Executive Summary

Einfühlung: Overview of Theory Components and Test in Advertising Settings
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Advertising research aims to provide marketers with suggestions for designing effective advertisements. In recent decades, academic research considered approaches developed in psychology and consumer behavior theory and derived recommendations how certain mental processes could be induced in the audience. For example, they showed how concepts such as construal level, familiarity, feeling right, flow, fluency, immersion in narratives, mental simulation, regulatory fit, trust, and warmth could be evoked through advertisements. However, one concept has received little attentions thus far: *Einfühlung*. There is not even an equivalent term in the English language yet. Empathy is a related but different concept.

The theory of *Einfühlung* was developed by German philosophers such as Herder, Lipps, and Stein more than a hundred years ago. Researchers on mirror neurons "re-discovered" this theory but focused on neurological processes. *Einfühlung* describes the processes of imitating the postures and movements and emotions of other people, which lead to immediate sensations of oneness of the observer with these people. Lipps (1903) illustrated the process of *Einfühlung* by referring to an example – he puts himself in the role of the observer of a circus acrobat and reports that he imitates movements and emotions of the acrobat and feels oneness with him. We do not consider a dancing acrobat on the tightrope, but movements, especially dance movements, of actresses and actors in commercials. We find that such movements improve responses of the video audience (and additionally provide evidence to the theory of *Einfühlung*).

Although our focus was testing the theory, we aimed to explore how the theory could be expanded. We examined if observers are equally prone to imitate positive as well as negative emotions displayed by the dancers. We did this because there is a debate in literature about whether observers tend more strongly to regulate negative emotions – meaning that people dislike the imitation of negative emotions. We created two samples of pairs of videos that are likely to induce either positive or negative emotions for social organizations. Dance (present vs. absent) was shown in videos evoking enjoyment and dance (present vs. absent) was shown in videos eliciting compassion. Our data indicate that people imitate positive as well as negative emotions (what contrasts with the position of many authors) but feel less oneness with others who express negative emotions (what is a new finding). However, as dance movements do not only cause emotional imitation but also bodily imitation, we can recommend that social organization use dance movements in their videos, even if they aim to provoke compassion.