Negative Mood and Risk Taking Tendency: the Effect of Attachment Style

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Negative Mood and Risk Taking Tendency: The Effect of Attachment Style Hieu P. Nguyen - University of Texas at Arlington Eyad Youssef - Old Dominion University This research explores the effect of attachment style (the systematic pattern of relational expectations, emotions, and behaviors resulting from the internalization of a particular history of attachment experiences) on the relationship between negative mood and risk taking. Results indicate that high avoidance attachment leads to increased risk taking under negative mood while there is no effect for the low avoidance group. Negative mood did not cause either high or low anxiety people to be more risk taking. Whether negative mood encourages risk taking (the mood maintenance hypothesis) or risk aversion (the affect-as-information hypothesis) seems to be influenced by individuals’ attachment style.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/12263/volumes/v33/NA-33

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**Working Papers**

**Negative Mood and Risk Taking Tendency: The Effect of Attachment Style**

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**Introduction**

While the effects of mood and affect on consumer decision making has received much attention among consumer researchers, the effects of mood on social evaluative judgments in general, and risk taking tendency in particular, remain understudied in marketing. Findings from research in social psychology have indicated mixed results. Most research seems to support the prediction that positive mood leads to increased risk taking tendency while negative mood gives rise to increased risk aversion (Isen and Geva 1987, Isen and Patrick 1983, Mittal and Ross 1998, Nygren, Isen, Taylor, and Dulin 1996). Nevertheless, other studies (Arkes, Herren, and Isen 1988, Isen, Nygren, and Ashby 1988, Johnson and Tversky 1983) also found that people in positive mood also tend to be more conservative and self-protective in choice tasks where there is a focus on loss or where there is a reasonable possibility that a real and meaningful loss may occur.

In this study we look at mood regulation strategies as an influential factor of risk taking tendency. A key factor in mood regulation is people’s attachment style—the systematic pattern of relational expectations, emotions, and behaviors resulting from the internalization of a particular history of attachment experiences (Fraley and Shaver, 2000).

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) explains the propensity of people to form lasting affectional bonds with other people and to regulate inner distress. Early experiences between a child and his or her primary caregiver lay the foundation for functioning in subsequent relationships. Early work on attachment style in infancy (Ainsworth et al. 1978) identified three types of attachment styles: secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent attachment. However, more recent studies have revealed that attachment styles are more appropriately conceptualized as regions in a two-dimension space: avoidance (the extent to which a person distrusts relationship partners’ goodwill and strives to maintain autonomy and emotional distance from partners), and anxiety (the extent to which a person worries that a partner will not be available in times of need) (Mikulincer, Dolev, and Shaver, 2004). Previous research has shown that these two dimensions are orthogonal. High scores on avoidance indicates a person’s reliance on deactivating strategies in dealing with stress (inhibition of proximity seeking, attempting to handle stressors by themselves). High scores on the anxiety dimension reflects hyperactivating strategies (energetic attempts to attain greater proximity, support, and love combined with a lack of confidence that it will be provided). People scoring low on both dimensions hold internalized representations of comforting attachment figures which leads to continuing sense of attachment security, positive self-regard (Mikulincer, Dolev, and Shaver, 2004).

In this study, we predicted that low avoidance people’s risk taking tendency would not be influenced by negative mood due to their sense of attachment security and positive self-regard. We also predicted that highly avoidant people’s tendency to detract from emotional figures and engage in self-protective activities will cause them to be more risk taking to correct their negative mood state without having to reach out for help. Meanwhile, people with high anxiety scores are already overwhelmed with constant worries and fears of separation and therefore the negative mood state would not result in a significant change in their risk taking tendency.

**Methodology**

123 undergraduate students participated in a 2x2x2 between-subject experiment to investigate how mood state (negative, neutral) and attachment style (avoidance: high, low; anxiety: high, low) influences subjects’ risk taking tendency. Negative mood was induced by asking subjects to recall and describe in details their saddest day, while in the neutral mood condition subjects were asked to describe their television viewing habits. Subjects were then asked to indicate their choice of a risky decision presented in both gain and loss frames.

**Major findings**

Findings supported our hypotheses. There was a significant interaction effect between mood and avoidance attachment. In both gain and loss frames, subjects scoring high on the avoidance dimension showed a significant increase in risk taking tendency under negative mood. For low avoidance subjects, negative mood did not result in a significant change in their risk taking tendency in the gain frame, but a significant decrease in the loss frame. One possible explanation for the stronger effect in the loss frame was that people tend to be more risk seeking when the choice is presented in a loss frame and more risk averse in a gain frame (the well-known Asian Disease dilemma, Tversky and Kahneman 1981). High anxiety people did not show any significant changes in their risky behaviors under negative mood in either frame.

**General Discussion**

These findings contribute to existing theory in several ways. To our knowledge, this research is the first in the marketing literature that investigates the effects of negative mood and attachment style on consumers’ risk taking tendency. It sheds some light on the current mixed results in the literature. Whether negative mood encourages risk taking (the mood maintenance hypothesis) or risk aversion (the affect-as-information hypothesis) seems to be influenced by subjects’ attachment style. For low avoidance subjects, the large network of emotional figures and the positive mental model of self tend to dampen the effect of negative mood. For anxious subjects, their constant worries and fears of attachment separation seems to diminish the effect of negative mood on their risk taking tendency. Meanwhile high avoidant subjects tend to engage in self-protective activities and by choosing more risky options, they hope to escape from the current negative mood state without having to reach out for help.
One limitation of this study is the use of convenience samples of American undergraduate students who are normally not overly affluent. Does this factor affect their choice of the risky or safe option in a risky situation involving money? In this study we investigated individuals’ risk taking tendency in a financial risky choice context. In order to maximize the external validity of the findings, future research should examine risk taking tendency under negative mood in other risky consumption situations that involve social, physical, performance, and psychological risks.

In this study, we investigated the effect of mood, which by definition, refers to transient feeling states particular to specific times and situations and are subjectively perceived by individuals (Gardner 1985). Future research should investigate the moderating effects of attachment styles under strong affective states such as disgust, fear, depression.

References

“When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Go Shopping”: An Examination of Self-Gifting Behavior
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What motivates the purchase of treats and small indulgences for the self? Do we buy self-gifts when we have something to celebrate or, alternatively, when the “going” is getting tough? Much of the published work has focused on the celebratory side of self-gifts (Mick 1991; Mick and DeMoss 1990a, 1990b). Achievements that are internally attributed are celebrated with indulgent consumption (Mick and Faure 1998), particularly those requiring higher effort (Kivetz and Simonson 2002a; Stevens, Maclaran and Brown 2003). The literature also suggests that self-gifts are premeditated (Mick and DeMoss 1990a). However, the classic saying above suggests that self-gifting may be impulsive and motivated by something darker.

The current work focuses on the use of self-gifts as a mechanism not only for celebration, but also for mood management. Consider the colloquial examples of “comfort-food” and “pick-me-up” bouquets of flowers. In particular, we examine the impact of individual differences in self-esteem, mood, loneliness, and regulatory orientation as moderators of self-gifting behavior, and explore the underlying motivations and needs that are satisfied by self-gifts in both celebratory and mood-repair roles.

Two studies were conducted to explore the different motivations of individuals who buy self-gifts for celebration versus consolation and to explore the impulsive nature of self-gifts. Individual differences in self-esteem (Study 1), loneliness (Study 2), regulatory orientation (Study 2) and mood (Studies 1 and 2) were also measured.
Study 1

Study 1 was conducted with 46 undergraduate students. Participants were asked to think back to their most recent self-gift experience and to explain the motivations and the meanings attached to it. In particular, we asked participants to indicate what gift they had purchased and the occasion that had motivated it. Self-esteem measures were taken.

Results. Both celebration and mood-repair were reported as reasons for past purchases (98%). The last purchase was approximately evenly divided between mood-repair (46%) and celebratory motives (54%). As such, both motivations for self-gifting are prevalent.

What items were purchased? First, we note that the items purchased for mood-repair and celebration did not differ ($\chi^2(5)=5.22, p>.30$). As such, any difference in motivation was not reflected in the type of product purchased but rather in the meanings participants attached to them. In their last self-gifting experience, participants in both conditions reported having bought clothing (48%), food/beverages (26%), entertainment products (e.g., DVD/CDs) (9%), items for personal enjoyment (e.g., plants) (7%), and hobby products (7%).

The meanings that were assigned to these purchases differed based on motivation for the purchase. Namely, self-gifts purchased for mood-repair were described as less functional ($F(1,44)=4.624, p<.05$) and less durable ($F(1,44)=5.256, p<.05$). For celebration, the gifts reflected self-purpose ($F(1,44)=5.078, p<.05$), individual uniqueness ($F(1,44)=5.087, p<.05$), and one’s heritage ($F(1,44)=4.396, p<.05$). Contrary to our expectations, consumers who were higher (lower) in self-esteem did not differ in either their motivations ($F(1,44)=.385, p>.50$) or the meanings attached to the self-gift (all $p>.10$). Mood, however, did. In general, an elevated mood led to an exaggeration of the average meaning attached to the self-gift, regardless of motivation.

Study 2

In order to increase the validity of our findings and examine the impulsivity of self-gifting behavior, we conducted a field study with 195 individuals at a shopping mall. They were surveyed both as they entered the mall and right before they left. Prior to shopping, they made a list of planned purchases. We collected measures of mood, loneliness, and regulatory orientation at that time. At the end of the visit, they provided a list of what they had bought.

Results. Of the 195 participants, 89 (46%) purchased an item as a self-gift, with mood repair twice as prevalent (69%) as celebration (31%) ($\chi^2(3)=3.08, p<.01$). These results reveal that self-gifting is more frequently motivated by mood-repair than celebration when the measure is collected at the point of purchase rather than through a retrospective report of the last self-gift purchased. Contrary to the pre-mediated nature of self-gifts described by Mick and DeMoss (1990a), we found that among impulse purchases, 72% were self-treats. Impulsive self-gifting was prevalent.

As expected, the moods of individuals who purchased treats for mood-repair (celebration) were worse (better) ($F(1,62)=4.88, p<.05$). Loneliness was unrelated to motivation ($F(1,62)=0.61, p>.40$). Finally, individuals who purchased treats for mood-repair were lower in promotion focus than those who bought treats for celebration ($F(1,62)=4.43, p<.05$). The means attached to the items were consistent with the findings in Study 1. Self-treats for mood repair were considered less durable ($F(1,60)=7.60, p<.01$) and less indulgent ($F(1,60)=2.70, p>.10$). We examined the impacts of mood and motivation on the meanings and found few differences. A promotion focus, however, led to treats that represented an ideal self ($F(1,60)=3.40, p<.07$).

Discussion

The findings of the two studies suggest that self-gifting behavior is not solely driven by celebratory motives. The mood repair motivation accounted for one-half to two-thirds of all self-gifts. We also found evidence of substantial impulsivity in self-gifting behavior. If the majority of self-treats are purchased for mood repair and purchased impulsively, this may lead individuals to spend beyond their means, deepening their emotional angst, and creating negative impacts on well-being. Future research is currently underway to examine the links between self-gifting, impulsive purchases, and post-purchase regret. What will you be doing when the going gets tough …?

References


Coping with Individual-Group Incongruity
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Introduction
It has long been recognized in social psychology and consumer research that decisions are context dependent and that groups have influence on the judgment and behavior of individuals. Most of the previous studies have focused on the influence of reference groups on product and brand decisions (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Childer and Rao 1992), and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Netemeyer, Bearden and Teel 1992). More recent findings have suggested that mere anticipation of an approaching group discussion causes people to tailor their responses in a strategic manner and influence their product attitudes (Schlosser and Shavitt 1999, 2002). In such situations, consumers may experience stress due to anticipated group influence. While consumer research has implicitly explored a subset of coping behaviors, for example, revision and concession (Aribarg, Arora, and Bodur 2002), previous investigations have not systematically considered coping as a set of stress responses involved in consumer decision process under group influence.

Coping is defined as the process of managing internal or external demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of a person (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Previous research has shown that cognitive and emotional appraisals interrelate to predict consumers’ choice of specific coping strategies. Additionally, Tetlock, Skitka, and Boettger (1989) argue that attitude change in anticipation of social interaction often result from cognitive process rather than being an automatic heuristic shift. Additionally, there is a high possibility that individuals have to cope with negative emotions generated by exposure to group feedback with is different from their own evaluations. Thus, it seems likely that both cognitions and emotions operate together to drive coping responses to social influence. This is especially likely to occur when consumers face controversial issues (e.g. products with favorable functional attributes but unfavorable norms or vice versa), which is common but understudied in the domain of consumer research.

In summary, the purpose of this study is to identify conditions under which individuals change their attitude toward a product and engage in coping strategies upon exposure to group feedback. Tetlock et al. (1989) proposed a social contingency model of judgment and choice. The model assumes that when people know the view of the audience to whom they are accountable and unconstrained by past commitments, they tend to respond to the pressures by shifting their public positions toward the audience and adopt the salient, socially acceptable position. This argument leads to our prediction of a main effect for subjects to report more positive evaluation upon positive group feedback and to report more negative evaluation upon negative group feedback. We argue that when there is an incongruity between individual response and group feedback, consumers experience stress and anxiety and therefore engage in coping strategies.

Method
We employed a 2 (positive vs. negative individual response) x 2 (positive vs. negative group feedback) between subjects design and manipulated the incongruity between initial individual evaluation and group feedback. The experiment was conducted in a behavioral technology lab on the computer-based interface of MediaLab software. A total of 161 undergraduate business students (87 males and 74 females) participated in the study to partially fulfill a course requirement. Each participant completed the procedures individually in his or her own cubicle individually.

On arrival, participants completed a consent form and were randomly assigned to the four conditions. First, they received a review about a fictitious study guide for business students with positive and negative information. The study guide was chosen as the product material because it is highly relevant to students. Questions were then asked about their attitudes about the study guide. To reduce the likelihood that participants would perceive a connection between the initial evaluation and later questions, a filler task was provided during which participants were told to answer some unrelated questions. Afterwards, either positive or negative group feedback was provided according to the four conditions. Participants were again asked about their evaluation of the study guide. Participants were told that there would be a group discussion during which they could share their thoughts and opinion with other students. They could choose either to manipulate the incongruity between initial individual evaluation and group feedback. The experiment was conducted in a behavioral technology lab on the computer-based interface of MediaLab software. A total of 161 undergraduate business students (87 males and 74 females) participated in the study to partially fulfill a course requirement. Each participant completed the procedures individually in his or her own cubicle individually.

Preliminary Findings and Discussion
Data were analyzed using ANOVA with participants overall shift, stress and coping as the dependent variables. The shift measure was calculated by subtracting the initial evaluation from the later evaluation after exposure to group feedback. As predicted, when there is a high degree of individual-group incongruity, participants shift from their initial evaluation toward group feedback. Accordingly, they experience anxiety and engage in coping strategies.

Consumer coping behavior under group influence is an important issue and has profound implications in producing consumer well being. Our research examined how coping strategies may help individuals respond to individual-group evaluation incongruity. Further research involves identifying factors that may mediate and moderate this effect.

References
Alleviating Mommy’s Guilt: Emotional Expression and Guilt Appeals in Advertising

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Extended Abstract

Guilt results from “essentially private recognition that one has violated a personal standard” (Kugler and Jones 1992). Its anticipation influences people’s behaviors (Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton 1994). Guilt appeals have been studied in marketing (Ghingold, 1980; Pinto & Priest, 1991; Ruth & Faber, 1988a, 1988b). Though not as their main focus, numerous studies implicitly assume the influence of guilt behind impulsive buying (Rook 1987), overspending (Pirisi 1995), pre-commitment to reward programs (Kivetz and Simonson 2002), compulsive consumption behavior (O’Guinn and Faber 1989), and donating to charities (Strahilevitz and Myers 1998). More specifically, some examined advertising campaigns that attempt to arouse guilt (Wheatley & Oshikawa, 1970; Huhmann and Brotherton, 1997); others investigated consumer reactions to advertisements containing guilt appeals (Ghingold, 1980).

Guilt is intrapersonal, mainly arising from transgressions of personal values or societal norms (e.g., McGraw 1987), but also interpersonal, arising from inequities in social comparisons (e.g., Baumeister et al., 1994; Walster, Berscheid, and Walster 1976). Consistent with this main distinction, self-reported guilt in consumption contexts is categorized into guilt arising from either actions or inactions related to a) others in close and distant relationships, b) societal standards, and c) oneself (Dahl, Honea, and Manchanda 2003).

One group of those who are affected by the experience of guilt is mothers. Their guilt involves all three categories of the consumption guilt, not just one. It entails the children who are in an extremely close relationship to themselves. The society idealizes the Madonna, the symbol of the perfect mother as the perfect standard which every mother should strive to equal. Every mother, moreover, has her own goals and ideas of being a mother, which influences her own self-esteem. Divorced mother (Boney 2002), working mothers (Elvin-Nowak 1999), and mothers of handicapped children (Natale and Barron 1994) all suffer from the inherent maternal guilt they experience.

Especially, working mothers are influenced by guilt appeals in advertising. Coupled with this inherent “it goes with the territory” kind of maternal guilt, there is the potentially manipulative survival tendency of the babies, not to mention their helplessness and dependency. Even infants under a year of age possess ability to use the mere information about an adult’s direction of gaze and emotional expression to predict action (Phillips, Wellman, and Spelke 2002). Given this, it becomes more difficult for the working mothers to manage their negative emotions. Since the baby must spend most of the daytime with caretakers, it may only be natural for these mothers to feel compelled to compensate for their absence in other ways. One particular kind of ways is shopping for their children (e.g., to buy the very best for the children). The advertising effects of guilt appeals on working mothers have been studied (Coulter and Pinto 1995), using print stimuli of every day products (bread and dental floss, but not with products directly related to the baby); their results indicated that moderate guilt appeals elicited most felt guilt in the working mothers. However, there have not been any moderators that may alleviate the guilt in them.

The purpose of this research is to introduce one such moderator, drawn from the emotional disclosure literature in clinical psychology. Since early 1990’s there has been much research on why talking or writing about emotional events can influence mental and physical health (e.g., Pennebaker 1990; 1995; Pennebaker and Seagal 1999). Expressing one’s emotions regarding traumatic or stressful events in life leads to both psychologically and physically healthier state. Specifically, writing about emotional experiences produces improvements in immune function, drops in physician visits for illness, and better performance at school and work (e.g., Esterling, Antoni, Fletcher, Marguilies, and Schneiderman 1994; Pennebaker 1993; Spera, Buhreind, and Pennebaker 1994). Consistent with this stream of research, I hypothesize that writing about their maternal guilt related to their career choice for the working mothers can strengthen their ability to resist the guilt appeals in advertising.

Proposed studies involve a sample of employed mothers of infants under a year of age, and a stimuli set of baby products that are used by infants, in addition to everyday products. Planned design for the first study is 2 (writing about maternal guilt vs. control group of not writing) X 3 (level of guilt appeals: low, medium, and high) X (baby products vs. everyday products). I hypothesize that for the controls for everyday products, the previous research results will be replicated, such that moderate guilt level is most effective in inducing purchase; but for those who write about their maternal guilt, the effect will show a different pattern. Their guilt will be more resolved and will not be as influenced by the guilt appeals in advertising. This effect will appear across different domains, but in different magnitude, such that it will be significantly greater for the baby products but not for the non-baby products, since the maternal guilt is specifically targeted to the baby-related domain.

Subsequent studies will examine various practical ways that may serve a similar role to that shown by emotional expression. The second study will examine whether showing a sponsor or a spokesperson who expresses her maternal guilt in advertising will show equivalent effects to emotional expression, though vicariously; and whether this effect will show a similar pattern in baby-related domain.
(e.g., to invest in the best educational video for your baby) versus non-baby-related domains (e.g., recycling to save the planet Earth). Third study will examine whether specific advertising appeals that solicit such written emotional expression of maternal guilt will change the initial effect; whether the entity of solicitation matters; and whether these effects carry over to non-baby related domains.

Considering that mothers constitute a major proportion of consumers that make purchases especially in baby-related domains, these studies will provide the marketers with managerial implications to utilize the guilt appeals specifically targeting them.

References


Positive versus Negative Affect Asymmetry and Comfort Food Consumption
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In the present study, we examine the effect on comfort food consumption of variables previously linked to the asymmetry between positive and negative affect. Specifically, we consider consumers’ gender, age, and cultural background as well as features of food product categories (e.g., sugar and fat contents) as moderators of emotional antecedents and consequences of comfort food consumption.

Men and women vary considerably in terms of how they experience, express and regulate emotions. Women tend to rely more on negative emotions in decision-making and behaviours; men tend to distract themselves from negative emotional experiences. We propose that men’s comfort-seeking consumption is more likely to be triggered by and then lead to enhanced positive affects, whereas women’s comfort-seeking consumption is expected to be driven by negative affects. With age, one learns to better regulate one’s emotions, developing both the ability and the tendency to constrain emotional experiences with a focus on heightening positive affect. In addition, research has also shown that as age increases so does the relative dominance of positive affect in decision-making. Thus, it is expected that for older adults positive emotions should be a more prevalent antecedent of comfort-seeking consumption than negative emotions.

Culture may also be related to affect asymmetry. For instance, the French cultural stereotype includes a longstanding association to hedonism as a general philosophy of life guiding individual decisions and behaviors. In contrast, the Anglo-Saxon philosophy of life includes stronger dispositions and associations to functionality and restraint. Therefore, we expect that comfort food consumption in
French-cultured individuals will be motivated by the maintenance/enhancement of positive emotions, and for English participants, comfort food consumption is more likely to be related to the alleviation of negative emotions. Finally, the type of food eaten to provide emotional comfort is another factor likely to be tied to affect asymmetry. For instance, sweet and high-fat foods (SHF), like ice cream, cookies or chocolate, have been linked to the experience of negative affect. Thus, we expect that the consumption of SHF foods is more likely to be triggered by negative affects than is the case for non-sweet high-fat foods (NSHF) or for foods of low energy density (LED) regardless of their dominant nutrient.

A survey was administered via the World Wide Web and was promoted in electronic and mass media in the city of Montreal, a multicultural Canadian city with a predominance of French- and English-cultured citizens. In total, 277 participants (196 women; 81 men) completed the survey. The age distribution was as follow: 117 young adults (age 18-24), 136 adults (25-54) and 21 older adults (55 and more). The language primarily spoken at home was taken as a proxy for cultural background: 121 participants primarily spoke French, 129 primarily spoke English at home, and the remaining 27 primarily spoke another language. Participants did not receive any incentive for this study. Participants first provided background information (age, height, weight, etc.), identified their favorite comfort food and were then asked to think back to instances when they ate their favorite comfort food, taking time to form a vivid and complete recollection. Next, using 7-point scales (“not at all” to “very intensely”) participants indicated the degree to which they typically felt a set of positive (happy, joyful, calm and relaxed, α=.81) and negative affects (depressed, anxious, sad, nostalgic, upset, and lonely, α=.88) prior to eating their favorite comfort food. Finally, to explore the effects of the proposed factors on the emotional consequences of comfort food consumption, we also asked participants to indicate the degree to which they typically experience the same positive and negative affects after eating their favorite comfort food. The difference between the pre- and post-consumption reports was used to assess change in affect. Guilt was added to the post-consumption list since it is distinct from general negative affects and was shown to arise from comfort food consumption.

Favorite comfort foods cited by participants were assigned to one of three categories: 1) sweet high fat (SHF) foods, which totalled 101 mentions (36.5%) and included primarily chocolate, ice cream and baked goods; 2) non-sweet high-fat (NSHF) foods with 69 mentions (24.9 %) including meats and meat products, pizza and salted snacks; 3) lower energy density foods (LED) with 93 mentions (33.6%) including soups, pasta dishes, fruits and vegetables. Fourteen favorite comfort foods could not be coded into these categories or were incomprehensible (e.g., foreign language vernacular or abbreviation).

Consistent with expectations, results indicate that men’s comfort food consumption was preceded by more intense positive emotions than women (Men=4.18, Women=3.69, p<.001). On the other hand, women’s consumption tended to be triggered by more intense negative affect (Women= 3.03, Men= 2.9) but this difference did not reach significance. Consumption of comfort foods alleviated women’s negative emotions but also produced more intense feelings of guilt than men (Men=2.00, Women=2.69, p<.05). Positive affect was a particularly powerful trigger of comfort food consumption for older participants (younger= 3.65, older=4.36, p<.05) and for French-cultured participants (French=4.06, English=3.66, p<.05). Younger participants and English-culture participants reported more intense negative emotions prior to consuming comfort foods. Foods high in sugar and fat content were more efficient in alleviating negative affects whereas low- to medium energy density foods were more efficient in increasing positive emotions.

Selected References:

Anger in Ultimatum Bargaining: Emotional Outcomes Lead to Irrational Decisions
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Consumers evaluate most retail prices in terms of utility/value of the good, but they may also infer fairness from these offers. When buying a car, for instance, consumers may judge the price as fair or unfair, and accept the offer (purchase) or not (do not purchase). This mechanism is similar to ultimatum bargaining, where perceptions of fairness influence offer evaluation. It is argued that emotions such as anger are a consequence of the fairness appraisal and it is possible to influence bargaining behavior by altering the perceived source of the emotion, holding fairness perceptions constant.

In ultimatum bargaining, a proposer controls an amount of money (say $10) and must offer some fraction (say $3) to the responder. Both players know the amount being divided and the rules of the game. If the responder accepts the offer, s/he receives $3, and the proposer receives $7. If the responder rejects the offer, both people receive nothing (Camerer and Thaler 1995).
Rationally, the respondent should never reject an offer, since even $.01 has more utility than zero. However, previous research has shown that ultimatum offers are sometimes rejected (Straub and Murnighan 1995), and variables such as fairness (Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler, 1986) and anger (Güth 1995) play a critical role. Pillutla and Murnighan (1996) proposed that respondents react to small offers by perceiving them as unfair and attributing responsibility to offerers. Accordingly, people are willing to sacrifice their own outcome to punish a player who had offered an unequal division to another player (Kahneman et al. 1986).

Anger has been found to correspond to appraisal of a negative event caused by another person and involving unfairness (Frijda, Kuipers, and ter Schure 1989). One behavioral consequence of anger is that the angry individual will probably try to hurt the agent as a punitive revenge or as retribution (Darley and Pittman 2003). Nevertheless, the punitive behavior will be directed towards the cause of the feeling (e.g. Younger and Doob 1978).

Transferring this to ultimatum bargaining, as people perceive an offer as unfair, they feel anger towards the agent and tend to reject the offer; however, when people misattribute the cause of anger, the rate of rejection tends to decrease. We tested these ideas in two experiments.

In study 1 we manipulated size of offer to test if a low offer leads to higher levels of anger and to what extent the anger felt decreases the probability of acceptance of an offer. Subjects read the description of ultimatum games and learned that participants in their session were randomly selected as respondents. We randomly assigned $2 and $4 offers-out of a total amount of $10-to 155 students from a major west coast university. After they marked their response to the experiments.

In the control condition, 25% of the participants accepted the $1 offer, 36.36% accepted the $3 offer, and 100% accepted the $5 offer. A chi-square test (p<.01) revealed that significantly higher proportions of participants accepted the “unfair” offers in the misattribution condition: 50% of the participants accepted the $1 offer and 63.16% accepted the $3 offer. The $5 offer was accepted by 95.24% of the participants.

A logistic regression showed that the $2 offer was more likely to get rejected as a function of anger. Mediation analysis showed rejection was mediated by anger: in the first model, offer had a significant impact on rejection (p<.01); when anger was added to this model, anger is significant (p<.01), but offer no longer is (p>.05). Anger proneness was not significant in the regression (p>.1), showing that the individual difference variable does not influence offer rejection.

The goal of study 2 was to examine outcomes when people misattribute the cause of anger. It was a 2 (control, misattribution of anger) x 3 (offer: $1, $3, $5) between-subjects experiment (n=120 students). Misattribution of anger was manipulated through an “independent” task called “life event inventory study” that consisted in asking participants to describe three/four “ordinary and mundane” events of their lives which they do not give much thought to nor have strong feelings about. In the control condition, participants started the “game” study right after this task. In the misattribution condition, they were told “in a similar study participants reported experiencing varying degrees of anger because of this assignment.” Fairness was manipulated through the “proposer-responder game.” The procedure was similar to experiment 1, and participants were asked to accept or reject the offer randomly assigned to them: $1, $3, or $5 out of $10. Finally, they responded to questions about their feelings and opinions.

In the control condition, 25% of the participants accepted the $1 offer, 36.36% accepted the $3 offer, and 100% accepted the $5 offer. A chi-square test (p<.01) revealed that significantly higher proportions of participants accepted the “unfair” offers in the misattribution condition: 50% of the participants accepted the $1 offer and 63.16% accepted the $3 offer. The $5 offer was accepted by 95.24% of the participants. A logistic regression showed that the effect of misattribution was significant (p<.05) and the effect of offer was significant (p<.01). When anger was included ("to what extent were you angry with the offer?") as a covariate, the effect of misattribution was not significant (p>.05), offer was significant (p<.01), and anger was significant (p<.01).

Experiment 1 shows anger resulting from the perception of (un)fairness of the offer and increasing the rejection of the offer. Experiment 2 suggests that when people misattribute the cause of anger they tend to “discount” its effect, decreasing the rejection rate of the “unfair” offer. The results have implications for the management of cooperative and competitive behavior in conflict situations such as bargaining.

References
Many radio stations play the same songs over and over again, with little willingness to add new songs to the playlist, despite voiced criticism. Station managers argue that they are simply giving the listeners what they want to hear. We investigate this radio paradigm to understand what is driving this discrepancy between voiced preference and actual choice.

Presenting 24 songs from 12 artists (one familiar and one unfamiliar), and 22 famous actors to participants, we show that people do indeed choose to listen to songs, and see actors in movies, based on two factors: their preference (or “liking”) and their familiarity with the song or actor. Interestingly, we find that the effect of familiarity on choice remains significant when we control for the effects of preference on choice. That is, participants sometimes chose a song they liked less than the other option, just because the chosen song was familiar.

In a second study we control for liking across songs based on pretests and show that participants choose playlists of songs that they are familiar with despite lower preferences for these songs. Our last study tested whether the results could be explained by anticipated regret and/or social perceptions (or “coolness,” which may drive people to indicate they do not like familiar songs even though they do actually like them). Using personal computers where participants actually listened to their choices on individual headphones, participants made choices first and then indicated familiarity and liking, as well as how much they may regret their choice and how “cool” they thought each song was. Though regret did affect choice, indicating the presence of some uncertainty about the options, we find that familiarity significantly predicts choice when controlling for the effects of liking, regret, and coolness.

When do Moods Influence Consumer Preferences?: Moderators of Mood Congruency
Katherine White, University of Calgary
Cathy McFarland, Simon Fraser University

The mood congruency effect refers to the tendency for those in positive moods to make more favorable judgments than those in negative moods. Although mood congruency has been documented in the domain of consumer judgment, past research is equivocal regarding the conditions under which such mood congruency effects emerge. While some authors have documented mood congruency effects in consumer judgments (Curren and Harich 1994; Isen, Shalker, Clark, and Karp 1978), other researchers have not (Adaval 2001).

In addition, several moderators of the mood congruency effect have been proposed, such as relevance of the product (Curren and Haric, 1994), consumer motivation (Pham 1998), ability to attribute the source of one’s moods accurately (Gorn, Goldberg, and Basu 1993; Pham 1998), and desirability of the brand (Barone and Miniard 2002).

One such moderator is the ability to focus on one’s mood states. Although some research suggests that those who focus on their moods are better able to avoid or correct for mood congruency (e.g., McFarland, White, and Newth 2003), other research suggests that those who focus on their moods are more likely to demonstrate mood congruency (e.g., Forgas and Ciarrochi 2001). We suspect that the different judgment tasks used in these two studies may be responsible for the discrepant results. The evaluation task used by Forgas and Ciarrochi (2001) involved evaluations of actual and potential possessions, whereas the evaluation task used by McFarland and colleagues involved making evaluations of another person. It seems plausible that people may consider it more appropriate to allow their moods to influence consumer judgments than interpersonal evaluations.

We attempt to resolve this discrepancy and suggest that the influence of mood-focus on the mood congruency effect will be moderated by perceived appropriateness of using moods to guide judgments. For example, Gasper & Clore (2000) found that the future predictions of participants high in mood attention were more affected by their current mood than those of participants low in mood attention. Importantly, the mood congruency bias revealed among persons high in mood attention was eliminated only when they were actively encouraged to view their moods as irrelevant to the judgment task. Thus, our key prediction is that mood congruency in consumer judgment will be most pronounced when individuals both acknowledge their moods and consider it appropriate to allow moods to influence their judgments.

In study 1, we utilized a 2(Mood: positive vs. negative) X 2(Focus: focused vs. not focused) X 2(Appropriateness: moods appropriate vs. cognitions appropriate) between subjects design. We manipulated mood by having participants recall either a negative or positive event (e.g., McFarland et al., 2002). Participants were either chosen on their moods (i.e., they rated their moods before making consumer judgments) or distracted from their moods (i.e., they completed a distraction task before making judgments). Perceived appropriateness was manipulated by having participants read either that using moods to inform consumer judgments is a good strategy or that using cognitions to inform consumer judgments is a good strategy. The consumer judgment task involved rating two products that pretested as being equally perceived as “think” and “feel” products: a camera and a backpack. Participants viewed photographs of both products and rated them in on 9-point likert scales ranging from dislike very much to like very much, unfavorable to favorable, negative to positive, and bad to good. A product evaluation index was created by averaging across these measures ($\alpha=.86$). The interaction between mood, focus, and perceived appropriateness was statistically significant $F(1, 186)=6.77, p <.02$. In particular, participants demonstrated mood congruency only when they were focused on their moods and perceived moods to be appropriate ($M_{positive}=6.07$ and $M_{negative}=5.19$, $t(186)=2.54, p <.02$).

1Manipulation checks in study 1 and 2 were successful.
Study 2 utilized product type to manipulate perceived appropriateness. In study 2 mood and focus were manipulated as in study 1. To manipulate perceived appropriateness, we selected products that differed in terms of whether people believed that moods or cognitions were most useful for evaluating them. In a pretest we asked participants a) whether it was more appropriate to use “emotions” or “thoughts” to evaluate each product and b) whether their own evaluation of the product was more based on “feelings” or more “logical/objective” information. We identified two “think” products (a pen and Newsweek magazine) and two “feel” products (a chocolate bar and People magazine). The pen and chocolate bar, as well as the two magazines were matched on stated price in order to control for the effects of differential price perceptions. Participants were presented with photos of each product (with think and feel products counterbalanced) and then asked to complete the same evaluations as in study 1. The 3-way interaction between mood, focus, and product type (as a repeated measure) was significant, F(1, 90)=10.13, p<.005. Once again, mood congruency only emerged when participants were focused on their mood states and when using moods to inform judgments was appropriate (i.e., when evaluating feel products; M\text{positive}=6.49 and M\text{negative}=5.68, t(90)=2.09, p<.05). Significant mood congruency effects were not exhibited in any other conditions.

The preceding studies reveal an important nuance regarding the influence of moods on consumer judgment. When it is considered appropriate to allow moods to influence judgments, those focused on their moods are more likely than those not focused on their moods to rely on their feelings when making judgments. We also provide evidence that, for certain products, it may be perceived as appropriate to use moods to inform judgments, whereas for other products it may be deemed inappropriate to use moods to inform judgments. In addition, advertisers may want to encourage consumers to perceive it to be appropriate to use positive moods when evaluating their own products, or to perceive it to be appropriate to use negative moods when evaluating a competitor’s product.

How Affect Influences Choice: An Investigation of the Comparison Processes
Catherine Yeung, National University of Singapore
Cheng Qiu, National University of Singapore

Extended Abstract
Research has shown that consumers’ affective experience can influence their evaluations of products (e.g., Adaval 2001; Pham 1998). While we know that affect can influence consumers’ absolute judgments of products, we are less clear about how it can influence consumers’ comparisons and choices among products. Consider a consumer who is choosing among a number of options, and assume that s/he receives information on each of these options one by one. Would affect influence evaluations of all these options in a similar way and to a similar extent, and hence have no net effect on choice? Alternatively, would affect influence evaluations of only one of the options, and lead to changes of his/her choice? If this is the case, which particular one will be influenced? Our research suggests that this would depend on the point of time (during the comparative judgment process) at which consumers start evaluating the options in the choice set.

In one case, consumers may begin their evaluations on receiving information on the first option. In this instance, affect is likely to influence evaluations of this first option, but not the ones that are encountered subsequently. This is due to two reasons. First, consumers are likely to form an initial impression of a product spontaneously based on their affect when they encounter the product (Pham, Cohen, Pracejus, and Hughes 2001; Yeung and Wyer 2004). Consequently, affect can influence their impressions of this option. Second, according to previous findings on affect attribution (see Pham 2004 for a review), once individuals have attributed their affect to one source (the first option), they are less likely to attribute this affect to other sources (the second and the third options). Based on these arguments, we propose that consumers’ affect is likely to have a positive impact on their liking of the first option that they encounter, and hence a positive impact on the choice share of this option.

In a second case, consumers may not start evaluating the options until after they have received information on all the options in a choice set. In this instance, their affect will be attributed to the last option instead of the preceding ones. As such, it will have a positive impact on their liking and choices of the last option.

We further suggest that the point of time at which consumers start evaluating the options would change as a function of choice set characteristics. In choosing among options that do not have any differentiating features but only differ in global aesthetic aspects, consumers tend to form a spontaneous impression of each option upon receiving information on the options, and hence the first option being evaluated would be the first option that they encounter (Yeung and Wyer 2004). However, in choosing among options that have certain differentiating feature(s), consumers may feel a need to delay their judgments until they have seen information on all the options, and hence the first option being evaluated would be the last option that they encounter (Houston, Sherman, and Baker 1989; Mantel and Kardes 1999). In either case, we predict that affect will have a positive impact on their liking of the first option being evaluated, and hence a positive impact on the choice share of this option. More specifically, consumers in a happy mood would be more likely to choose this option than those in an unhappy mood. Three experiments were conducted to test these predictions.

**Experiment 1.** We examined the influence of affect on choices between two options which did not have any differentiating features but only differed in global aesthetic aspects. We induced participants’ mood by asking them to write a piece of happy or unhappy personal experience. Then they moved on to the second (ostensibly unrelated) task where they saw pictures of two mango-flavored desserts sequentially. After that, participants indicated their choices between the options and also their absolute judgments of the options. Consistent with our predictions, the choice share of the first option was higher when participants were in a positive mood than when they were in a negative mood (68.97% vs. 38.46%; p<.05). The data on absolute judgments of the two options confirmed that participants had a higher evaluation of the first option when they were happy than when they were unhappy (p<.05); whereas the two groups did not differ in their evaluations of the second option (p>.50).

However, one might argue that, as dessert tends to elicit positive affective reactions, participants’ negative extraneous affect might not be perceived as a genuine affective response to the dessert and hence should not have an effect on choices of desserts. Instead, the low
choice share of the first option under the negative mood condition could be due to the high choice share of the second option, which, in turn, was driven by a recency effect. This alternative explanation is addressed in experiment 2.

Experiment 2. We investigated a three-option choice context in order to disentangle between the mood effect explanation and the recency effect explanation. If the change of choice share was due to an effect of mood, this change would be reflected in the choice share of the first option. However, if the change of choice share was due to a recency effect, it would be reflected in the choice share of the third (i.e., last) option. The results lend support to the mood effect explanation. That is, participants in a positive mood were more likely to choose the first option than those in a negative mood. Choices of the last option did not differ across the two mood conditions. Moreover, the absolute judgments data show that the two groups differed in their evaluations of the first option, but not in their evaluations of the ones that they encountered subsequently.

Experiment 3. In experiments 1 and 2, the first option that participants encountered was presumably the starting point of comparative judgments. To further investigate the mechanism through which affect influences choice, we manipulated the time at which participants started to evaluate the options in experiment 3. The procedure of experiment 3 was essentially the same as experiment 2. However, we delayed the starting point of comparative judgments by asking participants to choose among desserts that differ in flavor (which is presumably a differentiating feature for desserts). We predict that affect would influence choices of this last option in much the same way as it influenced choices of the first option in experiments 1 and 2. We found a marginally significant relationship between mood and choice (p=.067). Consistent with our predictions, participants in a positive mood evaluated the last option significantly higher than those in a negative mood and were more likely to choose the last option (46.3% vs. 26.9%; p<.05).

In combination, experiments 1-3 suggest that, the point at which consumers’ affect is incorporated into a comparison process depends on the starting point of the process. In any case, affect is incorporated into the first evaluation people make, regardless of whether this evaluation is made with reference to the first option or the last option from a choice set.

References
How Do Consumer Targets Perceive and Respond to Brand Agents in Persuasion Attempts?

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Many advances of the persuasion knowledge model have focused upon people in selling functions as agents in a persuasion episode. A major facet that remains under researched is our understanding of brands as agents. This paper addresses this gap by examining consumer beliefs about brands as agents of persuasion. Depth interview data show how target perceptions of agents can be more complex and their responses less resistant than previous conceptualizations. Consumer targets can perceive brand agents as representing, offering, reaching out, getting the word, and making do; and they can respond by defending, congratulating, choosing, and getting suckered.

How do consumer targets perceive and respond to brand agents in persuasion attempts?

In their seminal article, Friestad and Wright (1994) began to explore the nature of consumers’ taken for granted understandings of how persuasion agents attempt to influence them in the marketplace. Although they recognized that agents were not necessarily people in selling functions, many advances since have been situated in such settings [e.g., a salesclerk making a sale (Campbell and Kirmani 2000), a retailer convincing customers “to spend more money very soon” (Brown and Krishna 2004, 532)]. Recently, Kirmani and Campbell (2004) consolidated and extended our understanding of consumers’ understandings of salespeople as persuasion agents. A major facet of persuasion knowledge that remains under researched, however, is our understanding of brands as persuasion agents.

This paper begins to address this gap by examining consumers’ perceptions of how brands attempt to persuade and how they themselves respond to these attempts. This is important because unless we do so, we risk overlooking differences in consumers’ beliefs about how brands as compared with salespeople attempt to persuade. As well, this paper contributes larger conversations about how persuasion knowledge is an invariable resource (Friestad and Wright 1994; Kirmani and Campbell 2004) and how consumer responses to brand actions vary as a function of their relationship with the brand (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Aggarwal 2004).

Method

Depth interviews on the general topic of brands were conducted with five participants (Jack, Jill, Joe, Jon, and Jay), and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were first coded individually, and after grouping observations and identifying themes, the process of comparison and refinements was repeated until a coherent account of the data was achieved (Charmaz 2000; Strauss and Corbin 1998).

Findings

Brands as agents

Five dimensions emerge in participants’ perceptions of brands as agents: 1) agents represent, 2) agents offer, 3) agents reach out, 4) agents get the word, and 5) agents make do. It is worth noting that not all brands are discussed along these dimensions. For example, brands described as “imitators” and “least luxurious” are rarely talked about along these dimensions.

In seeing agents as representing, participants drop names and reference stereotypes. For example, on Diesel, Joe exclaims “GINO, you know, Italian, STM [local catholic school], ‘98 civic lowered with rims and beads, spiky hair perfect to the twist!’” As well, participants see agents as offering them symbolic connotations that might otherwise be inaccessible. For example, Jill notes how Club Monaco helps portray her as having class and cosmopolitanism, and how without it, she would risk looking like a “little hoochie” or “country.” Participants talk about agents as “reaching out” for them, and they express belief that agents get the word and teach them about styles and about what gets hot”. For example, Joe talks excitedly about how Tommy Hilfiger “180 degrees reversed their marketing” to reach him as a youth, and Jill explains how Club Monaco “looks at all the runway shows, everything and whatever’s hip at the time” and then gets this out to “the younger generation”. Lastly, participants see agents as making do with what already exists in “the system, the way society works”, and speak easily of branded placements in movies and video games. Jay remarks how “they do that all the time…if you watch your favorite sitcom, again the guy wears certain clothes, sits on certain furniture, whatever, like all that’s been placed there.”

Consumers as targets

Four dimensions are identified in participants’ perceptions of themselves as targets: 1) targets defend, 2) targets congratulate, 3) targets choose, and 4) targets get suckered. Again, it is worth noting that not all brands are discussed along these dimensions, instead these are often brands that participants like.

Although participants often talk about brand agents as “sneaky”, they are quick to defend when asked to elaborate. For example, on criticisms and Hugo Boss, Jack concludes “problem is that’s the nature of the game…they’re in the market where everybody else is doing it, so if they don’t do it, they’ll get left in the dust”, and adds “you shouldn’t need to have certain clothing to have more confidence, but the reality of the situation is…it gives you that nice, warm feeling inside.” Sometimes, agents are congratulated for being “sly” in persuasion attempts. In talking about Rocawear in music videos, Jay commends “a music video’s more subversive right…it’s clever right, an effective way to reach your target.” As well, participants often stress their choice by emphasizing product specifics and contrasting with others. For example, Joe repeatedly contrasts himself from others who are “into” his music: “I would say that 98% of people who like hip hop don’t like Guess”, and even when he retraces Guess back to a hip hop song, he is very adamant: “Honestly to tell you the truth why I bought Guess, because I heard it on a [Nas] song…[So might others?] No, not really, Guess is not very popular in that sense, where


like Puff Daddy wears that or like, this guy wears that.” Lastly, participants talk about themselves as being taken in by agent attempts at persuasion, terms such as “sucker” and “slave” come up repeatedly in interviews. For example, on Ecko, Jon notes how he “hopped on the bandwagon” and later, in talking about the prevalence of branded placements, he remarks “Oh clearly I’m a slave. [What do you mean?] Just cuz’ I am, know what I mean, you see a poster, a commercial, a radio show, you say ‘I want to buy that’. I don’t know why.”

Closing
This paper shows how consumer target perceptions of brands as agents can be more complex and their responses less resistant than previous conceptualizations. Targets can perceive agents as representing, offering, reaching out, getting the word, and making do; and they can respond by defending, congratulating, choosing, and getting suckered. A sensible next step is to probe conditions that cultivate such beliefs.

References

Attributional Processes in the Case of Product Failures–The Role of the Corporate Brand as Buffer
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Michaela Waenke, University of Basel
Andreas Herrmann, University of St. Gallen
Jakub Samochowiec , University of Basel

A coherent brand architecture is to enhance impact, clarity, synergy, and leverage among a firm’s brands (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Within this context, the organizing structure between the corporate brand and the product brands is of considerable interest for marketing and corporate management alike. Extending the ideas of what good brand architecture should do, we argue that a superordinate corporate brand can serve a buffer function by protecting its subordinate brands in case of a negative occurrence.

Attributional theorists argue that individuals attempt to develop a realistic understanding of the causes of events, such as why a product has failed (Folkes, 1984). Accordingly, people are inclined to find reasons why something negative has happened and who is responsible for the damage. We suggest that the brand architecture influences consumers’ judgment of responsibility (Weiner, 1995) by indicating the level of influence one brand has over another. The closer the endorsement by the corporate brand for the product brand, the closer the perceived influence of the former over the latter. A strong endorsement also indicates that the company guides the decisions and actions of the endorsed product brand, making the former partly responsible for the latter’s actions if things go wrong. Consequently, the corporate brand takes some of the blame for mishaps and thereby attenuates the negative effects for the product brand.

H1: A strong (weak) endorsement of the product brand by the corporate brand leads to less (more) perceived responsibility of the product brand in case of a failure.

The deferred responsibility to the endorsing corporate entity prevents damage to the attitude toward the product brand. Judgment of responsibility serves as the mediating variable for the effect of brand endorsement on brand attitudes.

H2: A strong (weak) endorsement of the product brand by the corporate brand results in a less (more) negative attitude towards the product brand in case of a failure.

H3: The effect of brand endorsement on product brand attitude is mediated by a consumer’s judgment of responsibility.

We conducted two experiments to test our hypotheses. In study 1 we manipulated the endorsement of a product brand (strong vs weak endorsement) by a superordinate corporate brand to find support for hypothesis 1. In study 2 we tested hypotheses 2 and 3 by means of a 2 (brand endorsement: strong vs weak) x 2 (information valence: neutral vs negative) factorial design.
Results
The results of our first study which was conducted among 39 student subjects indicated that the strength of the corporate brand endorsement moderated the perceived responsibility in case of a product failure. Responsibility was judged on a scale from -5 (product brand completely responsible) to 5 (corporation completely responsible). The responsibility of the corporation for a failure by the product brand was judged significantly greater when the corporate endorser was prominently displayed in an advertisement than when it was hidden in the corner of the ad (mean\textsubscript{endostrong}=0.25, mean\textsubscript{endoweak}=1.88; F=4.1, p<.05). Further support came from the manipulation of the brand name similarity. The corporation was perceived more responsible when the corporate brand and product brand names were similar than when the brand names were different (mean\textsubscript{endostrong}=-1.37, mean\textsubscript{endoweak}=3.59; F=6.3, p<.02).

In study 2 we presented 77 student subjects with an advertisement of a product brand for sporting goods and a fictitious news article. The advertisement served as the main manipulation of brand endorsement by either prominently displaying the corporate brand endorser or by hiding it in the corner of the ad. The news article reported either on flaws in products (broken zippers and faulty shock absorbers) or on a neutral event (brand presents its new collection) thereby manipulating the valence of the information. In the strong endorsement condition the corporate name was reinforced in the news article but not in the weak endorsement condition.

In support of hypothesis 2, we found a significant 2-way interaction of information valence and endorsement strength on the attitude toward the product brand (F=14.8, p<.001). The attitude toward the product brand was negatively affected by the failure story when the corporate brand endorsement was weak (mean\textsubscript{negative}=2.8, mean\textsubscript{neutral}=4.07). In the strong endorsement condition the corporate brand seemed to have worked as a buffer by taking on the responsibility for the failure (mean\textsubscript{negative}=4.18, mean\textsubscript{neutral}=4.10). Also, the product brand was perceived less responsible for the failure when the corporate endorsement was strong than when it was weak thereby replicating the findings from study 1 (mean\textsubscript{endostrong}=0.22, mean\textsubscript{endoweak}=-3.32; F=31.0, p<.001).

Mediational analyses (Baron & Kenny, 1986) suggest that judgment of responsibility served as a mediator of attitude towards the product brand. Brand endorsement was a significant predictor of brand attitude (p<.001) and brand endorsement predicted judgment of responsibility (p<.001). Regressing both, the potential mediator and the independent variable, on attitude, the impact of brand endorsement was attenuated (from p<.001 to p<.10).

Our findings extend the previous research on the role of superordinate brands. They raise new questions on how to incorporate the buffer role into the theoretical models of the effects of brand architecture and provide practical implications. Strengthening the corporate brand as is currently en vogue in marketing may provide an unforeseen benefit when it comes to coping with product failure.

References

Protection Motivation Theory—An Additive or a Multiplicative Model?
Magdalena Cismaru, University of Regina

Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) Variables
According to PMT, four factors influence the persuasiveness of health communications: vulnerability, severity, efficacy (response and self), and costs. Vulnerability refers to one’s subjective perception of the risk of contracting a condition or leaving a condition untreated. Severity refers to feelings concerning the seriousness of the condition. Response efficacy refers to the person’s belief that the recommended behaviors are effective in reducing or eliminating the danger. Self-efficacy refers to the person’s belief that he or she has the ability to perform the recommended behaviors. Finally, costs represent the sum of all barriers to engaging in the recommended behavior.

Variables’ Importance
All PMT variables were found to have an impact on persuasion, though not equally so. Indeed, the results of a meta-analytic review (Milne, Sheeran, and Orbell, 2000) show that costs and self-efficacy have the highest impact on persuasion measures.

Interactions Effects
Literature shows significant two-way interaction effects suggesting that costs influence the effect of self and response efficacy on persuasion measures, whereas self-efficacy and response-efficacy influence the effect of perceived vulnerability. Further, vulnerability was found to modify the effect of severity, whereas severity was shown to influence the effect of response efficacy.

Additive versus Multiplicative
There is disagreement among researchers as to whether the combined effect of PMT variables on persuasion follows a multiplicative model or an additive one. A multiplicative model assumes that no protection motivation would be aroused if the value of any of the components would be zero and expects a significant interaction effect among all variables. An additive relationship assumes that even when one of the predictor variables is 0, the persuasion could be different than zero and the combination of high levels of the variables produces the highest persuasion scores.
Proposed Combinatorial Rules and Empirical Evidence

Rogers (1975) predicted that perceived vulnerability, severity, and response efficacy combine multiplicatively to influence intentions. He expected significant main effects for each variable, and two-way and three-way interaction effects among these three variables. Few studies provided support for this model (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

A second model proposed by Rogers (1983) posited an additive relationship within each appraisal process and second-order interaction effects between the threat and coping variables. This model has also failed to find empirical support (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Weinstein (1993) proposed a weighted additive model, implying that the PMT variables are not equal in importance. Although this model has not been empirically tested, it makes a valid attempt to mathematically describe the relationships among the PMT variables. However, this model does not account for the numerous interactions among PMT variables that have been recently reported in the literature and described in the present review.

Proposed Model

We propose a new model in which the decision-maker does not equally and simultaneously considers all the PMT variables, but rather subjectively ranks the variables based on his or her own perception of their importance and sets minimum cut-offs for each. The person then starts by evaluating the most important variable, and decides not to follow the recommendations if the level of that variable does not meet the minimum cut-off point. If the variable meets the minimum cut-off point, then the next most important variable is evaluated and the overall effect will follow a weighted additive rule.

Costs were found to have the highest impact on persuasion (together with self-efficacy). In addition, costs are certain and represent a loss to the person. Consequently, it is likely that cost information would be considered as the most important among the PMT variables. When decision makers evaluate costs, they will set a maximum level above which they will not consider performing the behaviour (regardless of the other variables’ levels). If the costs are considered reasonable (below the cut-off level), thus self-efficacy is reasonable high, we expect people to evaluate the other PMT variables’ levels. Again, if the level of any of the variables is under a particular minimal level, the person decides not to follow the recommendations, following an initial elimination-by-aspects rule. In the situation in which all the PMT variables pass the cut-off levels, the general decision rule followed would be a weighted additive one.

Our model is based on the assumption that people are exposed to numerous health messages advocating changes in behavior. They choose not to adopt many of these behaviors, but may consider adopting a few. When exposed to fear-arousing health information advocating changes in behavior, people look for reasons to avoid adopting the recommended behavior. This proposed model thus, posits a combination of strategies frequently observed in the decision-making literature (Bettman, Luce, and Payne, 1998) with an initial use of the elimination by aspects rule to reduce the number of health messages considered for adoption, followed by a compensatory strategy such as the weighted additive rule to select from those remaining.

We believe our proposed model helps explain the inconsistent findings in the literature regarding the presence or the absence of one variable’s impact on persuasion and will also provide insight into the decision making process involved when deciding whether or not to follow a particular recommended health behavior.

### TABLE 1

<table>
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<th>Intention</th>
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<th>Subsequent Behavior</th>
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### FIGURE 1

Proposed Relationships Between PMT Variables

Cost (COST) → Response Efficacy (RE) → Severity (SEV)
The Devil You Know: Effects of Suspicion of an Information Source’s Identity

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Pam Scholder Ellen, Georgia State University

The sheer number of information sources available for search and choice comparisons has exploded with technology. With the growth of “buzz marketing” and organized “word-of-mouth” tactics such as “alpha pups” and “leaners,” marketers are intentionally using strategies to influence consumers that mask their true identity. As a result, the lines between marketer and non-marketer controlled are increasingly blurred. Without knowing the identity of the source, consumers may have problems assessing self-interest, and in turn, may discount credibility and recommendations. Rather than “gaining” the credibility often attributed to true word-of-mouth sources, Fein (1996) suggests that, when suspicion is raised, the “individual actively entertains multiple plausible rival hypotheses about the motives and genuineness of a person’s behavior” (p. 1165).

Sources explicitly identified as marketers may allow confident attributions of intent, and consumers can then factor such self-interest into their decision-making. Information provided by sources with expected self-interests in certain outcomes may naturally evoke coping mechanisms based on their persuasion knowledge (Friestad and Wright 1994). In personal sales contexts, perceived self-interest has been shown to moderate the effectiveness of argument strength and perceived expertise (Wiener, LaForge, and Goolsby 1990).

Sources appearing in identified “consumer” web forums would be expected to be judged synonymously with other forms of non-marketer controlled sources. If a posting in a web forum, is suspected to be authored by a marketer, instead of being viewed like other identified marketing sources, the suspicion of deception may result in even more negative thoughts than self-interested sources because of uncertainty.

The purpose of this study was to examine the willingness to rely on persuasive sources which vary on identified self-interests across traditional and web-based forums. Specifically, we examine the effects of suspicion of self-interested motives on perceived credibility of the sources and likelihood of relying on them for advice.

Method

An online survey presented a purchase scenario. Respondents were asked to imagine they planned to buy a digital camera as a gift. Though they had identified four models of camera in their price range, they were told that they could not discriminate between them so they sought additional input. Four sources of information were described (abbreviated descriptions below):

A **salesperson at a large electronics store** has gone through extensive training on digital cameras in addition to 15 years experience in the business.

A **website’s Buying Guide** has ads for electronics companies and direct links to various retailers. Its Buying Guide lets you identify up to five products and it provides a “best in class” recommendation.

A **customer in the store** who overhears your conversation and offers personal testimony about his recent camera purchase since he’d looked at the same four models.

A **person in a chatroom** who says he has 15 years of business experience with all types of cameras and experience with the four specific cameras in question.
The respondent was told that each source recommends a different camera so they will have to make a decision based solely on the sources since they must buy the gift immediately.

Each source was then rated on their expertise, believability, trustworthiness and interest in helping them make the best choice on a nine-point scale. They were then asked which recommendation they would be most likely and least likely to take. For the latter, they were asked why they would be least likely to follow this recommendation.

**Results**

Respondents were 140 undergraduate students. The sample was 54.1% female and 90.1% spent four or more hours per week on the internet.

In terms of interest in helping the customer to make the best decision, the chatroom advisor was rated statistically significantly lower (mean=5.09) than all three other sources (Customer=6.63, Web Guide=6.01, Salesperson=6.04), confirming expectations that suspicion led to lower ratings than those with admitted self-interest. While the salesperson and chatroom advisor were described as having equivalent expertise experience, the chatroom advisor was rated statistically lower (mean=5.48) on expertise than the salesperson (mean=6.81), and was even statistically lower than the store customer (mean=5.90) or the Buying Guide (mean=6.47).

When asked whose recommendation they would most likely take, 31.4% said the website buying guide and 30.0% said the customer, while 25.7% said the electronics’ salesperson. In terms of the recommendation they would be least likely to take, 51.4% said the chatroom advisor. The verbatims for those respondents showed that 68% of the responses doubted the chatroom advisor’s credibility, some expressing the need to see advisors face-to-face to be able to judge their credibility. Another 11% suggested that the person probably worked for the manufacturer. Interestingly 12% saw the recommendation as part of a possible joke, prank or fraud.

This provides some limited support to Fein’s arguments about the effects of suspicion. Consumers seem to be suspicious of sources who may be concealing their true identity and therefore their self-interest, rating them lower than self-interested sources.

This study suggests that marketers should proceed with caution in using online forums. Consumers are becoming more sophisticated in these forums where identity is less verifiable, leading to suspicion. The very “hint” of deceit may be sufficient to elicit significant consumer backlash. The heyday of marketers being able to “masquerade” as consumers to gain greater influence and avoid coping strategies may be past. The suspicion in this study seemed to be limited to the online forums.

**References**


**Product Placement: Developing Concepts, Constructs and Measures**

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Product placement practice has grown in scope and volume, and expenditure now exceeds one billion dollars per annum. Publicity and public concern is also increasing. Placement research however has not kept pace with these trends. Effects-based research is minimal and findings across studies diverge. Most researchers have adopted traditional advertising effect measures, however placement is qualitatively different to interruptive advertising. Whilst theoretical discussion is ensuing, it remains minimal. Before viable research can emerge, sound concepts and constructs must be developed. This paper presents a discussion and resolution of conceptual issues.

**The Effect of Perceived Brand Name–Logo Coherence on Brand Attitudes**

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**Extended Abstract**

This research investigates how the perceived coherence between brand name and logo affects brand attitudes and how this relationship is influenced by consumer-level and marketer-controlled variables (Keller, 1993, 1998). The topic is an important one since brand names and logos are common means to communicate brand identity to consumers (Aaker 1996; Henderson and Cote 1998). However, if these brand elements are incoherent, incongruity may occur at the brand association level (Keller 1993). Therefore, the coherence between brand name and logo is crucial to the development of a strong brand identity. Even though the coherence between brand names and their logos has been recognized as an important research topic, little systematic research has investigated it yet (Henderson and Cote 1998; Henderson, Giese, and Cote 2003; Klink 2003).

The purpose of this research is to study a main effect (the impact of brand name-logo coherence on brand attitudes), its potential moderators and its boundary conditions. To do so, the primary theoretical frameworks we rely on are Keller’s (1993) consumer-based
brand equity model, research on self-brand connections (Edson Escalas and Bettman 2003; Edson Escalas 2004) and preference for consistency (Cialdini, Trost, and Newsom 1995). The main rationale is that consumers will favor brand logos that are coherent with the brand’s current image and that this preference is affected by several consumer-level and marketer-controlled variables.

The constructs whose relationships are investigated in a first study are perceptions of coherent brand logo actions, self-brand connections (SBC) and preference for consistency (PFC). Specifically, the following hypotheses are tested:

H1: Attitudes toward a brand action that increases coherence between brand name and logo will be more positive than attitudes toward a brand action that decreases coherence between brand name and logo.

H2: Consumers with a high PFC will have more positive attitudes toward a brand action that increases coherence between brand name and logo than consumers with a low PFC.

H3: Consumers with a strong SBC will have more positive attitudes toward a brand action that increases coherence between brand name and logo than consumers with a weak SBC.

H4: Consumers with a strong SBC and a high PFC will have more positive attitudes toward a brand action that increases coherence between brand name and logo than consumers with a strong SBC and a low PFC.

An experiment was conducted to test these initial hypotheses. A multinational cell phone brand was chosen as the stimulus brand for two reasons. First, most students know the brand and own a cell phone. Second, cell phone brands usually have a distinct positioning and the brand to be investigated possesses distinctive characteristics in terms of brand name and brand marks. Stimuli and instructions were pre-tested with 15 students. Eighty-nine undergraduate students aged between 19 and 23 participated in the main study, which comprised two separate parts presented to participants as ostensibly unrelated surveys. In the first part, personal characteristics were collected including the seven-item SBC and the 18-item PFC scales (Cialdini et al. 1995; Edson Escalas 2004). In the second part, a 2 x 2 x 2 between-participants experiment was conducted (incoherent/coherent logo with brand; weak/strong self-brand connection; low/high preference for consistency). Participants were presented the current brand logo and were asked to imagine a new logo that would be (in)coherent with the name and current positioning of the brand. After time for reflection, they were asked to write down the characteristics of such a logo and why these characteristics could improve cohesiveness with the brand compared to the current logo. Participants also had the possibility to draw a new logo if they wished to do so. Finally, they were asked to rate their attitudes toward a brand action (three items) that would actually introduce a new logo in the market based on participants’ recommendations.

A 2 X 2 X 2 ANOVA was conducted with attitude toward brand action as the dependent variable and logo coherence, SBC and PFC as between-participant factors. Low/high groups on the SBC and PFC scales were constituted using a conventional median split. The main effect of logo coherence was significant ($F(1, 81)=47.78, p<.01$), whereby participants rated a brand action introducing a coherent logo with the brand more favorably ($M=4.67$) than an incoherent logo ($M=2.79$). This result supports hypothesis 1 and suggest that brand name–logo coherence matters to consumers. The three-way interaction between logo coherence, SBC and PFC was also significant ($F(1, 81)=4.08, p<.05$). A planned contrast revealed that participants with a strong self-brand connection and a high preference for consistency had more positive attitudes toward a brand action that increased coherence between brand name and logo ($M=5.04$) than participants with a strong self-brand connection and a low preference for consistency ($M=3.85, F(1, 81)=4.23, p<.05$). These results support hypothesis 4 and suggest that the effect of the two psychological difference measures on brand attitudes is strongly intertwined.

As a next step, a series of experiments are projected aiming at testing the effect of additional moderators on the basic relationship of hypothesis 1. These include other consumer-level factors such as brand ownership and but also marketer-controlled factors such as perceived initial congruence between brand and logo, stability of the logo over time and the social visibility of the brand. Specifically, we expect consumers actually owning a product of the brand to judge coherent brand logos more favorably than consumers who do not own any product from the brand. We also expect that brand name–logo congruence will be important for brands that frequently (vs. rarely) change logos over time; and for brands that are highly (vs. weakly) visible in social interactions.

In a broad perspective for future research, our conceptual framework may also extend to brand elements other that logo (slogans, sponsoring, public relations etc.) It would also be interesting to relate our framework to brand extensions research (e.g. Aaker and Keller 1990; Sanjay and Sood 2002). Whether the same factors influence the effect of other brand elements on attitudes as those hypothesized in this research is certainly an interesting question for future inquiry.

References


Explaining the Negative Spillover Effect in Target Marketing: Automatic Social Comparisons that Threaten Collective Self-Esteem
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The present research proposes that previously inconsistent findings on the NSE in consumer behavior work can be explained by accounting for the unconscious impact of activated negative stereotypes among non-targeted consumers. More importantly, it appears that (for those consumers highly identified with a particular group membership) this activation occurs even when prompted by cues that are largely irrelevant to the particular stereotype in question. While this finding is troubling, a particular way to mitigate the risk of NSE by advertisers refers to their use of specific regulatory focus manipulations, such as execution variables that put consumers in a state of promotion (strategic eagerness).

Effective Counter Persuasion: Creating Lasting Resistance to a Stronger Opponent
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Two studies investigated a counterpersuasive strategy that can be effective for a communicator facing a rival who can deliver his or her message many more times than the communicator. This strategy incorporated: 1) strong counterarguments against the claims of the target message and 2) a mnemonic link between the target message and these counterarguments. Results demonstrated that the combination of counterarguments and mnemonic links not only produced greater resistance to the target ad than a counterad that lacked mnemonic links, but it also undermined the target ad more strongly as the number of exposures to the target ad increased.

The Role of Mindfulness in Consumer Behavior
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Since its initial publication by Langer and her colleagues (Langer 1977; Langer, Blank and Chanowitz 1978), the psychological construct of mindfulness has gained increased influence in the field of social psychology (e.g., Martin 1997; Brown and Ryan 2003). In this research, we provide (1) a general review and description of the mindfulness construct, (2) a discussion of how mindfulness can be used in consumer research, (3) results from an advertising persuasion study where mindfulness is shown to moderate persuasion routes, and (4) an overall discussion of our on-going research program as well as further research areas for this construct.

Mindfulness refers to “a state of conscious awareness characterized by active distinction drawing that leaves the individual open to novelty and sensitive to both context and perspective” (Langer 1992). There are four main features to mindfulness: greater sensitivity to one’s context or environment, more openness to new information, greater aptitude at cognitive categorization, and enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving (Langer 1989). As such, mindfulness is distinct from other important psychological constructs which tend to solely apply to issues that are central or salient to an individual. In contrast, mindfulness speaks more about one’s general aptitude to notice and deal with what is new. Studies between mindfulness and other cognition, personality and social psychology constructs have shown that mindfulness should be seen more as a cognitive style than just a specific cognitive ability or a personality trait (Sternberg, 2000), and therefore it should seen as existing at the boundary of personality and cognition, and can used both as a state or trait variable.

This very brief description should be enough to outline the potential relevance of the mindfulness construct in a vast array of consumer behavior issues, such as consumer decision making, marketing communication, persuasion, and so on. However, a review of articles published in the leading consumer research journals reveals that this construct has been largely overlooked by consumer research scholars.
This lacuna is unfortunate as we believe that mindfulness can provide valuable insights into the study of consumption. First, when used as an individual difference measure (trait variable), mindfulness can be a valuable tool to segment consumers into groups, and can be used in theory testing and development. Second, when used as a state variable, it can provide insights on how contexts, marketing interventions, education and message elements might influence one’s level of mindfulness and therefore consumption behavior. Third, we believe that mindfulness can provide new insights into consumer cognition, judgment and decision making, and especially help us better understand issues such as heuristic processing, selective perception, routine behavior etc. Fourth, because it has been shown that mindfulness can be increased through training or other interventions, it seems that there is a direct consumer welfare implication as well, as increased mindfulness should help consumers make better decisions and achieve improved wellbeing.

To illustrate the potential role of mindfulness, we present a study on how mindfulness might affect persuasion efforts. In particular, we are interested in the role of mindfulness in the well established dual process models of attitude formation and change (e.g., Elaboration Likelihood Model, Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Heuristic-Systematic Model, Chaiken 1987). In this context, we also wish to contrast mindfulness with need for cognition (NFC), as NFC has also been shown to moderate the routes to persuasion, and on the surface, the two construct might appear quite related. However, we also believe that there are fundamental differences between the two. For instance, mindfulness is characterized by high level of conscious awareness, sensitivity to context change, openness to new information, ability to create new categories in cognition, and awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving (characteristics not necessarily shared by high NFC individuals). In persuasion contexts, where both motivation (e.g., NFC, mindfulness) and ability (e.g., expertise) to process a claim have been shown to determine persuasion routes and outcomes, we propose that NFC and mindfulness operate differently. Figure 1 shows how the two processes can differ. One key difference is that we believe that high mindful individual will attempt to process a claim, even if the information is outside of their typical expertise.

More specifically, we hypothesize:

H1: Low mindful consumers and low NFC consumers both tend to employ peripheral/heuristics routes in processing persuasive messages (regardless of expertise).

H2: Experts who are high in mindfulness or/and high in NFC will tend to employ central/systematic routes in processing persuasive messages.

H3: Novices high in NFC will tend to employ peripheral/heuristics routes in processing persuasive messages, whereas novices high in mindfulness will tend to employ central/systematic routes in processing persuasive messages.

A 2 (NFC/Mindfulness: high vs. low) X 2 (Argument Quality: strong vs. weak) X 2 (Expertise: high vs. low) experiment was designed. 228 undergraduates participated in this study. Participants were shown a series of print ads, in which a target ad for a digital camera (adapted from previous advertising studies) had been imbedded. We varied the product messages (strong/weak arguments, a between-subject manipulation) in the target ad, and took individual difference measures of mindfulness, NFC, and expertise (within-subject measures). Groups (based on median splits) were created for each of the individual difference measures.

Even though our results confirmed that mindfulness and NFC are significantly correlated (r=0.49, p<.001), these results also establish that these two constructs are distinct (only 25% common variance). Further, we were able to confirm that the two constructs do not serve

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FIGURE 1
The Contrasting Roles of Need-For-Cognition and Mindfulness in Persuasion

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This diagram illustrates the contrasting roles of need-for-cognition (NFC) and mindfulness in persuasion. It shows how different routes to persuasion are employed depending on the level of mindfulness and NFC. The diagram is divided into two sections, each representing a different route to persuasion: peripheral/heuristic processing and central/systematic processing. The diagram highlights how novices high in NFC tend to use peripheral/heuristic processing, whereas novices high in mindfulness tend to use central/systematic processing. Experts, on the other hand, use central/systematic processing regardless of NFC or mindfulness.
the same function in persuasion. Analyses of variance for product evaluation (attitude toward the product) and cognitive responses confirmed our theoretical predictions and allowed us to support hypotheses H1, H2 and H3.

In conclusion, we were able to show in this study that individual differences in NFC and mindfulness lead to significant differences in how consumers respond to persuasive messages. Especially, it is important to note that the introduction of the Mindfulness construct expands our understanding of the routes that lead to persuasion, and outlines routes that were previously deemed unlikely (central processing of a message under low expertise). Future research, however, should investigate further the nature of the processing styles that high mindful novice engage in (e.g., item specific, relational etc.). Also, it would also be important to consider the role of mindfulness in situations where consumers are repeatedly exposed to a message. In these situations, do high mindful consumers notice small change in information more than other consumers do, and are they more likely to update (keep constructing) their attitudes over time (as opposed to retrieving already formed attitudes)? Thus, the next step in our on-going program of research targets longitudinal studies designed to explore how consumers (characterized by mindfulness and NFC respectively) respond differently to multi-exposed messages. These questions can be investigated by exposing respondents to multiple instances of a similar message, with a slight alteration to the message content at a later exposure (for example a change in price), and then showing that this later change gets incorporated in the judgments of the high mindful respondents, but not for high NFC respondents. Also, we believe that this line of research has potential in providing some insights on the constructive vs. retrieval-based perspectives on attitude formation.

References


Identifying the Black Sheep From the Ordinary: Social Categorization and Within Group Deviation in Print Advertisements

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From a social influence perspective, Grier and Deshpande (2001) suggest that academics and practitioners seek to better understand how social context and individual characteristics influence consumer response to marketing communications. By addressing the perceived likeability of spokespersons presented in marketing communications, the factors of social identity will emerge allowing for a better understanding of how social identity strongly impacts consumer receipt of marketing communications. The biggest implication for this research is that marketers will be able to construct their strategy in a manner that not only has homogenous appeal for targeted groups but it appeals to the overall heterogeneous market. The lack of empirical data that addresses the deviant norms expressed by a spokesperson of the ingroup, and how it impacts the recipient’s evaluation is the motivation for our research question: What happens when consumers reject an ad because the spokesperson undermines the ingroup norms? It is suspected that the consumer will garner an unfavorable attitude of the advertisement and the spokesperson based on the salient ingroup norms, and ingroup derogation for the unlikable target will occur.

Social identity theory (SIT) offers a social-psychological perspective of group formations and inter/intragroup relationships. According to SIT, individuals tend to classify themselves and others into various categories, such as religious affiliation, gender, ethnicity, and organizational affiliations. Social identity theory attributes the general form of intergroup behavior such as ethnocentrism, stereotypic intergroup attitudes, and intergroup differentiation to social categorization and self-esteem processes. Where the categories are defined by the prototypical characteristics derived from the group members (Turner 1985). Social categorization serves two functions 1) it cognitively segments and orders the social environment, allowing individuals to defines others around them, and 2) it enables the individual to define himself within the social environment. When members of a particular group differentiate ingroup members from the outgroup, and simultaneously differentiate between specific likable and unlikable ingroup members, the “black sheep effect” occurs. Ingroup members who conform to the ingroup prototype or consistently maintain group norms validate their social identity, and therefore attract favorable reactions. However, in contrast members of the ingroup who do not conform to ingroup norms, exercise deviant (norm undermining) behavior. Participants. One hundred and twenty-three undergraduate students from a major Southeastern University participated as a part of a class requirement.
Participants were exposed to all levels of treatment, and the stimuli were counterbalanced to prevent learning effects. Participants were presented with a booklet of print advertisements for a fictitious brand of digital cameras. After viewing each ad, participants responded to a questionnaire that contained all of the dependent measures. The print stimuli were a series of eight advertisements for a digital camera. All advertisements were identical with the exception of the socially categorized model. The models in the advertisements were chosen from stock photos of non-celebrity models. The order of advertisements was counterbalanced according to the various treatment conditions.

As hypothesized members of the respective socially categorized ethnic group classified themselves more favorably than other groups as a whole. This is consistent with the phenomenon of ingroup favoritism. In addition, the black sheep hypothesis held across all treatments for the respondents in the Caucasian and Asian categories. For Hispanic respondents the black sheep effect was supported except for the evaluation of the Caucasian target. Respondents in the African American category did not exhibit the black sheep effect. They evaluated the deviate ingroup member more favorably than outgroup deviates, which is not in support of the black sheep hypothesis. Additionally, ingroup favoritism was only shown among Asian respondents, thus H1 is supported for that group only. The other three groups evaluated themselves less favorably than members of the outgroup.

Consumer Conflict Management Strategies in Everyday Service Encounters
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The nature of services creates a context in which disagreements between consumers and service providers are likely to occur. A growing body of research has been devoted to complaint behavior in services (e.g., Fornell and Wernerfelt 1987; Goodwin and Ross 1989; Tax, Brown, and Choudhary 1998), but relatively little research focuses on a broader range of conflicts in services. We draw on an established literature of conflict management, to examine conflict behavior in everyday consumer service interactions.

Conflict, defined as an “interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities” (Rahim 2002), has been studied extensively in the context of organizational life (e.g., labor relations) and economic exchange (e.g., channel conflict and buyer/seller negotiations). Rahim (2002) identifies six conditions which are likely to produce conflict: (1) Activity that is incongruent with needs and interests, (2) Incompatibility of behavior, (3) Differences in attitudes and values, (4) Exclusive preferences in joint activities, (5) Contention for limited resources, and (6) Interdependence in the performance of activities. Relating these conditions to the unique characteristics of services, such as intangibility, heterogeneity, and co-production, suggests that many services are likely to generate conflict between provider and customer. However, it is not clear how service providers and consumers manage such conflict.

In general, conflict management strategies refer to the specific behavior patterns one applies in conflict situations (e.g., Pruitt and Rubin 1986; Rahim 1983). Conflict management strategies/styles can be categorized into five types based on one’s level of concern for self and concern for others (e.g., Rahim and Bonoma 1979). These five styles are integrative/problem solving (high concern for self/high concern for other), obliging/accommodating (low self/high other), dominating/contending (high self/low other), avoiding (low self/low other), and compromise (moderate self/moderate other).

Research question 1: What conflict management styles do consumers use in everyday service interactions?

A number of authors have suggested the role of multiple motives in conflict resolution (e.g., Carnevale and Pruitt 1992). Recently, Ohbuchi and his co-authors proposed multiple goal theory (Fukushima and Ohbuchi 1996; Ohbuchi and Tedeschi 1997), which considers social motives, as well as resource (economic) motives, in interpersonal conflicts. Economic exchanges in services involve resource issues (money, time), but also are likely to involve social motives. Ohbuchi and Tedeschi’s (1997) research suggests that in everyday interpersonal conflicts (non-business), social motives are often activated in addition to resource (economic) motives.

Research question 2: In everyday minor conflicts with services providers, are social motives important and are they as important as economic motives?

Fukushima and Ohbuchi (1996) also suggest a relationship between motives and conflict management strategies.

Research question 3: In the resolution of minor conflicts with service providers, are consumers’ resolution tactics related to their motives?

If both social and economic motives are activated in service conflict situations, the choice of resolution strategy is likely to be influenced by the mix (combination) of motives expressed by each customer. Therefore, it would be expected that the level of activation of various motives (profiles) would vary between the different categories of conflict strategies employed.

Research question 4: Does the mix of motives (mean levels of activation) vary across alternative conflict resolution strategies employed?

A study was conducted to examine these research questions. The participants were 70 undergraduate students enrolled in business related courses at a large Midwestern university. Students were given a scenario in which they had been confronted by a video rental store about
a lost rented DVD. They were then asked to respond to a motives questionnaire, followed by an open-ended question about how they would deal with the conflict situation. The student responses to the open-ended question were coded by two independent coders for the presence or absence of four conflict strategies: integrating, obliging, compromising, and dominating. The level of agreement between the coders for each strategy was assessed using Cohen’s Kappa statistic (all>.70). Motives were measured with six-point likert-style scales based on Fukushima and Ohbuchi (1996).

The results suggest that respondents used a number of different conflict management strategies in their attempt to resolve the conflict over the lost DVD. Compromise was the most frequently used strategy (N=26), followed closely by integration ( N=24), and obliging (N=23). Relatively few respondents used a dominating strategy (N=6). The results also indicate that social motives were at least as (two were actually more) important than economic motives. Looking at the means across the motive categories, justice was the most important motive (9.97), followed by relational (8.20), economic (7.80), and identity (7.75), respectively. The relationship between motives and strategies employed was assessed using binary logistic regression. Significant predictors were found for each of the strategies except the integrative strategy. The results suggest that the higher the economic motive the lower the probability of an obliging strategy being used. Similarly, the higher the justice motive, the lower the probability of a dominating strategy and the higher the relationship motive, the lower the probability of a compromise strategy.

Based on the premise of mixed motives, we examined profiles of the means for the four motives by strategy. For the obliging strategy, the justice motive was the strongest, followed by relationship and identity, with economic being the weakest motive. For the aggressive strategy, the economic motive was highest and the relational motive was lowest. For the compromise strategy, the justice motive was highest, followed by economic and identity, with relational being the lowest. For integrative, justice was very high, followed by relational, identity, and economic.

Obviously, the study is preliminary in nature, however, it does provide some insights. The study suggests that even in a fairly insignificant service conflict situation, consumer behavior can be fairly complex. Therefore, service employees cannot rely on predetermined, “one-best-way,” strategies for handling consumer conflicts. Frontline employees must be able to identify alternative strategies and be capable of adapting their style of responding to conflict with customers. Alternative strategies were activated based on mixed motives. Maintaining a working relationship with the retailer and justice were rated to be more important motives to customers than the most favorable economic outcome. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have emphasized the importance of justice in complaint resolution (Goodwin and Ross 1989; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran 1998). These results are also consistent with Fukushima and Ohbuchi’s (1996) research, which indicated that an integrative strategy was related to relational motives, an obliging strategy was positively related to relationship motives and negatively related to economic motives, and an aggressive style was related to high economic and identity motives.

References

Relationships Among Individual, Institutional, and System Level Public Trust: A Case for Consumer Evaluations of Food Safety
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Extended Abstract
Many of the most challenging public policy issues of our century hang on the problem of public trust. Despite the central importance of public trust to consumer behavior and public policy research, relatively little is known about the origins and relationships between various types/levels of public trust. For example, it is not clear why consumers trust their own grocery stores and yet distrust grocery stores in general in providing safe food. Further, it is not clear why as consumers distrust food retailers, regulatory agencies, law-makers, food
manufacturers, scientists, they still trust the food system to supply them safe food. Our paper provides a unique perspective for understanding the origins of public trust and relationships between various levels of public trust.

Public trust has been studied largely at the institutional level where the focus has been to understand the citizens’ trust in specific social institutions (e.g. Lazarus 1991; McGarity 1986; Rampton and Stauber 2001). So far, the focus in understanding public attitudes toward GMF has also been limited at the institutional level—which we find shortsighted. In order to understand public trust in food safety and in the safety of GMF, one should investigate citizen’s views of various individual establishments (e.g. family farms) and institutions (e.g. farmers in general) through a holistic approach. Approaching public trust through systems perspective (Patton 1990) is likely to inform us about the relationships between various levels of public trust.

As we noted, the relationships between various levels of public trust are paradoxically conflicting. Various polls conducted over the past a few decades suggest that the public has generally positive perceptions of individual politicians (such as congressional representatives) and quite negative perceptions of political institutions (such as the Congress). These perceptions are not limited to politics. For example, people’s overall assessments of their own doctors are systematically more positive than their assessments of doctors in general (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994). Despite negative evaluations by the public at the institutional level, the polls over the same period of time suggest that collectively, across institutions, public trust is still very high. The great majority of people find United States the best place to live; and have confidence in the political system, the health system, the food safety system, etc (e.g. Nye 1997; Cooper 1999; Muntz and Fleming 1999).

Although social scientists (mostly in the area of political science) have attempted to explain the paradoxical conflict between individual and institutional levels of public trust (e.g. Asher and Barr 1994; Cook 1979; Fenno 1975; Ripley et al. 1992), there has been no attempt to explain the relationship between individual, institutional, and system levels of public trust. In other words, we do not know how citizens’ evaluations at the local level affect their evaluations of systems. In addition, we do not know how negative evaluations at the institutional level can collect into positive evaluations at the system level. The purpose of this article is to understand the origins and the relationships between institutional and system level public trust in the context of food safety and consumer evaluations of genetically modified foods. Our research design involved a two-stage iterative data collection process. The first stage involved eighteen depth-interviews and the second stage involved seventeen depth interviews with consumers in a Midwestern state. Based on our findings, we introduce the idea that consumer use “balancing strategies” in that their trust in one institution can offset their lack of trust in other institutions, and as a result, they feel safe about the food they consume. In addition, public trust in the food safety system may depend on the perceived capabilities of the most powerful institution of the system, and/or perceived negative and positive interactions between component social institutions that form the food safety system. We also explore the possibilities that institutional and/or system levels of public trust do not matter in consumers’ beliefs about food safety.

We believe that our paper complements to this year’s conference theme, Transformative Consumer Research (TCR), as TCR aims to “make a positive difference in the lives of consumers, both present and future generations, through the chosen focus and conduct of specific research, and in the communicating of its implications and usefulness” (ACR 2005). In addition, TCR aims a heightened relevance and value related to consumer research to business executives and public policy administrators. In this paper, we first set out to conceptualize public trust at three different levels, individual, institutional, and system levels. Then we review the prior research related to public trust. After a brief overview of research on public (institutional) trust, we specifically focus on the research that deals with the paradoxical disparity between various levels of public trust. We then provide an overview of our research context and activities that took place between 1999-2003 in the Midwest. After reporting our findings, we conclude with a general discussion of contributions and implications for consumer, for academicians, for practitioners (e.g. the food industry) and for public policy makers.

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This exploratory research looks at how anti-smoking messages, legislation and environmental changes have affected non-smokers and their attitudes towards, and treatment of smokers. Preliminary research suggests that a negative smoker stereotype has been created with various possible effects on the smokers themselves. Ex-smokers also appear to enjoy a particularly positive perception. The data collected allows the construction of composite images of each of these stereotypes. Finally, this research seeks to shed light on the possible implications of these attitudinal changes for the efficacy of the anti-smoking campaign.

When I Go Out to Eat I Want to Enjoy Myself: An Investigation into Consumers’ Use of Nutrition Information
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Extended Abstract
Over the past several decades, the populations of the world have become more and more overweight. As we have seen from the recent round of legal claims filed in the United States against many of the fast food companies and several best-selling books (i.e. Nestle 2002, Schlosser 2002), many people and organizations are firmly convinced that the fast food companies and their marketing representatives are to blame for this public health epidemic. As a result, many have sought legislative action in the form of new laws and regulations from the USDA to control what aspects of food products are marketed and to which age brackets certain products can be targeted (Nestle 2002). For example, The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) released a report in early 2005, urging that nutrition information be included on fast food and chain restaurant menus. They found that when nutrition information is provided, consumers have the ability to make healthier food choices off of restaurant menus. They also noted in their report that in a study of nutritionists, nutrition information was grossly underestimated for restaurant menu items (CSPI 2005). Also, within the past year the HeLP America Act of 2005 (S1074) has been introduced in the United States Congress to require restaurants to list the standard nutrition information on their menus for their regular offerings. While this legislation may not pass, this issue is not going away and will play a major role in the way restaurants and other food service establishments develop their marketing strategies for the future. Despite the increased government and public interest group efforts to include nutrition information on restaurant menus because they feel it is in the consumers best interest, the key question from a consumer research perspective is: whether consumers will in fact use the nutrition information if it is presented on a menu to make healthier food choices?

The current consumer literature on nutrition information began with the public policy research surrounding the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act (NLEA) of 1990, which regulated the nutritional labeling of packaged foods. This literature covers a wide variety of topics ranging from how consumers use nutrition information from a food package (Balasubramanian and Cole, 2002) to how nutritional labeling has affected the way in which food products are advertised (Pappalardo and Ringold, 2000). However, the consumption of food at home and the consumption of food in a restaurant seem to be different activities in that one meal can take place in a private setting (e.g. at home), while the other takes place in a more public location (e.g. at a restaurant). As Ratner and Kahn (2002) find, consumers make different decisions in public and private contexts and so we should reasonably expect that they also use different information to make decisions in public and private contexts (e.g. at home or in a restaurant). In an effort to study consumers’ choices from a restaurant menu, recent research has shown that evaluations of a restaurant are affected by the presence of health claims and nutrition information on the menus (Kozup, Creyer, and Burton 2003). Also, consumers have been shown to be willing to pay more for healthier food options at a restaurant (Burton et al. 2004). However, the consumers’ decision process is not thoroughly explored in the above studies and as a result, this paper will attempt to shed some light on the decision making process for consumers’ choices at a chain restaurant.

One model frequently used in the public health literature may help to explain why consumers have differing reactions to the addition of nutrition information to restaurant menus, and may use or not use the information presented. The Stages of Change Model (Prochaska and DiClemente 1992) posits that there are five stages consumers pass through when they are changing their behaviors (from precontemplation to maintenance) and at each stage, the consumers use different strategies to make decisions. This model was previously used to examine consumption-control processes in a self-chosen problem behavior area (Lawson 2001). As a result, in this context, consumers should have different reactions to the nutrition information (i.e. whether the information is used, and what types of affect are generated by the presence of nutrition information) based on the stage in which their current behaviors fall.

In an effort to study this issue, Study 1 involved an experiment with 121 subjects in three different settings, a community barbecue on the Mid-Atlantic and a weight loss center and student subject pool in the Southeast of the United States. The study consisted of a menu of selected items from a nationally-recognized chain restaurant, questions to determine the subject’s stage of change, food choices, and evaluation of the menu. The quantitative results from this study indicate that there are no effects of stage of change on the use of nutrition information or on the decisions made by consumers. Also, the presence of nutrition information on the menu in this study has no effect on the evaluation of the menu (p=0.13). As a result, the responses to the open-ended questions on the survey were analyzed and some interesting patterns were noted. These results show that a majority of the consumers made their food choices based on the description of the menu option and their food preferences. For example, as one respondent noted, “When I eat out I get what I like, regardless of money or health.” These results provide some preliminary insights into why consumers’ make certain (usually unhealthy) decisions when they eat out at restaurants. They also contribute to the literature on the Stages of Change model, which contains a debate about the appropriateness of the Stages of Change model for complex decisions like food choices (Jeffrey et al. 1999).
Since the results of Study 1 did not support the predicted hypotheses, Study 2 was developed to try to further uncover some factors that could explain an individual’s reactions to nutrition information on a restaurant menu. The purpose of this study was to examine the function of dietary restraint in food choices and whether there was a moderating effect of the presence or absence of nutrition information on this relationship. The secondary purpose of this study was to examine the role of health knowledge in food choice decisions. Study 2 involved an experiment with 124 subjects that again used the menu items from a national chain restaurant and the manipulation of either nutrition information being present or absent on the menu. In this study, the measured variables included dietary restraint (Herman and Polivy 1980), self-esteem (Heatherton and Polivy 1991), self-objectification (Fredrickson et al. 1998), and health knowledge (Moorman 1990; Moorman and Matulich 1993). The results support the hypotheses that self-esteem (F (1,103)=19.017, p<0.001) and self-objectification (F (1,103)=3.481, p=0.06) are predictors of dietary restraint. The results also indicate that health knowledge has a significant effect on food choices (F (1,119)=4.755, p<0.05). The results of the moderation of nutrition information on the relationship between dietary restraint and food choices are in the predicted direction, such that when an individual is a restrained eater, if nutrition information is presented on the menu, they order meals with fewer calories than unrestrained eaters. However, the moderation was not significant.

In conclusion, when examining the two studies together, we may be able to gain some interesting insights into how adults chose foods from restaurant menus. From the results of the qualitative data in each study, we can see that the main reason people state for choosing foods are that they like the way to food tastes or that these are the foods they prefer. Results so far are mixed in answering the question of whether or not individuals make healthier decisions when nutrition information is on the menu. Future research in this area could continue to investigate the role of health knowledge as well as dietary restraint in food choices. The framework developed in Study 2 may also be tested in restaurants that serve different types of food since the restaurant in this study offered mainly American food. Overall, the results of this series of studies may have some implications for the current legislation as well as further public policy efforts to regulate the provision of nutrition information at restaurants.

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Field Experiments in Nonprofit Marketing: Social Identity and Status Influence
Contributions
Yue Shang, University of Pennsylvania
Tara Thomas, University of Michigan
Shirli Kopelman, University of Michigan

This project examines whether the level of contribution to a public good is influenced by the relational affiliation, relative status of donors, and motivational framing of the transaction as consumption versus a charitable exchange. We use a field experiment in alumni giving to study such effects. Pilot field research has shown that social factors do influence contributions, and that donors do categorize their motivational framing of the transaction differently. In this abstract, we will focus on the hypothesis and the design of the actual research.

I Gave at the Office (And I Hated It): Changes in Preference for Ethical Behavior Following an Unrelated Ethical Act
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Julie Irwin, University of Texas, Austin

Two studies examine propensity to give to a charity following another, unrelated charitable act. We find that giving is affected both by 1) assimilation of affect from the first charitable act to the second and 2) a newly-identified phenomenon we call “gave at the office”: respondents sometimes feel that they have done their fair share of charitable giving and lose a sense of obligation to donate to subsequent activities. Manipulations of difficulty and morality of the first charitable activity determine whether people are likely to experience assimilation or “gave at the office” effects and thus influence people’s likelihood to donate to a second unrelated ethical cause.

Can a Rational Consumer Be a Good Citizen? Conflicting Goals in Today’s Society
Crina Tarasi, Arizona State University
Maura Scott, Arizona State University

According to public opinion polls, when “all other things are equal” consumers prefer “green” products (Ginsberg and Bloom 2004). However, other things are almost never equal. Price, characteristics and functionality are often poorer for environmentally friendly products, and people compromise. Our preliminary research suggests the existence of a goal hierarchy formed by consumers. The highest level of conflict is perceived between self related goals and environmental goals, while least perceived conflict is between self related goals and family and friends related goals. To explain the phenomenon we draw from the literature on social dilemmas, as well as motivation theory.

Free Bumper Stickers for a Better Future: The Long Term Effect of the Labeling Technique
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Abstract
We compared the labeling technique with a traditional social marketing campaign, providing thought-provoking arguments, regarding their long term effect on ecological behavior. In this study (n=241), we provided participants either with an ecological, self-descriptive label, an information-based campaign promoting ecological behavior or no information at all, and compared behavior in a repeated social dilemma situation, framed as an ecological task. We found that labeling outperforms classical campaigns on the longer term. We did not observe the expected interaction with mental load.

Paper Summary
Campaigns promoting different kinds of sustainable consumer behavior (e.g. buying ethical or ecological products) have often shown limited success, especially in the long term. Classical social marketing efforts, communicating arguments in favor of the sustainable alternatives, may cause consumers to think about the pros but also the cons of these purchases. Ethical and ecological products often are more expensive, require more effort to find, and their quality is trusted less. Even if these campaigns achieve short term success, people
often regress to their original purchase habits because the original drawbacks of sustainable products re-gain salience over time. We propose that ‘labeling’ the consumer might lead to better results. The labeling technique (Kraut, 1973; Miller, Brickman, & Bolen, 1975) exists of providing people with a self-defining label after an external stimulant has provoked a certain behavior. We will focus on ecological behavior. Consumers might, for example, be tempted into buying an ecological product by offering a price promotion. After this externally motivated purchase, a message is communicated which labels the consumer as an ecologically responsible person. When people accept this label as self-descriptive, their future ecological behavior might be internally motivated and hence be more robust to regression to the original purchase habits. We expect that imposing a mental load while receiving this label will result in increased acceptance of the label, and increased compliance.

**Experiment**

Two hundred forty-four students participated in the study for course credit. In a first phase, we provoked an ecological purchase decision. In order to do this, we provided the participants with a list of seven identically priced TV-sets, which were rated on several dimensions (Image quality, image quality in sunlight, sound quality, remote control, ecological aspects, ease of programming and quality of the manual). One of the TV-sets was superior on both image and sound quality, pretested as the most important features in the choice for a TV-set, and most participants (92.6 %) therefore chose this option. The others were discarded from the analysis. Importantly, the chosen TV set was also rated highest on ‘ecological aspects’.

Following this initial choice, participants were assigned to one of three conditions in the second stage of the experiment. Those in the ‘labeling’ group received feedback on the personality traits of the typical customer choosing this TV-set. The subjects who chose the superior TV-set learned that the people making this choice were typically ‘very concerned with the environment, and ecologically conscious’. A second group got to read an explicit plea in favor of ecologically conscious consumer behavior. These two groups read this information either when imposed to a cognitive load manipulation or not. A third, control group merely received the mental load manipulation, but did not get any information.

In the third stage of the experiment, the participants made three consecutive decisions in a social dilemma, framed as an ecological task. They were asked to imagine that they needed to buy 10 bags of potato chips for a party. The available potato chip alternatives were either packed in conventional or in bio-degradable bags. The bio-degradable bags were more expensive because they were bought less often. If enough people would buy the bio-degradable bag, its associated price could go down. After making a first decision, all participants received bogus feedback, saying that among the eight people present in the lab not enough bio-degradable bags had been bought to achieve a price decrease. They then proceeded to identical second and third rounds.

We also measured participant’s social value orientation, and asked on a seven point scale to which degree they took ecological aspects into account when making a purchase decision. Answers to the latter question demonstrated that the manipulation was successful.

Labeling had an effect on how many biodegradable bags were chosen. We assessed the effect both within and between subjects.

Within subjects, we compared behavior on choice 1 and choice 3. The choice position by communication (labeling vs explicit vs control) interaction was significant ($F(2,213)=6.27, p<.01$). In the explicit plea group the number of ecological choices increased, on average, from $M=5.30 (SD=.38)$ to $M=7.80 (SD=.38)$, in the control group it increased from $M=5.31 (SD=.56)$ to $M=7.57 (SD=.57)$. In the labeling group we observed the sharpest increase from $M=5.07 (SD=.40)$ to $M=8.59 (SD=.41)$.

The means for the three groups differed significantly in round 3 ($F(2,213)=4.63); p<.01$.

To examine the differential impact of the persuasion tools we tested how choice order interacted with the contrasts among the communication conditions. The contrasts between the labeling and the control condition and between the labeling and the explicit plea condition interacted with choice order ($F(1,142)=8.15; p<.01$ and $F(1,138)=12.17; p<.01$), respectively. The interaction of choice order with the contrast between the control and the explicit plea conditions, on the other hand was not significant ($F<1, NS$).

The effects of neither mental load nor social value orientation were significant.

The results suggest that providing people with a self-descriptive label is an effective means to achieve an internally motivated increase in sustainable consumer behavior, particularly in the longer term. Future research will deal with the generalizability of these findings to more involving situations, requiring actual personal sacrifices.

We will also investigate why mental load did not have the expected effect.

**References**


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**Do “Possessors” Really have a Stronger Desire to Possess than “Non Possessors”? Study of Consumer Desires of Visitors and Collectors of Contemporary Art Vis-à-vis Two Modes of Consumption-Access and Possession**

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**Extended Abstract**

Consumer behaviour studies seem to be separated into two different approaches: the “possession” behaviours-the classical modality of purchase- considered as “the most basic and powerful fact of consumer behaviour” (Belk, 1988, 1992; Mehta and Belk, 1991; O’Guinn and Belk, 1989; Richins, 1994 etc.); the “access” behaviours- the experience within a service which permits the temporal or long-term
utilization without purchase, initially linked to the “experiential products” in the field of consumer studies (Holbrook, 1980; Evrard et al., 2001; Pine II and Gilmore, 1999 etc.).

However, few studies have been done regarding on the situation where both “possession” and “access” -as two possible available means to “consume” the wanted goods- can occur depending on the consumers’ desires and choices.

From the literature, we find that 1) there is a lack of research that takes into account the two kinds of consumption behaviours concerning the same products and makes a comparison between them; 2) previous work puts emphasis on the objective of the consumption experience, but rarely focused on “what consumers desire” vis à vis these two consumption modes. This paper will contribute to the comparison of consumer desires between two modes of consumption -access and possession- by developing scales measuring consumer desires.

In our study, we are interested in two questions:

1) Are consumer desires for “access” different for “possessors” and “non possessors”?
2) Are consumer desires for “possession” different for “possessors” and “non possessors”?

Proposed Methodology:

Field chosen:
The field of contemporary art has been chosen due to the pre-existing consumption modes -notably art museum visits and the purchases- as well as due to the continual new creation of artworks. Therefore, the access and possession situations in this study refer to visits and purchases; possessors correspond to the collectors and non possessors correspond to the visitors.

The qualitative part:
The part of qualitative study, based on more than 30 depth interviews, shows that the desires of visitors to contemporary art exhibitions include discovery; curiosity; emotion; pleasure; passion; understanding; cultural broadening; inspiration; the enjoyment of beauty; escape; meeting friends; pastime; social representation; stimulus; social obligation; extended-self; and freedom of imagination. The desires of collectors of contemporary art are found to be emotional; aesthetic; intellectual; social; utilitarian (decorative); symbolic; philanthropic; ostentatious, and financial.

The quantitative part:
A questionnaire containing 273 items, developed on the basis of the results of the qualitative study, was sent to 1000 people on the occasion of the FIAC (International Fair of Contemporary Art) and GMAC (Grand Marché d’Art Contemporain) in Paris. One hundred and ninety six complete responses ( 98 from collectors and 98 from visitors) were received and allowed us to obtain preliminary empirical results. The responses to the items were subjected to a principal components analysis. The items were divided into 7 different factors (consumer desires in access experience, those in possession experience, etc.) and the analyses are effected respectively by these categories. The empirical results of the final study will be presented in this paper.

Analysis of data:
Analysis of principal components (APC) and Structural equation modelling (AMOS) were used in this study.

We have followed logical steps to analyze the data:
1. Item purification (APC)
2. Scale validation (AMOS)
3. The test for invariant factorial structure (AMOS)-the application involving multiple samples. The central concern is whether or not components of the measurement model and/or the structural model are invariant across the multiple groups.

In our study, we use this method to first confirm the stability of the measurement model and then learn about the similarities or differences of the desires for “access” and for “possession” of visitors and collectors.

Empirical Results:
Results in this study show that consumers have some contradictory desires vis à vis their behaviours: regarding the desire for possession, collectors have a weaker possessive desire; desire for accomplishment; desire for keeping family traditions. and desire for intellectual enrichment than visitors, while having a stronger philanthropic desire and desire for sociality. Regarding the desire for access, visitors have a stronger desire for sociality and desire for freedom, and a weaker desire for a simple visit than collectors.

The Act of Giving: Involvement, Habitual Giving, and Motives of Volunteerism
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Charitable organizations are under constant pressure to increase both financial and non-financial contributions. The question of how and why people give is crucial in helping non-profit organizations attract and retain donors and volunteers. Although the literature is rich in studies on helping behavior (c.f. Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996), research in consumer behavior provides little guidance in helping us understand motives of volunteerism (Fisher and Ackerman, 1998). Given that the number of voluntary organizations has increased in recent years, marketing techniques are playing an ever more important role in helping organizations recruit and retain volunteers (Bussell and Forbes, 2002). Understanding the psychological and behavioral aspects of volunteerism helps charities to identify characteristics of those most likely to volunteer, as well as target volunteer recruiting campaigns more effectively.
The purpose of this study is to explore relations between various psychological and behavioral aspects and volunteerism. Specifically, *reasoned influences* (e.g., attitudes, values, involvement and motives), *unreasoned influences* (e.g., habitual giving), and *situational influences* (e.g., income, education, etc.) are used to predict volunteer behavior. Extending existing theory in social psychology, Ronis et al.’s (1989) repeated behavior model is adapted to the study of volunteer behavior. The adapted model allows for measuring the effects of reasoned processes, unreasoned processes, and situational factors on volunteer behavior. Ouellette and Wood (1998) were able to demonstrate that repetitive past-behavior (habits) directly affects future behavior, independently of cognitions (attitudes, subjective norms, intentions, and perceived control). Although recent research has shown the influence of social norms on volunteerism (Fisher and Ackerman, 1998), there is evidence to indicate that there may be additional functions (or motives) served by volunteering (Clary et al., 1998).

Survey data were collected from members belonging to The Cancer Council Australia (TCCA), Australia’s national non-government cancer control organization. Surveys were mailed to 1000 randomly selected members in the TCCA database, with 418 completed surveys returned (42% response rate). TCCA members include those that have contributed either time through volunteering and/or made financial contributions to the organization in the past. The first step was to determine if existing scales measuring attitudes towards helping others (AHO) and attitudes towards charitable organizations (ACO) (Webb, Green and Brashear, 2000), and volunteer motives (Clary et al., 1998) could be replicated in Australia. Consistent with Webb et al., (2000), the four items measuring AHO and the five items measuring ACO loaded on two factors, respectively. Similarly, the factor analysis on the 30 items in the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) was consistent with prior scale development by Clary et al. (1998). The results produced six factors representing various functions served by volunteering (protective, values, career, social, understanding and enhancement). Based on the ability of these scales to capture the dimensions intended, composite measures were developed for each of the two attitude scales (AHO and ACO), as well as for each of the six volunteer functions (protective, values, career, social, understanding and enhancement). In order to test the adapted repeated behavior model, additional independent measures were gathered: involvement (number of activities supported, degree of support to other non-profits); *habits* (length of time supporting specific events, degree of habitual support of charity days, volitional/automatic support of charities in general); *values* (Schwartz’s (1992) 27 universal values: altruism, equality, etc.); and, *situational/enabling* factors (employer involvement with TCCA (2 items), age, income, education).

To identify significant predictors of volunteer behavior, stepwise multiple discriminant analysis (SMDA) was performed using a model consisting of 46 variables: attitude (2), volunteer motives (6), involvement (3), habitual giving behavior (3), values (27), and situational variables (5). Two groups were created, based on whether members volunteered for the organization or gave monetary donations or other financial contributions (e.g., purchased merchandise). The SMDA resulted in an 11-step model. Based on minimum Mahalanobis D2 and Wilks’ Lambda values, the 11 variables included in the final discriminant model, based on their loading order, were: Total number of activities involved in with TCCA (involvement), Employer involvement with charity (situational/enabler), Length of time supported special charity event (habit), Support provided to other non-profits (involvement), Employer matches donation (situational/enabler), Values (motive to volunteer), Social (motive to volunteer), Routine involvement in special charity events (habit), Enhancement (motive to volunteer), Age (situational), and INCOME (situational). Together, these 11 variables made up a discriminant function that was able to correctly classify just over 74% of TCCA members.

A summary of the findings suggests that attitudes (AHO, ACO) were poor predictors in discriminating between volunteers and non-volunteers. Similarly, personal values (e.g., altruism, helping, etc.) were not able to explain variation between volunteers and non-volunteers. One of the best predictors of volunteerism was involvement. Those that consistently showed prior support to TCCA through greater number of activities (breadth of support) were volunteers. Interestingly, those that showed greater involvement in other non-profit organizations were non-volunteers, suggesting volunteers were loyal to TCCA. Habits were also a significant predictor of volunteerism. The amount of prior time supporting TCCA’s special charity events significantly predicted tendency towards volunteering. Similarly, routinely supporting the special charity event was also a significant predictor of volunteerism. Consistent with past research (Clary et al., 1998), three of the six volunteer motives (values, social, and enhancement functions) were able to significantly predict volunteer tendencies. Although personal values (Schwartz’s values) were not able to directly predict tendencies towards volunteering, they appear to manifest themselves in one’s specific motives to volunteer. Factors that were able to predict non-volunteers are also meaningful. Non-volunteers were significantly influenced by their employer’s involvement with TCCA, suggesting that situational enablers help facilitate and encourage donation behavior. Furthermore, donors tended to be younger and have a higher income, perhaps influencing their decision to donate money versus time. And as expected, donors tended to make greater financial contributions to other non-profit organizations than did volunteers. These findings suggest that there may be a trade-off in how members of non-profit organizations decide on what they are going to give. Involvement, habitual giving tendencies, and motives to volunteer appear to serve as important predictors of why members tend to volunteer versus donate. Future research investigating such trade-offs in a repeated behavior framework are encouraged.

**References**


An Examination of a Strategic Household Purchase: Consumer Home Buying Behavior
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In the past few years, a criticism has been directed towards publication in the consumer behavior field, claiming that it is biased toward a marketing perspective and that it neglects consumer well-being and difficulties consumers face when making buying decisions for a strategic product. Existing literature lacks empirical studies of consumer decision making for “big” or “strategic decisions” (Bazerman, 2001; Gronhaug, Kleppe, and Haukedal 1987). According to Wells (1993), investigating purchasing decisions that can change lives of consumers, such as a car or a house purchase, can make an essential contribution to consumer behavior knowledge.

In view of the dearth of literature exploring consumer decision making when purchasing high-involvement and emotionally charged products, the purpose of this research was twofold: a) to develop a conceptual model of consumer decision-making process for a prefabricated house purchase; and b) to gain knowledge of factors impacting this process from the empirical standpoint. The product selected in this study was a custom-made prefabricated house. House is the most important durable good in the household and it requires high involvement as well as complex decision making. The strongest parallel can be made with a car purchase, and many studies of consumer decision making indicate there are similarities in the buying processes of different durable goods (Punj, 1987). Hence, the empirical literature in this area and the real estate literature provided a basis for conceptual and empirical work.

After a thorough review of the existing empirical work, a conceptual model of a consumer buying process in case of a home purchase was developed. This model consists of three main groups of variables: the buying process, the external and the internal factors. It suggests that an individual’s lifestyle and the meaning a person wants to derive from owning a house influence his/her needs and desires concerning the house. We posit that a house will reflect its owners’ individuality and personal style. For a complex product such as a house, the information stemming solely from a buyer’s memory is generally inadequate (Gibler and Nelson 2003). Therefore, consumers continuously gather new information and adapt their desires and goals accordingly. The buyer usually does not get to know all the alternatives simultaneously. Rather, new alternatives are gradually added.

The second stage of this research involved empirical testing of the presented conceptual model. A number of factors prompted us to utilize qualitative research methods, i.e., in-depth personal interviews with consumers: a deeper understanding of consumer behavior, a complicated nature of the buying process, and potential useful directions for further quantitative research. In this research, six semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out; three with recent owners of the prefabricated house, and another three with potential buyers of the same product. Due to a very limited population, the sample was selected on a non-random basis. Interviews were carried out in participants’ households. At least one decision maker in the household participated in the interview which lasted from 45 to 90 minutes and it was audio-taped. Topics of discussion followed the established interviewing protocol.

In the analytic stage of our research, we followed the procedure for analyzing qualitative data by Miles and Huberman (1984). These guidelines enable investigators to produce compelling analytic conclusions and enhance the internal validity of the study. The analyses involved three types of activities: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Audio tapes with interviews were transcribed and reviewed several times by the researchers. The conclusion drawing was based on the cross-case comparisons, reference to previously reviewed empirical studies and to the theoretical framework. Noting patterns, themes and regularities supported final conclusions.

One of the major contributions of this study was an extensive review of the literature dealing with consumer decision making processes and behavior in relation to strategic purchases. Using qualitative research design, we empirically examined the conceptual model and carefully compared the theoretical and empirical findings. Similar to Erasmus, Boshoff, and Rousseau (2001) and Loewenstein (2001) our results suggest that cognitive and rational factors alone do not offer a sufficient explanation of consumer behavior in the case of high-involvement products such as a prefabricated house. In addition to the idiosyncratic characteristics of the customer, his/her personal situation and environmental factors, the role of feelings, experience, subconscious factors, needs and goals should be taken into account. Along with the emotionally charged internal factors, other factors identified in our qualitative analysis include consumer’s experience with and prior knowledge of a house buying process. Significant external factors in this qualitative study included recommendations from people buyers trust, the seller/company’s behavior and marketing communication activities in the housing market.

As households may have serious problems in making wise strategic purchase decisions (Gronhaug, Kleppe, and Haukedal 1987), we offer several implications for consumers. Since house buying is a decision with long-term consequences, we recommend to consumers that they first explicitly define their needs and objectives concerning the purchase. Next, we propose consumers gain information about available alternatives and specific criteria relevant to them. Clearly, external information search is a way to increase knowledge, and reduce perceptions of risk and uncertainty (Dowling and Staelin 1994). Respondents in our study seem to have had limited knowledge about houses and the buying process itself. We emphasize that gaining additional knowledge about this topic is of critical importance. We recommend to the home buyers that they make attempts to experience the house independently of its producer. The findings of this study indicate that an individual’s experience with company’s representatives plays an important role in the consideration set formation and
decision making regarding the house purchase. Decision should be made based on direct comparison of evaluated alternatives consistent with a person’s goals and needs. Taking into consideration the specifics of the selected product, it is hoped that this study contributes to a better understanding of the strategic buying process and provides some useful guidelines for consumers.

References

Community and Connectivity: Examining the Motives Underlying the Adoption of a Lifestyle of Voluntary Simplicity
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Duane Elgin’s book Voluntary Simplicity resonated with those seeking an alternative to America’s “commodity culture,” a culture in which people are “primed to want and desire commodities even though they cannot afford to have them” (Elgin, 1981, O’Sullivan, 2003). While “voluntary simplicity” is not a new concept, recently there has been a growing ripple of individuals adding steam to this longstanding “anti-consumerism” movement (Etzioni, 1988). In the popular culture, many books, such as Circle of Simplicity and Choosing Simplicity, and organizations, such as Adbusters and Seeds of Simplicity, have emerged to give validity to this lifestyle and provide a forum for exploring ideas and gaining support (Andrews, 1997; Pierce, 1999).

Prior to this past decade, there was little academic interest in the voluntary simplicity movement. However, as the movement gains momentum in the popular culture, researchers are beginning to focus on understanding the attitudes, values and motivations of voluntary simplifiers, as well as those engaged in other anti-consumerism lifestyles (Cherrier and Murray, 2002; Zavestoski, 2002). This limited body of research suggests that voluntary simplicity can be viewed as a lifestyle choice since it pervades all aspects of behavior and is not necessarily correlated with what may otherwise appear to be highly related personality traits, such as frugality (Lastovicka 1999, Todd 2002). In fact, many who currently practice voluntary simplicity experienced a transformative learning process that that led them to simplify their lives. In Choosing Simplicity, a book that explores the different ways in which individuals have chosen to implement the principles of voluntary simplicity, several adherents stated that they were not content just going along with the “norm” and sought something more meaningful in their lives (Pierce, 1999). Interestingly, though implementing the voluntary simplicity lifestyle in quite divergent ways, those interviewed for the book shared the conviction that the “good life” is not based upon material possession or image.

Because research on this topic is still in its infancy, we currently lack answers to even the most basic questions about the voluntary simplicity lifestyle, such as what a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity entails, what factors prompt an individual to simplify their life and how voluntary simplifiers participate in the traditional marketplace. One of the earliest accounts of voluntary simplicity states that:

“Voluntary simplicity involves both inner and outer condition. It means singleness of purpose, sincerity and honesty within, as well as avoidance of exterior clutter, of many possessions irrelevant to the chief purpose of life. It means an ordering and guiding of our energy and our desires, a partial restraint in some directions in order to secure greater abundance of life in other directions. It involves a deliberate organization of life for a purpose” (Gregg 1936).

In another work, Elgin and Mitchell categorize simplicity according to five basic values: material simplicity, self-determination, ecological awareness, human scale, and personal growth. However, based on a review of the definitions appearing in the popular press and selective articles in the marketing field, Johnston and Burton (2002) reports that Elgin and Mitchell’s taxonomy of values fails to provide a complete account of the values and motivations underlying an individual’s decision to adopt this lifestyle. Johnston and Burton’s review represents a step forward, in that it attempts to provide a more clearly articulated conceptualization for future academic research on the topic.

Other attempts to bring coherence to the definition and motivations underlying this lifestyle have focused on clarifying what voluntary simplicity is not. This work shows that, contrary to the common misconception, voluntary simplicity does not advocate giving up all material possessions, but instead promotes the notion of mindful consumption.
In this working paper we attempt to bring greater clarity to our understanding of voluntary simplicity by examining the values, attitudes and marketplace behaviors of those adopting the lifestyle. Unstructured, in-depth interviews were administered with self-proclaimed voluntary simplifiers. Initial results provide insight into many dimensions of voluntary simplicity. In particular, the data reveal an interesting pattern among participants with regards to motivations for choosing this lifestyle. The stated motivations varied from individual to individual and included environmental concern, desire for financial independence and time freedom. However, the concept of community, both local and global, entwined many of their reflections. The local community aspect dealt with the face-to-face interactions with family, friends, and community members, whereas the global community referred to all living things on the planet, including plants, animals, and humans. Along with the discussion of community arose the desire to feel “connected” with nature, people and their inner self. This indicates that perhaps the most basic underlying motivation for choosing voluntary simplicity is the desire to feel connected to one’s inner, external and global community.

The need for connectivity is universal. The means by which voluntary simplifiers satisfy this need suggests that past consumer behavior research, which draws a direct link between identity and material items (Belk 1988), may need to be refined. The findings also suggest that marketers seeking to increase consumer well-being must decrease their focus on material possessions and emphasize experiences that facilitate connectivity.

References

Sacred and Profane Consumption Revisited: The Case of Fair Trade Consumers
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Conceptualisation
Two main responses to globalisation prevail. Protagonists committed to programmes of industrial and economic modernisation emphasise the role of world trade in attaining universal peace, prosperity and well-being. Antagonistic to the consumer culture driven by marketing and neo-liberalist activity, a ‘rainbow coalition’ points to a long list of the ills of globalisation ranging from habitat destruction through ‘air miles’ issues to child labour.

‘Third Way’ approaches to globalisation attempt a measured response based on the reality of the current propensity to consume. Accepting the dominance of consumption, strategic solutions to the ‘dark side’ of globalisation are understood in terms of responsible and ethical practices by producers and consumers alike. The Fair Trade movement represents a case in point.

Whilst recording the positive effects of Fair Trade on producers in developing countries, this paper proposes to concentrate on its benefits to consumers. A definition of Fair Trade is given:

“Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers—especially in the South. Fair Trade organisations (backed by consumers) are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade.” (European Fair Trade Association 2002)
This generates a discussion of the relational dynamics between consumers and Fair Trade producers. Given the Christian or humanist foundings of some Fair Trade companies, this discussion leads canonically to issues of the sacred and profane.

Russell Belk and his colleagues assert that anything may become sacred (or profane) as a result of a process of the investment of meaning by an individual or group. ‘Sacred’ consumption refers to that which is “more significant, powerful and extraordinary than the self”. The ‘profane’ is “ordinary and lacks the ability to induce ecstatic, self-transcending, extraordinary experience.” (all quotes, Belk et al 1989, p.13). Experiences of Fair Trade suggest that this notion of profanity needs adjustment. It is precisely in the mundane, everyday world of making coffee, washing clothes and dusting ornaments that we find the magical reality of our humanity. When the objects of our domestic actions are already ‘pre-sacralised’ through being fairly traded, then those actions serve to intensify that sacredness.

**Design and Method**

The central aim of the research is an inquiry:

“To what extent is Belk et al’s conceptualisation of the ‘sacred and profane in consumer behavior’ consistent with the experiences and understandings of Fair Trade consumers?”

There are methodological challenges in addressing the sacred and profane. The terms are complex. For example, Belk et al list twelve ‘properties of sacredness’. They are also open to considerable personal interpretation. Further, initial informal discussion between the researcher and informants suggested a degree of perplexity in relating the sacred and profane to consumption. The researcher was also aware of the twin pitfalls of reification and the ‘double hermeneutic’ (Giddens 1976) – the phenomenon of respondents adopting the researcher’s terminology in formulating their responses.

With these challenges in mind, the researcher drafted a semi-structured interview schedule that would progressively create a framework for the discussion of the sacred and profane. The schedule has four sections:

I) Details of respondent’s Fair Trade purchase and use.

II) An exploration of interviewees’:
- Length of involvement and reason for involvement in Fair Trade;
- Fair Trade meanings;
- Personal beliefs and values;
- Understanding of the relevance of these beliefs and values to Fair Trade involvement;
- Opinions of personal and other changes connected to the development of Fair Trade.

III) Using a set of consumer artefacts (e.g. Fair Trade coffee) and written prompts (e.g. quotes), the researcher and research participant engaged in discussions on:
- Reactions to Fair Trade and non-Fair Trade products;
- Intentional action and the Fair Trade consumer;
- Comparative and contrasting views of the consumer culture, elicited using written prompts:
  i) “… Render therefore unto Caesar …” (Matthew, xxii, 22);
  ii) “The consumer society exists today …” (Miller 1995);
  iii) Five summary critiques of the consumer culture derived from Droge et al (1993);
  iv) The ‘definitions’ of sacred and profane used by Belk et al (1989);
  v) A description of Fair Trade Christmas composed using four of the twelve properties of sacredness.

IV) Personal details: age / occupation / education / religion.

The schedule is a mix of conversational prompts typical of traditional qualitative research and the use of media that have a market research character.

Due to the origins of Fair Trade and the focus on sacred/profane, respondents were purposively sampled as Christian and ‘no formal religious affiliation’ (NFRA). Additionally, ‘greater than ten years as a Fair Trade consumer’ was used as a selection criterion.

**Initial Findings**

Currently, data from 10 interviews have been processed. Interviewee breakdown is: 4 female/Christian; 3 male/Christian; 2 female/NFRA; and 1 male/NFRA. Experience as a Fair Trade consumer ranged from 10 to 40 years. (Interviewing of other respondents continues; more NFRA’s need to be recruited.)

Initial findings indicate:

- Considerable use of Fair Trade products in daily life;
- A belief in making social justice a reality, common to all interviewees;
- Clear articulation of Fair Trade as a means of substantiating those beliefs;
- Christian respondents expressed the view that their faith needed to be lived out as direct connection with the Poor and Fair Trade was one means for doing this;
- Respondents least favoured the Puritan critique of the consumer culture and most favoured the Quaker;
- Before considering the sacred/profane issue, many interviewees referred to certain products as evil. Connections were made to ecological degradation and particularly the promotion of formula milk in developing countries. Respondents used these opinions to inform their complex reflections on the sacred and profane. For Fair Trade products, there was partial agreement with the
definition of sacred but the facet of ‘ordinariness’ provoked rich and varied responses, difficult to reconcile with the definition of the profane.

References

Effects of Interior Color on Healthcare Consumers: A 360 degree Photo Simulation
Experiment
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The effects of the ‘servicescape’ (Bitner, 1992) on consumer behavior have long been recognized. Especially in high-stress services, such as medical care, the physical environment can strongly influence customer evaluation. This experiment investigates the effect of interior color on patients’ emotional and cognitive appraisal and perceived service quality. Subjects were exposed to QuickTime 360° panorama photos of a first aid examination room and a private ward room. Blue walls (as compared to white walls) reduce anxiety and increase cognitive and affective appraisal and even perceived service quality.

Introduction
Hospitalization can have a great psychological impact. A patient’s health is at stake, and (s)he is temporarily separated from family and friends. Under such conditions, patients display a strong need for information concerning their health and treatment (Engström, 1984). However, reliable information about the quality of healthcare is rather difficult or even impossible to obtain, as patients lack insight into the procedure and effects of the treatment. To reduce this uncertainty, patients will be inclined to infer their judgment of service quality from other indicators, such as the tangible environment. Therefore, physical aspects of the service environment play an important role in customers’ evaluation of healthcare services (Arneill & Devlin, 2002).

A considerable amount of empirical evidence is available about the effects of environmental factors on a wide variety of consumer responses (Turley & Milliman, 2000). Historically, the atmosphere in clinical environments has been cold and sterile due to color, lighting and furniture. The current trend in hospital interior design is to create an attractive, relaxing atmosphere in order to relieve patients’ stress and anxiety, improve their emotions and hence encourage the healing process (Devlin & Arneill, 2003). Color can be used effectively for this purpose (Calkins, 2002; Marberry & Zagon, 1995). Blue has been found to be the most preferred color throughout color literature (e.g. Bellizzi, Crowley & Hasty, 1983; Guilford & Smith, 1959), and stress-reducing effects of short wavelength colors (blue, green) are well-documented (e.g., Birren, 1979; Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994). Yet, solid empirical evidence for anxiety-reducing and affect-enhancing effects of interior color in healthcare settings is largely lacking.

In this study we investigated the effects of wall color on anxiety, pleasure, evaluation of the room and perceived service quality in a simulation of a general hospital. We expected subjects exposed to a hospital room with blue walls to experience more positive emotions, and lower anxiety, to evaluate the room more positively, and to appraise the quality of the service higher than subjects exposed to a white hospital room.

Method
Procedure
A total of 90 students participated in a uni-factorial between-subjects design (blue vs. white wall color), using desktop computers in a social science laboratory.
First, participants were asked to imagine being hospitalized with a leg fracture, after a fall from a ladder. The vignette described how the patient, upon arrival in the hospital, was admitted to a first aid examination room. After the doctor made X-ray pictures, he performed surgery on the patient.
Next, for 70 seconds, subjects were exposed to a QuickTime 360° panorama of an examination room. Photos were taken at a local hospital. In a 360° panorama, the direction and rotation speed of the representation can be controlled by moving the mouse in the desired direction. Wall color was manipulated using Adobe Photoshop. Subjects were randomly assigned to either the white (Hue 336°, Saturation 3%, Brightness 93%) or the blue condition (Hue 226°, Saturation 27%, Brightness 80%). They filled out a questionnaire measuring anxiety, pleasure, cognitive appraisal and perceived service quality. Subsequently, the vignette described the patient being transferred to a private ward room for a 10-day recovery. A 360° panorama of the ward room was shown. Again, subjects were randomly assigned to the color conditions. The same colors were used as in the examination room, and again, the cognitive appraisal, pleasure and anxiety-scales were administered.
Measures

Anxiety and emotion were measured using the 6-item translated ‘Profile of mood states’ anxiety subscale (Wald & Mellenbergh, 1990; α=.92) and the 6-item Mehrabian & Russell pleasure subscale (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; α=.84), respectively. Cognitive appraisal was assessed using the 10-item environmental appraisal scale (Bitner, 1992; α=.81), and perceived service quality was measured, using a 13-item adjusted SERVQUAL-questionnaire (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988; Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1991; α=.87).

Results

Not surprisingly, respondents felt far more anxious receiving treatment in the examination room ($M_{\text{examination\ room}}=3.05$), than they did recovering in the ward room ($M_{\text{ward\ room}}=2.18$; $t=9.32$, p<.001).

Analyses of variance showed that in both rooms, blue walls significantly decreased anxiety compared to white walls (examination room: $F(1,88)=4.77$, p<.04, $\eta^2=.05$; ward room: $F(1,88)=5.77$, p<.02, $\eta^2=.06$), and also improved the subject’s pleasure (examination room: $F(1,88)=5.81$, p<.02, $\eta^2=.06$; ward room: $F(1,88)=5.36$, p<.03, $\eta^2=.06$ and cognitive appraisal (examination room: $F(1,88)=12.30$, p<.002, $\eta^2=.12$; ward room: $F(1,88)=8.54$, p<.005, $\eta^2=.09$). Even more interestingly, participants in the blue examination room condition perceived a higher service quality ($M_{\text{blue}}=3.53$), than participants in the white examination room ($M_{\text{white}}=3.24$; $F(1,88)=9.56$, p<.004, $\eta^2=.10$), even if the items referring to tangible aspects of the service, were omitted from the scale ($F(1,88)=7.33$, p<.01, $\eta^2=.08$).

A mediation analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986) revealed that the relationship between color and perceived service quality (Z=2.28, p<.004) was partially mediated by both pleasure (Z=1.83, p<.07) and cognitive appraisal (Z=2.56, p<.02).

Discussion

The results provide consistent empirical evidence regarding the effects of interior color on patient responses. The hypothesis that blue walls in healthcare settings alleviate anxiety and improve emotion, the evaluation of the physical environment, and perceived service quality, was confirmed.

Mediation analyses confirm that affective as well as cognitive processes underlie the relationship between interior color and consumer evaluation. Color can enhance service evaluation by improving customers’ affective state and by increasing their evaluation of the physical environment. This may be the result of a halo effect (Thorndike, 1920): because the physical environment is positively evaluated, customers assume that other aspects of the service, such as the diagnosis and the treatment, are of the same, high quality.

When entering an emergency room, patients experience elevated levels of distress as a result of an acute health threat and the anticipation of a medical treatment. The aforementioned positive effects of blue walls are found in a high-anxiety, short-stay emergency room and in the relatively low-anxiety ward room, in which a patient is to spend considerable time recovering. First, this suggests that the beneficial effects of a blue wall color are not restricted to high-stress encounters, but may also occur under moderately stressful conditions. Secondly, the effect seems to be independent of exposure length.

Some care needs to be taken in interpreting these outcomes, since the data were collected among healthy subjects who were asked to imagine being hospitalized. These results should be replicated under realistic circumstances.

References


A Taxonomy of Spiritual Motivations for Consumption
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Consumer researchers have acknowledged that spirituality is an important factor in motivating consumption (eg. Baumgartner 2002; Curasi, Price and Arnould 2004; Gould and Stinerock 1992; Hirschman 1985; Holbrook 1999, 2001; Kozinets, 1997, 2001; Murray 2002; Thompson 2004; Twitchell 2004). Considered to be the ‘life force’ by which we act (Golberg 1998), the spirit is a major driver for human behaviour (Dyson, Cobb and Forman 1997; Golberg 1998; Stoll 1989), including consumption. Yet despite this, consumer researchers still lack a clear understanding of what spirituality is and how it affects consumer choices. This study set out to develop a taxonomy by which researchers may understand this previously ill-defined and misunderstood motivation for consumption and presents propositions through which it may be studied.

A review of consumer research reveals a paucity of studies that explicitly focus on spiritual motivations for consumption. This seems surprising given the host of studies that reflect facets of a search for spiritual fulfilment, including river rafting (Arnould and Price 1993), skydiving (Celsi, Rose and Leigh 1993), collecting (Belk 1995; Belk et al. 1988), sporting spectatorship (Holt 1995; Kozinets et al. 2004), ownership of automobiles (Belk 2004) or pets (Hirschman 1994), and engagement in consumption communities (Belk and Costa 1998; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Thompson and Troester 2002) or anticonsumption activities (Huneke, 2005; Kozinets 2002). Furthermore, the few studies that have directly examined spiritually-motivated consumption (SMC) have predominantly focussed on its religious expression (eg. O’Guinn and Belk 1989; Ozanne 1992; Wright and Larsen 1992), thus excluding the substantial portion of SMC that is not within a religious context (see Durgee 1999, for one exception).

Much needs yet to be learnt about spiritual motivations for consumption. Central to this is the acknowledgment that spirituality is a complex, multifaceted phenomena (Emmons and Paloutzian 2003) that cannot be characterised by a single behaviour or experience. Rather, spirituality represents a series of interrelated constructs that work together to form a cohesive yet intricate whole. Accordingly, this study offers a theoretical framework through which the many facets of spirituality may be understood and further examined.

Method
An extensive multi-disciplinary review of literature from psychology, religion, anthropology, personality, consumption and health care was undertaken. Content analysis revealed eleven potential descriptors of spirituality or spiritual experience which were synthesised into three main categories. The first two (meaning and connection) reflect the cognitive component of spirituality, while the third (emotional transcendence) reflects its affective component (Seidlitz et al. 2002). Testable propositions were then developed to enable future study.

Results

Meaning. Whether sought through literature, art, food, music, ideology, or relationships (Burkhart 2001; Dyson et al. 1997; Golberg 1998), meaning was identified as a primary focus of spirituality (Apikos 1992; Zimbauer et al. 1997), and thus a sense of meaning in life was seen to be central to spiritual wellbeing (Stoll 1989). Closely related to meaning were the concepts of purpose, hope and personhood (Dyson et al. 1997; Golberg 1998; Stoll 1989). A sense of connection to the past, present or future (Badone 1991; Golberg 1998) or to a greater plan (Emmons and Paloutzian 2003) were considered important influences on spirituality. Hope, love, compassion, trust and forgiveness were identified as vital foundations for one’s relationship, thus influencing one’s sense of connection (Dyson et al. 1997; Golberg 1998; Rose 2001; Stoll 1989).

A desire for connection may be proposed to influence SMC choices in the following ways:

P1: Individuals who feel their lives lack meaning are more likely to choose SMC experiences that offer an explicit meaning narrative within a structured context such as a church (eg. O’Guinn and Belk 1989) or a social activist group (eg. Kozinets and Handelman 2004).

P2: Individuals who feel their lives already have inherent meaning are more likely to choose SMC experiences that enable them to create their own meaning narrative via self-driven behaviours (eg. the personal fashion discourse of ‘Delores’ in Murray 2002).

Connection. Caring connections with both external ‘others’ (other people, nature or a Higher Power) and with one’s internal selves were frequently cited as key expressions and experiences of spirituality (eg. Burkhart 2001; Dyson et al. 1997; Hirschman 1985; Holbrook 1999; Moore 1996; Rose 2001; Thompson and Troester 2002; Walton 2002; Zimbauer et al. 1997). A sense of connection to the past, present or future (Badone 1991; Golberg 1998) or to a greater plan (Emmons and Paloutzian 2003) were considered important influences on spirituality. Hope, love, compassion, trust and forgiveness were identified as vital foundations for one’s relationships, thus influencing one’s sense of connection (Dyson et al. 1997; Golberg 1998; Rose 2001; Stoll 1989).

A desire for connection may be proposed to influence SMC choices in the following ways:

P3: Individuals seeking outer-directed spiritual connection are more likely to seek SMC experiences that are other-focussed or externally-driven such as antimarket festivals (eg. Kozinets 2002).

P4: Individuals seeking inner-centred spiritual connection are more likely to seek SMC experiences that are internally-focussed and self-generated such as sky diving (eg. Celsi et al. 1993).

Emotional Transcendence. The final key characteristic of spirituality concerned the ‘feeling level’ (Stoll 1989) of spiritual experience. Desirable affective states ranged from tranquil emotions such as peace, inner harmony, comfort, or a sense of security (Golberg 1998; Moore 1996; Stoll 1989), to more vibrant emotions such as joy (Zimbauer et al. 1997), ecstacy, exaltation or rapture (Holbrook 1999).

The nature of emotional transcendence that is desired may be proposed to influence SMC choices as follows:

P5: Individuals who seek tranquil spiritual experiences are more likely to engage in SMC activities that are of a quiet, gentle nature such as collecting (eg. Belk 1995; Belk et al. 1988) or meditative ritual (eg. Badone 1991).
P6: Individuals who seek vibrant spiritual experiences are more likely to engage in SMC activities that are of a vigorous, exciting nature such as river rafting (eg. Arnould and Price 1993) or shamanistic dance (eg. Gould 1991).

Future Directions
This study set out to advance understanding of a dynamic consumer value that has vital implications for consumer motivation. Future research may explore SMC using the taxonomy and propositions presented. Further analysis of extant literature may also be required so as to integrate additional facets of spirituality such as healing (Golberg 1998) into this taxonomy.

References


Childhood Socialization Effects on Adult Ability to Control Impulse

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Extended Abstract

Conceptualization: There has been widespread recognition of the inability of purely cognitive decision models to fully account for important aspects of consumer behavior (Bargh 2002; Luce, Jia et al. 2003). Consequently there has been increasing interest in including “visceral” factors such as impulsive drives in consumer decision-making paradigms (Alba 2000; Loewenstein 1996). The merging of these conceptual models offers great promise for transformative consumer research by improving understanding of how and why consumers often act against their own self-interest, despite their having exquisite knowledge of the negative implications of their behavior. Consumer domains in which this line of inquiry shows great promise include, drug abuse, addictions, impulsive and compulsive buying, and overeating (Hirschman 1992; O’Guinn and Faber 1989). To date, many consumer researchers interested in visceral factors have focused on immediate external circumstances, such as “high pressure” sales tactics, or aversive states such as hunger, or fear (Aaker, Stayman et al. 1996; Cools, Schotte et al. 1992; Keller and Block 1996; Kroeber-Riel 1979; Lang, Greenwald et al. 1993; Pham 1996; Rju 1980; Sanbonmatsu and Kardes 1988; Sterntal and Craig 1974). However, there is an extensive developmental psychology literature that details how experiences during childhood development can have long lasting influences on a person’s capacities, sensitivities, and predispositions (Bernston and Cacioppo 2000; Goldhaber 2000). For example, unloving and overprotective parenting is known to increase risk for emotional disorders, school dropout and impulsive behaviors such as drug use, initiation of sexual behavior, and conduct disorder (Chisholm 1993; Chisholm 1999; Chisholm 1999; DuHamel, Manne et al. 2004; Hall, Peden et al. 2004; Hill, Young et al. 1994; Hojat 1998; Karen, Byron et al. 2005; Mason, Cauce et al. 1994; Meyer and Gillings 2004; Wells and Rankin 1991; Zimmerman, Salem et al. 1995). Long-term effects of childhood socialization may occur via several different varieties of “carry-forward” effects: (1) neural growth effects such as those known from studies of visual deprivation in infancy; (2) neuroendocrine organizational effects; (3) cognitive features such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and cognitive models of relationships; or (4) predisposition of one social adversity to others (Decker 2000; Flinn, Quinlan et al. 1996; Rutter 1994; Worthman 1999). In the case of the first three varieties, emotionally-valenced experiences during childhood, including those resulting from parental care, may alter long-term psychological characters via molecular reorganization of neurobiological networks involved in the integration of impulsive and reflective psychological states (Bechara 2002; Bechara, Damasio et al. 1997; Damasio 2001; Posner, Rothbart et al. 2001).

Method: We examined the influence of parenting on consumer impulse-control with a go-no-go task, and retrospective ratings of maternal care among 140 healthy women ages to 18 to 83 years. Vulnerability to consumer impulsiveness was examined through performance on an experimental affective-shifting task that requires participants to rapidly distinguish neutral from emotional stimuli (in this case positive or negative valence words), and to either respond by pressing a key or withholding response as directed. Impulsiveness was operationalized as response time to negative and positive targets, numbers of omissions and errors, as well as aggregated disinhibition and discrimination scores. Maternal care was measured using the “Parental Bonding Instrument” (PBI) (Parker, Tupling et al. 1979), which includes two scales, “caringness” and “controllingness.” The PBI has been widely found to have good long-term reliability, and sound validity.
Expectations: Several studies have revealed PBI “caringness” to be associated with adaptive adult outcomes, whereas “controllingness” often has been linked to maladaptive outcomes, such as emotional disorders. Go-no-go tasks have revealed differences in executive function among persons suffering psychiatric and/or substance abuse disorders. Go-no-go tasks have revealed that manic patients have impaired ability to inhibit behavioural responses and focus attention. Depressed patients are impaired in their ability to shift attentional focus, and also exhibit negative attentional bias (Murphy, Sahakian et al. 1999). Recovering alcoholics show generally slower response times than non-alcoholics, and poor discrimination between targets and distractors, but better executive functioning for alcohol words, indicating cognitive biases toward alcohol (Xavier, Van Der Linden et al. In Press). Based on past findings about parental bonding and impulse control, we expected that maternal caring would be associated with better executive function, whereas maternal controlling would be associated with deficits in executive function, including more omissions, more errors, and slower responses.

Major Findings: We did not find maternal caring to be strongly associated with measures of impulse control. Response latency was not found to vary as a function of childhood socialization. With age controlled (Y=CONTROL + AGE + CARE) women who reported their mothers as more controlling had less flexibility in shifting stimulus reward associations. This was manifest as both: greater response disinhibition $F(1, 136=1.86, p=.064) (\beta_1=0.17)$, and lower accuracy when shifting away from positive targets $F(1, 136=-2.22, p=.028) (\beta_1=-0.2)$. Although this trend was also true for performance on all shift-blocks aggregated $F(1, 136=1.74, p=.065) (\beta_1=0.17)$, a similar effect was not observed for the “shift-to-positive” condition, indicating that the impairment in adult executive function associated with maternal controlling during childhood is specific to flexibility in turning attention away from positive targets. Similarly, an association between childhood maternal control and errors in distinguishing positive from neutral stimuli during all shift blocks $F(1, 134=-2.15, p=.033) (\beta_1=-0.2)$, was accounted for entirely by the shift-FROM-positive condition $F(1, 134=-2.22, p=.028) (\beta_1=-0.168)$. Despite the fact that there was a non-significant difference in disinhibition during shift compared to non-shift blocks in general, maternal controlling associated with increased disinhibition in shift compared to non-shift blocks $F(1, 136=2.72, p=.008) (\beta_1=0.25)$. Results suggest that the childhood experience of having a controlling mother may influence impulsive, “out of control” consumer behavior. These findings indicate that controlling maternal behavior specifically decreases flexibility in turning attention away from positive stimuli. Such an effect could influence many of the maladaptive behavioral outcomes that have been associated with maternal “overprotectiveness,” as well as “out of control” consumer behavior.

Contributions to Transformative Consumer Research: The impulse control dimension examined in this study may be integral to a wide range of consumer behaviors ranging from overeating, to drug addictions, gambling, and impulsive buying. However, this study represents merely the first steps in one example of how transformative consumer research may be strengthened through an interlocution of traditional decision-theory and concepts and methods from developmental psychobiology for addressing “visceral” factors. This study provides a foundation for myriad trajectories through which future studies may extend the consumer-centric values of the present findings. Future work should seek to relate the parental bonding, and impulse-control variables examined here to actual patterns of consumer behavior, such as food buying habits. Representative community samples are needed to establish the degree to which parental behavior is correlated with, or confounded by other childhood socialization influences, such as schools, neighborhoods, poverty, illness or trauma. Studies of these issues in current parent-child social interactions will be needed to reveal the relative and/or interactive influence of the various carry-forward effects described above.

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Biases in Mental Extrapolation
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Extended Abstract
Consumption choices often involve forecasting one’s future preferences with a product based on limited information. The current investigation examines the biases and cognitive processes in a particular class of such preferential forecasting, namely, mental extrapolation tasks. By mental extrapolation we mean the process of envisioning the appearance of whole product on the basis of exposure to product fragments. For example, home owners often have to choose paint colors based on small swatches of various colors, so they have to imagine how their home would look like with each particular color since the complete product (i.e., their home in various colors) is not available. Likewise, movie goers often select movies based on trailers, essentially fragments of a movie, they have seen on TV. Although this problem is extremely common, there has been little academic research on this topic. The current research aims to fill the research void and to contribute to our understanding of preferential forecasting.
Background
Two lines of research are relevant. First, the affective forecasting literature (for a review, see Wilson and Gilbert 2003) examines people’s ability to accurately predict their affective reactions to a future event. This literature has shown a pervasive tendency to overpredict the intensity and duration of their future affective experience (i.e., the impact bias). In other words, the feelings people actually experience are often weaker than what people predict. A major source of this bias is anchoring; that is, predictions are excessively influenced by people’s current affective reaction to the target event and not tempered by considerations of future circumstances that may attenuate this reaction. In the context of mental extrapolation, we should also expect anchoring to influence forecasts more than actual experience since evaluations of the fragments per se are more salient in the forecast context than in the consumption context. This also leads to more extreme forecasts.

The second line of research, that on memory processes, helps to shed more light on the detailed cognitive processes for such judgments. The accessibility of prior experience affects preferential forecasts by strengthening the anchoring effect. Several authors have discussed the anchoring phenomenon in the framework of priming (e.g., Chapman and Johnson 2002), which highlights the role of accessibility in anchoring effect. In addition, more accessible information (e.g., memories of prior experience with a product fragment) is likely to be activated earlier than other information and bias the subsequent retrieval process (Roediger 1978). As a result memories that are consistent with the initial information are more likely to be retrieved than inconsistent memories. Both processes are likely to be present in mental extrapolation tasks, and both will result in more extreme forecasts and hence greater inconsistency between predicted preferences and actual experience.

Empirical Studies
These predictions were tested in two laboratory experiments. Both experiments recruited undergraduate students at an east coast university as participants for partial course credit. In both experiments, participants were told to evaluate some new shirt designs from a catalog company that was considering to expand business to target college students in the region where the school is located. All materials were presented on computer screens and all measures were collected by the computer. Each experiment consisted of two sessions separated by a short filler task. In the first session (forecast session), participants were first shown a series of patterns and were told that each pattern would be arranged in a particular array on a shirt. They were asked to indicate how much they would like a shirt with each pattern on a 100-point scale (i.e., a scroll bar). In the second session (experience session), participants were shown shirts with the patterns they saw in the forecast session and asked to evaluate each shirt on the same 100-point scale. The order of presentation for the stimuli was randomized.

The shirt patterns were manipulated on two dimensions: typicality for the product class, and familiarity. Both manipulations were confirmed by ratings of a pretest group. A third factor, predicted liking, was created based on each participant’s response in the forecast session in the following way: for each participant shirt patterns that ranked in the top third in predicted liking were coded as high in predicted liking, and patterns that ranked in the bottom third in predicted liking were coded as low. The middle third was dropped, but this did not affect the pattern or direction of results reported below.

In all respects, the two experiments were very similar except that in experiment 1 manipulations of typicality and familiarity were based on ratings of the pretest group whereas in experiment 2 they were manipulated based on each participant’s own ratings. Therefore, participants in experiment 2 first evaluated each pattern on typicality, familiarity, and attractiveness, and then proceeded to the forecast session after a short filler task.

The key dependent measures are forecast errors (= predicted liking [response in forecast session]−actual evaluation of shirt [response in experience session]) and response time for each prediction measured in seconds.

Results
Across the two experiments, several stylized findings emerge. First, in support of H1, forecast errors were positive when people expected to like the final product but negative when they expected to dislike it.

Second, consistent with H2, predicted likings in the forecast session had a significantly stronger correlation with evaluations of the shirt patterns per se than did actual evaluations of the whole shirts in the experience session. This indicates that preference forecasts were anchored on evaluations of the product fragment. Moreover, about 70% of participants across the two studies exhibited this anchoring effect, that is, pattern evaluations were more correlated with forecasted liking than with actual experience.

Third, familiarity with the product fragment tended to increase the magnitude of these errors, especially when the fragments were also atypical. This suggests that memory processes may have played a significant role in such judgments.

Discussion
The current research provides some initial investigation into a class of common consumption judgments (i.e., mental extrapolation) and extends the existing research on affective forecasting by introducing the role of memory processes and richer stimuli. The results also have implications for some retail practice.

References
Extended Abstract

The concept of brand community has been studied by a number of marketing scholars. Recently, Internet brand communities are attracting attention from marketers. Internet brand communities are growing taking various forms include extensions of a brand community built by corporations and Internet-centric brand communities built by consumers. Despite the widely acknowledged significance of Internet brand community, consumer behaviors within such a context have rarely been studied in the marketing literature, particularly when considering critical characteristics of the Internet environment. This paper seeks to address this distinctive absence.

In this paper, concepts that lie within the Structuration theory (Giddens 1984) will be used as a framework for integrating literature and conceptualizing Internet brand community. This paper’s objectives are as follows: One purpose of this study is to offer conceptual foundations of Internet brand community by developing an integrated overview of the current research. Concepts from the Structuration theory are used for synthesizing the consumer behavior literature. Among the basic concepts of Structuration theory, structure, social integration, time and space, and routines are employed for comparing the concepts of brand community and Internet brand community in the literature synthesis. Brand community and Internet brand community are compared based on the concepts in the Structuration theory.

A second purpose of this study is to find and fill the gaps between brand community and Internet brand community in the literature. Internet brand community is a new concept in academic literature. Comparing brand community and Internet brand community by using the basic concepts of Structuration theory, structure, social system integration, time and space, and routines, gaps between brand community and Internet brand community were found. To fill the gaps in the literature, potential research questions are suggested.

First, while the literature offer insights into defining the structure of brand community by discussing hierarchy and formalization, the structure of Internet brand community has only been discussed in terms of the super membership (Schau and Muniz 2003). Further, super membership in an Internet brand community is discussed not in an Internet-centric context but as an extension of offline brand community. It is imperative that the gaps between brand community and Internet brand community studies be filled, in order to clarify the Internet brand community structure. Thus, the following questions may be drawn upon in future research endeavors to fill the gaps: How can the structure of Internet brand community be conceptualized? What are the differences and similarities in structure between brand community and Internet brand community? What are the differences and similarities in structure between Internet brand community as an extension of offline brand community and Internet-centric brand community?

Second, while the literature conceptualized integration of brand community as Customer-Brand Relationship, Customer-Customer-Brand Relationship and Customer-Centric Relationship (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002), the integration of Internet brand community has not been conceptualized. Further, loyalty and satisfaction related to the Internet brand community have not been discussed. It is imperative to fill the gaps between brand community and Internet brand community studies, in order to clarify the Internet brand community integration. Thus, the following questions can be drawn upon during future research efforts: How can Internet brand community integration be conceptualized? What are the differences and similarities in integration between brand community and Internet brand community? How can loyalty and satisfaction be conceptualized and measured in Internet brand community integration?

Third, Internet brand community studies clearly propose time-space compression in the Internet environment. By considering time and space, the following questions can be drawn upon for the future research efforts which will consider the Internet environment: How does time-space compression affect the structure of Internet brand community? How does time-space compression affect the integration of Internet brand community?

Fourth, Brand communities as subcultures of consumption are characterized by sets of shared beliefs and values, rituals, symbolic expression, shared consumption patterns and ideologies of consumption. But discussions of routines, shared consumption patterns, or shared values in the Internet brand community were hardly found in the literature. The following questions can be drawn upon in future research efforts considering Internet brand community: What are shared beliefs and values, rituals, consumption patterns and ideologies of consumption in the Internet brand community as subculture? How do Internet brand community members present symbolic expression in the Internet environment?

Finally, the future research directions for conceptualizing Internet brand communities are discussed by considering basic concepts in the theory of Structuration and critical characteristics of the Internet environment. Critical characteristics of the Internet environment will be discussed. Then, by considering those characteristics, the future research direction for the Internet brand community will be suggested to fill gaps in the literature.

A conceptual model of Internet brand community will be suggested by providing theoretical underpinnings of Structuration theory in the Internet environment. The Structuration theory offers insights into the relationship between structure and interactivity, by providing the concept of the duality of structure. In fact, interactivity is a central issue in the Internet environment. However, few articles in the literature offered partial information toward interaction in the Internet brand community in order to build a conceptual framework for Internet brand community in the Internet environment, the relationships between structure and interactivity would need to be thoroughly captured into the model.

References


Consumers’ Internet and Internet Consumers: Exploring Internet-based Electronic Decision Aids
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Extended Abstract
As early as 1955, Simon introduced the notion of bounded rationality. Since then, it has become clear that the traditional approach in explaining consumers’ decision-making, which is based on rational choice theory, is incomplete and flawed (Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1998). According to Simon (1955), bounded rationality takes into account that consumers have cognitive limitations in respect to processing information, and that it is the interaction between task environment and human information-processing system that ultimately determines the behavior of consumers (Bettman et al. 1998; Simon 1990; Todd 1999).

Technological advances, shorter product lifecycles, and the globalization of market transactions have led to a new environment that is not characterized any more by its lack of products and information but by its abundance. In particular the development and fast dissemination of the Internet constitutes such a new task or information-search environment that makes available an enormous amount of information on alternatives (Alba et al. 1997; Urban and Hauser 2004).

It becomes clear that in such information- or choice-overloaded situations, in which the decision task becomes more complex, it is often not possible for consumers to make rational decisions. Customers simply do not have the time (Weening and Maarleveld 2002) and/or the cognitive capacity to process all of the information available to them in a given time (Iyengar and Lepper 2000; Malhotra 1982, 1984). Because of limitations of consumers’ cognitive system—such limitations include limited online memory and computational capabilities (Bettman et al. 1998)—research has demonstrated that customers simplify their decision-making processes in information rich environments or under time constraints by relying on simple heuristics (Payne 1982; Timmermans 1993). While the amount of information available on the Internet keeps expanding, the human processing capacity remains limited. This has created the need for sophisticated decision support tools that are available to consumers in the Internet environment to reduce their cognitive stress by helping them make their choices and providing them with information that is appropriate and relevant for their specific needs (Ariely 2000). Internet’s own technological development accommodates this need. Dickson (2000, 117) therefore calls the Internet a super-diffusion innovation, i.e. one that stands above other technological innovations in that it increases effectiveness, efficiency, and speed of “the transmission of new ideas and technologies between individuals and cultures” (see also Diamond 1998).

The focus of consumer research to date on Internet’s technological advancement has been to investigate how Internet tools influence consumers’ online search behavior. Little attention has been given to examine how the Internet helps improve consumers’ decision-making (Kohli, Devaraj, and Mahmood 2004; Zeng and Reinartz 2003) despite the increasing needs of more research that benefits consumers in general and that helps “individuals make wise consumption decisions” in particular (Bazerman 2001, 500). In a different vein, Bechwati and Xia (2003) note that traditional models of decision-making need to be revisited in the new Internet context. Others go even so far as to suggest that the Internet has changed at least some part of traditional theories of marketing, economics, and other fields of business management (see Biswas 2004; Gatarski and Lundkvist 1998; Hawkins Mansell, and Steinhull 1999). Diamond (1998) therefore calls on scholars to examine how the available Internet services change consumers’ decision processes. In response to these calls, the present study developed a conceptual framework to demonstrate that Internet’s technological advancement could be used to (1) reduce consumers’ perceived information overload; (2) replace or supplement consumers’ choice heuristics; (3) redefine consumers’ optimal choice; and (4) reduce consumers’ post choice cognitive dissonance.

Specifically, we argue that the Internet not only facilitates customers with electronic decision aids (e.g. recommendation agents, side-by-side comparisons, ordering and ranking) but also with multi-sensory stimuli (e.g. pictures, short films, or sound) that ultimately help customers in their decision-making process through mental imagery or mood-creation. While research has widely acknowledged the former form of decision aids, it has not sufficiently considered the latter one. We propose that both electronic decision aids and multi-sensory stimuli are being used by online consumers as choice strategies in addition to or instead of commonly discussed heuristics to reduce their perceived information overload and/or to deal with the huge information load provided by the Internet.

In addition, we bring forward that the electronic decision aids and multi-sensory stimuli on the Internet help consumers make more rational decisions. We borrow Bazerman’s (2001) definition of rationality, according to which a decision is considered rational when it maximizes the consumer’s expected welfare. As such, we propose that the most rational decision in the Internet environment does not necessarily have to be the most optimal choice according to the expected utility theory (Tversky and Kahneman 1981) or weighted adding strategy (Bettman et al. 1998). Rather, we propose that consumers judge their choice outcome or the “quality of the decision” according to a reference (e.g. recommendation, average customer rating) that does not necessarily constitute the theoretically optimal choice. This argumentation is in accordance with the information theory that implies to maximize consumers’ benefits (welfare) and minimize their costs (cognitive [over]load through information [over]load). Hence, the Internet environment requires a redefinition of “optimal choice” or “optimal decision performance.”

Finally, we argue that the Internet also changes post choice behavior. The foregoing discussion implies that a redefinition of “optimal choice” will also lead to more satisfied customers and ultimately alleviated consumers’ post-choice cognitive dissonance.
Selected References


Delivering Differentiated Experiential Branding in Web Environments

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Recent empirical evidence revealed that, beyond the hedonic/utilitarian distinction, a more differentiated representation of pleasure or positive affects or attitudes provides additional marketing insights (Dubé, Cervellon and Jingyuan 2003; Dubé and LeBel 2003). For instance, Dubé and LeBel showed that laypeople’s conception of pleasure is best captured by four differentiated pleasures: sensory/physical, emotional/aesthetic, social, and intellectual/accomplishment. Brand positioning strategies anchored in the delivery of differentiated pleasurable experiences have become ubiquitous and web communications are privileged vehicles to convey such positioning.

The present study focuses on consumers’ on-line experiences with products and/or services websites positioned along Dubé and LeBel’s four pleasure types. The objectives are: 1) to examine to what extent the intensity of the four types of pleasures is predictive of consumer responses at the individual level, as measured by website satisfaction and revisit intent, and 2) to examine to what extent the success of a website in inducing each of the four types of pleasures is predictive of market response at the brand level, as measured by patronage patterns reported by Media Metrix. We expect that the experiential positioning of the brand moderates the pleasure-intensity and consumer (vs. market) response relationship.

At the individual level, 100 web-sites with differentiated experiential branding strategy (sensorial, emotional, social and intellectual) were each observed on 24 visits by a panel of 200 participants. Websites were pretested so that each experiential branding strategy (sensory, social, emotional/aesthetic, intellectual) was represented. Each participant browsed a different website for 12 days and after browsing each website visit reported on the intensity of their experience of differentiated pleasures (twelve items, 7-point scale), website functionality (5 items, ?=.87), satisfaction (4 items, ?=.81) and revisit intent (a single likelihood item). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) performed on the 12 differentiated pleasure items revealed that a three-factor structure best represented the differentiated pleasures experience during the browsing episodes: sensory/emotional, social, intellectual. These results imply that sensory and emotional pleasures might have even fuzzier boundaries than expected, which may be due in part to the fact that Internet browsing is dominated by the more abstract senses of sight and sound (Howes, 1991). The correlations over the three types of online experiential pleasures are: -0.68 (for sensory/emotional-social), 0.49 (for sensory/emotional-intellectual) and -0.57 (for social-intellectual).

Structural analyses conducted at the visit level revealed a distinct contribution of the different pleasures to satisfaction and revisit intent, with a moderating effect for the website’s experiential branding strategies. Specifically, the results revealed that sensory/emotional pleasure accounts for the largest main effect on satisfaction (standard coefficient equals to 0.589, with p-value <0.01) over the four types of website. Further, the results demonstrated that website functionality contributes to browsing satisfaction (standard coefficient equals to 0.421, with p-value <0.01) and website browsing satisfaction in turn has a positive and strong impact on revisit intentions (standard coefficient equals to 0.862, with p-value <0.01).

Results revealed that social pleasure has overall a negative impact on website satisfaction, and the effect is further moderated by the type of experiential positioning espoused by a website. Specifically, social pleasure experience while browsing has a significant negative effect on website browsing satisfaction, except for website with a sensory pleasure positioning strategy (standard coefficients of -0.321 for social websites, -0.228 for emotional websites and –0.308 for intellectual websites). Further, intellectual pleasure has a mild positive impact on website satisfaction and the effect is further moderated by branding positioning as well. Specifically, intellectual pleasure had...
no significant influence on website satisfaction when visitors were browsing websites with sensory and emotional pleasure branding strategy, while significant effects were detected for websites with social and intellectual pleasure branding strategy, with standard coefficients equal to 0.296 and 0.211 respectively.

At the website level, we tested websites’ effectiveness in conveying the brand’s experiential positioning. To this end, Media Metrix data on traffic and information search patterns were obtained for the period extending from March to August 2003. The number of unique visitors served as a proxy for site traffic performance at the aggregate market response level. Further, based on Moe and Fader (2004) we also used indicators of visit depth and breadth such as average pages per usage day, average minutes per page, average usage days per visitor and average minutes per visitors.

Due to the censored nature of Media Metrix data, the standard Tobit Maximum likelihood estimation was adopted to explore the relationship between experiential pleasures aggregated as website level and website effectiveness. TOBIT analyses performed at the site level highlighted the central role of intellectual pleasure, more so that the site functionality, in accounting for traffic and search pattern. Sensory/emotional pleasure and social pleasure didn’t demonstrate any significant predictive power on website-level response indicators, yet the coefficients are negative and large. Further tests revealed that intellectual pleasure has the highest predictive power on website effectiveness for sensory website, and second for social website.

In this study, we attempted to trace and document the linkages between the differentiated pleasures that a brand may be attempting to convey, consumers’ responses when visiting websites for these brands, and aggregate market level responses. Overall, our research provides exploratory insights to better understand and estimate these linkages. It is clear that when using differentiated experiential branding strategies in the web environment, different types of pleasures have different influences on consumers’ responses. This suggests that brand managers and web designers should use extra care in planning their positioning and communication strategies.

Selected References:

Watchdogs on the Internet—Protecting Consumers against Online Fraud
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Counterfeiting is one of the biggest growth industries in the world and factors such as increased profit margins, tax free incomes and low overheads, when combined with the relative ‘safety’ from prosecution that the internet provides, has contributed to the explosion of ‘fake’ good that consumers are offered through mediums such as E-Bay and other on-line auction sites (Alcok, Chen, Ch’ng, Hodson et al 2003). In the past it was generally accepted that consumers knowingly purchased these items as counterfeit, and were prepared to trade off inferior quality goods for the satisfaction of owning a luxury product they might not have been otherwise able to afford. The rise of the ‘super counterfeit’ however, has meant that consumers are often paying large amounts of money for products they believe are genuine (Nia and Zaichkowsky 2000). The sale of branded goods identical in nature to legitimate articles is contrived to purposely deceive naive consumers (Ang, Cheng, Lim and Tambyah 2001) as well as capture a segment of the consumer market who are willing collaborators in the trade (Tom, Garibaldi, Zeng and Pilcher 1998).

A number of studies in recent years have examined the ability of consumers to differentiate between ‘fake’ and genuine luxury products (e.g. Ang, Cheng, Lim and Tambyah 2001), consumer demand for such products (e.g. Prendergast, Chuen and Phau 2002; Tom, Garibaldi, Zeng and Pilcher 1998), the value of these goods and consumer purchase intentions towards them (e.g. Cordell, Kieschnick and Wongtada 1996; Nia and Zaichkowsky 2000) as well as means of preventing counterfeiting at the manufacturing end (e.g. Alcok; Chen, Ch’ng, Hodson et al 2003). However, studies of this type do little to actually aid those consumers who are not willing participants in the trade of counterfeit goods—those who genuinely believe they are purchasing legitimate luxury goods.

Counterfeit products on the internet are somewhat of a hidden menace (Field 2005), particularly when they are positioned as genuine, and often sold through a team of sellers to avoid detection of large scale operations. Organisations such as the Anti-Counterfeiting Group (ACG) are useful in identifying and prosecuting large-scale offenders, however, this does not always help the individual consumer looking to buy a designer good at slightly less than retail. Firms such as Tiffany’s have launched legal action against E-Bay as a response to the high numbers of counterfeit products sold through this medium, however Rolex’s failure to successfully sue E-Bay’s German site raises questions regarding the success of any such lawsuit (Passariello 2004). Individual countries’ (such as France’s) tightening on the import of Asian-made replica products and the like has spurred the growth of sales of this type on the internet, as it becomes the most “easy way for a counterfeiter to get the product out to an end customer” (David Margolis, cited in Passariello 2004). Most luxury goods companies employ individuals to monitor representation of their products on the net, but these companies are more concerned with large scale fraud than the individual seller with one or two items on offer. In addition, programs such as VeRO (E-Bay’s Verified Rights Owner program), which shift the burden of monitoring sales to the brand holder in return for an agreement to remove all infringing items at the brand’s request, have not been successful, as the debate as to whose job it is to prevent sales of these items remains unresolved and most luxury goods brand (including Tiffany’s and LVMH) have refused to join the program.

Given that the law is still somewhat behind in effectively policing trade of this type on the internet, some consumers, frustrated by stories of friends and acquaintances bad experiences of purchasing faux luxury goods, have set themselves up as self-styled ‘consumer
watchdogs’, campaigning about this type of fraud by educating their more naïve counterparts. This research is concerned with two key issues—firstly the question of what motivates certain consumers to set themselves up in this way and give their time (and often money) to aid in the education of consumers about purchasing on the internet, and secondly to assess how consumers in general react to such ‘watchdogs’ and to what extent they utilize these services.

The research is exploratory in nature, and is designed to be conducted in two distinct phases. A number of organizations (including ‘watchdog’ sites, online auction sites and regulatory bodies) have been identified to form the basis of the initial development of this research, with depth interviews to be conducted with individuals representing these organizations. The second phase of the research involves qualitative analysis of consumer responses to a number of watchdog sites and online auction chat forums. Responses will be content analysed to determine overall themes and a guidelines for the development of watchdog sites that disseminate brand specific anti-counterfeiting related information to consumers. It is hoped that in the future such sites may be adopted by large scale trading sites such as E-bay as a consumer information resource, allowing greater protection of consumer interests than is currently provided.

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Technology-Based Communication Patterns of Youth
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Extended Abstract
This paper explores the consumption practices of young consumers in relation to their use of technology. We seek to understand the use of communication technologies, the underlying motivations for these uses and how young consumers select these communication technologies.

Consumer researchers have studied consumer practices and experiences centered on technological products. Specifically, scholars have considered various aspects of technology consumption such as use-diffusion of technology (Shih and Venkatesh 2004), consumer self-presentation through websites (Schau and Gilly 2004), disappointment in consumer technology (Thompson 1994), paradoxes of technology (Mick and Fournier 1998), and intimate self-disclosure via computers (Moon 2000). Whereas the focus of most of these studies has been on adults, our study focuses on young consumers.

There are two main reasons for our focus on young consumers. First, technology occupies a central position in the lives of these consumers. They have grown up with technology such as television, video, arcade games and CD players (Sefton-Green 1998). These technologies form a ubiquitous part of their cultural environment (Hutchby and Moran-Ellis 2001, Pearce and Mallan 2003). Second, young consumers form one of the most viable segments for targeting technological products. For instance, online spending by American 18-24 year olds was four times greater than among older age groups (Pastore 2000 in Osgerby 2004). The research reported here is part of an ongoing study. We used qualitative research methods and collected data from eight informants in Southern California. This sample size is deemed adequate for generating themes and cultural categories (McCracken 1988). The informants were all undergraduate students and their ages ranged from 18-25 years. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews which lasted from 90 to 120 minutes. We followed the general procedures of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998) in our data analysis. First, we identified conceptual categories and themes. Then we established relations among the emerging patterns. NVivo, data management software (QSR1999) was employed in the analysis.

The results indicate that there are evolving communication patterns among young consumers. They use various types of technological products for communication purposes. These communicative mediums include phones, cell phones, instant messaging, email, chat rooms, blogs and websites. Our analysis reveals that the underlying motivations for use of these mediums are guided mostly by young consumers’ need for connectedness, and to a lesser degree, by their need for self-expression and instrumental purposes. Self-expression as an underlying motivation is specifically evident in case of blogs. Blogs constitute a medium to reflect and express one’s self to others in the
virtual world. Our participants argue that blogs can be personalized in various ways to reflect the blogger’s identity and can constitute a medium through which individuals carry their real-life self to the virtual world. The instrumental reasons, on the other hand, are reflected in instances such as the use of instant messenger to discuss schoolwork with classmates and the use of blogs to organize and maintain a record of daily activities.

Consumers’ need for connectedness emerged as the central theme which motivates the use of different communication mediums. Our findings suggest that participants use different technologies to connect with their existing friends, family members, new people and communities of interest. In doing so, they cultivate their existing relations, bond with friends, meet new people and become members of broader communities.

The data also reveals that there are two main factors guiding consumers’ selection of specific communication technologies. These are structural properties of a particular technology and the level of intimacy in social relationships. Informants describe their choice of a particular medium in terms of its convenience in communicating and maintaining contact with others. Convenience of different forms of communication technologies stems from their inherent properties. For instance, participants view instant messaging as suitable for maintaining contact with friends. The structural properties of instant messaging allows participants to create a ‘buddy list’ composed of their community of friends and to engage in different levels of participation ranging from active conversations to merely observing others. Consumer discourses also reveal that participants act quite intuitively in their selection of different modes of on/off line communication technologies available to them based on intimacy in relationships, intimacy of content as well as the interplay between intimacy and structural properties.

Both the nature and the intimacy of relationship determine the appropriateness of the medium. Participants easily delineate among “family”, “friends”, and “acquaintances”. They use different communicative mediums depending on whom they want to communicate with. For instance, some young consumers communicate with email and instant messenger at the start of a relationship, then as the relationship progresses they use communication mediums such as phone. The subject matter of conversation is also found to affect the selection of a particular communication medium. For example, participants use online chat for impersonal conversations, while they prefer using the phone for more personal conversations. Finally, there is interplay between intimacy and structural properties which provides a sense of control and empowerment to participants. For example, they maintain several email accounts not only to channel different kinds of information, but also to differentially communicate with other individuals depending on the level of intimacy in the relationship.

We contribute to the existing literature by illustrating the ways in which intimacy in social relationships influence and guide young consumers’ use of communication technologies. Overall as consumers’ relations with social actors in their lives move along the continuums of impersonal to personal and distant to intimate, the use of particular technological products also changes. Consumer narratives reveal the role of technology in mediating social and personal relationships. These accounts highlight how technology usage shapes and structures, and in turn is shaped and structured by consumers’ relationships. This study has implications for consumer research. Due to changing communication patterns, marketers should consider the role of communication technologies in enabling different patterns of information exchange. These exchanges have implications for diffusion of product information. Given that this is an ongoing study, further work is anticipated to extend the findings.

A Blind Mind’s Eye: Perceptual Defense Mechanisms and Aschematic Visual Information
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This research reports on an eyetracker experiment exploring aschematic perception in visual processing. While eighty percent of those exposed to an urban image containing a woman committing suicide fixated on the woman, only thirty-five percent reported seeing her. Another thirty-five percent reported schema consistent items in her place and were three times as likely to insert other false schematic items into image recall. Schematic responders were also partially protected from the negative affect the image created. These findings suggest that people ignore aschematic stimuli due to top-down cognitive frameworks that transform images between sight and memory, rather than changing the visual search pattern itself.

‘Do I Know You?’: Constraints on the Recognition of the Celebrity Endorser
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We explore a celebrity recognition framework in which the ability to recognize other-race faces is based upon not only the race of the viewer relative to the celebrity, but also the amount of exposure/familiarity the viewer has had with others who are of the same race as the celebrity. The other-race-effect is pertinent for marketing researchers to understand because it has significant implications for not only multicultural celebrity facial recognition in advertising, but also for other marketing-related issues, including customer service, direct marketing, and personal selling.
The Role of Self in Evaluation of Advertisements with Highly Attractive Models

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Media, whether it is print, television or even the Internet, is flooded with advertisements for products and services endorsed by sources that are highly attractive. Marketers targeting their products towards women often use highly attractive sources in their advertisements in an effort to increase the ad’s effectiveness (Bower 2001). Marketing literature provides evidence of the positive effects of using highly attractive sources on consumers’ evaluations of both the product and the ad (Baker and Churchill 1977; Kahle and Homer 1985; Kamins 1990; Solomon, Ashmore and Longo 1992). However, researchers have been divided in their support for the effectiveness of the use of highly attractive sources in advertisements. For example Bower (2001), Cabellero and Solomon (1984), and Cabellero, Lumpkin, and Madden (1989) have documented the negative effect of using highly attractive sources in advertisements. These studies suggest that such negative effects are due to social comparison, feelings of inadequacy and/or jealousy (Bower 2001, Richins 1991). The research presented here furthers existing literature in this area by investigating the cognitive process underlying the formation of negative attitudes toward advertisements using highly attractive sources.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: It has been suggested that the use of attractive sources in advertisements may result in more favorable attitudes toward the product advertised—either by serving as peripheral cues when elaboration likelihood is low or by providing information central to the merits of the argument when elaboration likelihood is high (Kahle and Homer 1985, Puckett, Petty, Cacioppo, and Fisher 1983; see also Petty, Umava and Strathman 1991 for a review). Here, we examine how the use of attractive sources in advertisements may result in more negative attitudes by influencing the extent of elaboration itself. Specifically, we draw upon theories of self-concept (e.g., Grub and Grathwohl 1967), comparison and dissatisfaction (e.g., Richins 1991), dual process models of processing (e.g., Chaiken 1980; Petty and Cacioppo 1986), and preference-inconsistent information processing (e.g., Jain and Maheswaran 2000) to suggest that the relative gap between consumers’ perceptions of their own attractiveness and that of the source influences the extent of processing, and thus whether consumers will process the message claims in the advertisements or use attractiveness of the source as peripheral cue in forming attitudes. We suggest that it is not just the absolute level of attractiveness of the source that determines whether consumers form positive or negative attitude towards the advertisement, but also the gap between the perceived self-attractiveness and attractiveness of the source.

Based on this conceptualization, we propose the following hypotheses. First, the use of highly attractive sources in ads will result in a greater gap between self-attractiveness and attractiveness of the source (H1). Further, the greater the gap between the self-attractiveness and the attractiveness of the source, the greater the processing of ad claims (H2). Finally, in the case of a weak message, higher gaps will lead to: lower credibility of ad claims (H3a), more negative evaluations of the ad (H3b), and negative evaluations of the brand (H3c).

METHOD: A 2 x 2 x 2 between subjects experiment was conducted with source attractiveness (high/low), message strength (strong/weak), and gender (male/female) as independent variables. The stimulus was an advertisement for a bank. Male participants viewed an advertisement with a male model and female participants viewed an advertisement with a female model. Message strength was manipulated by the text in the ad. Gap was measured as the difference between the perceived self-attractiveness of the participants and that of the source (model featured in the advertisement). The experiment yielded 213 usable responses (113 males and 100 females).

RESULTS: As hypothesized, we found that the use of highly attractive sources in the advertisements resulted in significantly greater gaps as compared to the ads using less attractive sources across male and female participants (H1 supported). Second, we found that greater gaps between the perceived attractiveness of the self and that of the source leads to more processing of the ad claims for both males and females, as measured by a greater number of thoughts (H2 supported). Third, we found significant effects of gap and message strength on the credibility of the ad for males but not for females (H3a partially supported). The attitude toward the ad was found to be less favorable when the gap was high for males, while females were only influenced by message strength (H3b, partially supported). Finally, the attitude toward the brand was negatively affected by the magnitude of the gap for both males and females (H3c supported).

DISCUSSION: The results of this study indicate that the use of highly attractive sources in advertisements can lead to a gap between perceived image of the self and that of the source, and higher levels of gap motivate consumers to scrutinize and process the ad claims more closely. This study also found significant effects of gap and message strength on advertisement effectiveness measures, showing that it is not the absolute level of attractiveness of the source that determine the effectiveness of ad but the gap between the perceived attractiveness of the self and that of the source. Unlike previous research that views negative attitude toward advertisements with highly attractive sources as an affective response, this study explains the cognitive process involved in the negative attitude formation.

References
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Marketing academics have increasingly shown an interest in consumer values over the past decade, with materialism garnering most of the research attention (see e.g., Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002; Richins 1994). Relatively little consumer researcher has been done on religious values, despite the fact that religion is an influential and important aspect of American and many other cultures, impacting consumer attitudes (e.g., towards divorce, music, political issues), values (e.g., altruism, sexual morality, work ethic), and behaviors (e.g., food and alcohol consumption, holiday celebrations, dress) at both the individual and societal levels. (For notable exceptions, see Hirschman 1983; LaBarbera and Garhun 1997; Wilkes, Burnett, and Howell 1986.) This research attempts to fill some of the gaps in extant knowledge about how religion and other values may influence consumer behavior by examining the relationship between religiosity and materialism, as well as two related sub-values: concern for consumption ethics and value expression through brands. These values are compared across two generations of consumers of high interest to marketers today: Gen Y and Baby Boomers. In addition, this study tests the influence of generation and consumer values on the effectiveness of several types of advertising appeals. With respect to values, members of Generation Y were expected to be more materialistic, more likely to use brands as communication devices, and more concerned about the ethics of consumption as compared to Baby Boomers. Little is known at this point about Generation Y’s level of religiosity, so this was an open research question. With respect to appeal types, members of Generation Y were expected to respond more positively to advertising in general, and in particular to image, indulgence, eco, and sex appeals.

The sample for this study consisted of 264 Baby Boomers and 213 members of Generation Y. The method was a pencil and paper experiment in which each participant evaluated four advertisements drawn from the following set: image vs. functional appeals, value vs. indulgence appeals, waste vs. eco appeals, and high sex vs. low sex appeals. In the first three categories, the ads were for either a car (a public, durable product) or for a shampoo (a private, nondurable product). Both sex appeals were for cologne. In all cases, fictitious brand/organization names were used and ad presentation order was rotated and counter-balanced across subjects. Participants’ attitudes toward each of the four ads and intention to purchase the advertised product were assessed on ten Likert-type items, all on seven-point scales. Participants also completed multi-item scales to assess individual differences in religiosity, materialism, brand value expressiveness, and consumption ethics, and were asked to report their religious affiliation (if any), gender, age, education, income, and marital status. All multi-item scales were subjected to factor analysis, and composite variables were created for use in further analysis.

The results of the data analysis support the majority of the initial hypotheses. As expected, members of Generation Y were more materialistic and more likely to use brands as communication devices than members of the Baby Boom generation. They were also less significantly less religious on every measure, providing a preliminary answer to this research question. However, there was no significant difference between the two generations in concern regarding the ethics of their consumption practices. With respect to responsiveness to appeal types, Gen Y’s responded more positively to image, indulge, and sex appeals, as expected. However, they also responded more positively to function appeals, which was not specifically hypothesized, and no difference was found in response to eco, value, or waste appeals between the two generations. In addition, regression analyses were run separately for each of the four consumer values to test the interactions among generation, value, and appeal type factors. Several complex, higher-order interactions were found, but due to space constraints, cannot be discussed here.

This research potentially makes a couple of contributions to the study of consumer values and advertising effectiveness. First, the study examines religiosity and several other consumption-related values in two important generational cohorts to construct a more complete picture of religious consumers as a group. Although materialism and, to a lesser extent, religiosity have both been examined in the literature, the relationship between the two has not yet been fully explored. Furthermore, consumption ethics, its ties to religiosity, and the connection between brand value expressiveness and religiosity are also new to the literature. By explicating these relationships, a clearer picture of how these values relate to consumption may be obtained. Furthermore, the cross-generational nature of this study yields additional insights into these value constellations. Second, this research explores how generation and consumer values impact advertising appeal effectiveness. Studies on appeal effectiveness for different personality types and subcultures have been limited in general, so more
work is needed in this area. In addition, despite the apparently strong influence of religion and religiosity on a wide variety of consumer attitudes, values, and behaviors, this area has received much less attention than some other similar areas of influence (e.g., race or ethnicity). Although the results of the present research are limited in scope, it appears likely that religion and religiosity may have important implications for segmentation, targeting, and advertising strategy development and may serve as the basis for an important area of transformative consumer research.

References:

Bilingual Processing of Advertising from a Psycholinguistic Perspective: The Link Between Attributes Remembered and Attributes Preferred
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When marketers first studied cross cultural communications the focal audience was African-Americans and the usual issue was the ethnic match between perceiver and spokesperson(s) (For a review see Whittler, 1991).

As immigration from the south increased, researchers set their sights on the Hispanic market. In order to study this group, language necessarily became an operant variable. However, researchers seemed to be accepting the theoretical implication of an invalidated premise—the Whorfian hypothesis of linguistic relativity (Whorf 1956)—by treating language and culture as if though they were completely dependent on each other. As a result, most studies looked at cross cultural communication from a strictly cultural/social perspective and demoted language to the status of a corollary variable.

Seemingly justified by this type of research, Madison Avenue came up with a most disingenuous solution to the issue of how to communicate with ethnic target populations: simply translate the message to their dominant language. However, very little theory-based research exists to validate such an approach (Luna & Peracchio 2002).

The psycholinguistics literature suggests there are universal aspects of language learning and production, including characteristics of second language acquisition, encoding, and recall regardless of what language(s) we consider. Working from this knowledge, Luna & Peracchio have begun to study cross cultural marketing communications from a psycholinguistic perspective (Luna & Peracchio 1999, 2001, 2002).

Although Luna & Peracchio have looked at the quantity of recall by bilinguals when processing a second language message, and have concluded that the extra cognitive effort results in less recall for bilinguals than monolinguals, they have not considered the possibility that the information bilinguals do recall may be more valuable from a cognitive and/or affective standpoint than the information monolinguals are able to recall.

Contrary to what Kroll & Stewart’s Revised Hierarchical Model and the Conceptual Mediation Model have suggested, Silverberg and Samuel (2004) found that bilinguals who had learned their second language past the age of seven, did not exhibit any cross language semantic priming regardless of their second language proficiency. The cut off age of seven was based on research which found that during the planning of second language words, bilinguals who learned their second language after the age of seven, showed significantly different brain activation patterns than bilinguals who had learned their second language before the age of seven (Kim et al, 1997). This information leads us to believe that bilinguals who learn their second language after the age of seven (highly representative of U.S. adult immigrants), are likely to engage in more lexical activity than many theories would suggest.

For bilinguals, second language lexical to first language lexical activation results in a form of elaborative rehearsal as information is linked between short term and long term memory and both a lexical link and a conceptual link are activated. Elaborative rehearsal has been shown to improve episodic memory (Kellog 2003). It is believed that the extra elaboration undertaken by bilinguals, will result in a generation effect: better memory for target items that are generated (Slamecka & Graf 1978). Research has shown the occurrence of a bilingual generation effect (O’Neill, Roy, & Tremblay, 1993).

We intended to show that presenting a second language selling message to a bilingual may actually result in better recall of personally relevant attributes for any given product category, than would be the case for monolinguals.

It has been said that “recognition of the impact of attribute importance on information search is so widespread... that information acquisition behavior is accepted as a direct measure of attribute importance” (Mackenzie 1986, p.174). It therefore stands to reason that in an advertising context, a developing bilingual will begin to learn, recognize, and pay special attention to words representing the attributes he/she feels are most important in the focal product category. Because second language word recognition is not as automatic as first language recognition, a bilingual is better able to focus on the “important” words and essentially ignore the rest.

Our research began with a pilot study; a nested 2 x (2 x 2) between-subjects design: Hi/Lo-Motivation, Monolingual/Bilingual-Language, Forced/Unforced-translation (for bilinguals only). Subjects were randomly assigned to each of the controllable conditions.
Low-motivation subjects were only told they would be asked to judge an advertisement; additionally, hi-motivation subjects were
told they would have to explain the ad to another subject at a later time. Within the bilingual group, half the subjects were asked to make
a conscious effort to think of the words in the ad in a language other than English.
Subjects were then exposed to an advertisement for a backpack which featured seven distinct attributes. Immediately after the
exposure, subjects were asked to complete a standard attitude toward the ad scale, they were then asked to list all of the product information
they could recall from the ad. This was followed by language usage, demographics, and product involvement questions and a measure of
lexical activity.
One week later, subjects were asked to complete a conjoint task meant to assess their revealed preferences for a subset of the different
product attributes presented in the stimulus advertisement.
It was hypothesized that bilingual subjects’ revealed preferences for certain product attributes would be more highly correlated with
the attributes they recalled after exposure to the stimulus ad during week one, indicating that bilingual subjects had better recall for the
attributes they preferred in the focal product category than monolinguals.
Through a series of binary logistic regressions, we regressed the relative importance of all attributes on the likelihood that a given
attribute was recalled. We expected to find more and higher significant betas corresponding to our dependant attribute for bilinguals than
monolinguals.
Examination of the data revealed sampling problems related to self reported language proficiencies by American bilingual subjects;
however, tests on a small sub-sample of international bilinguals yielded strong directional support for the hypothesized effects.
Future studies will be conducted with subjects whose language proficiency can be objectively assessed; specifically, individuals
enrolled in English as a Second Language programs.

References

Advertising Claims About Search and Experiential Attributes and Their Effect on Post-Trial Evaluations of Functional versus Hedonic Products
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Introduction
Advertising and product trial are often used by companies to encourage consumers to buy their products. One focus of ad-trial research
has been on type of attribute information provided by advertising versus trial. A key finding is that product trial provides maximum
information relative to experiential attributes (e.g., taste, speed, softness); whereas advertising provides maximum information for search
attributes (e.g., price, ingredients, calorie content) (Wright and Lynch 1995).
Several researchers have speculated that other factors are important in the ad-trial experience. In particular, Devi and Ang (2001)
argue that advertising can more effectively communicate products’ hedonic dimensions, and product trial can more effectively
communicate the utilitarian dimensions. Additionally, research indicates that message claims affect advertising’s degree of effectiveness
(see Darley and Smith 1993; Edell and Staelin 1983; Ford, Smith, and Swasy 1990; Holbrook 1978), and in the context of trial, the extent
to which a claim provides more objective versus more subjective information may be important.
To-date, no ad-trial research has examined the effect of advertising claims on post-trial evaluations. Specifically, the objective of this
study is to investigate whether objective versus subjective pre-trial advertising claims about experiential versus search product attributes
differentially affect consumers’ post-trial perceptions of a functional versus a hedonic product.
Background Literature

The Integrated Information Response Model

The Integrated Information Response Model (Smith and Swinyard 1982) provides an insightful framework in understanding the processing of advertising and trial experience. IIRM states that an advertisement because it is provided by a source with a vested interest will be met with resistance by consumers, generating weak beliefs about the advertised brand. These weak beliefs coupled with weak affect lack sufficient expected value to create brand preferences; only upon trial can these weaker beliefs be transformed to stronger beliefs and affect, and result in commitment to the brand.

Although advertising may be less effective in generating stronger belief strength and belief confidence, it may still play a significant role in product evaluation. In his two-stage model of advertising effect, Deighton (1984) argued that advertising arouses expectations. Therefore, even though consumers may indicate that they do not believe in the ad claims, they store the message and (subconsciously) form a tentative hypothesis regarding the product, which is then assessed during product trial.

In the context of advertisement and product trial effects for highly diagnostic products, I argue that the processing related to the IIRM is dependent upon product type (hedonic vs. functional), type of attribute information (experiential vs. search) and claim objectivity (objective vs. subjective).

Hypotheses Development

Functional products are those that fulfill utilitarian needs (Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994; Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard 1993), and the utilitarian value of a product is decided objectively. Using the expectancy value model, several studies investigating functional products have demonstrated that objective claims, as opposed to subjective claims, generate more positive expected values, are more credible (Ford, Smith, and Swasy 1990; Holbrook 1978), and generate higher purchase intentions (Darley and Smith 1993). Further, Ford et al. (1990), by cross-classifying claim objectivity (objective/subjective) with attribute type (search/experiential attributes), indicate that in the context of functional products: (1) consumers are least skeptical of advertising claims about search attributes expressed in objective terms (e.g., “Buy this product for only $4.99”); (2) consumers become more skeptical of subjective claims about search attributes (“Buy this product at an extremely low price”), which are relatively ambiguous; (3) consumers are even more skeptical of objective claims about experiential attributes (e.g., “[…] carpeting will not mildew or rot for at least three years’’); (4) consumers are most skeptical of subjective claims about experiential attributes (e.g., “this auto service treats you fairly time after time’’). Further, because belief confidence is a function of the amount of information the individual has available to form a judgment of relevant attributes (Peterson and Pitz 1988), search attribute claims have the potential to generate more confidently held trial-based brand beliefs than trial alone.

The hedonic value of a product is decided based upon the ability to provide feelings or hedonic pleasure. Hirschman (1980) defines hedonic consumption as consumer behavior that is related to sensual, fantastic, and sensitive experience with a product. As argued by Hopkinson and Pujari (1999, 273), “the unrestricted imagination is controlled ultimately by the participant, hedonism creates the opportunity for the individual dream” and experiential attributes, as opposed to search attributes, may facilitate imagination. For instance, when shopping for perfumes, trial by giving away scented cards does not effectively communicate the fantasy and imagination attributes associated with a perfume. Perfumes do not just sell the fragrance. They also sell beauty, image, dreams, and fantasy, which are more effectively communicated through advertising’s experiential attribute claims than through trial (Dewi and Ang 2001).

With regard to claim objectivity for the experiential attribute information, the subjective claims should generate more positive consumers’ responses than objective claims in the context of hedonic products. In fact, research indicates that subjective claims may be more effective than objective claims for value-expressive products (Park and Young 1986) or other hedonic products like perfume or stylish clothes. However, for the search attribute advertisement, I do not expect a significant difference between the objective and the subjective ads in the post-trial responses they generate, because the search attributes, by definition, are pragmatic and do not allow the customer to imagine experiencing the product. Finally, trial alone should generate the least positive post-trial responses because it neither “prepares” the customer for the experience that is about to occur, nor does it provide additional information (i.e., search attribute information) to increase consumers’ beliefs in their evaluations.

Conclusions

This paper develops the theoretical foundation and hypotheses related to the effect of pre-trial advertising messages (i.e., objective versus subjective claims about search or experiential attributes) on subsequent trial experience. This study provides practical insights for advertisers in formulating specific advertising claims for functional versus hedonic products, when advertising precedes a sampling campaign.

References


Brand Stereotypes and Consumer Judgments: The Automatic Shifting of Standards in Brand Evaluations
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Applying the social psychology precepts of the Shifting Standards Model (Biernat, Manis, and Nelson 1991) it is shown that—depending on a marketer’s particular choice of eliciting consumer feedback—a brand that fares objectively better than another on a specific attribute can in fact be perceived as equal or even relatively worse than the same brand on that very attribute. Such anomalous explicit response originates in consumers’ use of different stereotypical standards for the competing brands. Unless brands are directly juxtaposed (objective judgment), evaluative standards are implicitly more relaxed for the inferior brand, allowing it to match or even surpass its competitor in subjective judgments.

Empirical Support for an Item and Relational Conceptualization of Sponsorship
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Many marketers rely on commercial sponsorship as a means of promoting brand awareness or enhancing brand image, and many events rely on sponsorship as a source of funding and would potentially cease to exist without it (Gardner and Shuman 1988, Lardinoit and Derbaix 2001). Despite a growing body of research aimed at investigating various aspects of sponsorship, such as potential outcomes and measures of effectiveness (see Cornwell, Weeks, and Roy 2005 for a discussion), few researchers have proposed fully developed psychologically-based conceptual models of how commercial sponsorship might function to affect its audiences. Without such models, predictions about sponsorship success can be difficult to make, and firms that might otherwise invest in worthwhile events may be reluctant to do so (Lardinoit and Derbaix 2001). This paper uses theory from the item and relational information memory literature (e.g., Einstein and Hunt 1980, Hunt and Einstein 1981) to explain how commercial sponsorship can be conceptualized. Further, it reports empirical data in support of this conceptual model, and illustrates that the model can be used to predict memory for various types of sponsorship information. This theoretical framework has been presented in Weeks, Cornwell, and Humphreys (forthcoming) and the empirical support from the current study demonstrates its validity.

Item information is that which is encoded to represent specific events or objects in memory, while relational information is that which is encoded to represent the relationships between events and objects. If both brands and events (the two key components of a sponsorship) can be considered forms of item information, and the relationship a brand holds with an event (a sponsorship) can be considered relational information, then an item and relational information framework should be a valid way to conceptualize commercial sponsorship. Item and relational theory suggests that item information is encoded in such a way that item-specific features are stored which make the item distinctive from other information represented in memory (Einstein and Hunt 1980). Relational information, on the other hand, is encoded such that features shared across items are stored, thereby enabling the representation of relationships among items in memory (Einstein and Hunt 1980). Memory for the relationship that a brand holds with an event (a sponsorship), is therefore dependent upon the encoding and storage of both sponsor-specific item information (which distinguishes the brand as a sponsor) and sponsor-event relational information (which ties the brand to the event). Congruent sponsorships (e.g., where a sporting goods manufacturer sponsors a sporting event) may be at an advantage to incongruent sponsorships (e.g., where a mineral water brand sponsors an electronics fair) in that relational information is more readily available given that a relationship is more obvious. Market competitors can also be conceptualized in this model, as sources of information (also encoded as item or relational information) that can potentially interfere with the storage of the target (sponsor) information.

The current study used an experimental design to test the predictive value of this model. Since sponsorship information is likely to be processed as peripheral information (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983, Pham and Vanhuele, 1997), participants were exposed to
a series of radio-like press announcements detailing upcoming event sponsorships, which were embedded among distracter announcements outlining horoscope predictions and weather forecasts. Participants were asked to rate the announcers in terms of effectiveness and suitability to be radio presenters rather than focus on content, and at the end of the session they were given an unexpected recall task. In total, 196 student volunteers took part in the study and received course credit for doing so.

The study used a 4 (competitor information type) x 3 (sponsor information type) x 2 (sponsor-event congruence type) mixed factorial design. Participants heard twelve announcements, each containing a description of a fictitious upcoming event, one of four levels of competitor information (no competitor, competitor mention, competitor-specific item information, competitor-event relational information) in order to assess the effects of competitor information interference, and one of three levels of sponsor information (sponsor mention, sponsor-specific item information, sponsor-event relational information). Each level of competitor information was presented between groups, while the three levels of sponsor information were presented within groups. Half of the announcements that participants heard detailed congruent sponsors and competitors, and half detailed incongruent sponsors and competitors. All conditions were counterbalanced to avoid possible order effects. Memory for the sponsorship information was assessed using cued recall where the event name served as the recall cue.

Results lend support to conceptualizing sponsorship within an item and relational information conceptualization of commercial sponsorship. The model is able to predict, based upon the type of sponsorship information a consumer receives and the congruence between an event and sponsor, just how well the consumer will remember that information. If these results can be replicated in future studies, this model will prove valuable to both marketing researchers and practitioners alike. Although memory for sponsorship information is an important outcome of sponsorships, whether the model is able to predict affective and behavioral outcomes must also be considered in future work.

References

Elaboration, Imagination and the Misinformation Effect
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Consumers’ recollection of their consumption experience has been shown to be open to suggestion and susceptible to external influence. For instance, recollections about product quality as well as product type have been shown to be open to misleading suggestions from print advertisements (Braun, 1999; Cowley & Janus, 2004). While these initial studies have demonstrated the presence of the misinformation effect in the consumer behavior context and some boundary conditions for the same, they have also raised important questions regarding the nature of the effect, the level to which it extends to and processing strategies that might enhance or mitigate the effect. For instance, one important question that is raised is whether consumers’ false recollections are limited to the actual misinforming stimulus or do they extend to confabulations that go beyond the misinforming intrusion. The objective of this study is to investigate this possibility.

Previous studies in the decision making literature have shown that extended processing of information may not always lead to accurate judgments and might, in some cases, reduce judgment accuracy. In addition to this, evidence from the eyewitness testimony and cognitive psychology literature suggests that when individuals are placed in situations that elicit extended recollection, they are prone to greater
memory errors. The interesting aspect of this is that in certain situations these errors of recollection could go beyond the misinforming stimulus. Recent qualitative studies on the role of imagination in the consumption of products (Martin, 2004) have also provided us with an explanation of how imagination, by way of enhancing vivid imagery and inducing embellishment, could actually lead to greater errors in recall of the consumption experience.

The above two threads of rationale lead us to expect that some forms consumption, specifically, consumption experiences that encourage extended processing of information (through elaboration), might actually lead to greater errors in memory as compared to experiences with no such extended processing. Studies on autobiographical memories find that in situations when participants were encouraged repeatedly (along with misinformation stimuli) to provide detailed accounts for their childhood experiences, misinformation effects were particularly strong and confidence in their recall were also high. Accordingly, we expect that when consumers are in an immersive experience and are naturally placed in a situation conducive to imagination, their consumption memory is not only susceptible to misinformation but can also be led to confabulate. That is, via the misinforming stimulus and imagination, they can be expected to not only recall their experience to be more consistent with the misinforming stimulus but also go beyond the stimulus itself and ‘hyper-recall’ aspects or features of the experience that were actually not presented. We expect these reconstructions to be specific features or aspects that are extensions of the (main) misinforming stimulus. In a way, contrary to previous misinformation effect studies, we expect misinformation at the more ‘general’ thematic level to lead to greater ‘specific’ feature-level false alarms.

Based on a survey and pretest examining product relevance and involvement, we chose computer games as the test setting. In a 2 X 2 computer-based experiment, the misinformation stimulus manipulated a) the basic theme of the game and b) the primary evaluative dimension related to the game via misleading questions presented after the participants had read a description and had actually played the game for 4 minutes. Imagination was manipulated by a story which placed them in an imaginary problem situation and asked them to imagine and write down their account of the way in which they tackled the problem. In addition to free recall measures, we also collected recognition measures on a variety of words that were semantically related (as well as unrelated) to the key misinforming stimulus. Preliminary analyses show that the main effect of misinformation on both theme-related and evaluation-related words was significant at the p<0.001 level. That is, when exposed to the incorrect theme (in the misinformation condition), participants’ recognition of the misinformation-consistent theme and evaluation words was significantly more than the no-misinformation condition. The main effect of imagination was not significant on both. However, imagination had a significant effect on unrelated words, i.e. words that were neither part of the description nor part of the misinformation stimulus. Further, this effect was found to be inhibitory. That is, in the imagination condition, participants were less likely to falsely recognize unrelated words. The misinformation X imagination interaction was also not significant.

The pattern of results suggests that consumers’ susceptibility to misinformation is robust. However, increased thought put in on the game after initial consumption (by way of the ‘imagine’ instruction) seemed to do two things. Firstly, it led participants along a different path which made them falsely recognize words that were actually consistent with the imagination story (and thus inconsistent with both the game and the misinformation). Secondly, the increased thought induced by the imagination condition probably enhanced the involvement of these participants and led them to reduced false alarms with respect to both misinformation-related and completely unrelated words. The lack of an interaction between misinformation and imagination leads us to believe that further study is necessary to untangle the effects of involvement and imagination upon consumers’ susceptibility confabulate and embellish their memories.

Reference List


Innovating and Lagging as Signals of General Intelligence

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We approach innovativeness from a costly signaling perspective. We suggest that both innovative and lagging consumer behaviors signal general intelligence. Only highly intelligent consumers can afford not to follow the majority, possibly because they can justify their choices. Innovators and laggards do not follow the majority by definition. In three studies, we find evidence that (1) more intelligent people are expected to innovate or lag, (2) people who do not follow the majority, either by lagging or innovating, are actually more intelligent and (3) are perceived by others as more intelligent than those who follow the majority.
The Impact of Mathematics Anxiety on the Evaluation of Price and Price Presentation Formats

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Price, a numeric aspect of product information, at time requires simple calculations and comparisons with either prices of competing offers or a price in memory to determine the savings or evaluating an offer. But for some consumers these computations could become a source of anxiety. This research develops a conceptualization that predicts the effects of mathematics anxiety and motivation to process information on the processing of price information and price presentation formats. The results from two studies show that mathematics anxiety influences the evaluation of prices and price presentation formats.

Intuition in Consumer Decision Making

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Almost 30 years ago, Mace (1977) published a paper on his interpretation of the theories of perception espoused by psychologist James J. Gibson. The subtitle of that paper should serve as a constant reminder of a very common mistake in consumer research, as well as a roadmap to significantly greater understanding of consumers and consumer decision making from an academic and an applied perspective: “ask not what’s inside your head but what your head’s inside of.” Qualitative research into naturalistic decision making (e.g., Zsambok & Klein, 1997), including consumer decision making (e.g., Readinger, 2004), has repeatedly shown the importance of recognizing environmental cues in making split-second decisions. Currently, the most convincing model explaining this phenomenon is Klein’s (1989) Recognition-Primed Decision (RPD) model. It shifts the emphasis of decision making away from selecting among a set of options, and towards assessing a situation and mentally simulating courses of action. Essentially, it places a premium on the ability of the decision maker to perceive and interpret the environment. In this framework, recognizing relevant aspects of past experience in the current situation is the fundamental step in making many rapid decisions. Therefore, understanding “what the head’s inside of” is the key to understanding consumers’ intuitions in many naturalistic situations.

Domain experts recognize in an instant the presence of certain contextual factors that tell them nearly everything they need to know about a situation. For example, critical care nurses in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) know (without explicitly knowing that they know) the factors that indicate sepsis (Crandall & Calderwood, 1989). They may have memorized a list of symptoms “by heart,” but they recognize the physical manifestations of those symptoms “by intuition.” In many cases, all such experts need is an appropriate frame in which to situate their cognition; they need to recognize features of the environment that are familiar, and then proceed to build expectations about what will happen next and what cues and factors they should pay attention to. Consider another example. When professional hockey players are on the ice in a game situation, they recognize a defense and take actions to exploit its weaknesses well before they can verbalize where their opponents are located and what they’re doing (Readinger, Ross, & Phillips, in preparation). The action (or reaction) seems to precede the explicit decision. The players call it intuition or instinct, and it is very similar to what the NICU nurses mentioned above. Intuition, though, is a keen perception of the environment, now and in the past. It is the conjunction of what an expert has thought and done before, when the environmental context was relevantly similar.

In this sense, buying a product is not significantly different from recognizing sepsis or playing professional hockey. The critical contingency in the comparison is the “expertise” of the consumer. Is he or she an expert, in the way that the NHL hockey players or the nurses are? There are differences, but the similarities are more striking. The ability to “size up” a situation in a moment’s glance often comes with practice, and it is present when a shopper purchases household goods at a supermarket, just as it is when nurses diagnose sepsis. Behavior often becomes routinized and difficult to verbalize, when consumers are questioned. In the extreme, the experts do not even recognize that they are making any decisions at all. Certainly not all consumer behavior will be at the expert level; purchases made infrequently, for example, are often considerably more analytical (involving the explicit comparison of options) in nature. In these cases, there has been no opportunity for intuition to develop, no environmental and contextual factors that can be grouped across experiences.

In some cases, though, consumer intuition can be studied and demystified in the same way that tacit, expert knowledge has been researched in other domains.

Research techniques exist, such as the Critical Decision Method (e.g., Hoffman, Crandall, & Shadbolt, 1998), that focus attention on the aspects of the environment that are critical in making rapid decisions. These have been used on a somewhat limited basis for purposes of consumer research, but will be critical in further exploring the role of intuition in consumer decision making, as well as identifying the cases where analytical decision making predominates. Consumer needs and wants can ultimately be better met when research professionals have the appropriate tools and theoretical stance to uncover the primary environmental cues and factors behind split-second, intuitive behaviors, and relate these to cognition and behavior.

References
Consumer Preference Between Price and Feature Changes

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Over time, a firm may be required to either cut features or raise price in order to maintain profitability. Conversely, a firm may decide to deliver additional value to customers and will have to choose between increasing features and reducing the price. In this paper, we explore these trade-offs across multiple product categories to better understand consumer preferences. We expect to find that consumers prefer feature changes to price changes due to loss aversion. We also expect to find that consumers prefer non-alignable gains and alignable losses. We are currently conducting experiments to test our predictions.

Today It’s New! Great! And Tomorrow?

Perceived Product Newness and Product Liking with a Time Perspective

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With today’s companies innovating at the speed of light, it’s no wonder that consumers’ response to new products has aroused a great deal of interest in the past years. But are consumers as fast? Most prior research has addressed the issue of product newness or innovativeness from a firm perspective (e.g. Garcia and Calantone, 2002) but the psychological approach of newness from a consumer point of view has received little attention in the marketing and consumer behavior literature. In this research, we propose that, from the consumer’s perspective, newness can be seen as lying along two dimensions with distinct effects on product liking: (1) mere perception (perceptual newness) and (2) an epistemic dimension linked to the difficulty of understanding a new product. Besides, if a large number of studies focused on exposure effects on new stimuli evaluation (e.g. Bornstein, 1989), product newness perception over time has been relatively poorly addressed. This paper examines the effect of time and exposure on product newness evaluation and product liking separately, as well as on the relationship between these two variables; it also examines the effect of product trial on perceived product newness.

Building on Berlyne’s (1960) theory of ‘collative’ variables (i.e. variables of comparison), we conceptualize newness as a two-dimensional construct, but how do we expect these two dimensions to evolve over time? As newness involves a comparison in time between a previous and a current status, we expect newness perception to decrease over time. Yet, previous research suggests that repeated exposure results in perceptual fluency when encoding is based on perceptual information, but also conceptual fluency with meaning-based representation (Shapiro, 1999; Janiszewski and Meyvis, 2001). Consequently, we argue reaching a better understanding of the new product (conceptual fluency) with repeated exposure, actually leads to a temporary increase in perceptual newness.

With respect to liking, Mandler’s theory (1982) and empirical findings in the consumer behavior context (e.g. Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989; Moreau et al., 2001), suggest liking increases with newness as long as newness remains cognitively manageable; otherwise the effect is reversed. As a result, the type of newness considered should greatly influence product liking. More precisely, product liking is expected to increase with perceptual newness, whereas it is expected to drop when epistemic newness increases (i.e. makes the problem-solving task more difficult for consumers). Over time and with repeated exposure there is reason to believe that although the differential effect of perceptual and epistemic newness on product liking will remain, consumers should also develop new criterias to form their judgment over the new product (e.g. resulting from their experience). Hence, the explanatory power of newness for liking is expected to decrease over time with exposure.

In the first study, we examine the evolution of newness perception and its relationship with product liking in product usage conditions. With the collaboration of a market research agency, 420 Dutch consumers were randomly assigned one of five new products (in the fabric care category) and data were collected throughout the 2.5 months of the experiment at t₀ (start of the experiment), t₁ (after 3 weeks), t₂ (after 6 weeks) and t₃ (after 9 weeks). After confirming the two dimensions of product newness in a consumer’s perspective, we find opposite effects of these two dimensions of product liking. Namely, a positive effect of mere perception versus a negative effect of the epistemic dimension. We also find that the mere perception of product newness increases in the short run (3 weeks), as consumers simultaneously become more able to make sense of the product. Finally, we find that, in the longer run (12 weeks), newness remains persistent despite daily product usage and exposure, yet, its explanatory power for product liking decreases.

In a second study, we examine the particular impact of product trial on the evolution pattern of perceived product newness and liking. In a test-retest context, we ask 160 consumers to rate perceived product newness and liking before and after trial for three new food products. Similar to the first study, we find that mere newness perception is higher after product trial compared to before trial. We also find that consumers become more able to make sense of the product after product trial.
Overall, these findings suggest that getting consumers exposed to the product fosters understanding and simultaneously facilitates perceiving change, thus potentially product advantage. This may be emphasized in this study where consumers where in a context of daily product usage and exposure. Interestingly, consumers acknowledge the fact that the product is new on both dimensions, hence both perceptually and cognitively, however it seems that the benefits/disadvantages of being new vanish. Consequently, it seems that although product newness is critical to determine innovation trial rates, it may not be an appropriate determinant for long-term success.

References

Brand Equity and Shadow Diffusion in the Music Industry: Implications of Familiar and Popular
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Extended Abstract
Explicitly or implicitly, it is generally accepted that brand equity plays a role in the sales of entertainment products. For example, new novels by established authors such as John Irving or J.K. Rowling generally sell better than a first novel by an unknown author. In this research we recognize that consumers are subject to a number of influences when consuming entertainment. Two broad forces, one’s own prior consumption (personal consumption capital) and other consumers’ consumption (social consumption capital) constitute the brand equity effect that we consider. Of particular interest and note relative to prior diffusion models, we focus on how the sales of a current offering are complementary to the sales of prior offerings.

Record executives, book publishers, and film studios have increasingly focused on selling the products of established artists. While new bands, authors, and movies are breakouts on occasion, it is perceived that there is less risk to offering the known or familiar. Movie sequels and new books or albums by established names are generally believed to perform better in the market. The charts of top selling offerings (e.g., Billboard 200, New York Times Bestsellers) are primarily populated with established artists, providing ample support for this perception.

In many cases, preference is a function of one’s own past consumption and experience as well as the consumption of others (e.g., Becker 1996; Zajone and Markus 1982). One area where this may hold is in entertainment goods. For example, Backstreet Boys albums are phenomenally successful with teenagers, but these consumers were not born with the inherent desire to buy Backstreet Boys albums. Instead, it is the consumption of these albums by their peers and their own consumption of prior Backstreet Boys album(s) that contributes heavily to their current preference and the album’s sales.

We contribute to the existing knowledge in this area by constructing an estimation model that explicitly captures the effect of consumption of a previous generation entertainment product, as well as the effect of peer consumption of the current generation. This model allows us to investigate differences in consumer purchase patterns for new and established artists. By estimating diffusion parameters for several generations of albums by numerous music groups, we are able to provide insight into the diffusion pattern for music purchases. This decomposition of sales provides knowledge that allows managers to more proactively manage new product introductions and better manage multiple generations of offerings.

The estimation model is a modified diffusion model (e.g., Bass 1969). While this model has generally been applied to product categories, it also fits many entertainment markets quite well. With many entertainment products there is a distinct consumption cycle for each product generation. Within a cycle, a population of potential consumers may buy based on an innovative influence or buy because of social influence, but few consumers will buy the product more than once.

While Norton and Bass (1987; 1992) investigated the situation where a latter generation cannibalizes, we investigate the converse, incorporating complementarity by expanding the basic diffusion model to include an across generation imitation influence in addition to the traditional within generation effects of innovation and imitation. This framework is consistent with Becker’s (1996) conception that prior consumption and social consumption (consumption by others) will affect an individual’s current consumption.
Our model allows us to empirically explore two areas of interest. First, we provide hypotheses about the across generation pattern of the coefficients of innovation and within- and across-generation imitation. This focuses on the patterns, systematic variation due to brand equity—personal influence, social influence, and innovation. Second, we use information past generation’s success to forecast the success of a new generation.

To specify the model we use the Billboard 200 data. Limiting the set to the Billboard 200 allowed us to focus on albums that received greater than marginal attention but was not too restrictive. Sales volume outside the top 200 was fairly inconsequential, usually well below 5,000 units per week nationally. Sales of the top three albums were around 200,000 with sales for the top album occasionally substantially above that figure.

Our findings show that an album’s sales over time are influenced by an innovative (or external to the social system) influence as well as both within- and across-generation imitative (or internal) influences. The first two influences, innovative and within-generation imitative are part of a traditional diffusion model. The last influence, across-generation imitative, is new and explicitly connects the diffusion pattern of the current generation with brand equity established prior to the launch of the current generation.

Turning attention to predicting future success for an album we focused on whether a follow-up album makes the charts and if it does, how success in the prior generation is related to success for the current generation offering. Our data show that if a prior album makes the charts, less than 30% of follow-up albums fail to make the charts. The data shows that this occurs when a prior album experiences relatively minimal success in the top 200. Another observation is that the contribution of brand capital may not grow with each successive offering. We did not observe growth in the importance of brand equity across latter generations of offerings and in fact observed a non-significant decline in the importance from 48% to 39%. We did observe a U shaped effect from the 2nd to third and fourth and beyond albums for albums subsequent releases not to even make the charts.

Clearly, brand equity and sales due to across generation effects are important. Our results and the fact that knowing a group’s prior album made the charts significantly elevates its chance of making the charts with its next album seems to justify the industry executive’s focus on the established and familiar.

Our approach has been to decompose the sales pattern and derive a separate estimate for sales due to across generation effects. This provided a better understanding of differences across generations of offerings and implications for a group’s next offering.

References
If I Don’t Understand It, It Must Be New: Processing Fluency and Perceived Product Innovativeness

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Extended Abstract

The meta-cognitive experience of the ease or difficulty with which new information is processed, referred to as ‘processing fluency’, has been shown to influence a wide range of human judgments including judgments of truth and preference (e.g., Lee and Labroo 2005; Reber and Schwarz 1999; Skurnik et al. 2005; Winkielman et al. 2003). In relation to preference, high fluency has typically been found to increase subjective liking of the judgment target due to the positive feelings elicited by the fluency experience (see Winkielman et al. 2003). However, what people conclude from their meta-cognitive experiences of processing fluency should be influenced by which naïve theory of information processing they bring to bear on their fluency experience (see Schwarz 2004). The present study addresses this possibility.

Study objectives and hypotheses

High processing fluency is hedonically marked and experienced as positive, which can be captured with psychophysiological measures (Winkielman and Cacioppo 2001). This positive affective response, in turn, results in more positive preference judgments. Suppose, however, that the initial judgment pertains to a specific product attribute (e.g., innovativeness). In this case, fluency may serve as input into a more specific judgment, provided that the task brings an applicable naïve theory of information processing to mind that can serve as an inference rule. We test one such naïve theory, namely the (usually correct) assumption that ‘new information is more difficult to process than familiar information’. This assumption may influence judgments of the novelty and innovativeness of a described product. Specifically, we predict that a given product is judged as more innovative when consumers have difficulty processing the product information. Once that judgment is made, it may feed into a later judgment of product preference, reversing the typically observed pattern of the fluency-liking link.

Whether consumers rely on their subjective experience of processing fluency in making specific attribute judgments, however, may depend on their willingness to engage in effortful cognitive processing (referred to as Need for Cognition; Cacioppo and Petty 1982). If a judgment of product innovativeness is seen as pertaining to an objective product characteristic, consumers high in NFC may draw on the details of the product description, whereas consumers low in NFC may rely on their processing experience. Hence, the expected influence of fluency on innovativeness judgments may be limited to low NFC consumers.

Finally, judgments of preference always pertain to one’s own subjective response to the product. Accordingly, high as well as low NFC consumers may, in principle, draw on their fluency experience in making preference judgments. But they may be more likely to do so if they have not already attributed this experience to a specific product characteristic. The reported experiment explores these possibilities.

Method

Following a 2 (Fluency: High vs. Low) x 2 (NFC: High vs. Low) between-subjects design, 95 undergraduates read a product review printed in either an easy-to-read font (10 point, black Arial font) or a difficult-to-read font (10 point, dark gray Agency font). Pretests confirmed that the text was differentially easy to read. The product was a multi-functional digital handset which can function as a phone, mp3 player, camera, video recorder, and e-mailer. After reading the product review, participants were asked to indicate how innovative the product was and how much they liked it, each on a 7-point scale. At the end, participants were shown the same product review article (printed in Times Roman font) where twenty-five key product attributes were underlined, and asked to circle those they thought were false, based on their memory of what they read before. This measure serves to capture participants’ substantive processing of the text. NFC was measured using an 18-item NFC scale (Cacioppo, Petty, and Kao 1984); a median split on this variable is used for data analysis.

Findings

Innovativeness. A 2 (Fluency: High vs. Low) x 2 (NFC: High vs. Low) ANOVA revealed the predicted fluency x NFC interaction on the product innovativeness judgment (F(1, 91)=4.264, p=.042). Contrasts confirmed that low NFC participants perceived the product as more innovative when the product information was printed in a difficult-to-read font rather than an easy-to-read font. This provides the first evidence that processing fluency can serve as an experiential basis of judgments of innovativeness. The innovativeness judgments of high NFC participants, in contrast, were not influenced by the fluency manipulation.

Preference. A significant fluency x NFC interaction was also obtained for participants’ preference judgments (F(1, 91)=6.454, p=.013). As predicted, low NFC participants, who just inferred from low processing fluency that the product is highly innovative, drew on this preceding judgment and tended to like the product more when its description was difficult to process. That is, we obtained a reversal of the commonly observed fluency-liking link. In contrast, high NFC participants liked the product more when its description was easy to process, replicating the standard finding in this area.

Memory. It is conceivable that our fluency manipulation affected participants’ attention to the presented product information. To address this possibility, we assessed their memory of what they had read. A 2 (Fluency: High vs. Low) x 2 (NFC: High vs. Low) ANOVA of the product attribute verification judgments measure revealed no difference in participants’ memory of the product attributes across the four conditions, putting this concern to rest.

Conclusions

This study extends our understanding of the role of processing fluency in consumer judgment as follows. First, it provides the first evidence that fluency can serve as a basis for judging the innovativeness of a product. Because familiar information is easier to process...
than novel information, consumers may infer from difficulty of processing that the information is novel, resulting in favorable assessments of the product’s innovativeness. Second, once low fluency is attributed to innovativeness, it no longer leads to a negative response to the product. Instead, we observed a reversed pattern of the usual high fluency–high liking link. Third, our findings highlight the role of NFC in the use of fluency as a source of information for making specific attribute judgments. In our study, only low NFC participants relied on their fluency experience as a heuristic cue when asked to judge an objective product characteristic, innovativeness. In contrast, high NFC participants’ judgments of innovativeness were not affected by fluency, presumably because they relied on the substantive description of the product. Finally, high NFC participants used their fluency experience in making liking judgments, replicating the usual fluency–liking link. This reflects that liking judgments are subjective, rendering one’s fluency-related affective response (Winkielman and Cacioppo 2001) highly relevant.

References

The Impact of Regulatory Focus on Brand Choice and Category-Brand Associations
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Consumer decisions vary with the specific wishes and requirements of consumers. For one consumer, a product has to be very reliable whereas, for another consumer, it has to be well designed. Recent research demonstrated that such decision criterions are affected by basic orientations and motivations which are related to hedonic goals of avoiding an undesired state and approaching a desired state. A very sophisticated framework to study the impact of these motivations is provided by Higgins (1997). In his regulatory focus theory, he posits two different self-regulatory strategies: The regulation of behavior according to ideals, hopes, and aspirations, termed promotion focus, and the regulation of behavior according to responsibilities, duties, and security, termed prevention focus. The promotion focus emphasizes the pursuit of positive outcomes. The prevention focus is related to the avoidance of negative outcomes. A basic assumption of regulatory focus theory is that individuals are more concerned with information relevant for the regulatory focus and that attributes compatible to this focus are given more weight in choice (Chernev, 2004; Florack, Scarabis, & Gosejohann, in press).

The main objective of the present paper is to complement this research by showing that the regulatory focus of consumers has an influence on product preferences as well as on the strength of the association of a brand with the product category. In particular, we assumed that category-brand associations vary over different contexts and that products of a category which are compatible to consumers’ regulatory focus are more likely to be associated with the category than products that are less compatible with the consumers’ regulatory focus. Product preferences and category-brand preferences are two important factors influencing choice. Whereas brand preferences determine the choice between available alternatives of a consideration set, category-brand associations have an influence on whether brands are recalled from memory (Posavac, Sanbonmatsu, Cronley, & Kardes, 2001). The latter is of particular importance when brands are not displayed and when they have to be recalled from memory (Negundagadi, 1990).

To examine our hypotheses, we conducted two experiments. The goal of Experiment 1 (N=415) was to show that the regulatory focus of consumers has an impact on the preferences of sun lotions with different claims. We asked participants to evaluate two different brands of sun lotions (cf. Aaker & Lee, 2004) and to indicate which one they would purchase for their summer holidays at the sea. The two sun lotions were presented by two pictures with an advertising claim for each. For one brand, we used a claim that was concerned with the avoidance of sunburn (“Give sunburn no chance. Brand X provides safe protection.”) while for the other brand we used a claim that stressed enjoyment of the sun (“Enjoy the warm rays of the sun. Brand X for a healthy tan.”). Before participants evaluated the brands, we induced either a promotion or prevention focus with a few questions. In the promotion focus condition, we provided participants with a list of positive things that could happen during their holidays (e.g., meeting nice people) and asked them to indicate which of these things they would actively pursue. In the prevention focus condition, we provided participants with a list of negative things that could occur during holidays and asked them to indicate those they would actively try to avoid (e.g., risk of terror attacks). As predicted, prevention-focused participants preferred the sun lotion with the claim that stressed protection more than promotion-focused participants. This pattern of...
preferences was reversed as regards the advertisement for a sun lotion with a claim related to enjoyment. Thus, our results are congruent to those of Chernev (2004) who showed that the regulatory focus of consumers may have a direct effect on product preferences.

In Experiment 2 (N=110), we tested the question whether the manipulation of the regulatory focus of consumers also changes the association between a brand and a product category. In the first part of this experiment, participants saw advertising claims for various products and for the target sun lotion. In one condition, a promotion-focused claim and, in the other condition, a prevention-focused claim was used for the target brand. To guarantee that participants elaborated the claims, they were also asked to recall the presented claims.

In the second part of the experiment, we applied a procedure of Pham and Avnet (2004) to induce either a promotion or a prevention focus. In the promotion focus condition, participants were asked to list present and past hopes and ideals. In the prevention focus condition, they were asked to list present and past responsibilities and duties. Then, we measured the brand category associations with a procedure of Fazio, Herr, and Powell (1992). On a computer screen, we presented the name of a brand category (e.g., electronics) followed by the name of a brand. We presented a total of 60 category-brand pairs. The target brand was presented five times in the correct category-brand pair. The task of participants was to decide as fast as possible whether the presented brand belonged to the preceding product category. The response latency of the trials in which the correct pair was presented was used as a measure of category-brand associations. The results provided support for our hypotheses. Participants showed stronger category-brand associations for the target brand when the claim of the target brand was related to the primed regulatory focus of participants.

Since preferences and category-brand associations are important determinants of product choice, our findings suggest that advertising strategies are more effective when they consider the regulatory focus of the consumer at the point of purchase which may differ within the specific context of choice (e.g., buying a sun lotion in a pharmacy or in a shop for beach equipment).

References

Does Ingredient Branding Improve Choice of Host and Ingredient Brands?
A Test of Brand Equity-Choice Behavior Consistency
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We extend prior research in ingredient branding in two important ways. First, we use real data about consumer’s choice vs. judgment measures employed by prior research to find out if ingredient branding improves choice (and not just brand attitudes) of host and ingredient brands. Second, with attitudinal survey data, we attempt to find out to what extent consumers’ equity perceptions about the ingredient product and the ingredient and host brands explain their choice behaviors towards these products. This investigation of the consistency between consumers’ brand equity perceptions and their choice behaviors is rare and thus adds to the brand equity literature. Our analytical approach involves running a Random Coefficient Logit Model of consumers’ actual choices of four ingredient products from a rich scanner data set
Mortality Salience and Regional Consumer Behavior Effects of Mortality Salience on Ethnocentric Consumer Behavior at a Regional Level
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Effects of Mortality Salience on Ethnocentric Consumer Behavior at a Regional Level

How do we react as consumers to information that reminds us of the inevitability of our own death (e.g., news of terrorist attacks, natural disasters, wars, murders, accidents)? Terror management theory suggests that one possible reaction to mortality salience is consumer ethnocentrism. But what are the cultural boundaries that define in- and out-groups in such comparisons? And are these ethnocentrism effects only responsible for consumer attitude change or do they also have an influence on less cognitive concepts, e.g., gustatory preferences for a local drink?

Consumer Ethnocentrism is an individual’s tendency to view the in-group’s objects of consumption as superior to those of the out-group. As Shimp and Sharma (1987) stated, this tendency increases when people experience an economic threat from foreign competition.

Economic threat may be an important source of out-group derogation but another existential threat that also seems to influence ethnocentric tendencies can be derived from terror management theory (for an overview see Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski 1997). According to this theory, affiliation to an in-group and belief in its worldviews serve as a mechanism to buffer our death-related anxieties. The bolstering of a shared cultural worldview against views of the out-group could lead people to ethnocentrism (e.g. Nelson et al. 1997).

Consequently, priming thoughts of people’s own mortality (mortality salience) should also lead to stronger ethnocentric consumer preferences. Indeed, an ethnocentric bias related to mortality salience is not only an in-group–out-group phenomenon, but it can also be found towards objects of consumption (consumer ethnocentrism); e.g., preferences for national cultural items (cars, food, sports, etc.) under mortality salient conditions (Jonas, Fritsche, and Greenberg 2005). As information that reminds us of the inevitability of our own demise is frequently presented in the media, the influence of our existential concerns on ethnocentric consumption behavior should be investigated thoroughly.

Since many consumer brands and products (e.g., foods and beverages) are mainly or exclusively marketed and consumed within a local region, we were interested in whether ethnocentrism effects only occur on a national level or if they can be found among regions as well. In accordance with social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), worldviews in a regional context should have at least the same strong influence on individuals’ cognitive structure as national views because regions are less inclusive than nations and so they should provide the individual with an even more homogeneous worldview.

We analyzed the local beer preferences of the inhabitants of two German cities under mortality salient versus control conditions. We chose the cities of Cologne and Düsseldorf because they are situated close to each other and, objectively, have an almost identical cultural background. Nevertheless, from the inhabitants’ perspective, a cultural competition can be observed that is manifest in different traditions, lifestyles, and consumption patterns. Hence, the residents of each city were assumed to perceive at least an unconscious threat to their regional worldviews if asked to evaluate a cultural symbol (we chose beer sorts) from the other city.

We were also interested in whether the predicted ethnocentrism effects would take place if a less cognitively controlled concept like taste was the dependent measure. Thus, gustatory preferences between two German beers that either came from either the participants’ own or the competing region (within the same nation) were examined.

H 1: A regional ethnocentrism effect—i.e., a main effect of beer sort—will occur across all experimental conditions: the beer sort of participants’ own city will taste better than that of the other city.

H 2: This main effect will be qualified by an interaction effect between priming and beer sort. Mortality salience will additionally increase this ethnocentrism effect.

In our experiment, we used a 2 (city) x 2 (mortality salience vs. control condition) x 2 (own beer vs. foreign beer) between-subject design with condition and beer sort randomly manipulated and two fixed city samples (Düsseldorf and Cologne). The dependent measure was evaluation of beer’s taste compared to an idealized one. 192 people (72 females and 120 males)–96 from each city–agreed to participate in our study (participants were between 19 and 88 years old; M=43.8).

Results show that both hypotheses could be confirmed. Participants in both cities and both conditions rated their own beer as tasting significantly better than the beer of the other city ($F[1, 184]=25.46, p<.001$). This main effect was qualified by a significant interaction effect between sort and priming: the taste difference was greater in the mortality salience condition than in the control condition ($F[1, 184]=7.85, p<.01$) mainly due to a devaluation of the foreign region’s beer sort.

To summarize, we would argue that our research adds to the emerging line of research that relates terror management theory to consumer behavior. Our research showed that individuals that have previously thought about their own death have a tendency towards regional consumer ethnocentrism. According to terror management and social identity theories, we found that regional identity serves as an anxiety buffer when mortality is salient, and consumption objects that challenge our regional worldviews—like a foreign region’s beer sort—are devaluated more strongly under that condition.

References
Both academic and industry research shows that consumers desire and value new and original products (Battel.org/news; Dahl & Moreau, 2002; Lee & O’Connor, 2003). Individuals strive to obtain new products for both functional benefits that can provide utility as well as psychological benefits inherent with being the first to recognize an innovation. Research has shown that the perceived product newness can have a major impact on the product’s diffusion and adoption (Gatignon & Robertson, 1991; Rogers, 1976). A new product can also instigate demand and may even redefine major aspects of consumption in a particular product category. Finally, new products can motivate consumers to seek more information, stimulate word of mouth and can enhance consumers’ receptivity to marketing activities surrounding the innovation. Given the ascribed benefits of newness it is not surprising that organizations spend millions of dollars in developing new products and convincing consumers of their newness. Yet, very little research has been conducted to determine how consumers recognize and define newness in new-to-market products. What constitutes newness in the mind of a consumer? Research suggests that people naturally rely on categorization and perceived prototypicality to form inferences about newly encountered objects (Cohen & Basu, 1987; Gelman & Markman, 1987; Veryzer & Hutchinson, 1998). Categorization is necessary to incite learning and the formation of product evaluations and preferences (Gregor-Paxton & John, 1997). Aesthetic response to product prototypicality is also influential in the development of preferences in consumers. Research on prototypicality indicates that people respond more favorably to objects that are stronger category exemplars than to objects that are less prototypical (Veryzer & Hutchinson, 1998). To date, new product learning has been a studied in a context that provides consumers with obvious categories and detailed attribute information (Hoeffler, 2003; Moreau et al., 2001A; Moreau et al., 2001B). However many consumer product encounters occur under information limited and ambiguous circumstances where a category label is not immediately available (e.g., limited visual exposure, teaser ad campaigns). This context provides a rich opportunity to explore the direct effect of categorization and certainty on newness perceptions. The following studies are the first of a series that are designed to illuminate the interplay between categorization, certainty and perceptions of newness. Thus far, we find evidence to support that newness perceptions, first rely on the ability of the consumer to identify a product’s category and, second, depend on the accuracy of this categorization.

Study 1 provided a direct test of the effect of categorization on newness perceptions for new-to-market products. Participants were randomly assigned to receive either a 30 second visual product exposure only or a product exposure and product category. The product stimulus was the Roomba Vacuum Cleaner, a new-to-market product. Following the manipulation, participants completed a survey containing measures relating to perceived product newness. There was a significant difference in perceived newness between individuals who received the product category [M =5.33], and individuals who did not receive the category [M=4.24] (t (50)=-3.31, p<0.05). This finding demonstrates that categorization plays an important role in facilitating perceptions of newness during new-to-market product encounters. Having a category label enhanced newness ratings, and not having a category label reduced newness ratings.

Study 2 examined the effect of natural categorization processes on perceived newness for new-to-market products. The design was a 2 information level (no demo/demo) x 2 product prototypicality (prototypical/non-prototypical) between-subjects design. The Roomba differed substantially from typical category exemplars and was used in the non-prototypical condition. The Dyson Cyclone vacuum was selected as a new but representative exemplar for the prototypical condition. After the manipulation, participants described the product as though talking to a friend. This description was coded for the use and accuracy of a category label. Participants then completed a survey with the key dependent variable, perceived newness and relevant manipulation checks.

A significant interaction between information level and product prototypicality on perceived product newness was found [F (1,76)=4.66, p<0.05]. Perceived newness was significantly higher for the high [M=4.83] versus low [M=3.76] information conditions for the non-prototypical product [t (39)=-3.06, p<0.01]. Perceived newness in both the low and high information conditions for the prototypical product were significantly lower than perceived newness in the non-prototypical, high information condition [both t’s<0.05]. Perceived newness did not differ significantly among the prototypical and non-prototypical products at the low information level and the prototypical product and the high information level [all t’s<1, p>0.05].

A significant interaction between information level and product prototypicality on categorization accuracy was found [F(1,76)=37.06, p<0.05]. Accurate categorization for the prototypical product in the low and high information conditions and the non-prototypical product in the high information condition were all significantly higher than in the non-prototypical, low information condition [all t’s<0.05]. Prototypicality also had a significant effect on categorization, such that accurate categorization always occurred for the prototypical product in comparison to the non-prototypical products [F(1,76)=75.17, p<0.01]. There was also a significant main effect of information level on correct categorization [F(1,76)=37.06, p<0.01]. High information enhanced categorization accuracy in comparison to low information.
Accurate categorization mediated the relationship between information level, product prototypicality and perceptions of product newness (as per Baron & Kenny, 1986). The first two mediation criteria were realized above. When categorization accuracy was added into the analysis, the interaction between information level and prototypicality on perceived product newness was significantly diminished [F(1,75)=0.64, p>0.05], while the effect of categorization accuracy remained moderately significant [F(1,75)=3.02, p<0.1].

These findings provide evidence that 1) participants naturally engage in categorization processes upon encountering new products, and 2) the identification of a correct category label is needed to facilitate accurate newness perceptions for new-to-market products. Our findings suggest that people are not willing to perceive new-to-market products as new until they can identify with some level of certainty an appropriate category anchor.

References


The Impact of Information Characteristics on Negative Spillover Effects in Brand Portfolios

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This study investigates the moderating effect of the information characteristics, namely crisis severity and attribution, on the spillover effect of negative information in a brand portfolio context. Three experiments provided validation of hypotheses related to spillover effects. We found that both factors moderate the pattern of spillover effects, although attribution information has a more dominant role in consumers’ interpretation process of negative information. This study sets the boundary conditions for the impact of negative information, and provides marketers with knowledge of situations in which the negative spillover is likely to be strengthened, attenuated, or even diminished.

Research background

Product-harm crises are product-related incidents of negative publicity in the marketplace due to the malfunction, misuse and sabotage of products (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, and Unnava 2000; Dawar and Pillutla 2000). Beyond the direct impact on the harmed brand, a product-harm crisis may also affect other affiliated brands. For example, a sudden acceleration problem with the Audi 4000 automobile also negatively influenced the demand for Audi Quattro (Sullivan 1990). This spillover phenomenon can be conceptualized as the impact of external information (e.g. a product-harm crisis) on associated objects (e.g. brands) that are not directly involved (Balachander and Ghose 2003).

Despite the potential impact of such spillover between brands, knowledge about its effect is limited. Many studies on this issue focus on market-level analyses (e.g. Sullivan 1990). Among those that do focus on consumer-related issues (e.g. brand evaluations), few investigate the impact of inter-brand structure or relationships (e.g. strength of association between two brands, brand typicality in a product category) on spillover (e.g. Lei, Dawar and Lemmink 2005; Roehm and Tybout 2004). Essentially, a spillover effect is a network effect, and thus the network structure describing inter-brand relationships plays an important role in predicting the pattern of spillover effects.

Research questions

One underlying assumption in previous studies is that all negative information is alike in nature and induces similar patterns of spillover effects. Departing from prior research, we argue that the characteristics of the information itself moderate the processing of negative information and the spillover effect between brands. One important attribute of negative information is its severity (Herr, Kardes,
and Kim 1991). Extremely negative information draws more attention and a greater level of cognitive elaboration on the information, which facilitates spillover onto related brands (Petty et al. 1997). Next, consumers' attribution of the crisis incident may also potentially influence the pattern of spillover effects. Attribution theory views people as rational information processors whose reactions are influenced by their causal inference (Folkes 1984). Previous research has shown that crises perceived to be avoidable cause more anger and stronger emotional reactions to the harmed brand than crises perceived to be unavoidable (Folkes 1984; Weiner 2000). These induced negative emotions could be generalized to related products/brands (Smith et al. 1999) and strengthen the spillover effect.

Hence, this research investigates the impact of crisis severity, consumers' attribution of the crisis, and their interaction with the inter-brand structure on the pattern of spillover effects. We intend to set boundary conditions for the impact of negative information on brand evaluations, and therefore provide marketers with the knowledge of situations in which the negative spillover is likely to be strengthened, attenuated, or even diminished (Ahluwalia 2000). Furthermore, despite the prevalence of portfolio brands in the marketplace, little empirical research has been conducted in the brand portfolio context. In the current research, we lay the foundation for a theoretical framework of negative information spillover by focusing on the pattern of spillover in brand portfolios.

Experimental design

Three experiments provided tests of hypotheses related to spillover effects. Experiment 1 utilized a 2*2 factorial design, in which two levels of crisis severity (high/low) and strength of association between brands (strong/weak) were manipulated in one brand portfolio. Experiment 2 utilized a 2*3 factorial design, in which three levels of crisis attribution (internal controllable/internal uncontrollable/external uncontrollable) and two levels of strength of association were manipulated in a different brand portfolio. Experiment 3 utilized a 2*2*2 factorial design, in which two levels of crisis severity, attribution (internal controllable/external uncontrollable), and strength of association were manipulated to test the three-way interaction. A series of pretests were conducted to develop appropriate crisis scenarios and select suitable brand portfolios where brands are associated with each other in different levels of association strength.

Experiment 1 and 2

Experiment 1 and 2 investigate the moderating effect of crisis severity and attribution on the spillover effect respectively. We hypothesize that severe crises and crises perceived to be internal controllable can induce a higher level of cognitive activation at the origin brand (where the crisis is exposed), and therefore facilitate a stronger spillover effect conveyed via associative linkages between brands. Results of experiment 1 support our hypotheses that a severe crisis at an origin brand has a greater spillover effect on the strongly associated target brand as compared with the weakly associated target brand, whereas no such differences are found for the non-severe crisis. Results of experiment 2 support our hypotheses that both internal controllable and internal uncontrollable crises have a greater spillover effect on the strongly associated target brand as compared with the weakly associated target brand, whereas no such differences are found for the external uncontrollable crisis. These results indicate that the network structure, namely the strength of association, influences the magnitude of spillover effect only if the crisis is perceived to be severe or it is attributed as internal causes.

Experiment 3

Attribution theory suggests that the attribution process dominates consumers’ interpretation process of negative information (Folkes 1984). Therefore, we expect that when severity information and attribution information are both present, attribution information might overshadow the impact of severity on the spillover effect contingent on strength of associations. Specifically, when a crisis is due to internal and controllable causes, consumers may already have very negative attitudes towards the brand. This may create a ceiling effect so that the impact of severity on spillover will be weakened or diminished. However, when a crisis is due to external and uncontrollable causes, a severe crisis would lead to a greater spillover than a non-severe crisis. We test this three-way interaction in experiment 3. The results confirm our hypotheses, yet reveal a different pattern than in experiment 1 and 2.

The results of this study suggest that the impact of negative information on brand portfolios is not homogenous. Rather, it depends on several information characteristics, such as crisis severity and attribution. This study also shows that, when dominant crisis information such as attribution is present, the impact of other crisis information will be weakened or even diminished. Furthermore, this study corroborates previous evidence that attribution information forms the basis for the updating of central consumer judgments such as brand evaluations (Folkes 1988; Klein and Dawar 2004). From a managerial viewpoint, the results of this study help managers to predict the pattern of spillover effects in brand portfolios by looking at not only the inter-brand relationships, but also the characteristics of negative information itself.

The Film Preference Scale: The Effect of Preference and Cultural Capital on Film Going Behavior

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Extended Abstract

Independent film and the independent film audience are neglected areas of research. Using the film preferences scale film audiences are split into four preference groups (independent, crossover, mainstream and no film) and these four groups are compared on a number of quantitative measures (Cultural Capital, Sensation Seeking and Communication behavior (Watson 2004). This is the first attempt to categorize film audience’s types via a scale that can be given to the general public.

The measure of cultural capital is used to elaborate on the notion that there is a class system in film that mirrors the dichotomy found in the traditional art world of high art and popular art. In the case of film, independent film functions as high art compared to mainstream films functioning as popular art. This dichotomy in film will help to explain to a certain extent the perceived inaccessibility of independent film.
Most of what we know about filmgoers falls in the category of demographic information. Little has been done to explore who these people are in a more behavioral way. There is extensive research on audiences for the traditional arts such as symphony, opera, fine arts, ballet, and theatre. Film audiences have been a neglected area of research. Research for the art film audience has received even less attention (Corbett 1999; Meers 2001). Only a small amount of literature has attempted to separate film audiences into distinct groups based on film preferences. These studies have centered on fringe audiences such as those for cult films (Austin 1981), X-rated films (Nawy 1970; Webster 1998), and drive-ins (Austin 1985). For the purposes of this paper, the art film audience is closest to the independent film audience, although it historically encompasses a slightly broader group of types of films. The definition of art films most often used in research comes from Twomey (1956, p. 240), “(art films are) films from other countries, reissues of old-time Hollywood ‘classics’, documentaries, and independently made films on off-beat themes-in short films that lie outside of the mainstream Hollywood product.” Independent films, on the other hand, do not include old-time Hollywood classics or for the most part foreign films.

Research on art film audiences has shown that they tend to have more education, are of higher socioeconomic status, are older, hold more prestigious occupations, and are heavier consumers of cultural activities (Adler 1959; National Research Center for the Arts 1975; Smythe, Lusk, and Lewis 1953).

There is an inherently social aspect to the arts in general and film in particular. Although much of the direct interaction with the art object is one on one, the interaction with others plays varying roles in the experience. The conceptual model in this paper delineates the importance of the passing of information, the socialization that occurs in the process.

Traditionally, most film has not been considered a form of high art. This label has been reserved for symphony, opera, and fine art. It is argued here that the film world operates like many of the art worlds (Becker 1982). There are certain works that are more popular and others that are more alternative. These works appeal to different audiences. The independent film world, in this case, is considered to be high art, whereas the Hollywood film world is considered popular art. This will help explain the differing level of popularity between the two types of films. Given this designation of film groups it follows that the independent film group should have higher cultural capital than either the crossover film preference group or the mainstream film preference group.

The measure of cultural capital used in this study captures the three primary sites of acculturation, which is where, according to Bourdieu, cultural capital is attained. These are: cultural upbringing, formal education and occupational culture, all three being equally weighted (Bourdieu 1984; DiMaggio 1982; Holt 1997). In other studies, measures of cultural capital have included father’s occupation and education level only (Holt 1998). They have looked at the relationship of cultural capital to the father’s education and occupation only (DiMaggio and Moher 1985). For this study, the mother’s education and occupation is included as well, to take into account the changing influence of word-of-mouth in the workforce, mother’s influences on their children, and the cases of mothers as single heads of household.

In order to test if the film scale predicts actual filmgoing behavior, respondents were presented with two lists of films, the top 30 grossing Hollywood films of 2002 and 30 top independent films from 2000-2002.

For this study a 174-item questionnaire composed of Likert style items, categorical questions, open-ended questions, and demographic information was administered to a group of 350 students of a large northwestern U.S. University. Out of the group a total of 301 usable questionnaires were generated. The 49 unusable surveys were incomplete due to unpredictable time constraints.

The results showed that the means for number of films seen in each category (independent and Hollywood) by the independent, crossover, and mainstream film preference groups were significantly different, and the number of films from each category conformed to what was predicted. The independent group saw the most independent films followed by the crossover group and finally the mainstream group. With respect to Hollywood films, the mainstream group saw the most, followed by the crossover and independent groups respectfully.

The study showed that there was a significant correlation between Independent film preferences and both general sensation seeking and the experience seeking construct and that the level of both was significantly higher for this group.

The study showed that there was a difference between the groups with respect to their level of Cultural Capital with the independent group having higher cultural capital than each of the other groups in the study. This fact may begin to account for the differing viewing habits for the three groups when looking at the relationship of independent film to Hollywood film as that of High Art to Popular Art.

Reference List


This work investigates the effects of pursuing non-instrumental information on non-consequential reasoning in the context of hedonic and utilitarian product purchases. Individuals did not differ in their willingness to pursue non-instrumental information in the two purchase contexts; however, once they pursued the non-instrumental information they were more likely to rely on it in hedonic than in utilitarian purchase decisions. This research suggests that individuals feel more accountable for hedonic than for utilitarian purchases and thus, they are more likely to weight non-instrumental information to avoid feelings of guilt.

*Is It the Luxury Car or the Super Model that Tempts Him?: The Possibility of Misattributed Arousal*

Xiuping Li, University of Toronto

Research in consumer impulsivity has documented the effect of hedonic stimuli (e.g., dessert) on related behaviors (eating). We extend this line of research in the direction of whether the induced craving towards one hedonic stimulus category (dessert) can be carried over (or misattributed) to intertemporal choices in ostensibly unrelated behavioral domains (investing). In a series of experiments, we found that cues of hedonic stimuli (pictures or scents) led to (1) more choices of vices, (2) impatience in waiting for larger monetary gains, and (3) unplanned purchases.

*Goal Abstraction Compatibility and Lexical Fit in Consumer Choice*

Ryan Hamilton, Northwestern University

Objects can be described by either their concrete, feature-level attributes or by more abstract, benefit-level attributes. Likewise, a consumer may have a relatively more abstract or concrete mindset in approaching a decision. In a series of studies, we find that choice is a function of consumer mindset such that individuals with an abstract mindset tend to prefer products that dominate on abstract benefits and individuals with a concrete mindset tend to prefer products that dominate on concrete features.

*Differential Impact of What is Available and What is Inferred: Promotional Element Salience Effect in Reference Price Promotions*

Igor Makienko, Louisiana State University

**Conceptual Background**

In reference price promotions, consumers are usually exposed to a sale price and a reference price or to a reference price and a discount (we do not investigate situations with all three elements). Thus, savings are presented either directly, in the form of an explicit discount,
or indirectly, by stating the sale price along with the reference price. In the first case consumers infer the sale price. In the second case, they infer the size of discount. Though these two formats may represent economically identical deals, consumers’ evaluations are likely to vary depending on the salience of promotional elements.

Levin and Gaeth (1988) found that when ground beef was presented as ‘75% lean’, respondents displayed significantly better evaluations than when it was presented as ‘25% fat’. Evaluations were different despite the fact that information on the salient attribute automatically provided information about the absent attribute. Salient stimuli have a disproportionate influence on people’s judgments (Slovic, Fischhoff and Lichtenstein, 1982). Hence, the first research question is whether promotion format will have a differential impact on consumers’ deal evaluations and price estimates. Building on prior findings that consumers prefer to see their gains separately rather than integrated into a price of the product (Thaler, 1985; Diamond and Campbell, 1989), it is expected that consumers’ evaluations will be higher for discount present conditions than for sale price present conditions.

The second factor investigated in the study is reference price level. Extant research showed that reference prices have a significant impact on consumers’ buying behavior (Kalyanaram and Winer, 1995). For example, it was found that high implausible reference prices substantially increased perceived value of the offer despite decreasing believability of such claims (Urbany, Bearden and Weilbaker, 1988; Mobley et al., 1988). Urbany et al. (1988) suggest that consumers do not reject high implausible reference prices but instead discount them to the level deemed more reasonable. However, this reference price effect may only be true when a high implausible reference price is presented along with a sale price. Compeau and Grewal (1998) suggest that believability of reference prices is of little concern since consumers know that the retailer must sell the product at the advertised sale price. Presenting a discount instead of a sale price in advertisement may inhibit consumers’ abilities to estimate the actual sale price and may result in under- or overestimation of the sale price. Moreover, with a high implausible reference price the size of the discount should be large enough to make the sale price (inferred) attractive to consumers. Large discounts will also be perceived with skepticism (along with high implausible reference prices) and are also likely to be discounted to a more reasonable level (Gupta and Cooper, 1992). In this situation consumers may engage in a double discounting that may lead to deal evaluations lower than those in a ‘high implausible reference price and sale price’ format. Therefore, there may be preference reversal. At plausible levels of reference prices, consumers will have higher deal evaluations when a discount is present than when a sale price is present. However, at high implausible levels of reference prices, consumers will value sales promotions providing information about sale price significantly higher than those providing information about a discount.

Methodology

A 2 (plausible reference price vs. high implausible reference price) x 2 (discount is present vs. discount is absent) between-subjects design was employed to investigate how the level of reference price and the salience of promotional elements affect consumers’ deal perceptions. Respondents were exposed to a hypothetical advertisement of a Philips TV set and then were asked to answer a questionnaire. Manipulation checks were conducted to ensure that respondents remembered their treatment conditions and were significantly different in their perceptions of advertised reference prices. Data was analyzed by MANOVA.

Major Findings

A significant interaction between reference price level and salience of promotional elements (p=0.016) was found using MANOVA. Upon further investigation, it was found that the interaction was significant only for source credibility (p=0.031).

Results of the analysis partially support findings of Urbany et al. (1988). Respondents exposed to advertisement with high implausible reference prices had significantly higher attitude toward the deal (but not perceived value of the offer as in the original study), significantly higher market price estimates, and exhibited significantly lower believability toward claimed savings than those exposed to plausible reference prices. Quality perceptions of stimuli did not differ across groups. Main effect of the salience of promotional elements was significant. When advertisement contained reference price and sale price, respondents’ attitudes toward the deal and their perceived value of the deal were significantly higher than when advertisement contained reference price and discount. One interesting and unexpected finding refers to retailer (advertiser) credibility. While credibility of the advertiser was not different at the plausible reference price level, it was significantly higher for the discount present condition than for the discount absent condition at the high implausible reference price level, meaning that double discounting somehow improved the retailer credibility.

Contrary to the hypotheses’ salience of promotional elements did not have any effect at the plausible reference price level. However, in line with the hypotheses, presenting a discount instead of a sale price in a high implausible reference price condition resulted in significantly lower attitude toward the deal and perceived value of the offer. At high implausible reference price level, salient discount had detrimental effect on respondents’ deal perceptions and at the same time significantly enhanced retailer credibility.

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Too Good to be True vs. Too High to be Good: The Role of Product’s Price and Form of Incentive in Sales Promotion Evaluations

Igor Makienko, Louisiana State University

Conceptual Background
According to the perceived value concept (Monroe and Chapman, 1987), consumers evaluate market offers based on the ratio of perceived quality to perceived sacrifice. In a sales promotion context, this means that deal evaluations should be positively related to the size of incentive because an incentive would decrease a consumer’s perceived sacrifice and, as a result, enhance the perceived value of the offer. However, there are some limits on the size of discounts that retailers can offer during sales promotions. One way to increase the size of an incentive while keeping the sale price of a deal constant is to show a higher regular (reference) price. Blair and Landon (1981) note that consumers can be skeptical of implausible reference prices, and at the same time, be influenced by them. Indeed, Urbany, Bearden and Weilbaker (1988) found that after exposure to implausible reference prices, consumers update their internal reference standards upward. This adjustment leads to a substantial increase in the perceived value of the offer despite decreasing believability of such claims. Therefore, it is expected that when consumers are exposed to overpriced products and bigger incentives, they will have higher evaluations than when they are exposed to normally priced products and respectively lower incentives. However, there will be an interaction if the second factor—the form of incentive is taken into account.

One major difference between the two forms of incentives is that with a monetary incentive consumers do not need to pay the regular (reference) price for the offer, while with a nonmonetary incentive, they do. (For the sake of simplicity the study is limited only to instant sales promotions). Situations where consumers pay only sale price for the offer are identical to reference price advertising, and consumers are likely to have higher evaluations for the overpriced condition. However, when consumers have to pay regular price and get a nonmonetary incentive with the purchase, a high regular price of the offer may result in a perceived unfairness and trigger negative feelings toward the retailer (Xia, Monroe and Cox, 2004; Martins and Monroe, 1994). In this case, consumers’ evaluations in the normally priced condition are likely to be higher than those in the overpriced condition (despite greater nonmonetary incentives in the overpriced condition). Therefore, it is hypothesized that consumers’ evaluations and purchase intentions toward instant monetary promotions will be higher when the promoted product is overpriced than when it is normally priced. Conversely, consumers’ evaluations and purchase intentions toward nonmonetary promotions will be higher when the promoted product is normally priced than when it is overpriced.

Methodology
Respondents in a 2 (normally priced vs. overpriced product) x 2 (monetary vs. nonmonetary incentive) between-subjects design experiment were exposed to a hypothetical sales promotion advertisement of a Kodak one-time-use color camera and then were asked to answer a questionnaire. Sale prices (either actual or inferred—by subtracting the value of the nonmonetary incentive from the regular price) for all four conditions were identical ($2). The Kodak brand was used to prevent inferences about low product quality that respondents may make based on a low sale price of the offer. To control for consumers’ preference heterogeneity in the nonmonetary condition, a free film processing coupon was chosen as a clear complement to the camera. Data were analyzed using MANOVA.

Major Findings
Contrary to the hypotheses, no significant interaction was found between the product price level and the form of incentive for both deal evaluations (p=0.603) and purchase intentions (p=0.863). Upon further investigation it was found that respondents did not significantly vary in their deal evaluations (p=0.502) and purchase intentions (p=0.296) across the two forms of incentives. The only significant main effect found was for the price of promoted product (p<0.001). Contrary to Urbany et al. (1988) overpriced condition did not improve evaluations of the deal and purchase intentions. When a product was overpriced, respondents’ evaluations of a deal and their purchase intentions were significantly lower than when it was normally priced.

One plausible explanation of those findings is based on consumers’ belief that a marketers’ goal is to make a profit. When a discount appears to be too high, consumers may engage in attributional processing to account for the behavior and may make some inferences about the quality of a product or the motive of a retailer (Friestad and Wright, 1994). With high offer prices consumers may completely switch their focus from product quality to retailer’s motivation and infer that the retailer wants to look good by stating inflated regular prices first and then offering bigger discounts. As people pay greater attention to disadvantages (Sen and Johnson, 1997) and negative stimuli get a greater weight in consumer decision making (negativity bias), sales promotions with overpriced products are likely to result in lower evaluations than those with normally priced products.

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The Role of Meta-cognitive Experiences in Reason-based Choices for the Self vs. Others

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Extended Abstract

Prior studies have shown that people sometimes base judgments on the subjective meta-cognitive experience, for example, the ease or difficulty with which relevant information comes to mind (referred to as “ease-of-retrieval” by Schwarz et al., 1991). For instance, Wänke et al. (1997) have shown that consumers evaluate a BMW less favorably after generating ten reasons to choose a BMW over a Mercedes than with only one self-generated reason. Our research ultimately intends to look into three possible mechanisms for this “ease-of-reasoning” effect. The first two explanations have been offered by prior studies, but there seem to be mixed findings in the literature (see Haddock 2000 and Wänke & Bless 2000 for reviews).

Three possible mechanisms for the ease-of-reasoning effect

The first possible mechanism suggested by prior studies is the ‘availability heuristic’ based processing. This heuristic-based account suggests that people infer a scarcity of good reasons from the experienced difficulty of generating reasons. According to this explanation, people are more likely to rely on this ease effect under low-elaboration conditions than high-elaboration conditions. If this availability heuristic mechanism operates in the reason-based choice contexts, then the experienced difficulty of generating reasons should have a negative impact on the predicted choices of others as well as the choices made for the self only under low elaboration conditions (or at least the ease effects should be more pronounced under low, rather than high, elaboration conditions). The second possible mechanism involves the perceived validity (or quality) of reasons. According to this explanation, people are more likely to rely on the ease effect under high-elaboration conditions, because subjective difficulty of generating reasons undermines the perceived validity or compellingness of the reasons (Wänke & Bless 2000, Tormala et al. 2002). If this ‘reason validity’ mechanism operates, then the subjective difficulty of generating reasons should have a negative impact on the predicted choices of others as well as the choices for the self only under high elaboration conditions. In the current study, we suggest another possible explanation that the subjective experience of difficulty tells the person something about his/her preferences directly (i.e., “I can’t think of many good reasons, so this tells me something about my own preferences” rather than “I can’t think of reasons, so this tells me something about the reasons themselves”). In other words, the consumer may believe that it is inconsistency with his/her own preferences, rather than the validity of the reasons themselves, that makes reason-generation difficult. If this ‘preference diagnosticity’ mechanism operates, then one’s subjective difficulty of generating reasons should be limited to decisions made on one’s own behalf. We further argue that only under high-elaboration conditions people would be motivated and make a distinction between one’s own feelings and the feelings that others might be likely to have. Therefore, under high-elaboration conditions, when a person makes a choice for the self, the target option will more likely be chosen after only a couple of (vs. many) reasons are generated. On the other hand, when the person predicts others’ choices, the person would predict that the others will more likely choose the target option after many (vs. a couple of) reasons are generated, supposedly because the subjective difficulty of generating reasons is no longer diagnostic for others’ choices.

Experiment design

Allowing people to generate reasons then asking them to make choices on behalf of themselves or predict others’ choices will allow us to disentangle these mechanisms. Seventy-nine undergraduate students participated in our experiment with a 2 (reasons: 2 vs. 8 pro reasons) x (NFC: high vs. low) x 2 (choice type: self vs. others) mixed-design where ‘reasons’ and ‘NFC’ were treated as between-subjects factors and ‘choice type’ was treated as a within-subjects factor. Each participant generated either 2 or 8 reasons for choosing New York over Las Vegas as a vacation destination. NFC was measured using the 18-item scale (Cacioppo, Petty, and Kao 1984) and participants were divided into two groups based on a median split for data analysis. After reading a choice scenario and generating reasons, participants were asked which destination they would most likely choose and which destination they thought other students most likely choose (the two choice questions were given in a counter-balanced order). At the end, participants were asked how difficult it was to generate the 2 or 8 reasons (on a 7-point scale) for manipulation check.

Major findings

First of all, our manipulation check on the experienced difficulty of generating reasons revealed only a main effect of the number of reasons as expected: participants in the 8-reason condition reported that it was more difficult to generate the reasons than those in the 2-reason condition. Our analysis of the main data revealed a significant three-way within subjects interaction among ‘the number of
reasons, ‘NFC,’ and ‘choice type’ showing that depending on the choice perspective (self or others), the ease effect on the choice outcome differs. This three-way interaction was the only significant effect. In specific, when people made a choice for themselves, those with high NFC relied primarily on their subjective ease experience. They were more likely to choose N.Y. over L.V. after generating 2 (vs. 8) reasons to go to N.Y. However, when they predicted similar others’ choices, they relied more on the number of reasons they generated. They were more likely to choose N.Y. over L.V. after generating 8, rather than 2, reasons. On the other hand, those with low NFC, when making a choice for themselves, were more likely to choose N.Y. after generating 8 reasons than 2, suggesting that they did not make use of subjective difficulty in making their decision and simply relied on the number heuristic (i.e., “more reasons are better”). However, when predicting others’ choices, they were more likely to choose N.Y. after generating 2 reasons than 8, consistent with the possibility that taking others’ perspective generated more cognitive effort. For high NFC people, our results replicate the previous finding that people sometimes use the ease or difficulty of generating reasons as a guide to their choices; however, according to our data, what their subjective difficulty of generating reasons informs may be neither about the scarcity of good reasons nor about the validity of the reasons themselves. It seems to be rather about their diagnosticity for the person’s own preferences. Our future study will look more closely into the mechanisms for low NFC people.

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**When Behaving Bad is Good: Self-Regulatory Enhancement by Strategic Goal Deviation in Consumption**

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**Extended Abstract**

Most important goals cannot be attained without considerable self-regulation and effort (Cantor and Blanton, 1996). During the process to attain the desirable end state that the personal goal focuses on, consumers need to choose between multiple goals (Kruglanski, Shah, Fishbach, Friedman, Chun and Sleeth-Kepler, 2002), to restrain “irresistible” impulses (Baumeister, 2002), and need commitment to persistently pursue the current goals (Brunstein, 1993; Locke and Latham, 2002). Altogether, the process of goal striving can be quite exhausting leading many times to interruptions of current goal-pursuit (Baumeister, Heatherton and Tice, 1994).

A common assumption in the literature is that in order to reach a specific goal, consumers need to progress through some sequence of steps when making a choice (Bettman, 1979), consistently regulating their activities in alignment with their focal goals (Hacker, 1985). For example, Bettman (1979) proposed that in order to reach goals, a set of sub-goals must be defined, defining a plan to reach the specific goal. Analogously, Kruglanski and colleagues (2002) proposed that each goal can be depicted as a goal-system, where the super-ordinate goal is cognitively connected to its various sub-goals or way-stations en route to that goal. Hacker (1985) considered that any activity that is not organized towards the goal should typically be characterized as trial and error.

Clearly, the systematic pursuit of goals over time can be quite exhausting since cognitive and other resources are spent over time to keep commitment and focus on the current long-term goal (Kruglanski et al., 2002). Thus, controlling self-behavior requires the expenditure of resources that become depleted during the self-regulation process, resembling a muscle’s ability (Muraven and Baumeister, 2000; Schmeichel and Baumeister, 2004). And, if the muscle metaphor of willpower generalizes, then because the muscle needs periods of rest and relaxation to recuperate and to strengthen, willpower will also require its moments in the sun. This is the thesis that we examine in the present research.

Many goals that consumers pursue, such as dieting, saving, and exercising, entail inhibitory behaviors that need to be executed over extended periods of time, involving effort and need for high self-regulation. Such inhibitory activity strains willpower, and it does so progressively when the inhibition needs to be maintained over extended periods of time. Long-term projects on which consumers work repeatedly, sometimes with little optimism for a quick or easy finish, strain the limits of self-regulation for practically everyone (Mischel, Cantor and Feldman, 1996). Thus, it is likely that consumers, when pursuing goals that involve inhibitory behaviors for extended periods of time, may need periods of rest and relaxation to recuperate and to strengthen self-regulatory resources.

The issue then is if we always need to perform the behaviors that bring the desired end-state closer, in order to eventually attain it? Or, if there are conditions that is good to temporarily deviate strategically from direct goal pursuit, in order to eventually attain the goal?
For goals that require inhibitory behaviors over extended periods of time, such as in dieting, exercising, saving and so forth, it may be beneficial to temporarily not only abstain from goal pursuit, but actually to perform behavior that runs counter to the overarching focal goal, but which allows the replenishment of self-regulatory resources. Therefore, in the spirit of the muscle metaphor of willpower, we propose that the temporary pursuit of non-regulatory behaviors, even when counter productive to the overarching goal, can act as a mechanism to deal with immediate self-regulatory depletion, can contribute to willpower enhancement, increasing likelihood of goal-pursuit and contributing to eventual long-term goal-attainment.

We hypothesize that in goal-pursuit processes where individuals foresee that high self-regulatory behaviors will be needed to attain the focal goal, intermittent goal-striving processes (i.e., goal-focused activities with goal-relaxation moments) will be preferred, leading to lower levels of ego-depletion and increasing likelihood of goal attainment. By exerting goal-relaxation moments, we also predict an enhancement of motivation to proceed with self-regulatory tasks, as well as an increase in consumers’ ability to cope with self-regulatory demands.

Results from five experimental studies demonstrate that the inclusion of a priori moments of goal-relaxation in self-regulatory processes, when counter productive to immediate goal-attainment, increase the likelihood of long-term focal goal attainment. The findings demonstrate the importance that goal-rest periods are defined before initiating self-regulatory activities, i.e., a priori. This prior knowledge that goal-rest periods will take place during self-regulation leads to lower rates of ego depletion than when consumers do not have a priori knowledge about the occurrence of such goal-relaxation periods. Furthermore, the inclusion of goal-relaxation moments, in which inhibitory self-regulatory processes do not take place (e.g., interruption of dieting behavior to eat “normally” for one day), increases motivation to attain the goal, enhances action likelihood of proceeding with self-regulatory activities, leads to lower depletion, and increases ability to develop coping strategies to deal with self-regulatory issues. Consumers also clearly showed preference for engaging in self-regulatory activities where goal-relaxation periods are included. Taken together, these results provide support that for goals requiring inhibitory behaviors over extended periods of time, the likelihood of eventual goal-attainment is higher when consumers engage in an intermittent goal-striving process, where relaxation-goal activities are entailed, than when they engage in a straight goal process, where all the activities are aligned with focal goal.

Overall, this research contributes to a better understanding of self-regulatory behavior for goal-attainment, emphasizing the importance of temporal activity/planning in goal-striving. Because goals play an essential role in consumer behavior (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 1999), are present in most behaviors of daily life (Cantor and Blanton, 1996), and its pursuit involves coping with challenges, temptations and frustrations (Mischel, Cantor and Feldman, 1996), this research sheds some light on when it is good in the long run to be sometimes bad in the short run.

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Improving Consumer Quality-Efficiency By Using Simple Adaptive Feedback in a Choice Setting

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This paper proposes a feedback control based adaptive scheme for providing choices for users in a web setting. We hypothesize that using this scheme for updating the number of choices presented produces an efficient method of user interaction. We conducted an experiment with seventy-five subjects who had to choose a computer they would buy, given monetary constraints from a large choice set. We used various algorithms for number of choices to be presented to the users in a time-sequential manner. One algorithm was the proposed Simple Feedback Algorithm, which was proven by the data collected to be the most quality-efficient.

The Negative Stigma of Coupon Redemption

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The present research explores the possibility that the positive act of redeeming coupons to save money is a socially stigmatized behavior. Further, we suggest that not only does a stigma exist for the consumer who redeems a coupon but that the negative stigma extends to influence other shoppers in close proximity to the consumer. The results of a laboratory and a field investigation confirm that coupon redemption is a negatively stigmatized behavior and that its negative implications extend to impact other non-involved bystanders.

Relationship Stages and Consumption Patterns: Variations in Object Attachment and Importance of the Brand

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Consumers’ interpersonal relationships have often been excluded as explanatory variables in consumption behavior (Richins, 2001), despite their ability to affect consumption practices (Johnson and Thomson, 2003). As intimate interpersonal relationships relate to consumers’ happiness, feelings of self-esteem, fulfillment, goal achievement, and general well-being (e.g., Leary, 1999; Leary and Downs, 1995; Peplau and Perlman, 1982; Mikulincer, et al., 2003) they are likely to influence both the type and the volume of products consumed.

We propose that the effect of interpersonal relationships on consumption behavior can be observed by taking into account different relationship stages. For example, research has shown that divorced men and women dine out more often than their married counterparts, and women spend more money on shoes and hair care if they are divorced rather than married (Silverstein and Fiske, 2003).

If consumption patterns differ across stages of the relationship cycle, marketers could approach consumers with more targeted advertising messages when their relationship stage could be identified. Similarly, consumers could better protect themselves from persuasive messages by recognizing that a particular relationship stage might leave them vulnerable to such claims.

The purpose of this paper is to present a framework of consumption patterns across relationship cycle stages. We propose four different relationship cycle stages—single life, infatuation, committed relationship, and dissolution—and relate them to object attachment and the importance of brands. Each stage is signified by a distinct combination of object attachment and brand importance, in which brand importance can be high or low and object attachment broad or narrow, and deep or shallow. Breadth of attachment denotes the volume of objects that the consumer is attached to, whereas depth signifies the meaningfulness of the attachment. Brands are separated from objects, as they are vehicles of self-expression used for the creation of an ideal-self (Hogg et al., 2000).

Consumer lifecycle stages and consumption

In the single life stage consumers are seeking to define their self-identity. An identity is effectively communicated through the brands the consumer chooses. For example, a woman can choose to be a sporty Esprit girl, or a classy Armani woman. Product categories that are often used for the purpose of communicating one’s identity are those that are highly observable in nature, such as clothing, beauty products, and services, which can communicate the status and attractiveness of the owner. Therefore, we predict the importance of brands, as well as the object attachment to increase. More specifically, we predict that the object attachment increases both in breadth (as there are many objects the consumer is likely to be attached to) and in depth (as the meaning the consumer attaches to objects is likely to be very elaborate).

In the infatuation stage, a consumer has found a potential partner that s/he is infatuated with. To maintain harmony and ensure the success of the relationship, consumers often try to communicate their ideal self-identity to their partner. As a result, the importance of brands (as they signal status and quality) is likely to remain high. However, the breadth of the attachment to objects is likely to decrease. With the advent of the new partner, the objects no longer play such a central role they used to do. Thus, as compared to the single life stage,
in which object attachment was broad and deep and brands important, the broadness of the attachment as well as the importance of brands, is likely to decrease in the infatuation stage.

In the committed relationship stage consumers focus their attention on the relationship they have. In this stage, the breadth of object attachment decreases, as consumers are shifting their attention from objects to the relationship, and no longer feel the need to communicate a distinct identity. In contrast, the depth of object attachment increases, since the objects acquire bring additional symbolic meaning that is likely to be linked to the relationship (e.g., romantic dinners or holidays). Similarly, the importance of brands decreases, since consumers no longer need brands as much to reinforce their ideal-self.

During the relationship decline and dissolution stage consumers begin to separate themselves from the relationship identity, and start seeking a new individual identity. As a consequence, the breadth of their attachment to objects grows in view of the fact that consumers begin to experiment with new products. At the same time, the depth of the attachment decreases, as the objects are just trials, i.e. not meaningful per se. Simultaneously, brands are increasing their importance, since consumers start paying more attention to what brands can signal about their identity and use it for creating a new identity.

The existence of a link between a consumer relationship stage and his or her consumption pattern has several implications for both marketers and consumers. Consumers are likely to be more influenced by certain types of persuasive messages in particular stages of their relationships. Marketers could use this information to their advantage to better target those consumers who are likely to be most receptive towards the message. For example, consumers in the decline stage are more likely to be receptive towards innovations and products that involve excitement. As they seek for a new identity they are willing to experiment with a variety of products. Brands of the products, on the other hand, should be communicated to single consumers or those in the beginning of a relationship, as they are more susceptible to use a brand as a signal of status and quality.

Consumers, on the other hand, could overcome vulnerability associated with particular stages (such the decline stage), if they can link their feelings to a particular stage. Recognizing that consumption might be a reflection of a particular relationship stage that might leave the consumer insecure can help the consumer limit or control excessive spending.

Attributional Processes during Product Failures–The Role of the Corporate Brand as Buffer
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Information about product failures is expected to deteriorate brand attitudes. However, our research indicates that the harmful impact is attenuated if the responsibility for the failure can be assigned to a superordinate brand. We found a significant interaction between the favorability of product information and the strength by which a product brand is endorsed by a corporate brand. Negative information reduced attitudes towards the product brand but only when the product brand was not strongly endorsed by a corporate brand. These findings call for the incorporation of the corporate brand’s function as buffer into the models of brand architecture.

People We Love to Love and People We Love to Hate: Predicting Desired Outcomes of Reality TV Scenarios
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This study seeks to uncover the qualities of participants that people look for when deciding on a reality TV contestant to root for or root against. We examine the relationship between a number of respondent ratings (e.g., similarity to self, attractiveness, intelligence) and the respondents’ desire to see the contestant win or lose. We expected, and found, that preference for contestant success depended on the type of reality show (we tested four basic types: relationship drama, sadism, trickery and glamour).

The Sphere of Pure Consumption: Outsourcing the Production of Sacred Commodities
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This paper explores the phenomenon of outsourcing of production of sacred ‘commodities’. The example of the international markets for adoption is examined as one manifestation of such outsourcing. The creation of distance and separation between the ‘production’ and ‘consumption’ cycles is offered as one of the ways consumer markets seek an utopian market where production does not taint consumption. The industrialised late capitalist economies are seen as becoming a sphere of pure consumption, while the less industrialised economies in transition are seen more and more as bearing the lion’s share of production of these ‘products’.
Market Agents’ Roles in the Maintenance and Transformation of Rituals
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Extended Abstract
Following Rook’s (1985) seminal work on ritualistic dimensions of consumption, numerous studies investigating the content, context, and major elements of different rituals appeared in the marketing literature (e.g. Lowrey and Otnes, 1994; Sherry and McGrath, 1989; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). These studies demonstrated symbolic significance of rituals and reported their dynamic nature. However, while it is noted that “the marketplace significance of rituals … is striking” (Rook 2004, p.315), very few studies to date examined the role of market agents in the maintenance and transformation of rituals. The exceptions include the studies looking at the role of retailers (McGrath 1990; Otnes 1998; Sherry and McGrath 1989) and the relationship between advertising and consumption rituals (Otnes and Scott 1996). Motivated by this gap, this study seeks to identify the market agents and explore their roles in reproduction and transformation of rituals, using dowry practice—a form of marriage payment—in Turkey as a case study.

There are two reasons for our focus on the dowry practice. First, dowry is a long-standing and commonly performed wedding-related ritual in Turkey and many other Asian countries, including India and China (e.g. Tambiah, 1973; Croll 1984; Siu 1993; Bhopal, 1997). While the content of dowry varies from culture to culture, in general, it involves the gifts given to the bride, the groom, and the groom’s family by the bride’s parents. Irrespective of its content, it is a highly symbolic ritual that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood and from being a daughter/son to a wife/husband. Second, several studies report major transformations in the nature and content of dowry ritual in different cultures it is practiced (e.g. Rao, 1993; Caldwell et al., 1983; Banarjee 1999; Yan 1996). A recent study demonstrates that Turkish marriage dowries have undergone major changes as a result of the country’s economic development and urbanization (Sandikci and Ilhan 2004).

Traditionally, Turkish dowry is confined to the textile products such as embroidery, clothing, bed linen, and carpets that are manually manufactured by the bride-to-be (e.g., Çelik, 1987, Tezcan, 1997, Öztürk, 1983). However, as a result of the changes in the social roles of women, the weakening of traditional lifestyles, and the emergence of independent manufacturers, more and more daughters and their mothers began to either buy ready-made dowry pieces or outsource the artifacts. Today, a prolific and expansive dowry market, composed of different agents producing various dowry pieces exists in Turkey. Our analysis indicates that there are several players in this market, including independent women, retailers, schools and institutes, collective exhibitions, and media that have the power and the means to both reproduce and transform dowry ritual through their design, production, and marketing activities.

So far, we collected data through a series of semi-structured, “long interviews” (McCracken 1988), observations, photographs, and supplemental materials such as newspapers, web pages, and business flyers. Depth interviews were conducted with four dowry shop owners and four independent women who work as freelance manufacturers in Ankara. The informants vary in terms of the size of the businesses, type of dowry preparation service they provide, and number of years in the dowry market. We have also visited dowry and marriage planning fairs both in Ankara (May 2003, 2004) and in Istanbul (February 2005) where we had the chance to observe different players in the market.

Preliminary analysis suggests that the market agents play three different roles: to mediate, consult, and innovate. The market agents assumed the role of the mediator as a result of the proliferation of dowry meanings. Traditionally, dowry included a pre-determined, fixed set of artifacts. However, as a result of urbanization and changing lifestyles dowry preparation became increasingly subject to negotiation (Sandikci and Ilhan 2004). While market agents transform the rituals through new or modified artifacts, scripts, and performances, they also reproduce the ritual through marketing ‘classic’ pieces. Overall, our study indicates that market agents have the ability to transform the dowry ritual and also the means to control the rate and extent of the diffusion of new artifacts, scripts and performances.

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**Spiraling Downward: An Illustration of Social Breakdown Theory and Its Relationship with Self-Concept**

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**Extended Abstract**

Social breakdown theory (SBT) suggests that an individual’s sense of self, his/her ability to mediate between self and society, and his/her orientation to personal mastery are functions of the kinds of social labeling experienced in life (Kuypers and Bengston 1973). It contends that the media can be instrumental in creating negative social labels that adversely affect the self-concept of susceptible older adults. The result is a downward spiral that finds victims accepting the view that they are incompetent, ailing, and useless to society and subsequently believing and behaving accordingly. Kuypers and Bengtson (1973) argue that the elderly are more vulnerable to social labeling because of the “nature of social reorganization in late life” (i.e., role loss, vague or inappropriate normative information, and a lack of reference groups). Thus, the model has the potential to clarify why older individual’s self-concepts may change in later life and the consumption related consequences of such changes (Moschis 1994).

While SBT is yet to be empirically tested in its entire due to its dynamic nature, specific relationships between variables lend themselves to falsification. Our efforts were in a similar vein, testing specific relationships and the moderating effects of select variables.

**Conceptualization**

Over their life course, older adults are likely to face a variety of life transitions that require the acquisition of new norms, behaviors, and roles. SBT addresses the issue of how one’s changing social world might result in changes in one’s self-concept (Moschis 1994). The SBT model acknowledges that one’s social system is in constant flux as it reflects new roles, norms, reference groups, and statuses characterized by different stages in one’s life (Kuypers and Bengston 1973).

Social roles are sets of expectations or guidelines for people who occupy given social positions, such as those of a widow(er), grandfather, and retiree. Yet, there appears to be little evidence of clearly-defined expectations concerning what the growing number of older people should do during their later years, as a result of transitions into various types of roles. The difficulty in determining the socially appropriate cognitions and behaviors for older adults is likely due to a number of factors. The transition to “old age” tends to be vague, amorphous, and unregulated, as the scarcity of rites of passage ceremonies that benefit children and younger adults reflects (e.g., graduation, marriage) (Rosow 1974). Additionally, the heterogeneity of older adults adds to the complexity of defining their social roles.

Kuypers and Bengtson (1973) assert that when certain social reorganizations occur in late life, the individual is deprived of feedback concerning “...who he is, what roles and behavior he can perform, and, in general, what value he is to his social world” (p. 182), due to a lack of normative guidance, role loss, and a lack of appropriate reference groups. As a result of the subsequent “feedback vacuum,” the elderly are vulnerable to, and dependent on, external sources of self-labeling (e.g., the mass media). Moreover, these external cues tend to communicate negative, stereotypical messages of the elderly as useless and obsolete. In short, Kuypers and Bengtson (1973) contend that the effects of ambiguous role conditions leave older adults susceptible to the negative cycle of social breakdown syndrome because they rely on negative, external labeling that gradually erodes their self-concepts; ultimately, they accept a self-concept of a person who is useless, obsolete, and inadequate. Kuypers and Bengtson (1973) predict that the consequence of this pattern is an atrophy of coping skills. However, they contend that SBT’s downward cycle can be broken and even reconstructed through certain personal circumstances and/or interventions (e.g., his/her health, financial resources, and housing situation).
The present study considers the basic foundation of the SBT model within the context of the life course framework. It proposes that various unexpected and anticipated life events that older adults encounter require transitions to new and not well-defined roles. Resulting feelings of role loss or discontinuity will lead to a susceptibility to negative labeling (i.e., via media messages) that weakens one’s self-concept and results in the initiation or intensification of emotion-focused coping strategies (Folkman and Lazarus 1980). This progression may be moderated by one’s financial status, health, and education.

**Method**

The data used in this study was based on a national mail survey of 695 U.S. consumers who were part of a panel. Because SBT applies only to elderly individuals, this number was reduced to 314, by limiting analysis to only those respondents 60 years or older.

Regression analysis was utilized to test the relationships between role discontinuity events, declining self-concept, and emotion-focused coping strategies. The moderation effects of media, education, income, and health were also tested.

**Major Findings**

The hypothesis that the relationship between one’s self-concept and emotion-focused coping strategies was supported. The mass media measure did not emerge as a significant moderator of the relationship between role discontinuities and declining self-concept. A key finding of this study was the moderating effects of health and education as they relate to anticipated life discontinuities and one’s self-concept. Apparently, the impact these factors might have on the elderly’s stability of their self-concept due to role discontinuities in later life has important societal implications.

**References**


**Developing and Testing the Cultural Embeddedness of Products (CEP) scale**

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**Extended abstract**

**Background**

National culture seems to be an increasingly important variable in consumer behavior research. First, the variety of products from all over the world is growing in most Western markets. At the same time, there is more political pressure to display the origin of products, especially within the European Union. Moreover, previous speculations about convergence of national cultures (e.g. Levitt 1983), are countered by recent evidence showing that many cultures are in fact diverging along several dimensions (de Mooij 2000; de Mooij 1998).

Research on cultural meaning of products has typically adopted a qualitative anthropological approach (Applbaum and Jordt 1996; Thompson and Haytko 1997). Past research has provided useful insights of how consumers ascribe cultural meanings to specific products. However, in order to study larger numbers of products and exploit the advantages of multivariate statistical analyses, we need quantitative measures of focal concepts. In this research we develop a scale for measuring the type- and extent of national cultural meaning embedded in products, the CEP-scale.

**Defining the CEP construct**

CEP is an individual level variable and refers to the degree to which a product category (e.g., pizza, meatballs, orange juice, TV, jeans, etc.) is perceived to be embedded in a given national or ethnic culture. The dimensionality of the construct was uncertain ex ante. Our research strategy was to develop a broad set of scale items and look for different dimensions by means of factor analysis.

We used three theoretical frameworks in developing the scale items: theories on transferal of cultural meaning to products (McCracken 1986), theories on symbolic interactionism (Solomon 1983), and social identity theory (Kleine et al. 1993). Furthermore, we consulted two experts on national culture and consumer behavior, one academic and a marketing director of a multinational consumer goods company. The items were developed to capture the interaction of meaning in consumer products with the culturally-constituted world and consumers’ self-concepts. The initial list included 17 items, such as “when consuming this product, I feel that I am part of the national tradition” and “this product is probably found in some folk tales, songs, or jokes (of this nation)”.

**Method and major findings**

The CEP Scale was tested on two non-student samples in Moscow, Russia (N= 201 and 238). Five products were included in both tests. Products were selected systematically to provide variation in the expected level of cultural embeddedness: ketchup (low), soft drink (low), vodka (high), mors (a special kind of juice based on berries; high CEP), and pelmeni (a special kind of meatball; high CEP).

Based on the first dataset we performed exploratory factor analyses in order to explore the dimensionality of the scale. Regardless of extraction- or rotation schemes, the analyses tended to converge in two factors, but with some sign of a third factor (explained variance, all factors: about 65%). The two major factors seemed to represent a descriptive CEP dimension (items such as: “This product could be...” etc.) is perceived to be embedded in a given national or ethnic culture. The dimensionality of the construct was uncertain ex ante. Our research strategy was to develop a broad set of scale items and look for different dimensions by means of factor analysis.


used by foreigners, e.g. in movies or stories about Russia, in order to describe something typical Russian”), and a personal CEP dimension (items such as: “as a Russian, I probably have other thoughts and feelings for this product than other people”). One or two items, though, tended to load on a third factor. These items referred to a public aspect of CEP (item: “If other Russian were to see me using this product, he or she would perceive me as a typical Russian”). This third factor was interesting from a theoretical viewpoint, because previous research has shown that the self-concept has a private and a public dimension (e.g. Richins 1994).

Hence, we developed three more items in order to cover a potential public aspect of CEP. In a new study of Russian consumers (N=238) involving the same five products (ketchup, soft drink, vodka, mors and pelmeni), the revised scale was tested for both a two-factor and three-factor structure via LISREL.

The results tended to support a three-dimensional structure for the CEP Scale. There was a better fit for the three-dimensional model, in particular for two product categories-vodka and mors. The fit indicators for the three-dimensional model were CMIN/df=2.445, NFI=0.859, CFI=0.910, RMSEA=0.078 for vodka and CMIN/df=1.747, NFI=0.876, CFI=0.942, RMSEA=0.092 for mors. Preliminary evidence of discriminant and nomological validity was found by correlating the three CEP dimensions with related constructs such as the CETSCALE (descriptive CEP: r=.044, p=.544; private CEP: r=.281, p<.01; public CEP: r=0.246, p<.01) and age (descriptive CEP: r=-.05, p=.488; private CEP: r=-.168, p<.022; public CEP: r=-.106, p=.138).

Moreover, the three dimensions of the CEP-scale correlated differently with these other variables. This finding supports the validity of a multidimensional definition of the construct.

Implications
The CEP-scale may prove to be a very useful scale for cross-cultural consumer research. In addition to measuring the extent of cultural embeddedness of a given category, researchers may use the scale to identify the type of embeddedness involved: descriptive, personal or public. Future research should validate the scale on other samples in other countries and in other product categories. Most important, research is needed on the effects of the different CEP-dimensions on information search and processing, attitude formation and choice.

References


Self-Gifting vs. Gifting to Others: An Examination of Psychological Orientation Differences in the Domain of Gift Giving
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Extended Abstract
In the past, gift giving theory and research had typically been dyadic or interpersonal in nature (e.g. Belk, 1979). Nonetheless, it was acknowledged that people may sometimes give gifts to themselves, and in 1990 the first empirical investigation on the topic of giving gifts to oneself was conducted and self-gifts were conceptualized as (1) personally symbolic self-communication through (2) special indulgences that tend to be (3) premeditated and (4) highly context bound (Mick and DeMoss 1990b, p.328).

Since its inception into the marketing research domain, it has been suggested that the self-gift phenomenon may be widely occurring in American society (Mick and DeMoss 1990a, 1990b) and two predominant contexts of self-gift behavior have been identified: reward and therapy (Mick and DeMoss 1990a, 1990b, 1992). Other research has substantiated the notion that self-gifts are a fairly common and important phenomenon particularly in western consumer behavior. According to social researchers, Western individuals have become increasingly self-oriented in their purchases and consumption behavior (Mick et al. 1992). Similarly, McKeage et al. (1993) believe that people have been giving gifts to themselves since the early beginnings of self-indulgence. Mick et al. (1992) advise that if self-gifts are as prominent in American society as some past research has suggested, then it’s a phenomenon marketers cannot afford to ignore or misunderstand.

Specifically, McKeage et al. (1993) suggest that future research might examine affective responses to self-gifts versus gifts-to-others. Additionally, Mick and Faure (1998) suggest that therapeutic self-gifts may result from a different type of psychological process than reward self-gifts. Extending Gould and Weil’s (1991) study of gender differences in buying gifts for same sex friends versus opposite ones, (they found that males described themselves differently in terms of masculine and feminine traits when buying gifts for same sex friends...
as opposed to for opposite-sex friends, while females tended to be more consistent across these two situations.) we predict that psychological gender orientation will be triggered differently based on the gifting scenario (self-gift vs. interpersonal gift) and such psychological differences will have affective and cognitive implications for consumer decision making in gift buying situations. Further, we hypothesize that these differences will exist between the two contexts of self-gifts as well (reward and therapy).

When measuring gender orientation, prior research has suggested that people who score high on the feminine dimension are said to be nurturing whereas people who score high on the masculinity dimension are said to be more instrumental. Similarly, we would like to add to the self-gifting literature by examining affective differences (nurturing vs. instrumental) that may exist between the two self-gifting contexts and interpersonal gift giving situations by measuring individual’s gender orientation in these different contexts. Psychological gender orientations have been shown to substantially mediate many of the gender differences in a range of behaviors in that the more women resemble men along gender dimensions, such as masculinity and femininity, the more similar their behavior (Helgeson, 1994). Models of psychological androgyny have supplanted the prior bipolar models of gender, in the sense that both sexes are viewed as capable of having both masculine and feminine qualities (e.g. Bem, 1974)

Therefore, we hypothesize that when gifting to a friend, individuals will feel more nurturing and score higher on the feminine dimension, and when self-gifting, they will feel more instrumental and score higher on the masculine dimension. Additionally, between the two self-gifting scenarios we predict that the therapeutic (reward) situation will result in higher feminine (masculine) scores than in the reward (therapeutic) situation. To test our hypotheses that gender orientation changes depending on the gift-giving scenario, we conducted a pretest with 34 subjects and found strong support for our predictions. In the pretest we also observed that subjects seemed fatigued filling out the full BEM Scale (60 items) three times. Thus, we ran the ANOVA with a reduced 20 item BEM scale (Barak and Stern, 1986) and still found significant results. We then used this reduced BEM scale, confirmed by a Factor Analysis, in our main study with 85 new subjects. The method was similar to the one used by Gould and Weil (1991). A within subjects design was used where subjects randomly received counterbalanced questionnaires and were assigned to three gift giving scenarios: self-gift reward (SGR), self-gift therapy (SGT) and interpersonal gift (IG). Subjects were told to imagine a certain gift-giving scenario and then asked to fill out the BEM scale; they repeated this task for each of the three gift scenarios. Subjects were also asked a number of items designed to assess subjects’ feelings when comparing the different gift giving experiences.

A one-way ANOVA with scenario condition (SGR, SGT and IG) was run on the measure of gender-orientation based on the BEM scale inventory score. The analysis produced significant results (M_{SGR}=0.88 vs. M_{SGT}=5.61 vs. M_{IG}=14.27, F (2,230)=31.80, p<.001). The means support our predictions, as the gender orientation is significantly different in all three situations and more feminine in the self-gift therapy situation as compared to the self-gift reward situation (in which it is more masculine and not feminine at all). Further, we also ran a one-way ANOVA with scenario condition split at two levels (self gift (SG) and interpersonal gift (IG)), the results support our prediction that gender orientation of the individuals varies based on the gift context an individual faces (\text{MSG}=2.36<\text{MIG}=14.27, F (1,230)=49.716, p<.001). Additionally, as predicted, in the interpersonal gift situation, individuals’ gender orientation is more feminine than in that of the self gift situation where it is more masculine.

Our study makes two important contributions. First, it adds to the self-gifting literature by proposing that psychological gender is one aspect that differentiates the two main contexts of self-gifting. Second, this is a pioneering study that directly compares self-gifting and interpersonal gift giving and shows how they differ with regards to individuals’ psychological states. Future studies should examine other affective and cognitive differences that may exist in this domain.

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Perceptions of Counterfeit Consumers
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Counterfeit products, such as fake Louis Vuitton handbags and Oakley sunglasses have become widely available in the marketplace to consumers worldwide. The international trade of counterfeit products has been estimated at over $100 billion per year, or 3-6% of sales overall. As a result, it is estimated that corporations have experienced a global loss of $200 billion both through lost sales and damage to brand equity (Review of Business 2001). Although the magnitude of this phenomenon is staggering, consumer research in this area has remained sparse. The current research aims to being filling this gap.

Consumers often purchase luxury or prestige products for their ability to communicate information regarding their social class, or to indicate their membership in a valued reference group. Previous research has shown that consumers who purchase expensive luxury items often place greater importance on the status or image associated with the product than with the product itself (Dubois and Duequesne 1993). Some consumers of counterfeit luxury products may be attempting to capitalize on the symbolic nature of a prestige brand without paying the premium price. If luxury products and prestige brands convey information about the owners’ social status to others, consumers of authentic looking counterfeit products are sending inaccurate information about their social status. Social Identity Theory (SIT) holds
that people will form negative impressions of individuals deliberately attempting to misrepresent their social status to others. The current research applies SIT to investigate perceptions of individuals that choose to purchase and display counterfeit products.

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) focuses on explaining the dynamics of intergroup relations, and has been applied to better understand the strategies members of low status groups use to increase their status both individually and collectively. According to this theory, people gain self esteem from their membership in social groups, and will pursue goals they believe will increase or maintain the status of their social groups. According to SIT, one way this is manifested is in the evaluations people make of in-group vs. out-group members. Individuals tend to favor or make more positive evaluations of members within their social group (in-group members) than members of other groups. Although the misrepresentation of one’s social status through the purchase of counterfeit products violates social norms, people’s judgments about counterfeit consumers, according to SIT, will depend on whether those counterfeit consumers are in-group or out-group members. This study tested the hypothesis that individuals will make less favorable evaluations of counterfeit consumers when those consumers are members of an out-group, compared to an in-group.

The sample consisted of 304 undergraduate students from a large Southeastern university. Respondents were asked to complete a survey, ostensibly about an online dating service, and evaluate an online dating profile containing a photo of either a Caucasian or African-American male target and information about his hobbies, likes/dislikes, and income. In addition, the passage also contained information about one of three possible products that the target had recently purchased (high status: Rolex watch, lower status: Seiko watch or counterfeit: replica of a Rolex watch). After reading the passage, respondents were asked to evaluate the target on a number of attributes: desirability as a date, desirability as a marriage partner, physical attractiveness, social status and trustworthiness.

As expected, MANOVA revealed a significant main effect of product status, such that targets portrayed as having recently purchased, and wearing, a counterfeit Rolex watch were rated significantly less favorably on all five dependent variables than those wearing either a Seiko or authentic Rolex watch. Consistent with our main hypothesis, a significant three-way interaction of participant race x target race x product type was observed when analyzing Caucasian and African-American respondents. In other words, when the subject’s race matched that of the target, respondents rated the target wearing the counterfeit product more favorably than when the race of the target differed from their own. Results were similar for both the Rolex and Seiko watch. Now tell the reader in words what the three-way means. The results provide support for the efficacy of Social Identity Theory in understanding status consumption, and the hypothesis that perceptions of consumers of counterfeit products depend on the respective group memberships of the consumer and the observer. This study also suggests that consumers of counterfeit products are actually not acquiring the prestige and status they are seeking. In fact, their choice of counterfeit products may actually negatively influence the image these consumers project to others.

The Tiger Roars: Tribalism in a Non-traditional Australian Sport

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Extended Abstract

The decline individualism and the rise of tribalism have now been noted by many researchers, (Maffesoli, 1996; Cova, 1997; Cova and Cova, 2001; Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). Tribes according to Maffesoli (1996) are held together through shared emotions, life styles, moral beliefs and consumption practices. Additionally there has been much research, building on the idea of the “subculture of consumption” as defined by Schouten and McAlexander, (1995) as “a distinct subgroup of society that self selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand or consumption activity”. The definition was further expanded by Kozinets (2001) to groups whose members define themselves within a broader cultural context, finding meaning and community largely in terms of holding contrasting positions against that cultural background.

The traditional idea of community has also been challenged in today’s world with increasing geographical mobility (Thompson and Holt, 1996) in a sense blurring the boundaries. What we are now seeing is the tribes or community being formed with no geographical boundaries (Tambyah, 1996). Many tribes today are based on sport and other leisure pursuits. Belk and Costa (1998) refer to these as transient consumption communities which result from serious leisure pursuits and are defined by shared experiences objects and actions.

This paper explores tribalism in the martial art of karate. Shotokan Karate a traditional Japanese martial art form has been practiced in Australia for less than 30 years, therefore is not considered a traditional Australian sport, but does have a significant following. Using ethnographic evidence gathered at the last World Championships in Durban South Africa, this paper introduces and showcases elements of tribalism and of the subculture of consumption which are evidenced by following the Australian team over three days of competition. Over the three days of competition we see evidence not only of tribalism in karate in general but clearly see it manifesting in the behavior of the national teams of various countries. These competitors and spectators share a passion for the sport. It gives them a sense of identity. The spectacle of the sport is enhanced by the opening ceremony. We see evidence of rituals, flags, chants setting the tribes apart, but conversely we see the shared meanings in rules of competition, karate gi (uniform) and an overall passion for the way of life.

The importance of karate as a way of life for the karateka was further evidenced in post competition interviews that were carried out, which reaffirm Maffesoli (1996) idea that “the accent is on that which unites, not that which separates”. So while we clearly find differences between nations in their pursuit of competitive success they still define themselves based on their sport, showing a shared commitment to the sport. Many respondents spoke of their karate family, which for most was a global family, crossing many national boundaries.

References
Experiencing Motherhood: The Importance of Possible Selves to New Mothers

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Long Abstract

Background
We report a small-scale exploratory study that investigated the interrelationships between consumption, identity and choice using the theoretical lens of possible selves. Mothers-to-be and new mothers are faced with important choices, as consumers, at a major transitional stage in their lives. We examine the impact that women’s experiences of consumption choices had on the processes of their identity formation and stabilization as mothers (‘the kind of mother I want to be’, ‘the kind of mother I don’t want to be’).

The transition to motherhood (Goldberg 1988:2) is a time when women learn about their new role and identity as mothers, experience changes in patterns of consumption as well as significant changes in their work/life balance (e.g. Fursman 2002). Identities may be challenged as different roles are experienced in competition (e.g. Fursman 2002), along with changes in women’s relationship with others (Smith 1999a;b) and difficult consumption decisions (Prothero 2002).

New motherhood as a transitional stage can be linked to ‘possible selves’, which describe future possibilities not central to our current identity (Antonucci and Mikus 1988:69-73). Possible selves provide consumers with goals, aspirations, motives, fears and threats and the self-relevant information that individuals need to organize and give direction to their lives (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Women may have preconceived ideas about their ‘possible selves’ (Antonucci and Mikus 1988: 69-73) as they approach pregnancy and motherhood—‘what kind of mother do I want to be?’ and just as importantly, ‘what kind of mother do I not want to be?’ This study provided an opportunity to explore how women’s choices in the early stages of motherhood are used to manage this process.

Method
Women were recruited for a small-scale pilot study on the basis that they had recently given birth to their first child. We used semi-structured interviews to identify the main themes and patterns of interest, and explore the choices made by our participants and the context in which these decisions were made.

We plan to develop our methodology on the basis of this pilot study and use a quasi-longitudinal approach. We hope to recruit twenty-four expectant new mothers and interview them at key stages in the transition to motherhood. Our qualitative approach will also incorporate diaries and projective techniques. Using a quasi-longitudinal approach will capture experiences of maternity and support services, as well as evolving experiences of mothering linked to consumption and identity as they are made, rather than relying on retrospective accounts, which could provide inaccurate accounts of pregnancy.

Findings
Our preliminary findings identify some of the key ways in which women’s hopes, fears and expectations of mothering (possible selves) have impacted on the choices and decisions they made. We identify some of the key choices that our participants made at certain stages of their pregnancy/motherhood and identify the role of possible selves: in terms of the mother/parent that they wanted to be (ideal), their thoughts about the kind of mother they did not want to be (negative self), balanced with the pressure to fit with others’ expectations (ought self).

The issues explored included pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, attitudes towards immunization, specific consumption activities (for baby and/or for mother) and the interplay of actual experiences relating to new mothers prior attitudes and beliefs in the form of possible selves. New mothers’ hopes and fears were exhibited in consumption decisions such as whether to purchase particular products (e.g. dummies/pacifiers), and whether to fit in with society’s expectations (e.g. gendered products and colors) but also key experiences associated with motherhood such as the wish to breastfeed, yet the experience of difficulties in establishing breast-feeding. Our participants found themselves balancing their needs and expectations with those from a variety of sources (e.g. friends, family, work colleagues, health service professionals) and this was particularly challenging in some circumstances.

Discussion
The concept of possible selves provided a useful means to explore our first time mothers’ experiences and the way in which they negotiated their way around some key decisions associated with new motherhood. This approach provides the potential to highlight women’s expectations and the sources from which they take advice. Our research could demonstrate how women cope when their actual experiences of mothering (actual self) do not align with their hopes and expectations of mothering (ideal self), or the kind of mother I think I should be (ought self), and sometimes involve aspects of mothering they had originally hoped to avoid or reject (undesired self). These
hopes and fears can include consumption decisions such as whether to purchase particular products (e.g. pacifiers), and whether to fit in with society’s expectations (e.g. gendered products and colors) but also the kinds of experiences highlighted within this paper such as the wish to breastfeed, yet the experience of difficulties in establishing breast-feeding.

Many of the decisions which women face at this time are likely to be influenced by the ‘ought self’ which are informed by discourses generated by social networks and public policy campaigns/health care professionals about what constitutes ‘a good mother’ as well as family members and the social networks of new mothers. The discrepancies and psychological distances between a range of selves (e.g. ideal/actual; ought/actual and undesired/actual self—see Higgins et al. 1987) clearly had an influence on the consumption experiences of our mothers as well as their overall well being. The research contributes, theoretically, to our understanding of possible selves relating this concept to consumption choices into public services. It also contributes to our understanding of identity formation processes amongst new mothers—how identities are acquired or imposed; and the consumption practices in daily life (Reckwitz 2002; Warde 2003) which underpin the acquisition of the identity of mother.

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Beauty, Brains, or Brawn: Idealized Male Images in Advertising
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Extended Abstract
A number of researchers have examined the influence of the media, particularly advertising, on American perceptions of physical attractiveness and beauty, and the implications of that relationship on attitudes and self-perceptions. Most agree that advertising presents idealized images of individuals and the American lifestyle (Richins 1995). Enhanced by special effects capable of minimizing the least imperfection, many models and actors project virtually unattainable levels of beauty and physical attractiveness. Some even suggest that the thin and beautiful female model so pervasive in cosmetic and apparel advertising contributes to the development of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia (Richins 1991; Cattarin, Thompson, Thomas, and Williams 2000).

Social comparison theory (Festinger 1954) has been used to investigate the process by which people compare themselves with individuals in ads. Festinger (1954) proposed that humans have a drive to evaluate themselves through comparisons with others. Negative effects may occur when comparisons are made with others perceived as superior on a dimension of interest (upward comparisons) (Major, Testa, and Bylsma 1991), and these comparisons may be primarily automatic (Lyubomirsky and Ross 1997). Research indicates that for women, comparisons to idealized advertising images result in lower satisfaction with physical attractiveness (Cattarin et al. 2000; Richins 1991), decreases in self-esteem (Martin and Gentry 1997), and increases in moods such as depression and anger (Cattarin et al. 2000).

It appears that men as well as women make social comparisons to advertising imagery and that these comparisons impact male self-perceptions. Gulas and McKeage (2000) demonstrated that idealized images of financial success negatively reduced male subjects’ level of self-esteem whereas idealized images of physical attractiveness had no significant effect. It may be then that men are subject to upward comparisons when idealized images reflect relevant features other than physical attractiveness. For example, media images that portray desirable characteristics such as athleticism or intellect may be influential in affecting male self perceptions. The present study represents an exploratory effort to identify the types of idealized male images prevalent in contemporary print advertising from the perspective of the individual consumer, both male and female.

Method
Male fashion photos were chosen randomly by the researchers from recent issues of men’s lifestyle magazines and retail catalogues. The selected photographs featured full-color, full-body shots of a single model (no other people or animals). All commercial text and graphics, including background and brand names, were removed using photo editing software. Eighty-six pictures were included in the final set. Participants were asked to sort the photographs into as many piles as they deemed appropriate on the basis of similarity of
appearance and to select the single photograph from each pile that best represented all of the photographs placed in that group. The participants were then asked to provide a word or short phrase of their own that best described the type of look depicted by each group of photos. Finally, each exemplar was rated in terms of overall attractiveness and a list of adjective descriptors (e.g., handsome, attractive, powerful) using a 5-point scale ranging from low (1) to high (5).

**Results**

Five distinctive clusters emerged from multidimensional scaling analysis.

**Classic/Elegant:** This category portrayed male models who were elegantly dressed, very well groomed, and with serious facial expressions. These images were rated high on descriptors such as sophisticated, intellectual, classy, confident and intellectual.

**European/Fashion Forward:** This cluster of images was described as stylish and bold in their commitment to make a fashion statement. The reference to Europe may indicate that the models were considered less typically American-as though coming from the old continent of high fashion and extravagance. The images rated high on sophistication, mysteriousness, and intelligence.

**Trendy/Casual:** These images scored high on descriptors such as athletic, healthy, casual, outgoing, and rugged. This look was perceived as youthful and highly attractive.

**GuyNext Door/Athletic:** The guy next door appears to be the antithesis to the Classical/Elegant Look. These male images ranked high on friendliness, strength, and masculinity. On average, the models were perceived as attractive, but somewhat ordinary and regular.

**Macho/Masculine/Sporty:** Participants described this group as macho, strong, outdoorsy, healthy, yet more stylish than the Guy Next Door. The models in this group were closely linked to sex appeal, power, good health and an outdoor lifestyle.

**Implications for Future Research**

The results of this analysis suggest that consumers tend to categorize idealized print images of men in terms of types of attractiveness that emphasize lifestyle characteristics. As such, men may compare dimensions other than overall physical attractiveness with that of the models depicted in advertising directed toward them. Further research is needed to better understand which comparison dimensions are most relevant in eliciting upward and downward comparisons for men and under what conditions. It may be particularly worthwhile to study the extent to which idealized male images negatively impact self-esteem for pre-adolescent and adolescent males.

**References**


**Image Consumption: The Study of Bridal Photography, Semiotic, and Feminine**

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**ABSTRACT**

The growth of the bridal photography industry could be a miniature of Taiwanese anthrop-sociology development records. In the past, the conservative bridal photography showed exaggerative make-up and bridal costumes that represented a semiotic of contemporary fashion. However, along with the import of Western information a new aesthetic awoke and educated Taiwanese women to reach an ideal state of self-confidence and autonomy. The research was drawn on the premise that the awareness of feminism was an effect of media exposure to women of new images and an overall development of anthrop-sociology as well. A researcher developed survey instrument and a visiting survey were designed and used to collect data from 550 randomly selected customers from the cluster of bridal photography salons. The finding revealed that modern Taiwanese women thought that they could be independent decision makers and were keen-witted and capable. They would ask for bridal photography based on the value of commemoration and self-expression and agreed that bridal photography represented beauty, romance, and happiness. Also, bridal magazines and friends' relatives' recommendations were the best information resources.
INTRODUCTION

In preindustrial society, bridal photography was not a must-have commodity when two families prepared a wedding ceremony for the new couple-to-be. During that time, bridal photography was only taken at a groom’s front yard on the formal wedding day. However, along with anthrop-sociology development and the economic boom, the modern couple-to-be sees bridal photography as one important step of the wedding ritual; they view bridal photography as their own business rather than old people’s. They visit many bridal photography salons to try on the most fashionable wedding gowns, check the samples, discuss their preferred style with sales representatives, and pick a date prior to the formal wedding ceremony to take shots—it usually is an all-day long and very complex process. All they wanted to pursue was an ideal look for a day that could preserve and fulfill a romantic affair. Lewis (1997) indicated that “wedding photographs are powerful because they are traditional, professional, personal, and seemingly accurate renditions of reality as they help couples remember a key period in their social and personal lives” (p. 168).

Miller (1995) indicated that consumption could reflect cultural diversity, meaning, and value. Bridal photography consumption and popularization was just an angle which reflected the historical record of the growth of Taiwan society that our people gradually awoke along with the social-economic developing; they were aware of personal meaning and value in the material culture. Also, while foreign media such as modern art, movies, TV shows, and advertisement were introduced, they were disciplined to have different perspectives defining their own values of wedding photography as well as feminine social meaning.

The research draws on many researchers’ premise that how consumers create meaning in their lives toward aesthetic, body image, and design operates interdependently along with anthrop-sociology development and advertising. The purpose of the study was to explore the interaction among the awareness of feminine self-esteem and self-actualization, semiotic, and bridal photography which might affect the new generation to abandon traditional concepts of the burden of marriage and create a new wedding ritual practice of creating an atmosphere of happiness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Development of the Bridal Photography Industry

Once, taking pictures was luxury and seldom happened, in the preindustrial era, only wealthy families could have the chance to take snap shots for fun or even possess a camera. However, most middle-low income families might invite a photographer to take shots for very formal and important situations to record family events such as births, weddings, and funeral ceremonies...etc. The purpose was to prolong a family memory and to unify the sentimental power of the family or a clan to the next generation (Bourdieu, 1990). Hence, it could be understood that photography, in the past, served only a social function instead of satisfying individual demand.

Adrian (1999) indicated that, before 1980, bridal photography salons did not provide full service but only rented white gowns. After several years, some bridal salons such as Lao Mai and Chongshi set the full wedding service package that included photography, head-to-toe styling, florists, and white gowns. Through a successful marketing strategy with advertising and promotion, the bridal industry soon developed their business. The sudden changed was unavoidable for those old-fashioned photo studios that became aware that proper weddings could not be achieved without an integral service package. Based on the demand, the number of full service bridal salons had rapidly grown to over 200 in the Taipei metropolitan district by 1997.

The minimal full package that the modern bridal photography salons provide usually includes at least 20 sheets of 12-15 inch enlargement pictures in an album, plus one additional 36-40 inch enlargement photo with frame which can be displayed on the formal wedding day. However, the price was not very easily met by the new couple-to-be; usually the bridal salons charge at least NTS30,000 for the minimal full package in Taipei. The price was a little bit lower outside of the region.

New Feminism

The social status of women was very low historically in Taiwanese society. The economic boom, that caused feminine involved into working position, led an overall social-economic upgrade in education, income, entertainment, and cultural business. The development modified personal value to pursue higher self-esteem and self-actualization. Moreover, the import of foreign media such as movies, TV shows, and advertisements exposed people to different perspectives of feminine value, visual communication, and aesthetics (Figure 1 & 2). The women were introduced to a new feminism that changed their sense of aesthetics and their eyes fell on personal appearance and performance. Swinth (2002) pointed out that women in the media were both symbols and icons which helped create a new modern social order and set a new image for women to achieve and imitate.

McCranken (1986) indicated that when a viewer/reader glimpsed an object, a process of transfer would happen to the person. Hence, when the bridal photography industry emerged women became visualizations of ideology, and because of the Cinderella factor, women invested themselves to achieve the ideal beauty and self-realizing image in the bridal photographs as portrayed in public media (Figure 3 & Figure 4). The forming process of the new feminism was socially produced by the new image in the media. It involved a relationship of sharing meaning between people and objects via the power of symbols to communicate images and ideas which would be considered as cultural conventions (Kang, 1997).

Semiotics and Bridal Photography

Otnes and Scott (1996) declared that ritual semiotics were expressions that were designed to identify and transfer metaphors, moods, and arguments for products’ image in particular motifs and for different occasions. Also, the identities and transfers could evaporate into our social constructions which would shift the audiences’ capabilities and preferences to interpret products’ image (Christensen & Askegaard, 2001). Therefore, the traditional bridal appearance was gradually changed when the new bridal image was introduced to us through bridal photography in bridal salons, along with the progress of Taiwan society.

According to bridal yearbooks, the traditional bridal photography was composed of black-and-white pictures, which did not have many poses and gestures. The new couple, in the past, was required to stand straight without any close touching (Figure 5) because marriage
meant a turning point for the two persons with new social responsibilities. The heavy and ugly bridal make-up style represented the idea that the woman had a new responsibility to take care of the whole family after removing the mask. However, in the new era, of the new feminism, the bride would like the emphasis to be on showing her inner beauty (double eyelids were no longer a standard of beauty in 21st century of Taiwan) (Figure 6) and her determination to look after a romantic and happy marriage. Their postures and gestures were no longer conservative (Figure 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, & 12), they particularly imitated models in the Western media because they wanted to show that they were sexy and confident. Furthermore, the new semiotic of bridal photography have revealed a reality that women had announced their autonomy from male dominance.

**METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the study was to discuss the moving of the modern Taiwanese’s perspective towards aesthetics, body image, design, as well as feminine awareness that could be told through modern wedding photography. Questionnaires and visiting surveys given to both consumers and bridal salons’ managers were adopted as survey instruments to collect data. The survey’s instruments consisted of demographic data, motivations to have wedding photography taken, brand images, senses of beauty, perspectives towards feminism, photography styles, product values, and symbolic meanings of bridal photography. Fifty consumers, ages 18-35, were chosen to do the visiting survey on the streets; five professional bridal salons’ manager accepted our invitation to complete the visiting survey. Moreover, a sample of 500 visitors was randomly selected to fill in the survey from Aug. 29 to Sept. 11, 2003. The data from the questionnaires was analyzed by using procedures of the SPSS 10.0.

**Findings of Visiting Survey**

**The Visiting Survey of Bridal Salons’ Managers**

The motivation to take bridal photography. According to Fand-Yu Lin, the Tia bridal salon’s manager, bridal photography represented and public ritual more than a personal demand because it meant a man and a woman decided to join hand in hand for the rest of their lives. Vanessa bridal salon manager, Su-Ching Chiou, said that bridal photography meant a lot for a couple because it represented that fact that they stepped into another phase in the journey of their life. That kind of joy, happiness, and excitement, which they strongly wanted to share with their relatives and friends, existed only in that moment and would not return forever. A groom might be deeply touched suddenly and feel his responsibility to his bride when he saw his lady appearing in a stunning dress. Hence, we would seriously undertake to provide the best service for each new couple.

With regards to preserving the traditional custom, Mei-Lin bridal salon manager Xuan-Min Huang shared her personal experience that some new couples would not dare to disobey their seniors and not have bridal photography done because their seniors seriously considered it to be a public ritual that proved the joining of two families. However, some new couples chose not to prove their marriage by having bridal photography done; they omitted the complicated process because they believed that the happy marriages need to be carefully cultivated and are not guaranteed by stunning wedding gowns or a series of delicately designed bridal pictures.

Marketing of aesthetics. Most bridal salons’ managers held quite similar perspectives in that they totally agreed that aesthetics was interdependent with anthrop-sociology development and advertising. According to Vanessa bridal salon manager Su-Ching Chiou both staffs and consumers’ sense of beauty could be informed from outside resources such as Western magazines or contemporary artworks. For example, she suggested that a bride could hold a silver tray or a designed basket with candies in it instead of the traditional wooden tea tray which was not quite in harmony with the stunning bridal style, to thank their guests at the end of the wedding. She insisted on providing a different wedding to her customers by adding small changes that created a new aesthetics.

Moreover, Bazaar bridal salon manager, Che-Ming Lin intimated that most customers would hand him newspaper or magazine clippings that they wanted to imitate. He would further communicate with his consumers to shape a neat style which matched the current fashions and revealed their personalities as well. The most important thing was for the customer to not blindly chase the fashion; a good style also had to give a sense of the customer’s individuality.

The new feminism. Most brides-to-be would gather many information before they took shots, and also they would positively participate to discuss their make-up, decorations, poses, and angles with the bridal salon staff. It was totally different from the tradition that women could not have any opinions for her marriage. Taipei Fashion bridal salon manager Mon-Yang Lu shared his experience that grooms-to-be would express an attitude of indifference toward bridal photography. Nevertheless, brides-to-be show a determined attitude to announce their authority to direct the production of bridal photographs. Vanessa bridal salon manager Su-Ching Chiou expressed that the new women possessed a better ability to earn money; they could afford ideal bridal photographs. Modern women would ignore their future parents-in-law suggestions because they did not want to pretend they were satisfied with their arrangements.

With regards to make-up and dress, Mei-Lin bridal salon manager Xuan-Min Huang pointed out the modern bride did not like the bridal fashion of the past because it was a ridiculous custom where by the bride was packaged into a different person with heavy make-up, exaggerative decorations and gown. She indicated that light make-up and simplified gowns were the current trend. Brides especially like to show their backs in backless gowns which was not allowed in the past. And Tia bridal salon manager Fang-Yu Lin said that modern bridal photography reflected the new feminism in that brides were willing to show their attractive figures with décolleté gowns and that they were eager to show their beauty, character, and thought. They disagreed that “a woman without talent was the highest virtue” but they wanted to pursue self-esteem, self-actualization, and self autonomy.

**The Visiting Survey of the Consumers**

The motivation to have bridal photography done. Most people agreed that taking bridal photography was a ritual to record a romance of two persons. “I want to capture a record of my beautiful appearance when I am still young. Bridal photography can help me to reach an ideal state where I will wear a gorgeous gown and delicate make-up. I feel very happy and proud when I see that I can be as beautiful as a superstars” (visitor#10). However, some people were concerned that bridal photography was a necessity although it would cost them a hefty expense. They thought “If I did not have to worry too much about the expense, I think I would feel more positively about bridal...
photography. But it usually takes at least twenty-five thousands dollars or more for a package service; it is a great amount for me” (visitor#9 & 13).

The male consumers saw the bridal photography as something for only women. However, they were willing to give it a chance if they were physically fit. One visitor said “I am willing to have wedding photography taken to keep my handsome appearance as a memorial gift if I lose my weight” (visitor#4). However, some visitors did not like bridal photography because they thought the pictures were not very natural. For example, “I saw a totally different person modified by Photoshop. I think those pictures were only a fiction” (visitor#11).

Marketing of aesthetics. Price usually was the main concern for consumers before they decided to sign a contract with a certain salon. However, besides pricing factors, brand image, the photographer’s sense of beauty, and the skill of photographers were influential factors for the prospective customers. One visitor said that “I feel insecure choosing a salon with an unknown brand name. Besides this, I will check the styles they created because I worry they do not possess enough sense of beauty” (visitor # 17). They also concerned that “the photographer is able to communicate with me, he must figure out and sense what kinds of style will match me because I do not want to get pictures that show no feeling of me” (visitor#12).

Nevertheless, some consumers were hardly able to sense or to judge what image those salons wanted to transmit “My friend introduced ‘France Paris’ to me because that name sounds very classy, but I did not see any difference compared to the others” (visitor #19). Or, “I do not have strong feelings about bridal photography, but I only know ‘Hidden Love’ is a very romantic name” (visitor#10).

The new feminism. Sex appeal and self-expression were two important subjects of concern for the modern bride-to-be. They did not like the conservatively composed bridal photographs that bride and groom standing up straight without any smiles. They thought “I want to wear the different styles because I usually only wear one style in my daily life” (visitor#20). Or, “I do not care how others will judge me, because I want to have a different style to express myself from others” (visitor#12). To express sex appeal could be a one way to obtain self-esteem and self-actualization for modern women. “I especially prefer découleté gowns because they make me look very sexy and modern” (visitor#14). However, some visitors asserted that they would not choose gowns for their shot because “when I put on wedding gowns I look much older than my real age; I would rather put on casual dress for bridal photography. Besides, if we can wear comfy clothes such as jeans with T’s in bridal photographs, we can have a free and relaxed attitude for our marriage” (visitor#11 & 23).

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Results

According to the statistical testing for the 455 returned questionnaires, the following research results were noted:

The majority of the respondents were female (69.5%), 30.5% of respondents were male. The largest group of respondents were from Taipei city (66.6%) and the age grouping of respondents were between 19-25 years of age (55.4%), 26-30 years of age (15.6%), and 31-40 years of age (18.0%). In addition, regarding the respondents’ educational background, 46.6% respondents held bachelor’s degrees, college degrees 26.4%, and high school degrees 18.2%.

The marital status of most respondents was single (73.2%) and the motivation of need was the main reason to consult with bridal photography salon (59.3%). Professional expertise of a photographer was the major reason to choose a bridal salon (42.4%), recommendations from friends and relatives were the second (29.0%), and price was the least concern for the prospective consumers (4.8%). Most respondents passively collected information (23.3%) because it was not a necessity in daily life. The reliable resources were bridal magazines (47.9%), friends and relatives’ recommendations (43.1%), bridal shows (31.6%), and consultation with sale clerks (30.3%).

The main reason to have bridal photography done was commemoration (89.2%). The consumers asked for photo albums (47.7%), designed greeting cards and wedding invitations (43.5%), and photo discs (43.7%). With regards to the Western brand image, the respondents thought it was romantic (53.2%), fashionable (45.7%), and elegant (46.6%).

Both males and females agreed that modern women were independent (M=3.81, SD=0.77), keen-witted and capable (M=3.59, SD=0.75), and major decision makers (M=3.49, SD=0.80); nevertheless, they disagreed that women were commander (M=2.92, SD=0.85). The men slightly disagreed and reached significant difference that women could be powerful people (t=-3.08, p=0.002), were independent (t=-2.99, p=0.003), and decision makers (t=-4.03, p=0.000). In the other hand, the women respondents disagreed that women enjoyed wearing less (t=3.44, p=0.001), had only a beautiful and gorgeous appearance (t=2.80, p=0.005), and attracted men by appearance (t=2.56, p=0.11).

Most respondents associated bridal photography with beauty and self-confidence (M=4.11, SD=0.77), marriage (M=4.02, SD=0.72), and romance (M=3.89, SD=0.71). The youthful respondents translated bridal photography into romance (t=2.34, p=0.02), and showed difference concerning price (t=1.96, p=0.05), service (t=2.41, p=0.016), and quality (t=3.38, p=0.001).

With regards to the pattern of bridal photography, most respondents preferred backgrounds featuring Western attractions (M=3.93, SD=0.83), Western-style gowns (M=3.59, SD=0.83), and realistic photo styles (M=3.60, SD=0.77). In the contrast, the respondents were least interested to nude bridal photography (M=2.65, SD=0.89). The single respondents had significantly different feelings toward backgrounds featuring Western attractions (t=-2.82, p=0.005), the Western-style gowns (t=-3.11, p=0.002), and Japanese Kimonos (t=-2.97, p=0.003).

Most respondents strongly agreed that bridal photography was beautiful (M=4.07, SD=0.69), delightful (M=3.97, SD=0.72), and attractive (M=3.76, SD=0.70). Moreover, they agreed that bridal photography was commemorative (M=4.21, SD=0.70) and self-expressive (M=3.70, SD=0.81), but they least agreed that it was ambiguous and alluring (M=2.88, SD=0.91). The youthful respondents revealed strong agreement and significant difference that bridal photography represented self-expression (t=4.48, p=0.000), commemoration (t=4.05, p=0.000), and association with location (t=2.35, p=0.019).

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings and results of the data analysis.
The typical respondents lived in Taipei city and Taipei County, were female, 19-40 years old, and possessed at least a college degree or higher. Most respondents were single, were highly interested in consulting bridal photography salons and were not much concerned about the price because they valued the function of commemoration more than anything else. Also, they preferred bridal salons that offered photo albums, designed wallet-size greeting cards, and wedding invitations.

Professional wedding magazines, friends and relatives’ recommendation, and wedding exhibitions were the main resources for the prospective consumers. Nevertheless, the prospective consumers would choose services in a certain salon based on the photographers’ expertise. Most respondents agreed that modern women were independent, keen-witted and capable to handle major tasks alone, but women respondents agreed least strongly that women retained their positions in the workplace by wearing sexy dresses and maintaining a good-looking appearance.

Most respondents said that bridal photography was gorgeous and romantic. They believed personal glamour shots could present their personalities and commemorate their marriage. The youthful respondents were less concerned about the price factor but more interested in well-decorated banquet halls. It could attribute to modern feminism that women were daring to pursue and satisfy their personal desires.

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**Framing the Negative: Consumers and Consumption**

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Consumer researchers have conventionally studied the link between self-concept and consumption choices within a positive frame (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Sirgy 1982; Solomon 1983; Belk 1988), thus generally neglecting the negative circumstances of consumption. Others have long recognized that consumption is more convoluted than a mere response to need, want, or desire as people are also motivated by negative emotions (Bourdieu 1984; Miller 1997; Wilk 1997). Consequently, consumer researchers must also understand those states of mind that negatively impact upon consumption practice.

Negative consumption, or anti-choice, depicts those products a consumer chooses not to buy (Hogg 1998) and researchers suggest that the conceptualised feared self (Markus and Nurius 1986; Ogilvie 1987), a negative possible self, is an effective concept to explore negative consumption (Patrick, MacInnis and Folkes 2002). However, no consumer research to date has employed the actual feared or undesired self in negative consumption.

Using an exploratory, emic research design this research sought an increased understanding of the role played by the feared self and, subsequently, the role played by negative product-user stereotypes (Hogg and Banister 2001), in negative consumption. In-depth interviews were employed to gain an understanding of negative consumption behaviour of beverages consumed within a social consumption context. The findings support previous assertions that choosing not to consume a product is just as relevant in shaping our self-identities as positive consumption, and that choosing to not consume those products associated with the feared self does play an integral part in shaping our social, public, and private self-identities.

However, this research also discovered a further significance of the feared self within the realm of negative consumption. The findings discovered that the role the feared self played was dependent on the experiential nature of the feared self, and that the conceptualised feared self is not as influential on negative consumption as previously considered.

Rather, it was those feared selves that were experience-based that played a greater role. Renamed as the escaping self, to differentiate from the conceptualised feared self, experience-based feared selves appear more powerful as indicators of negative consumption. Denoted by flights from both past and current selves considered unfavourable or undesirable by the respondent, the escaping self differed from that of a conceptual feared self because respondents became more involved in its suppression.

Furthermore, it appeared that the undesired other, or a negative product-user stereotype, emitted the greatest influence on negative consumption. Respondents commonly associated their avoided products with negative images of the typical product-user. Those beverages that were avoided due to a link with a negative stereotype produced a heightened emotional response and an enduring avoidance.
It was discovered that the negative image of appearing as someone that they are not, or someone perceived to have lesser qualities than themselves is, for these individuals, more fearful. Therefore, negative consumption appeared more influenced by the undesired other rather than the undesired self.

This research undertook a more dimensional analysis of the undesired self than previously employed, and in combination with an emic approach, allowed a deeper understanding of the feared self’s influence on an individual’s avoidance behaviour. This enabled a gained understanding of the role played by the undesired or feared self in negative consumption. It also discovered that conceptual feared selves differ from experiential feared selves (escaped selves) in their relative influence over negative consumption.

Additionally, this research provides an enriched comprehension of negative stereotypes, the role they play in negative consumption, and their relationship with the feared self, and suggests that the influence negative stereotypes exert over consumer avoidance behaviour operates at a higher level than that of the feared self. Such increased understanding of how negative selves influence negative consumption will assist in marketers’ positioning strategies. Marketers also need to be aware of the relative influence of the feared self, escaping self, and negative stereotypes in consumers’ negative consumption behaviour. Identification of these negative selves or stereotypes would assist in implementing advertising and communication strategies well removed from representations of these undesired selves or others.

The contributions also extend to the consumer. This, and further exploration of negative consumption, will give consumers’ confidence that the full scope of their consumption practices have been acknowledged, and that researchers recognise negative selves and their impact upon the preservation and enhancement of self-concept. Furthermore, this emic research highlights the relative impact of consumers’ negative self-identities and negative stereotypes as perceived by them, and their relative impact upon their consumption choices.

CITATIONS