Abstract

Most of us hope negative information will not affect how people view us. Affect perseverance theory suggests that negative information has a reduced effect on positive first impressions. On the other hand, affect momentum asserts that people will see us more positively when negative information is presented first. This experiment tests these two theories. If affect perseverance theory is correct, then positive information followed by negative information will result in more positive ratings than in cases where the negative information is presented first. On the other hand, if affect momentum is correct, just the opposite will be found. Participants (N=38) from two General Psychology classes at Berea College were given a packet of four different cases. The participants rated the likelihood of wanting to be friends with each character described in each case on a one to seven Likert scale. The results provided clear evidence for affect momentum by female participants. When given the option to give positive or negative information first, the strategy of giving negative information first could lead to more positive affect when presenting information to females. This strategy could be applicable within job interviews and relationships in general.