

Public defence Ph.D. in Applied Economics by Birgit Wauters.

The public defence of the Ph.D. in Applied Economics for Birgit Wauters will take place on Friday July 12th 2013 at 4.00pm on the Etterbeek-campus of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussels in Building D, level 2, room D2.01.

The Ph.D thesis is called "The Effectiveness of Threat Appeals: A Focus on Moderating Persuasion Variables ."

Promoter: Prof. dr. Malaika Brengman

Please confirm your attendance by Monday July 8 2013 to [Tom Matthijs](#).

Abstract:

This dissertation is a compilation of essays on the effectiveness of one of the most frequently used message tactics in mass media campaigns promoting (health) behaviour change, namely threat or fear appeals. Threat appeals are often used in social marketing campaigns to inform people about a possible (health) risk and to convince them to end undesired behaviour and/or adopt a different lifestyle. By describing the negative consequences of certain risky actions, e.g., lung cancer for smokers, car-accidents because of reckless driving, social disapproval caused by obesity, getting HIV/AIDS as a result of unsafe sex,... social marketers aim to scare people into doing what the message prescribes.

While numerous academics have proposed different theories to explain the process through which threat appeals motivate behaviour change, the underlying theoretical framework for this dissertation is the 'Extended Parallel Process Model' (EPPM) presented by Witte (1994), as it integrates various previous theories in order to explain when and why threat appeals are effective and why they sometimes fail. We use the Integrative Framework of Advertising Persuasion (IFAP) (Joan Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999) to try adding moderating persuasion elements to the EPPM in order to be able to explain the effectiveness of threat appeals in more detail and/or to predict their outcomes.

By integrating the persuasion variables as formulated by the IFAP with the EPPM, this dissertation contributes to the general understanding of the effectiveness of threat appeals used in a social marketing context. Based on six experiments conducted, the dissertation offers evidence that threat appeal communications can be more effective when keeping in mind the context of the message, the characteristics of the receiver of the message and not to forget, the message components itself.