It Matters Who You Are: New Perspectives on the Role of the Individual Differences in Brand Behaviors and Evaluations

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Special Topics Session  It Matters Who You Are: New Perspectives on the Role of the Individual Differences in Brand Evaluations

Two Roads to Updating Brand Personality Impressions: Trait versus Evaluative Inferencing
Gita Johar (Columbia University), Jaideep Sengupta (Hong Kong University of Science & Technology), Jennifer L. Aaker (Stanford University) We present a framework that delineates two mechanisms that guide the updating of personality trait inferences about brands. The results of three experiments show that chronics (those for whom the trait is accessible) update their initial inferences based on the trait implications of new information. Interestingly, nonchronics (those for whom the trait is not accessible) also update their initial inferences, but do so based on the evaluative implications of new information. The framework adds to the inference making literature by uncovering two distinct paths of inference-updating and highlighting the moderating role of trait accessibility. Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions: Role of Cultural Orientation
Rohini Ahluwalia (University of Minnesota) This research examines the effect of culture (as operationalized by salient self-construal–independent versus interdependent) on consumer evaluation of brand extensions. Data collected from three countries (United States, India and Italy), utilizing different assessments of interdependence (at the nation-level, as individual difference variable, as well as via priming), was used to test two alternative perspectives on this issue. The results reveal that interdependent and independent consumers differ in their evaluations of the moderate fit extensions, but not the close and far extensions. Consumer Heterogeneity in Brand Relationships: An Attachment Perspective
Susan Fournier (Dartmouth College), Marcel Paulssen (Humboldt University) This research explores the utility of attachment theory in explaining individual differences in consumer relationship marketing responses and thereby its actionability as a basis for segmenting and targeting decisions. LISREL results demonstrate that secure and anxious personal attachment styles predispose individuals toward different satisfaction, trust, and loyalty responses, revealing patterns parallel to those found for interpersonal relationships. Extending attachment theory specifically into the consumer setting, the authors operationalize secure attachment as it might be manifest in business-to-consumer, versus person-to-person, relationships. Results reinforce the legitimacy of inquiries that extend relationship and personality theories in consumer research.

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http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/12317/volumes/v33/NA-33
INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES:
Past research in the area of branding has uncovered several important findings relating to how information about brands is perceived (Aaker 1997), how it may be updated (Ahluwalia and Gurhan-Canli 2000; Loken and John 1993) and the extent to which consumers form relationships with brands (Aaker, Fournier and Brasel 2004; Fournier 1998). This research, however, has typically overlooked the role of consumer individual differences in understanding branding-related phenomena.

The session attempts to bridge this gap. It included three papers, one from each of the major areas of branding research (brand personality, brand extensions, consumer-brand relationships), which examine this issue. Together, these papers provide (a) a deeper understanding of the role of consumer characteristics/individual differences in understanding branding phenomenon, (b) the opportunity to generalize and generate higher level models to understand the role of individual difference variables in branding, (c) an array individual difference variables to examine in this regard, and (d) identify new and important boundary conditions for previously well-researched findings in the branding area.

OVERVIEW
Gita Johar presented her research, coauthored with Jaideep Sengupta and Jennifer Aaker which builds on past research in the area of brand personality (e.g., Aaker 1997). Their research focuses on the role of consumer’s personality in influencing the mechanism adopted for updating brand personality inferences. It delineates two mechanisms that guide the updating of personality trait inferences about brands. The results of three experiments show that chronics (those for whom the trait is accessible) update their initial inferences based on the trait implications of new information. Interestingly, nonchronics (those for whom the trait is not accessible) also update their initial inferences, but do so based on the evaluative implications of new information. The framework adds to the inference making literature by uncovering two distinct paths of information processing and highlighting the moderating role of trait accessibility.

Rohini Ahluwalia presented her research in the area of brand extensions which examines the effect of culture (as operationalized by salient self-construal— independent versus interdependent) on consumer evaluation of brand extensions. Data collected from two countries (United States, and India), utilizing different assessments of interdependence (at the nation-level, as individual difference variable, as well as via priming), was used to test two alternative perspectives on this issue. The results reveal that interdependent and independent consumers differ in their evaluations of the moderate fit extensions, but not the close and far extensions. The findings obtained with consumers whose interdependent self was either chronically or temporally accessible, were remarkably different from those obtained in past research in this area, where the independent self was more accessible (e.g., Ahluwalia and Gurhan-Canli 2000; Loken and John 1993).

Susan Fournier presented her research co-authored with Marcel Paulsen which builds on past research in the area of consumer-brand relationships (e.g., Fournier 1998). Their research provides a new perspective, rooted in individual differences, for understanding the strength of the consumer-brand relationship (e.g., brand loyalty, commitment). They argue that people have different attachment styles, and the likelihood that a company may be able to convert them into loyal consumers is to a great extent a factor of consumer attachment styles. As such, some individuals are more likely to become loyal consumers as compared to others. The research attempts to identify who such individuals might be.

REFERENCES: