

# Micro Theories, Macro Phenomena

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# Micro theorizing about Identity

# **ANONYMITY**

The expectation that one will be unrecognized in a second encounter.

# IDENTITY

Some of the characteristics of a self exhibited in a social setting, which in sum specify to others and to oneself who one is

To be identified is to recognize that one is observed or at least observable

Identity is constructive and reflexive.

It comprises a set of meanings that act as a standard or reference for who one is or intends to be

The organizing construct through which ordinary consumption activities can be understood (Kleine, Kleine and Kernan 1993).

## Identity as face and interface

- Vehicle for the expression of who I want to be?
- Seductive mask that transforms me into the role that the mask enables me to perform?

Identities are enacted in contexts

The more an identity context engages central life themes of the buyer, the more it shapes tastes, values, motives.

Macro Implications:

Frequent shopper, frequent flyer  
and frequent guest programs as  
identity context offerings,

# Identity Programs

## Degrees of Identity:

Transitory

Persistent

Role-Specific

Self-Expressive

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Checkout coupons

Frequent shopper card

Frequent flyer program

Harley Owners Group

## Implications for Exchange Relations

	<u>Buyer Interest</u>	<u>Response to Seller</u>	<u>Loyalty?</u>
Transitory Identity	Exploitation of seller	Responsive to isolated promotional inducements	Self-interested behavior on discrete choice occasions
Persistent Identity	Compliance with seller's inducements	Adaptive to pattern of specific inducements over time	Self-interested gaming behavior
Role-Specific Identity	Conformity to seller-defined role	Conforming to a script whose scope is more general than the inducements	Role-consistent loyal behavior
Self-Expressive Identity	Fidelity to seller values	Sincere adherence to a role	Allegiance

## **Conclusion**

Micro theories derive their interest from their ability to account for market-level phenomena.

The more consequential the market-level phenomenon, the more interesting the micro theory.

How much, then, do loyalty programs really matter?