control variables

Two key control variables—patriotism (12-item scale adapted from Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989) and consumer ethnocentrism (the reduced 10-item version of the CETSCALE proposed by Shimp & Sharma, 1987)—were elicited and originally included in the tested models as control variables. Patriotism was controlled for because citizens of any given country are likely to differ in their level of identification as in-group members of their country and because patriots might feel an urge to buy their country's products to protect its economy and support domestic companies/products (Balabanis, Diamantopoulos, Mueller, & Melewar, 2001). A second control variable at the individual level was consumer ethnocentrism. Shimp and Sharma (1987) suggest that one way to explain consumer preferences for home-country products involves the perceived appropriateness of purchasing foreign products. Consumer ethnocentrists are said to view purchasing foreign products as wrong because of its damage to the domestic economy, causes a loss of jobs, and is simply unpatriotic. Since neither of these variables significantly influenced the hypothesized relationships ($p > .10$), they were dropped from the reported analyses.

3.2. Results

Text comprehension questions ensured that respondents identified the location (Brazil or South America) of the tragedy. All of the respondents in both conditions correctly answered those questions. Further, an assumption is made that the affective response and the attitude toward the article results act as a good indicator that respondents were

sensitized to their national identity (their national identity became activated).

3.2.1. Activation of national identity through media context

Hypotheses 1a and 1b suggest that exposure to a report of a tragedy would have a greater impact on both the respondents' affective response to the reported tragedy and on their attitude toward the article if the tragedy occurred in the home country rather than in some other location. The results provide support for these hypotheses. As predicted, respondents who were told that the severe-weather tragedy occurred in Brazil (i.e., the respondents' home country) demonstrated a higher affective response ($M_{NI \text{ activated}} = 5.5$) than did respondents who were told that the tragedy took place in South America ($M_{NI \text{ nonactivated}} = 5.0$; $F(1, 175) = 4.1, p < .05$). As for attitude toward the article, respondents demonstrated a higher positive attitude toward the article that made Brazil prominent in the news report ($M_{NI \text{ activated}} = 4.9$) than they did toward the article that made South America prominent ($M_{NI \text{ nonactivated}} = 4.5$; $F(1, 175) = 6.8, p < .05$). This main effect of the manipulation of context-induced national identity on affective response and attitude toward the article holds consistent with research on social identity, which posits that when a relevant social identity becomes salient, individuals will increasingly identify with their in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

3.2.2. The mediating role of affective response

To test for the mediating effect hypothesized in H1c, this research uses a bootstrapping methodology based on 5000 bootstrap resamples, as proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2004). This procedure purports to be a more statistically rigorous method than Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal steps procedure and Sobel's (1982, 1986) test (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2004), in part, because the bootstrap procedure does not impose the assumption of normality of the sampling distribution (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). According to the results presented in Table 1, NI salience acts as a significant predictor of both attitude toward the article ($\beta = .42, p < .01$) and affective response ($\beta = .41, p < .05$), and affective response acts as a significant predictor of attitude toward the article ($\beta = .24, p < .001$). In addition, after adding affective response to the model, the effect of NI salience on attitude toward the article becomes weaker ($\beta = .33, p < .05$), demonstrating that affective response partially mediates the effect of NI salience on attitude toward the article. Finally, to test for the significance of this mediating effect, an evaluation of the bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals must take place. Preacher and Hayes (2004) suggest that if zero is contained within the 95% CIs, a lack of significance for the mediating effect will result. As can be seen in Table 1, the results of the bootstrapping simple mediation

Table 1
Regression and bootstrap results for testing the mediating role of affective response.

	β	SE	t
<i>Direct paths</i>			
NI salience → Affective response	.41	.20	2.0*
NI salience → Attitude toward the article	.42	.16	2.6**
Affective response → Attitude toward the article	.24	.06	4.2***
<i>Indirect path</i>			
NI salience → Attitude toward the article	.33	.16	2.1*
Adjusted R ²	.11		
d.f.	(2, 174)		
F	12.3***		
Bias corrected and accelerated 95% CI			
Affective response	.0075		.2366

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

analyses show that zero is not contained within the calculated 95% CIs. Taken together, these results provide full support for H1c.

3.2.3. Activation of national identity through advertising appeal and responses to ads

Hypothesis 2 proposes that exposure to ads that explicitly pair the brand with consumers' national identity (explicit NI ads) results in higher Aad and purchase intention. The explicit pairing of the ads with national symbols/rhetoric is expected to activate respondents' national identity and result in an in-group favoritism behavior (higher Aad and purchase intention for the explicit NI ads.) This analysis was conducted only for the NI nonactivated condition because of the expectation that activation of national identity through the media context (NI activated) has a positive effect on the evaluations of the implicit NI ads (Hypothesis H3c). Results of a mixed-model repeated-measures ANOVA with a one between-respondents factor (ad appeal: explicit NI ads or implicit NI ads) and a within-respondents factor with three different ad exposures (product replication: perfume, backpack, and jeans) showed support for this hypothesis. Confirming H2a, respondents who were exposed to ads that explicitly paired the brand with their national identity (explicit NI ads) demonstrated a higher Aad ($M_{\text{explicit NI ads}} = 4.4$) than did respondents who were exposed to the implicit NI ads ($M_{\text{implicit NI ads}} = 3.9$; $F(1, 86) = 8.6, p < .01$). They also demonstrated a greater intention to purchase the advertised product ($M_{\text{explicit NI ads}} = 4.2$; $M_{\text{implicit NI ads}} = 3.4$; $F(1, 86) = 11.1, p < .001$), giving support to H2b. These main effects of national identity hold consistent with research on social identity, which posits that when relevant social identity becomes salient, individuals will tend to feel a sense of obligation to the members of that in-group (Briley & Wyer, 2002).

3.2.4. Activation of national identity through media context and responses to ads

Hypothesis 3 posits that exposure to a news report that activates consumers' national identity (NI activated) will result in higher Aad and purchase intention for the embedded ads that do not explicitly pair the products with consumer' national identity (implicit NI ads), but will have no effect in the Aad and purchase intention for the embedded ads that explicitly pair the products with consumers' national identity (explicit NI ads). Support for this hypothesis would be found through an interaction of NI salience (NI activated \times NI nonactivated) with ad appeal (explicit NI ads \times implicit NI ads) on Aad and purchase intention. Fig. 2 presents these findings schematically.

Supporting Hypothesis 3, these results reveal a significant interaction between NI salience and ad appeal in predicting respondents' Aad ($F(1, 173) = 5.7, p < .05$) and purchase intentions ($F(1, 173) = 9.5, p < .01$). Simple effects tests reveal that, first, NI salience (NI activated \times NI nonactivated) provides a significant positive effect on how much respondents on the implicit NI ads condition liked the ads ($M_{\text{NI nonactivated}} = 3.9$; $M_{\text{NI activated}} = 4.5$; $F(1, 173) = 11.4, p < .001$)

and intended to purchase the advertised products ($M_{\text{NI nonactivated}} = 3.4$; $M_{\text{NI activated}} = 4.1$; $F(1, 173) = 9.0, p < .01$). Second, NI salience (NI activated \times NI nonactivated) provides no significant effect for respondents in the explicit NI ads condition. For the NI nonactivated condition, the results also reveal a significant difference between the evaluation of the implicit NI ads ($M_{\text{implicit NI ads}} = 3.9$) and the explicit NI ads ($M_{\text{explicit NI ads}} = 4.4$; $F(1, 173) = 10.7, p < .001$) and the intent to purchase the advertised products ($M_{\text{implicit NI ads}} = 3.4$; $M_{\text{explicit NI ads}} = 4.2$; $F(1, 173) = 9.0, p < .01$). No significant differences emerge in the evaluation of the ads and intentions to purchase the advertised products within NI activated condition ($p > .10$). Taken together, these results provide support for Hypotheses H3a and H3b.

The results also reveal a main effect of the within-respondents factor (product replication) for the Aad ($M_{\text{perfume}} = 4.6$; $M_{\text{backpack}} = 4.8$; $M_{\text{jeans}} = 3.5$; $F(2, 346) = 51.3, p < .001$), and for intentions to purchase the advertised product ($M_{\text{perfume}} = 4.4$; $M_{\text{backpack}} = 3.9$; $M_{\text{jeans}} = 3.4$; $F(2, 346) = 12.9, p < .001$). The COO literature suggests that some products might be positively associated with certain countries and others not (e.g., jeans might be positively associated with Brazil whereas perfume might not) and that this association often influence consumers' evaluations and purchase intentions (Usunier & Cestre, 2007). In the results of the current research, product replication (perfume, backpack, and jeans) did not interact with any of the other two experimental variables ($p > .10$), suggesting that type of product does not interfere with the current research's theorizing.

3.2.5. The roles of affective response and attitude toward the article

Regression analyses were conducted to test the predictive power of affective response and attitude toward the article on Aad and purchase intention. Hypothesis 4a suggests that both affective response and attitude toward the article (combined with NI salience) significantly predict Aad and purchase intention. To test this hypothesis, the authors performed separate regressions for the implicit NI ads and the explicit NI ads conditions. As expected, the first regression model (including affective response and NI salience as predictor variables and Aad as dependent variable) is significant for the implicit NI ads ($F(2, 87) = 9.7, p < .001$; $R^2 = .18$) but not for the explicit NI ads. The coefficients for affective response (.22, $p < .01$) and NI salience (.54, $p < .01$) are also significant for the implicit NI ads but not for the explicit NI ads. The second regression model (including attitude toward the article and NI salience as predictor variables and Aad as dependent variable) is also significant for the implicit NI ads ($F(2, 87) = 21.5, p < .001$; $R^2 = .33$), as is the coefficient for attitude toward the article (.40, $p < .001$) and NI salience (.41, $p < .05$), but not for the explicit NI ads. The third regression makes use of affective response and attitude toward the article as well as NI salience as independent variables to predict Aad. The third model is also significant for the implicit NI ads ($F(3, 86) = 15.1, p < .001$; $R^2 = .35$) but not for the explicit NI ads. In the third model, the coefficient is significant for attitude toward the article (.36,

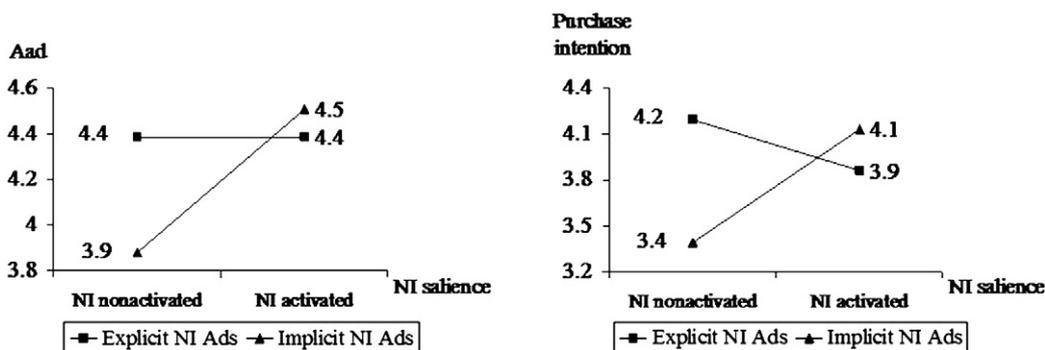


Fig. 2. Schematic presentation of findings for the effects of NI salience on responses to ads.

$p < .001$) and for NI salience (.39, $p < .05$) but not for affective response, demonstrating that NI salience is a better predictor of Aad than both affective response and attitude toward the article and that attitude toward the article is a better predictor than affective response.

Similar results are found for the effects of NI salience on purchase intentions. That is, the first regression model is significant for the implicit NI ads ($F(2, 87) = 6.1, p < .01; R^2 = .12$) but not for the explicit NI ads. The coefficients for affective response (.15, $p = .10$) is marginally significant and NI salience (.68, $p < .01$) was significant for the implicit NI ads but not for the explicit NI ads. The second regression model is also significant for the implicit NI ads ($F(2, 87) = 11.4, p < .001; R^2 = .20$), as is the coefficient for attitude toward the article (.34, $p < .001$) and NI salience (.56, $p < .05$), but not for the explicit NI ads. The third model is also significant for the implicit NI ads ($F(3, 86) = 7.7, p < .001; R^2 = .21$) but not for the explicit NI ads. In the third model, the coefficient is significant for attitude toward the article (.32, $p < .001$) and for NI salience (.55, $p < .05$) but not for affective response. Taken together, these results provide support for Hypotheses 4a and 4b.

Furthermore, adding each subsequent predictor variable (for implicit NI ads only) increases the explanatory power of the model significantly, as reflected in the significant changes in R^2 . That is, by adding affective response to a model containing NI salience as an independent variable and Aad as a dependent variable, the R^2 increases from .10 to .18 ($p < .01$), and by subsequently adding attitude toward the article, the R^2 increases to .35 ($p < .001$). Similar results emerged when purchase intention is the dependent variable (by adding affective response the R^2 increases from .10 to .12 ($p = .10$), and by subsequently adding attitude toward the article R^2 increases to .21 ($p < .01$)).

3.2.6. Moderated mediation analysis

Hypothesis 4c suggests that the effect of NI salience through the media context on Aad and purchase intention would be mediated by attitude toward the article for the implicit NI ads but not for the explicit NI ads. Baron and Kenny (1986) refer to this type of model as moderated mediation because the ad appeal moderates the mediational effect of attitude toward the article on Aad and purchase intention. Tests for this moderated mediation effect employed hierarchical moderated regressions with 5000 bootstrap resamples, as suggested by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007). According to the results presented in Table 1, NI salience significantly predicts attitude towards the article ($\beta = .42, p < .01$), and Table 2 reports that the interaction between attitude toward the article and ad appeal significantly predicts Aad ($\beta = .13, p < .05$) and purchase intention ($\beta = .17, p < .03$).

Finally, the conditional indirect effect of attitude toward the article on Aad is significant for implicit NI ads ($\beta = .18, p < .05$) but not for explicit NI ads ($p > .10$). Similar results emerge for purchase intentions. That is, the conditional indirect effect of attitude toward the article

on purchase intention is found to be significant for implicit NI ads ($\beta = .17, p < .05$) but not for explicit NI ads ($p > .10$). Following Preacher et al. (2007), this last condition establishes whether the strength of the mediation effect varies across the different conditions of the moderator variable.

In sum, the presence of the interaction effect and the difference in the conditional indirect effect for the two conditions of the moderator indicate the existence of moderated mediation. More specifically, the mediation effect of attitude toward the article occurred only in the implicit NI ads condition. Taken together, these results provide full support for H4c.

4. Discussion and implications

The results of this experiment hold consistent with the conceptual framework used to derive the hypotheses. First, when national identity becomes salient, either directly (through the advertising appeals) or indirectly (through the media context surrounding the advertisement), then that particular identity exerts an influence on people's perception and behavior. That is, heightening the salience of individuals' national identity leads them to react more positively to ads and products associated with that identity. The NI nonactivated condition (where explicit NI ads scored higher than implicit NI ads) clearly demonstrates this effect. Hence, the explicit pairing of products with national symbols or rhetoric serves to activate individuals' national identity and consequently generates more favorable responses to the paired ads and the advertised products, thereby demonstrating one of the main contributions of this research.

Another main contribution of this paper refers to the activation of national identity through media context. In this study, the content of the news report induced the respondents into a temporary negative feeling state (affective response) and prompted good overall evaluations of the article (attitude toward the article) for both NI salience conditions (NI activated and NI nonactivated), with the means for those measures measuring above four—the neutral point in the scale. However, as the content of the NI-activated condition article became linked to the respondents' national identity, respondents on this condition presented significantly higher scores for both variables than did the respondents on the NI-nonactivated condition. This result supports two assertions made in the current research: 1) national media plays an important role in activating national identity; 2) making national identity prominent in the text of news reports increases the affective response to the content of the report and the attitude toward article.

Perhaps the most interesting finding comes from the fact that the activation of respondents' national identity by the report of a tragedy in the home country (NI activated) also seems to influence both Aad and purchase intention, even when the ads and the advertised products were not explicitly paired with national symbols or rhetoric. In this case, two different effects appear to combine forces. First, a higher positive attitude toward the article that made the Brazilian identity prominent leads to a higher evaluation of the ads and a higher intention to purchase the advertised products. Consistent with previous research on the effect of media context on the evaluation of embedded ads, a transfer of appeal (i.e., from the article to the embedded ad) appears to occur here (Schumann, 1986). Second, consistent with theory on social identity salience (e.g., Dimofte et al., 2003), the activation of the respondents' national identity through the media context influences their perception of the ads in the implicit NI ads condition. Given that the ads present peripheral cues (e.g., Portuguese brand names and Brazilian national colors) that could be linked to the respondents' national identity (Brazilian), respondents then associate those ads and products with their own nation. Social psychologists such as Hinkle and Brown (1990) and Turner (1987) explain this social categorization phenomenon, which occurs through an assimilation process. Such effects clearly emerge in the results of the analysis of the mediation role of affective response to and attitude toward the article on the effect of NI salience on Aad and purchase intention. A regression model that included all three

Table 2
Regression and bootstrap results for testing moderated mediation.

	Aad			Purchase intention		
	β	SE	t	β	SE	t
NI salience	.18	.13	1.4	.10	.18	0.6
Attitude toward the article	.29	.06	5.0**	.21	.08	2.5*
Ad exposure (implicit vs. explicit NI ads)	.70	.27	2.6*	.93	.39	2.4*
Attitude toward the article \times Ad exposure	.13	.06	2.2*	.17	.08	2.1*
Conditional indirect effect for each ad exposure condition						
	Indirect	SE	t	Indirect	SE	t
Implicit NI ads	.18	.08	2.3*	.17	.08	2.1*
Explicit NI ads	.07	.05	1.4	.01	.06	0.2

Indirect effect statistics are bootstrap estimates. Bootstrap p -values assume normal bootstrap distribution.

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .001$.

variables (NI salience, affective response, and attitude toward the article) predicted Aad and purchase intention better than other models that included only one of those variables. In addition, although affective response and attitude toward the article constitute potent mediators for the effect of NI salience on the evaluations of the ads and purchase intention, both variables (separately and combined) cannot completely account for the relationship between NI salience and Aad and purchase intention. This result supports the argument that because national identity makes up a strong part of an individual's self-concept, the effect of this identity transcends the effects of affective response and attitude toward the article.

Certain limitations of this study must be considered in order to better understand its findings. First, this study uses students as participants in the experiment. Although the use of products that appeal to this particular group of consumers (i.e., perfume, backpacks, and jeans) helps to reduce this concern to some extent, the application of these findings to a broader consumer group remains unclear. Second, this study took place in Brazil, a country that currently lacks any international conflict that would especially sensitize its citizens to their national identity. Limiting the research field to a single country means that the findings pertain only to the citizens of that specific country; therefore, future work should examine the above-proposed theoretical framework among citizens of other countries. Third, the findings of the current research point to the

fact that media-activated national identity influences consumers' interpretation and evaluation of ads and intentions to buy the advertised products. Hence, the durability of this effect comes into question, and these findings, although theoretically interesting, might lack managerial relevance. Thus, the use of a more longitudinal study might better explain the longevity of these effects and the managerial importance of these findings. Fourth, in the current paper, researchers use a tragedy as the context of the national identity activation, since negatively arousing news items appear to lead the audience to experience an increased response to the news (Grabe et al., 2000), future research could evaluate whether a positive stimulus (e.g., when the national soccer team wins an international competition) might achieve similar results.

Despite such limitations, the results of this experiment possess implications for research on evaluating individuals' expressions of their unique social identities through consumption patterns. First, these results highlight the value of exploring the effect of advertising on consumers' social identities. Second, they provide an indication that embedding ads on broadcast events that activate people's social identity (e.g., Olympic Games, World Cup soccer championships, Independence Day) increases positive attitudes toward those ads and the consumer's intention to purchase the advertised products.

Appendix A

Explicit NI ads

Perfume Brasileirinho
VIVA A NATUREZA!!!
 Feito com o que o Brasil tem de mais original: nossas raízes. O novo **Perfume Brasileirinho** traz na exuberância de suas notas a tradição dos povos da floresta.

MOCHILAS CONQUISTA
 Nossa já consagrada mochila cargueira **Conquista** ficou ainda melhor... O acolchoamento das costas, além de mais macio, foi projetado para melhorar a ventilação, permitindo a circulação do ar e reduzindo a transpiração.

CALÇA UNIÃO JEANS
 Confeccionada em Jeans de alta qualidade e costura reforçada evidenciando rebites e costuras duplas. Com bolsos frontais e fechamento em zíper.

Implicit NI ads

Perfume Florestal
VIVA A NATUREZA!!!
 Feito com o que a natureza tem de mais original: suas raízes. O novo **Perfume Florestal** traz na exuberância de suas notas a tradição dos povos da floresta.

MOCHILAS CONQUISTA
 Nossa já consagrada mochila cargueira **Conquista** ficou ainda melhor... O acolchoamento das costas, além de mais macio, foi projetado para melhorar a ventilação, permitindo a circulação do ar e reduzindo a transpiração.

CALÇA UNIÃO JEANS
 Confeccionada em Jeans de alta qualidade e costura reforçada evidenciando rebites e costuras duplas. Com bolsos frontais e fechamento em zíper.

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