

A theorisation of discrete emotion spillovers: an empirical test for anger

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Abstract-

Compared to cognitive and behavioural spillover, emotional spillovers remain relatively undertheorised. This is the first paper to conceptualise discrete emotion spillover. In discrete emotion spillover, the content and valence of an emotion experienced towards target A spills over to target B, and indirectly influences subsequent behaviour towards target B. We test this model in two studies, examining the spillover of anger following corporate social irresponsibility (CSI). First, we show that anger spillover depends on attribution of blame, and leads to emotion-consistent outcomes (i.e. punitive behaviour). Second, we demonstrate the effectiveness of communication strategies that can reduce attribution of blame, thus limiting emotion spillover. We conclude by highlighting the implications of the proposed conceptualisation of discrete emotion spillover in other marketing contexts.

Index Terms- Emotion spillover, appraisal theory, anger, corporate social irresponsibility, crisis communications, scapegoating

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