Perceptions of the Length of Future Time Intervals: a Simulation Perspective

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We investigate consumers’ perceptions of future time intervals. We find that future intervals seem shorter when consumers fill the intervals with events than when consumers contemplate empty intervals equal in objective length. Further studies support this finding, revealing that intervals filled with frequently occurring events seem shorter than those filled with rare events, and that intervals containing many events seem shorter than those containing few events. We develop an interval-simulation hypothesis, suggesting that consumers gauge the length of an approaching interval by simulating its passage, with busy intervals seeming to “fly by” and empty intervals seeming like a long wait.

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future state more than forecasters do. Third, when people are not guided to use one or other of these methods, they tend to make predictions and consider information as backcasters do. A simple primacy or recency explanation is insufficient to explain these findings.

“Why We Don’t Learn to Accurately Forecast Our Feelings: How the Misremembering of Our Predictions Blinds Us to Our Past Forecasting Errors”
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Why do people persist in making erroneous affective forecasts (e.g., Gilbert, Pinel, Wilson, Blumberg and Wheatley, 1998; Novemsky & Ratner, 2003)? We present the results of several studies that suggest that this persistence is partly caused by people’s biased recollections of their initial predictions. Individuals who experienced a negative event (e.g., Kerry supporters following the 2004 presidential election and Philadelphia Eagles fans following the 2005 Super Bowl) were less upset than they had predicted and misremembered this prediction as less extreme than it actually was, thus obscuring the fact that they had made a forecasting error. Similarly, individuals who experienced a positive event (e.g., UNC students following their men’s basketball team’s appearance in the Final Four) also recalled having made less extreme predictions than they had originally indicated. Interestingly, although participants’ memories were inaccurate for affective forecasts relating to the Final Four, their forecasts about winning the championship were quite accurate. This suggests that people’s memories for their affective forecasts may be better for unusual, extremely positive events than for unresolved, more emotionally-ambiguous events. Furthermore, even when individuals were able to accurately recall their affective forecasts, they did not spontaneously bring these to mind, and thus did not learn from the discrepancy between their affective forecasts and their actual experience unless prompted to do so.

We find that when we confront people with the fact that their initial forecast was wrong, they make less extreme predictions in a similar situation in the future. After a real-time experience that disconfirmed their initial affective forecast (i.e., not experiencing as strong context effects as participants’ expected when eating liked and disliked jellybeans, following Novemsky and Ratner 2003), people misremembered their initial affective forecasts as having been less extreme than they actually were. Respondents who were reminded of these actual, extreme initial forecasts showed more learning (i.e., made less extreme predictions for a similar, future set of experiences) than those who were not reminded of what their initial predictions had been. This indicates that learning is indeed impeded when people do not realize that their initial affective forecasts did not match their real-time experience.

In another study, we extend our investigation to the planning fallacy and find that students also misremember predicted completion times for class assignments as less optimistic than they actually were. Furthermore, students who were asked to recall their predicted completion times before making a second prediction, made less optimistic second predictions than those who were reminded of their prior predictions or those who only recalled their prior predictions afterwards. In fact, those students who made the largest recall errors tended to make the least optimistic second predictions. This suggests that people may sometimes perceive their prior predictions as more diagnostic than their prior behavior, leading them to anchor on their recalled prior predictions when formulating a prediction for a new, similar task. Note that this is consistent with previous theorizing that the persistence of the planning fallacy is in part caused by people perceiving their past failures as nondiagnostic for their present predictions—since they ascribe these failures to idiosyncratic obstacles that were specific to that past situation.

In sum, these studies indicate that one of the reasons for the persistence of forecasting errors is people’s tendency to systematically misremember their predictions. We often recall our predictions as being closer to the actual outcome than they in fact were. This recall error creates the illusion that we did in fact accurately predict the outcome (or that our misprediction was less severe than it actually was), thus reducing the perceived need to learn. However, these studies also suggest some boundary conditions for this phenomenon. First, we do not always misremember our predictions. For instance, predictions regarding exceptional events tend to be recalled more accurately. Second, even when we systematically misremember our prediction, this may sometimes facilitate, rather than impede learning. For instance, when we use our recalled prior prediction as an anchor for our future predictions, recalling this prediction as being closer to reality will provide a more realistic anchor, and thus a more appropriate basis for our future predictions. Together, these results indicate that a systematic bias in memory for past predictions contributes to the persistence of forecasting errors.

“How Predictions Differ from Actual Adaptation to Durable Products”
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Many consumer purchases involve items for which consumption extends over a long period of time and decisions to purchase such products depend critically on predictions about how the experience with these products will unfold over time. For example, the decision to purchase a sunroof in a new car depends on whether one believes that it will provide little enjoyment after 6 months. Are consumers able to accurately predict this at the time of purchase? Clearly the ability to predict enjoyment with a product over time is important for many decisions. Failures in predictions of how utility from a product unfolds over time can result in repeated dissatisfaction with purchases or lack of repeat purchase of worthwhile items.

There is a growing body of research on predictions about how consumers will feel in the future in particular circumstances or following particular events. This research has examined many possible influences, including the weather, various health conditions, being denied tenure, having your favorite candidate win an election, etc. For example, Schkade and Kahneman (1998) found that individuals overpredicted the effect that weather would have on their well-being, thinking that Californians would be happier than Midwesterners. One key mechanism for this and many other mispredictions seems to be a focusing illusion (Schkade and Kahneman 1998) whereby individuals focus disproportionately on, and thus exaggerate the importance of, things that would change in the future while ignoring things that would remain the same when making predictions about overall happiness in the future. In actual experiences, individuals pay less attention to any one particular circumstance because they are busy fulfilling the demands of everyday life. A second explanation for misprediction of future happiness is that people may fail to appreciate the speed and extent to which they will emotionally adapt to changes in life circumstances (Gilbert et al., 1998; Loewenstein & Frederick, 1997). In light of these two major explanations for the gap between predicted and experienced happiness, past research has shown that drawing attention to focusing illusions or emotional adaptation might improve the quality of hedonic prediction about long-term emotional impact of certain events (Ubel, Lowenstein, and Jepson, 2005).
The present research differs from this existing affective forecasting research in one important way: the present studies examine happiness with a particular product over time rather than general happiness or well-being. Our measures of predictions and experiences are focused exclusively on the target item, and therefore are not subject to the documented effect of overweighting one event or dimension in considering total well-being.

Our first study examines how predicted enjoyment compares to actual enjoyment for a durable hedonic product. Participants were either given the product to take home (experience condition) or presented with a picture and detailed description of the same product (non-experience condition). Participants assigned to the experience condition either reported their current enjoyment after 1 day or 7 days with the product. Participants in the non-experience condition made predictions about enjoyment after either 1 day or 7 days with the product. We found a substantial reduction in actual experienced enjoyment with the product over time, and yet participants failed to anticipate this downward trend in future enjoyment without a first-hand experience with the product. This failure in predicting adaptation prior to experience with the target product might help explain why intuitive knowledge or past experience of adaptation often fails to curb the desires for new products, especially novel hedonic products, that consumers have yet to experience.

In our second study, we examined how predicted enjoyment compares to actual enjoyment for consumers who have gained some experience with a product. All participants in this study were given a product to keep and were assigned to either a 1-day or 7-day condition. One-day participants were asked to report their current enjoyment after one day with the product and to predict how they would feel about the product on day 7. Seven-day participants were asked to report their current enjoyment on day 7. The hedonic measure again shows that enjoyment is declining over time. Interestingly however, after owning the product for one day, participants largely overpredicted adaptation to the product, i.e., 1-day participants anticipated their enjoyment of the product to be much lower on day 7 than what the 7-day participants actually experienced. It is possible that once participants get to experience a product, they focus too much attention on how they are going to use or play with the product, overpredicting the usage frequency when making predictions about their future enjoyment and hence conclude that its novelty will wear off sooner than it does.

In study 3, we borrowed a defocusing manipulation from Wilson and colleagues (Wilson et al. 2000) to examine whether accuracy of hedonic prediction for a target product can be improved by drawing attention to various daily activities. We used a similar design to our study 2 with the addition of a 1-day defocusing condition. Before making predictions about their future enjoyment of the target product on day 7, participants assigned to this condition first completed a “Diary Study” where they were asked to estimate the number of hours they would spend on 10 activities during a typical week of a year (e.g., going to class, socializing with friends, studying, eating meals). We replicated the study 2 findings that participants in the 1-day control condition predicted their enjoyment of the target item to be much lower on day 7 than what the 7-day participants actually experienced. However, participants who were first asked to reflect on daily activities they would typically be engaged in made predictions that are roughly on par with the actual experienced enjoyment of the item on day 7.

In summary, we find that consumers’ enjoyment of durable hedonic products often declines over time. Predictions sometimes fail to accurately represent these trends. Specifically, consumers fail to predict adaptation for products that they have not yet experienced. Once they gain experience with the product, consumers tend to overpredict the degree of adaptation by focusing disproportional attention on their use of the target item.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers are exposed to a barrage of information cues about and from retailers. These cues can be categorized as being either high-scope or low-scope. A high-scope cue is one that is enduring such as a retail reputation. Whereas a low-scope cue is more easily changed such as a retailer offering or not offering a price matching guarantee (PMG) (Purohit and Srivastava 2001). The focus of this research is how consumers use the low-scope cue in forming evaluations as a function of the congruity with and valence of the high-scope cue.

Previous research offers conflicting evidence as to the use of high and low-scope cues in evaluations. Purohit and Srivastava (2001) demonstrate that high-scope cues are used in evaluations regardless of the valence of other cues, but low-scope cues are used only when the valence of the high-scope cue is positive. In contrast, research into the impact of PMGs (a low-scope cue) demonstrates that that a low-scope cue is only used when a retailer is not price-competitive (a negative high-scope cue) (Biswas et al. 2002; Lurie and Srivastava 2005). Thus, one research stream indicates that the low-scope cue will be used when the high-scope cue is positive, and the other indicates that it will only be used when the high-scope cue is negative.

This research seeks to resolve the apparent discrepancy by understanding how the level of congruity between the high and low-scope cues impacts evaluations. Consider, for example, the association between the type of retailer reputation and a PMG. A PMG is more congruent with a retailer with a reputation based on price; and less with a retailer with a reputation based on service. Previous research has shown that the level of congruity between a stimulus (e.g., the low-scope cue) and an evoked schemas (e.g., schema based on the high-scope cue) influences both processing and evaluation of the stimulus (Campbell and Goodstein 2001, Mandler 1982, Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). Thus, we expect that the level of congruity between the cues will impact when the PMG is considered diagnostic and hence used in evaluations. Cue diagnosticity and level of congruency serve as underlying frameworks for this research.

Considering the impact of both congruence and the valence of the high-scope cue, we expect that when the low-scope cue (PMG) is congruent with the high scope cue (price reputation), the low scope cue will not impact evaluations of the retailer if the high-scope cue is positive, but will if the high-scope cue is negative. The reasoning for this follows from the fact that if the two cues are congruent they both evoke a schema related to price resulting in consumers viewing the PMG as relevant additional information to update their existing schema. If the high-scope cue is positive (retailer is price competitive), the low-scope congruent cue (PMG) is not necessary to further improve perceptions. But if the high-scope cue is negative (retailer is not price competitive), the low-scope congruent cue (PMG) will enhance consumer evaluations of the retailer. The PMG partially offsets the negative impression caused by the high-scope cue because it is congruent, and hence, relevant information to that evoked schema. Thus, we hypothesize:

\[ H_1: \text{When the high and low-scope cues are congruent (PMG provided and retailer's reputation based on price competitiveness) there will be an interaction such that:} \]

- The low-scope PMG cue enhances perceptions about the retailer when the high-scope reputation cue is negative.
- The low-scope PMG cue has no impact on perceptions about the retailer when the high-scope reputation cue is positive.

If the two cues are moderately incongruent they evoke different schemas related to the retailer. Cues which are moderately incongruent can both still indicate positive information. For example a retailer that provides excellent service can also offer competitive prices. If the high-scope cue is positive (excellent service reputation), consumers will consider other information about the retailer even if it is not related to the high-scope cue. Thus, the low-scope moderately incongruent cue is expected to impact evaluations when the high-scope cue is positive.

But if the high-scope cue is negative (poor service reputation), impressions of the retailer will be more heavily influenced by the negative information (Ahluwalia 2002; Skowronski and Carlston 1987). A moderately incongruent cue is not directly associated with and hence relevant to the schema evoked by the high-scope cue and is unlikely to offset the negative impact of the high-scope cue. Thus, we expect that:

\[ H_{1b}: \text{When the high and low-scope cues are moderately incongruent (PMG offered and retailer’s reputation is not based on price) there will be an interaction such that:} \]

- The low-scope PMG cue enhances perceptions about the retailer when the high-scope reputation cue is positive.
- The low-scope PMG cue has no impact on perceptions about the retailer when the high-scope reputation cue is negative.

These hypotheses are tested in three experiments. Experiment 1 uses a retailer with a reputation based on price, and experiment 2 uses retailer with a reputation based on service. Hence, the PMG is congruent with reputation in experiment 1 and is moderately incongruent with reputation in experiment 2. Finally, experiment 3 provides evidence to support the congruency and process arguments used in the development of hypotheses 1 and 2.

Experiment 1 utilized a 2 x 2 between subjects design which manipulated reputation of the retailer (positive/negative) and the presence of a PMG (present/absent). The retailer’s reputation was based on price. Experiment 2 utilized the same design but the retailer’s reputation was based on service. Finally experiment 3 utilized a 2 x 2 between subjects design in which the valence of the retailer’s reputation (positive/negative) and the type of retailer’s
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reputation (service/price) were manipulated. Results support the hypotheses.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Researchers have invested considerable effort into understanding how consumers learn associations between product attributes and product benefits (Janiszewski and van Osselaer 2000; Keller 1993; van Osselaer and Alba 2000; van Osselaer and Janiszewski 2001). One of the more commonly studied consumer-learning phenomena is cue competition (van Osselaer and Alba 2000; van Osselaer and Janiszewski 2001). Cue competition occurs when learning of an association between a predictive cue (e.g., product attribute) and an outcome (e.g., brand name) interferes with the learning about a second cue. For instance, a consumer shopping for a pain reliever may learn early in the process that a certain brand has a rapid release property and is gentle to the stomach. Later on, this consumer may learn that another brand of pain reliever has the same rapid release property (i.e., a common attribute) and has anti-inflammatory properties (i.e., a unique attribute). Recent research on associative learning and cue interaction (Kruschke 2001a; Kruschke, Kappenman and Hetrick 2005; Medin and Edelson 1988) shows that the association between the redundant cue and the first outcome (first brand) is stronger than the association between this cue and the second outcome (e.g., second brand). This phenomenon has been labeled the highlighting effect. In this paper, we use Attentional Theory (Kruschke 1996, 2001a, 2001b) to explore the marketing implications of the highlighting effect. The Attentional Theory account of the highlighting effect predicts that people will shift attention from common attributes toward unique attributes when learning associations of a second brand to preserve the association between the common attribute and the first brand learned. An implication of the attention shifting account is that the order of learning and the value of the predictive cues can have a strong impact on consumer preference for products with equally valued attributes.

In three experiments, respondents were trained to associate attributes to two different brands. Both brands were associated with one imperfect predictor ($I$) and one perfect predictor ($PC$ or $PR$). The first brand offered attributes $I$ and $PE$ (brand $b(E)$) and the second brand offered attributes $I$ and $PL$ (brand $b(L)$). After the learning phase, respondents were tested with products offering attributes $I$ or $PE,PL$. In line with Attentional Theory, we predicted that a product offering attribute $I$ only should be more frequently associated with $b(E)$. Conversely, a product offering attributes $PE,PL$ should be more frequently associated with $b(L)$. The first experiment provides compelling support to this prediction. The second experiment shows that the strength of association between attributes and brands learned at different points in time has a direct impact on product preferences. When attribute $I$ has a higher value than attributes $PE$ and $PL$, $b(E)$ receives a higher evaluation than $b(L)$ since the first brand becomes more strongly associated with attribute $I$ than the second brand, which is expected to have stronger association with $PL$. Finally, the third experiment provides further evidence for Attentional Theory and rules out explanations based on mere-exposure and primacy effects for the results of the second experiment. By manipulating the value of attribute $I$ to be either larger or smaller than the value of $PE$ and $PL$, we show that brand name repetition or primacy is unlikely to drive the results of the second experiment. In addition, we show that, depending on the relative value of the attributes $I$, $PE$ and $PL$, reversals in brand preferences can be obtained as predicted by Attentional Theory.

Even though the highlighting effect seems to represent an irrational learning behavior, it can be considered a drawback of a rational attention-shifting process. In evolutionary terms, it is important to protect and accelerate learning through attention shifts. An organism that does not protect the learning of a previous negative episode will have a high chance of experiencing this episode again. For example, the protection of the learning that a certain type of food is associated with poisoning or that a type of sound indicates the presence of a predator is a crucial survival skill. Thus, in the greater scheme, attention shifting is indeed a rational process.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Most individuals believe that their chances of experiencing negative events are lower than those of other people (Self<Other). This is the robust “unrealistic optimism” bias (Weinstein 1980, Raghubir and Menon 1998) though “realism” has been documented for depressives (Keller, Lipkus, and Rimer 2002). The absolute levels of perceived risk moderate the extent of self-other differences, such that unrealistic optimism is associated with those who are optimistic in absolute terms, but “unrealistic pessimism” (Self>Other) has been shown for those who are pessimistic in absolute terms (Lin, Lin, and Raghubir 2003). Gender moderates these effects, such that, when given base rate information, optimists remain unrealistically optimistic irrespective of gender, while pessimistic men become realistic, and pessimistic women remain unrealistically pessimistic (Lin and Raghubir 2005).

This paper demonstrates the moderating role of experience for these biases. We replicate the effect that optimists are unrealistically optimistic irrespective of gender, but show that the pattern for pessimists is only valid for those who do not have experience with a cancer/depression victim. For those without experience, pessimistic men show realism, and pessimistic women show unrealistic pessimism. However, experience flips the manner in which gender and experience interact for pessimists. For people who know a cancer/ depression victim, pessimistic women become realistic, and pessimistic men remain unrealistically pessimistic. We argue that these results suggest that one of the underlying reasons for self-other differences are biased processing of information about base-rates or exemplars due to cultural differences (Hofstede 1990), where men have been shown to have a more independent self-construal and women a more interdependent one (Sedikides, Gaertner, and Toguchi 2003). Women, who have experience in interacting with others due to their interdependent self-construal should be able to use information regarding an exemplar to become realistic, while men, who culturally have more of a independent self-construal, when faced with an exemplar of a disease due to experience with another person imagine themselves in that position leading to their being unrealistically pessimistic. Two studies test this prediction.

Method
Participants. Study participants were undergraduate students in Taiwan (n=152 in Study 1, and n=385 in Study 2).
Procedure. Participants estimated the likelihood of getting a disease (cancer in Study 1; and depression in Study 2) using a 0 to 100 scale for themselves and the average undergraduate student.
Design: Both studies used a 2 (target: self / other) x 2 (male/female) x 2 (experience/ not) x 2 (optimist vs. pessimist) mixed design, with the target factor manipulated within-subjects, and the remaining factors measured between subjects. Experience was measured by asking respondents whether they knew a person who had cancer/depression. Optimism was defined in terms of a median split (Median=20 in study 1 and Median=38.6 in study 2) of people’s self-estimates. Respondents who reported a likelihood of more than the median were categorized as “pessimists,” whereas the remaining participants were categorized as “optimists.”

Results
Study 1: A 2x2x2x2 ANOVA on risk estimates for cancer, revealed a two-way interaction between target and optimism (F(1, 144)=37.653, p<0.001), a three-way interaction between target, experience and gender (F(1, 144)=9.94, p<0.002); and an overall four-way interaction (F(1, 144)=5.104, p<0.05). Means are shown in Table 1.

The pattern of means show that optimists show self-positivity irrespective of gender and experience. However, gender and experience interact for pessimists: male pessimists without experience show realism, as do female pessimists who have experience; while pessimistic females without experience and pessimistic males with experience show unrealistic pessimism.

Study 2: A similar analysis on risk estimates of depression showed a main effect of target (F(1, 377)=16.67, p<0.001) which interacted with experience, optimism and gender (F(1, 377)=4.05, 189.11, 8.71, respectively, p<0.05) while both the three-way interaction between target, experience and optimism and the overall four-way interactions were significant (F(1, 377)=4.05, and 8.15, p<0.05). Means are provided in Table 2 and replicate the patterns found in Study 1.

Discussion
Results of two studies showed that optimists demonstrate unrealistic optimism irrespective of experience, while pessimists are either realistic or unrealistically pessimistic as a function of their gender and experience. Pessimistic males who did not know any one with cancer/depression were more realistic about their risk-estimate, but pessimistic males who knew a depression victim showed unrealistic pessimism. On the other hand, pessimistic females without experience show unrealistic pessimism, while those who know a person who has cancer/ is depressed are more realistic.

The fact that pessimist females who know a cancer/depression victim become more realistic can be explained by the fact that females tend to have closer, intimate relationships with others’ than men (Shek 1995), therefore, when they know a depression victim, they are more likely to have specific knowledge of depression. It implies that their beliefs about their own chances may reflect greater realism rather than positivity or negativity bias. Pessimistic males, with a more independent self-construal, may instead focus on the many reasons they could get a disease once they have been exposed to an exemplar.

References
TABLE 1

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The Moderating Effects of Past Experience on Behavioral Intentions
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Despite the growing body of research on the positive association (i.e., main effect) of past behavior on intention, key questions remain as to whether specific components (i.e., predictors) of intentions are enhanced or diminished when past behavior is included as a moderator in behavioral intention models (cf. Orbell, Hodgkins & Sheeran, 1997). Further, little is known about how past behavior might induce changes in people’s deliberative and heuristic processing of information within these models (cf. Wood, Tam & Witt, 2005). For example, it is possible that people with very little experience may be motivated to engage cognitive resources such as considering their evaluations of salient beliefs when making a decision. In contrast, those with extensive experience may be less motivated to process cognitive information, relying instead on heuristic information such as their past success performing the behavior (i.e., confidence in their ability) and their perceptions of how easy or difficult behavioral performance will be (i.e., external facilitators of behavior). These possibilities are investigated in this research.

We make predictions that the level of past behavior will change the nature of the relationship between attitude and intent at low levels of past behavior, and between internal and external control at high levels of past behavior. Thus, the purpose of study one is to test the predicted moderating effects of past experience on attitude and perceived internal and external control with respect to behavioral intent.

Study One. In study one, hypothesis 1 was supported indicating that past behavior accounted for a significant amount of variance beyond the effects of attitude, subjective norm, external, and internal control. This is consistent with other research indicating the explanatory power of past behavior within the framework of the TPB. Further, it was shown that for participants with low levels of past experience, attitude was predictive of intention while internal and external control were not, in support of hypothesis 2. At higher levels of past behavior, internal control and external control were predictive of intention while attitude was not, in support of hypotheses 3 and 4. These findings support our theoretical model that past behavior can have a moderating effect on the other variables within the TPB. More importantly, we provide a framework for establishing the rationale as to why such moderating effects occur. Specifically, our framework suggests that those with lower levels of past behavior are more likely to engage cognitive resources when formulating a behavioral intent than those with higher levels of past behavior and thus, when past behavior is low, attitude is the primary driver of behavioral intent. Additionally, these findings support the view that when past behavior is higher individuals are more likely to utilize less cognitively demanding inputs such as perceived control. Despite this support of the influence of past experience on decision making within the TPB, further direct evidence is needed to assess the boundary conditions under which past experience can influence a consumer’s likelihood to engage cognitive resources to assist in the deliberative processing of information. Study 2 seeks to address this issue.

Study Two. In our conceptual model, different levels of past behavior result in differential levels of cognitive processing. Thus, study two examines the processes related to past behavior in an experimental paradigm in which the extent of cognitive processing of information is explicitly considered. We argue that when past behavior is low, individuals will be more likely to engage cognitive resources to access additional information to make up for their lack of actual experience. Thus, we predicted that if low past-behavior participants are likely to engage cognitive resources, they should demonstrate discrimination between strong and weak message arguments. Conversely, when past behavior is high, individuals will be unlikely to engage additional cognitive resources because of the small gap between their perceived level of personal resources and the threshold-level of personal resources believed to be necessary to form a behavioral intent. Thus, we predicted that if high past-behavior participants are unmotivated to engage cognitive resources, they should demonstrate little discrimination between strong and weak message arguments.

Findings in study 2 suggest that those in the low past-behavior condition engaged in greater elaboration of the issue relevant arguments contained in the message than those in the high past-behavior condition, as evidenced by their discrimination between the argument quality of the message. That is, participants with low levels of past behavior were more motivated to engage cognitive resources to the processing of the issue-relevant components of the message than those in the high past-behavior condition. These findings are generally supportive of our theoretical model and more specifically are supportive of hypotheses five and six.

These findings have important implications for both marketers and consumer educational interventions for the prevention of debt. Our research demonstrates that, based on the nature of the interactions, it would be useful for researchers to segment the target population based on experience as suggested in past research (e.g., Beale & Manstead, 1991). For marketers, communications focusing on engaging cognitions of consumers may be quite effective for inexperienced consumers since their attitudes are typically formed through beliefs about the advantages of credit cards (e.g., build credit history, precaution for emergencies, etc.) and reducing disadvantages (e.g., risk of future debt, damaged FICA score, etc.). Thus, marketing campaigns could highlight these salient cognitions and provide positive consequences that are likely to strengthen intention through a favorable attitude (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Marketers could also target experienced consumers with communications about the ease with which products and services, such as credit cards, can be acquired and the conveniences that they offer, in order to increase the consumer’s external control. Also, for experienced consumers, communicating information that builds confidence in their ability to acquire a given product or service can be effective. For example, increased perceptions of one’s ability to select the best product might be based on past successes and favorable outcomes associated with a particular brand.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Characterized by its heart-tugging, emotional plot, melodrama is a subtype of dramatic entertainment that appeals to the heightened emotions of audiences and readers of all ages. Often labelled “chick-flicks,” “tearjerkers,” or “human interest stories,” emotional melodramas appear in a wide range of entertainment formats (e.g., movies, short stories). In general, the target audience for emotionally melodramatic entertainment has primarily been female consumers. For example, The Oprah Winfrey Show which regularly features stories of tragedy, personal weakness and devastation, attracts approximately 50 million US viewers, among whom women outnumber men in the audience by a ratio of 19 to 1 (http://www2.oprah.com/presents/2005/20anniv/tows/tows_trivia.jhtml). Given this prevalent belief, the purpose of the present research is to understand and test for gender differences in evaluations of melodramatic entertainment. We use as our context of investigation emotionally melodramatic short stories. Further, we extend this literature by identifying the role of one characteristic inherent in melodramatic entertainment—its level of fictionality—on the activation of these gender differences. Finally, the present research seeks to explore underlying processes and tests the impact of the credibility of the fictionality communication source in influencing gender and the level of fictionality on consumers’ evaluations of melodramas.

Gender research has consistently found that females are more emotional and emotionally expressive than males (e.g., Allen and Haccoun 1976). The existence of these gender differences has been attributed to gender-specific norms regarding the “rules of emotions” that are developed through socialization (Birnbaum 1983). For little boys, the norm that they should be emotionally strong and refrain from emotional experiences is socialized by discouraging them from displaying soft emotions (e.g., “big boys don’t cry”; Birnbaum and Croll 1984; Timmers, Fischer and Manstead 2003). In contrast, such restrictive norms do not apply to females and in fact, society encourages women to seek and express their emotions (Timmers et al. 2003). Given the existence of these norms for emotional expression, we expect that females in general will respond more favorably to emotional melodramatic entertainment than males.

However, we expect that this predicted effect will be moderated by an important factor inherent in such melodramas, its level of fictionality. Defined here as the extent to which the story line for a melodrama reflects a real-life event (i.e., low in fictionality) versus a fictitious account (i.e., high in fictionality), the level of fictionality in melodramatic entertainment is expected to either attenuate or magnify gender differences in evaluations of such entertainment. Melodramatic entertainment that is high in fictionality is safe because it is not real or binding, permanently beneficial or harmful (Izod 2000). This is in stark contrast to reality where social rules and norms must be adhered to if one is to avoid the penalties imposed by society for deviating behaviors. Given that fiction presents a context where rules and norms are relaxed and there may be minimal social ramifications for eliciting emotions, we expect that males will feel safe to become involved in a melodramatic story, experience and express their emotions, and consequently evaluate the story more favorably. In contrast, when a melodramatic story is factual, the rules of society (i.e., gender norms about emotional responses) cannot be freely discarded without potential negative consequences. Thus, in this situation, we expect males to react consistently with gender norms, such that they will be less involved in an emotionally melodramatic story and thus evaluate the story less favorably. The opposite pattern is expected for females as developmental psychology suggests that they have a preference for reality which begins to become apparent at a young age. In particular, while little boys are prone to play fantasy themes and devise make-believe toys (e.g., Marshall 1961), little girls generally replicate reality by playing a domestic or teacher role (McLoyd 1983; Nicolopoulou 1997). Furthermore, these developmental findings for the preferences towards reality are reflected in adulthood (e.g., Elkin and Handel 1972). Thus, we expect that females will respond more favorably to melodramatic entertainment that is low in fictionality (i.e., based on reality). This should be the case because melodramatic stories that are high in realism are more salient and vivid, thus increasing involvement with the story and consequently eliciting more favorable evaluations. Finally, the predicted pattern of effects for both genders is only expected to arise when information about the level of fictionality is provided by a high (vs. low) credible source.

Three studies examined the impact of level of fictionality on gender differences in consumers’ evaluations of emotional melodramatic entertainment. The first two studies found that males formed more favorable evaluations of a melodramatic story when they were explicitly told that the story was make-believe (i.e., high in fictionality) versus real (i.e., low in fictionality). In the make-believe condition, males temporarily relaxed their gender emotion stereotypes, which led to increased emotion expression, and consequently more favorable evaluations. Females, on the other hand, evaluated the melodramatic story more favorably when they were told it was based on a real occurrence (i.e., low in fictionality). Mediation analysis demonstrates that as implied in the theorizing for both genders, higher involvement was shown to lead to more favorable evaluations of a melodramatic story. The third study extends on the first two studies by examining the role of source credibility on individuals’ evaluations of a melodramatic story. The interaction effects between gender and level of fictionality only held when the source of the fictionality communication was high in credibility. When source credibility was low, the differences in responses to fictionality were attenuated for both genders.

This research makes three important contributions. First, it advances our understanding of gender differences in evaluations of melodramatic entertainment by identifying an important factor (i.e., level of fictionality) which moderates these differences. Second, it explores underlying processes (e.g., involvement) for the observed effects. Finally, it investigates a boundary condition (i.e., source credibility) for the impact of fictionality and gender on evaluations of melodramas.

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Love and Consumption in Poor Families Headed By Lone Mothers
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INTRODUCTION

In the US, 32.3 million people are classified as poor, representing some 12% of the total population (Hill 2002a). In the UK, the General Consumer Council (2001) estimated that between 13 and 14 million people live in poverty. Lone parents, mainly lone mothers, account for a significant percentage of the poverty population (Field 1996). One in four families in the UK is headed by a lone parent and 62% of these families live on or below the poverty line (Gingerbread 2003). Despite their prevalence, low-income families and their consumption decisions are neglected in consumer research generally, and in family consumer research in particular. There is only a very small stream of research that focuses on the poorer consumer, mainly located within the sub-fields of macromarketing (Hill and Stephens 1997) and marketing and public policy (Andreasen 1993). Similarly, in family consumer research Ahuja and Stinson (1993) called for more attention to the fastest growing family type in the US, the female-headed single parent family.

In addition to bearing the burden for ensuring the family’s financial survival, lone mothers are often stigmatized by other members of society. The tendency to view lone mothers as a homogeneous group facilitates the social construction of lone motherhood as a social problem (Kanji 2004). Yet Edin and Lein’s (1997, 159) study of single mothers, many of them in extreme poverty, found “surprising resilience and creativity in building strategies to help their children overcome poor life conditions.” The study of lone mother headed families reported here supports this finding in the context of consumer decision making. Lone mothers try to ensure that their children are protected from the realities of living on a meager budget. In doing so, they either suppress their own needs and desires or place them on hold. Children may also contribute to the family coping effort directly through earned income or, indirectly by withholding their desires for consumer goods. Thus, by their actions lone mothers and their children demonstrate the potential strength of love influence on family decision making.

The paper begins with a review of literature on the poor as consumers and then goes on to consider decision making in family consumer behavior research. The methodology is then discussed with details of sampling, data collection and interpretation methods employed in the study. The study findings are presented and the subsequent discussion considers the significance of love as a driver of consumer decision making in families. Finally, the implications of the findings for family consumer research are discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most studies with low-income consumers consider how they cope with poverty with an emphasis on how finance and other resources are accessed. There is little information regarding decisions on resource allocation within low-income families. Even in disciplines where poverty is a more vibrant research topic, there is a tendency to analyze poverty in terms of the financial circumstances of families and take little or no account of the distribution of expenditure within families (Millar and Glendinning 1992).

Low-income consumers often show great skills in exploiting their environments to exert some control within their lives and adapt to the financial realities with which they are faced (Hill and Stephens 1997). For example, the poor often turn to alternative sites of acquisition for many essential household goods (Williams and Windebank 2001). People on limited incomes patronize car boot sales more frequently than other consumers (Stone, Horne and Hibbert 1996). Gregson, Crewe and Brooks (2002) found that charity shopping is often a necessity for impoverished consumers even though this involves a lot of time and effort to find adequate, good quality products.

Lone mothers frequently borrow money even though this compromises their independence (Edin and Lein 1997). Usually, they rely on cash help from members of their personal networks, such as absent fathers, boyfriends, relatives and friends. In the financial sector, credit unions and mail order credit (Ford and Rowlingson 1996) are important sources of credit, as are doorstep lenders and pawnbrokers. However, as financial circumstances worsen, households tend to move away from credit towards a more liquid form of budgeting (Ford and Rowlingson 1996).

Illicit income can be generated from legal activities in the form of informal work such as babysitting, or from illegal activities such as prostitution or selling drugs (Hill and Stephens 1997). Fryer (2005) found that men typically attempt to maximize income through illicit activity whereas women try to reduce expenditure through careful budgeting and economizing, exploitation of special offers, reduction in expectations of life, creative activities (for example, buying and restoring old furniture) and cultivation of social support. Social support from family and close friends, and from sources including churches and other non-profit associations, is an important resource asset for low-income consumers (Lee, Ozanne and Hill 1999).

The plurality of family structures has not been greatly recognized within the consumer research literature (Ekström 2004). Despite the changes in family structure, consumer researchers have largely neglected the issue of how alternative family forms influence consumer behavior (Rindfleisch, Burroughs and Denton 1997). Thus, little is known about the consumption patterns of lone parent families. Bates and Gentry (1994) studied stem families resulting from divorce and found that children are accorded “adult status” earlier. Ahuja and Stinson (1993), in their study of lone mother headed families, found that children’s influence in this family type varies according to demographic characteristics of the family, the mother’s sex role orientation, product type and stage in the decision making process. However, Geuens, Mast and De Pelsmacker (2002) found that contemporary family structures, such as single parent families and smaller families, have only a minor impact on children’s influence on decision making. Studies of family consumer decision making have tended to consider abstract concepts, such as influence and power, rather than focusing on the tangible consumer behaviors of family members (Hall et al. 1995), such as how resources are spent and distributed within the family. Since family decisions are made within a private and intimate setting, it can be difficult for researchers to access this information.

METHODOLOGY

In line with other consumer researchers (Darley and Johnson 1985), this study adopted a relative perspective on poverty and defined low-income consumers as lacking the resources necessary to participate in the normal customs of their society. However, to aid the selection of families for the study, the results of the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of Britain (Gordon et al. 2000) were
used as a guideline. This survey indicated that the income after tax
needed each week to escape overall poverty averaged £239 for all
households. Most of the families in the study were on incomes under £200 per week.

Purposeful sampling was used for this project, which involves
the selection of information-rich cases that are used to provide in-
depth information that is relevant to the purpose of the research. The
study involved twenty-four female lone parent headed families.
Families were selected from urban areas and all but three of the
mothers were unemployed, one was employed full-time and two
were in part-time jobs. Employed mothers were working in low-
paid jobs. The interviews began in March 2004 and continued until
May 2005.

In-depth interviews were held with the families. As poverty
can affect the whole family unit, a family approach was adopted in
that all households included at least one child under the age of 18.
In 16 families, the mother was interviewed alone and in 8 families
it was possible to arrange an interview with the mother and her
children (aged 11 to 18). Family methodologies have not been
widely used in consumer research (Ekström 2004). Poverty is often
experienced within the social context of the family and as such,
responses to poverty may be collaborative in nature. The interview-
ing of multiple family members permits a deeper understanding of
the family dynamics in terms of each person’s role and influence in
consumption decisions. Given the private and personal nature of the
research, interviews were carried out in respondents’ homes to
ensure a familiar and comfortable environment.

Hermeneutics was used to interpret the data. This is an
iterative process, “in which a ‘part’ of the qualitative data (or text)
is interpreted and reinterpreted in relation to the developing sense of the ‘whole’” (Thompson, Pollio and Locander 1994, 433). These
iterations allow a holistic understanding to develop over
time, as initial understandings are modified as new information
emerges. First, each individual interview was interpreted. Sec-
ondly, separate interviews were related to each other and common
patterns identified.

FINDINGS

The study findings are presented under 3 sub-headings relat-
ing to ensuring children fit in, the price of fitting in and support from
children.

Ensuring Children Fit In

Many mothers in the study aimed to minimize the negative
consequences of poverty for their children. Fear of social difference
affected almost all the mothers, highlighting the strong social
pressure they are under to ensure that their children do not stand out
as being different from other children. Within the consumer society
there is a large emphasis on designer brand names that have high
brand awareness among children, even those younger than school
age. One way that this is manifested is through the purchase of brand
name clothing and footwear and many mothers felt pressurized into
ensuring that their children had access to socially acceptable
clothing.

Jackie: “Actually nearly all his friends wear brand name shoes
so I wouldn’t make my child stand out” (23, one child).
Lorraine: “It seems to be that it’s the done thing to dress your
kids in brand name clothing, I have to do it now; she has
reached that age. For years I avoided brand names, but I was
never going to make her stand out from the rest of them” (43,
three children).
Sarah: “If I buy them cheap stuff they won’t wear them, they’re
only going to be laughed at in the street, you buy stuff for the
kids so as they’re not going to be bullied” (46, six children).

Previous research also suggests that it is not uncommon for
children in low-income families to own branded clothing and they
consider that if someone is wearing expensive-looking brand names
they could not be poor (Elliott and Leonard 2004). However, this
desire for brand name clothing can place families under financial
stress. Some mothers turn towards credit in order to obtain the
desired products.

Eva: “I have to shop from catalogues sometimes because you
can pay it off. There’s times I just couldn’t go to the town and
spend £30 or £40, I mean some of these Reeboks and all that
Sarah [12 year old daughter] would want, I mean I couldn’t
take £35 out of my money, I can’t do it” (45, three children).

Low-income consumers may be accused of acting irrationally
because they spend their limited incomes on branded goods that
may be deemed as luxuries rather than necessities. In some family
interviews teenagers admitted that their peers would tease them if
they did not wear the “right” clothes. The purchase of brand name
clothing and footwear may be aimed at maintaining visible con-
sumption whilst reducing expenditure in other less visible areas,
such as food consumed within the home. Some parents commented
that if they have to reduce expenditure it is food that is the most
flexible.

Eva: “You have to pay your bills; you can’t have no electric or
no heating. You’d have to cut back, maybe instead of having
a full dinner, you’d have maybe beans and toast or egg and
chips instead of egg sausage and chips” (45, three children).

The Price of Fitting In

The majority of the mothers said that obtaining what their
children need and want is their main priority and consequently,
even everyday family consumption is structured around the chil-
dren. To illustrate, several mothers organize their own diet around
their children’s preferences with comments such as “I tend to buy
what they eat and I would sort of skimp on my own stuff” and “I eat
kids’ food, I don’t eat adult’s food, I just eat what they’re eating.”
As one lone mother described, this situation is also found with
money allocated to clothing, “he [2 year-old son] gets a lot of my
shopping money, he gets a lot of clothes. I can’t afford to buy clothes
for me and him.”

Many parents in the study suppress their own needs to provide
for their children. Indeed, some parents even implied that their lives
were on hold as all their energy was aimed at caring for their
children. Some parents choose to delay fulfilling their own ambi-
tions and place their own desires secondary to those of their
children.

Julie: “My lifestyle is very very budgeted, very sacrificing. It
can be quite stressful… it amazes me how I can find the money
to pay for some of the bills that I have like Holly’s [5 year-old
daughter] school bills… because she wants to be involved in
loads of stuff for her school which costs a fortune” (24, one child).

While many families have to endure sacrifices in other areas
to afford to buy the branded goods their children desire, others turn
to unreported income. Janet is a 38-year-old lone mother with 3
children. Although she is receiving welfare payments, she supple-
ments this income with an unreported job in the local fast food outlet for which she receives cash-in-hand payment. Janet describes her experiences of benefit fraud as follows.

“It’s very hard and dangerous too. I’ve already been caught. You have to pay them back; I’ll be paying £20 a month back until I’m 84 or something.”

This illicit work provides benefits over and above financial ones, such as the opportunity for social interaction and improving feelings of self-worth. As Janet states, “it’s good because you’re meeting people and you’re not stuck in the house.” However, the overriding reason for such work is the extra income it generates. Although Janet mentions the benefits of illicit income, she also implies that this is not a problem-free option. The stress and constant worry of being reported creates an emotional strain: “I hate my life like this, looking over your shoulder all the time” but “I just want to be able to give the kids a bit more.”

Kochuyt (2004) discusses how exclusion from the marketplace can be countered by the inclusive effects of the family unit which is made into a back-up institution to fill the gaps created by the failures of the market and the insufficient safety nets of the welfare state. The subordination of individual needs to family needs demonstrates that the way in which resources are allocated amongst family members is unequal. As Kochuyt (2004, 145) suggests “By imposing an ‘artificial lack’ of resources upon themselves, the parents create an ‘artificial affluence’ for their kids.” One reason for the prioritization of children’s wants and needs is that mothers view their children as part of their extended self (Belk 1988). If mothers are judged based on their children, it follows that the well-being and appearance of children can be seen as an extension of concern about their individual identities. By providing children with increased possessions and opportunities, parents aim to prevent the reproduction of poverty in the next generation.

Support from Children

Previous research suggests that children employ pre-mediated and well thought-out strategies to persuade parents to meet their consumption desires (Palan and Wilkes 1997). Often this involves overt influence attempts such as bargaining or repeated entreaty (Daly and Leonard 2002). This study demonstrates that the process of low-income children’s influence does not necessarily result from overt direct persuasion strategies. Indeed, many of the children had an awareness of their family’s financial situation and consequently curtailed demands for increased possessions. Rossiter (1978) pointed out the need to distinguish between direct influence and indirect influence whereby the former represents an active role based directly on the decision maker’s own needs and the latter represents a passive role in which the decision maker takes another family member’s needs indirectly into account. This study demonstrates how more passive forms of influence can be as powerful as overt persuasion tactics.

In some families, children play an active role in coping with financial constraints and are effective in contributing to the family’s united coping effort. Take the example of Melissa, a mother to five children (all below the age of 7) who has faced extreme financial difficulties resulting in personal bankruptcy. Due perhaps to the severity of their financial circumstances, Melissa explained that her 6 and 7 year-old daughters understand the value of money. The following extract demonstrates how 7 year-old Debbie contributes to the coping effort.

“I had no money at all and the girls were eating rice for breakfast and they were eating meatballs and crap food. And I said, “look Debbie, whenever my money comes I will give you a five and you can go down to the shop and you can buy whatever you want,” and she went down to the Co-op and brought up a pack of Variety [Breakfast] Cereal and two liters of milk and came back and put it all in bowls for everyone, God love her.”

Melissa’s guilt over not being able to provide her children with good quality food encourages her to give her daughter money out of the limited budget. Given the extreme financial difficulty, this may appear irrational to outsiders. However, Melissa feels that this is an appropriate course of action in the circumstances. Additionally, in this case, the money is ultimately allocated to collective family consumption. Debbie understands the importance of necessities and uses her own pocket money in such a way as to benefit all members of the family. Additionally, although the pressure to display socially acceptable clothing does not escape Debbie, she rationalizes these choices by curtailing demands in other areas.

“When they were getting their uniforms, we went out to get trainers and Debbie kept saying “no mummy it’s ok, no mummy it’s ok” and we came home that night and she said “you know what I would really want, do you remember those trainers with the big thick soles, they were Reebok mummy, could I not have them? I’ll not get black shoes, I’ll just get my trainers, I’ll just get them.”

Melissa’s financial situation is worse than the difficulties faced by many of the other families in the study. However, the evidence suggests that other young children are also capable of understanding financial constraints. Some children attempt to make a direct financial contribution to the household taking the form of both withdrawing money from savings accounts and contributing money earned from part-time employment. Sarah, mother to six children, (four under the age of 18) described how her 11 year-old daughter withdrew half of her savings from her credit union account to help the family.

“One day I was stuck, she went and took, she only had a tenner and she went and took a fiver out of it for me.”

Teenage children who earn money from part-time employment can help the family both directly and indirectly. This is consistent with previous research that highlights children’s resourcefulness in attempting to improve their family’s situation by accessing part-time work (Ridge 2002). Some teenagers contribute directly to the household bills, for example, one informant described how her 16 year-old daughter contributes money towards the electricity bill. Similarly, in another family consisting of a lone mother with three children, the two older children had full time jobs meaning that all bills were split three ways. As well as direct financial contributions towards the maintenance of the household, teenagers with part-time employment also indirectly reduce the pressure placed on parents. In an interview with Janet and Pamela, a mother and her 16 year-old daughter, Pamela described how she is able to buy her own clothes with the money earned through her part-time job. Pamela now has her own income source and as a result is placing fewer demands on her mother.

In some families, especially those with older children, mothers expect their children to participate in the coping process. This does not always require a financial contribution but rather an understanding of the family’s financial situation and the limitations that this entails. One way in which mothers achieve this is through open family communication to keep children informed of financial
circumstances. In an interview with Maria and her 17-year-old son, Ryan, Maria mentioned that both Ryan and her other children are “made very aware of what we’ve got and what we haven’t got.” As a result Ryan maintained that he does not place unrealistic demands on his mother, relieving pressure at special times such as Christmas. This is supported in the sociology literature as Daly and Leonard (2002) found that some children curtailed their demands for brand name clothes or alternatively sourced clothes with prices that fell within their families’ means.

The strategies can be categorized into those that involve a direct financial contribution to the household and those that indirectly alleviate financial pressure due to the reduced demands placed on parents.

DISCUSSION

Previous family consumer research suggests that children influence the consumption choices of products for which they are the end user such as toys and breakfast cereals (Lackman and Lanas 1993). This study shows how limited financial resources may actually increase children’s influence. These low-income children are at the centre of consumer decision making within the family, not only in relation to products that are used by them, but also in relation to products for other family members. As in this study, Kochuys’s (2004) research with low-income families in Belgium also found that parents place children’s needs first, making considerable sacrifices in the process.

However, there is evidence in the study reported here that sacrifices for others are not confined to parents alone. There were many instances where children, though not all of them, put family needs above their own personal needs. This suggests that the family as a consuming unit provides a protective capsule against the risks of poverty by acting in a collaborative manner such that the available resources are distributed within the family on the basis of need. Of course, it could be argued that ‘need’ is perhaps an inappropriate term in this context. Many of the buying decisions in this study may appear irrational to more affluent consumers.

The poor are often accused of acting irrationally because they spend their limited incomes on products that society deems as unnecessary. Given their financial situation, it is assumed that the poor would be cautious shoppers and, consequently, actions that are not aimed at minimizing expenditure can be viewed as irrational. For example, Alwitt and Donley (1996) found that poor consumers prefer nationally branded goods and do not use generic or store brands any more than other shoppers. In this study, it may seem irrational to spend £40 on a pair of branded training shoes for a child, who may shortly outgrow them, when family financial resources are so meager. Furthermore, in order to buy these trainers, savings may be made by serving ‘crap food’ to the family and spending less of their resources on what is identified as essential products required for a healthy life (Firat and Dholakia 1998), Andreasen (1993) argued that people act rationally given their own circumstances. In this study one of the overriding aims of buying expensive branded goods and services is the protection of children in terms of potential stigmatization, social difference or bullying from peers, a rational decision given the circumstances.

Thus, current categories such as rational and irrational decisions and discretionary and non-discretionary spending need to be revisited when considering the behavior of poor consumers, as do hierarchy of needs frameworks that suggest consumers meet basic needs for food and shelter before buying the more discretionary ‘social’ goods, such as branded trainers. For low-income consumers spending on branded clothing and footwear is non-discretionary whereas with food spending, in terms of quantity and quality at least, there is some discretion. This suggests new categories for low-income families of visible and invisible goods placed, perhaps, at either end of a continuum. Spending on visible goods and services will be towards the non-discretionary pole for it is through them that poor consumers present themselves to the world, giving added meaning to conspicuous consumption. Their lack is an indicator of poverty and the associated stigma and shame. By contrast, there is some discretion in invisible spending, which applies to goods and services consumed in the privacy of the home.

Findings demonstrate that both mothers and their children place the needs of other family members before their own needs, suggesting that love can be a driver of consumer decision making. Park, Tansuhaj and Kolbe (1991, 723) note that family consumer research has given little attention to emotions including love, affection, sympathy, intimacy, anger and guilt in consumer behavior. It seems also that family researchers in other disciplines give little attention to love. According to Bahr and Bahr (2001, 1234): “The naming of love and sacrifice as essential concepts, even root metaphors, strikes the modern student of families as quaint, for neither term plays much part in today’s family theory.” Certainly, it is difficult to find many instances in consumer research where love is theorized as a driver of consumer decision making.

Miller (1998) suggests shopping is not an individualistic act and that objects can be the means of creating or enhancing relationships of love between subjects. Belk and Coon (1993, 413) examine agapic love in the context of romantic love and gift giving but suggest that it may also apply to “brotherly love, spiritual love, and parental or familial love,” and also to non-gift purchases. Agapic love means that the giver is willing to make sacrifices and do anything for the recipient. More specific to impoverished consumers, Hill (2002b, 20) recognizes the potential of love driven behavior to improve the lives of the poor. Other-centered love involves behavior, “designed to support and advance the quality of life of loved ones.” He argues that other-centered love stems from individuals who believe that giving to others is an extension of their concern for their own families. It can also come from individuals outside the community who bring new resources to help alleviate poverty.

One of the difficulties in attributing love to consumer decision making is the slippage between terms such as other-centered, caring, self-sacrifice, altruism, emotion, agape and love, which, though not synonyms, could all be used to offer at least a partial description of behavior that places others’ needs before one’s own. Additionally, the “deconstruction” of many of these terms means that there is caution surrounding their use. For instance, self-sacrifice can have distinctly negative connotations when applied to the family. Feminist scholars argue that when sacrifice is employed in this context, it tends to be women who are expected to do the sacrificing—mothers with their children, daughters with elderly parents, and so on (Bahr and Bahr 2001). Similarly buyer behavior, like economics, rational choice theory and psychology, has difficulty in accepting ‘genuine’ altruistic or other-centered behavior since it is assumed that self-interest underpins action (Monroe 1994), perhaps more so in an era when it is widely accepted that consumers are increasingly individualistic.

CONCLUSION

Contributions from this research are evident on a number of levels. First, poverty impacts on the family as a whole and, it follows, that responses to it have the potential to be more collaborative in nature. Parents often restrict or minimize their personal needs to satisfy children and children may suppress their desires and use their ‘own’ financial resources to buy items for other family members. Such collaborative consumption demonstrates the importance of using the family as a unit of analysis. Secondly, it
questions assumptions about the poor and the seeming irrationality of their buying decisions. It suggests that a new category of visible and non-visible goods and services may help explain some seemingly irrational buying decisions by poor consumers. Thirdly, it questions the predominant model of consumer decision making that assumes self-interest and suggests that love may be more of a driver of such decisions than current theory suggests. There are opportunities for further explication and development of love and terms used as synonyms in the consumer buying context. Finally, findings from this study may not be exclusive to low-income families. Regardless of income or marital status, mothers may suppress their own needs and desires, or place them on hold, until their children are older.

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The Use of Seeker and Sentry Persuasion Management Strategies by Heterosexual Male Shoppers

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Interpersonal influence has often been examined in terms of how marketing agents and other individuals persuade consumers. For example, past research has explored how the influence of salespeople (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990) or strangers (McGrath and Otnes 1995) can shape consumers’ experiences. However, recent research has examined how consumers respond to and manage persuasion attempts by others in the shopping environment. Kirmani and Campbell (2004) develop a typology of 15 consumer response strategies in managing marketing persuasion interactions. However, little research has examined how male shoppers manage marketing interactions, especially in a domain where they may be particularly vulnerable to influence. This study examines the response strategies of men who are avid consumers of fashion and grooming products—a domain in which most men do not have a lot of experience and knowledge. Unlike the Kirmani and Campbell (2004) study of both college students and individuals between the ages of 30-74, this study is more narrowly focused on younger male consumers in urban areas, such as Chicago, IL and New York City, NY. Collage construction, in-depth interviews, and shopping trips with consumers were utilized in order to gain a holistic picture of how men engage in consumption and how they manage their interactions with influencers that guide this type of consumption. A comparison to the Kirmani and Campbell (2004) typology is offered in order to understand how men rely on and resist interpersonal influences. The findings suggest that informants did use some of the seeker strategies detailed by Kirmani and Campbell (2004), such as Ask, Accept Assistance, Establish Personal Connections, Direct, and Test. Men asked for advice and guidance, particularly from women, in their pursuit of creating an ideal masculine identity. Informants often turn to women due to their perceived expertise in the domain of physical appearance. In addition, several informants accept the assistance of salespeople in their consumption of grooming and fashion goods. Informants in this study also establish personal connections with others, such as friendly behavior and loyal patronage, in the pursuit of their consumption goals. Moreover, men direct others to their consumption needs in order to successfully construct their desired identity. While the Kirmani and Campbell (2004) proved useful in some of the strategies that the male consumers in this study employed, other strategies emerged as well. The three new strategies identified include: Monitoring influence attempts, Hiring surrogate consumers, and Acquiescing to others’ influences. For example, informants monitor and observe how others use goods and services in order to determine if they want to portray the same image as those individuals. Other men hire professionals, such as personal shoppers, to aid in the shopping process of fashion goods. Men also give into others’ influence and suggestions in order to reach their desired identity goals. Moreover, some of the strategies detailed by Kirmani and Campbell (2004) as sentry strategies, or those behaviors which aid in warding off unwanted influence, actually manifest themselves in a different manner with our informants. Specifically, informants use strategies such as Deceive, Prepare, and Enlisting Companions to assist in the pursuit of their identity goals rather than to ward off an unwelcome persuasion attempt. For example, men did engage in deception, or withheld information about their consumption behavior, not to fend off persuasion agents, but because this type of consumption fell beyond the traditional boundaries of heterosexual masculine consumption, and they did not want to be ridiculed in their social circles. Informants also engage in preparation through conducting extensive research on goods in order to build up expertise, to ensure that they were purchasing quality goods, and to avoid crossing the boundary into perceived homosexual consumption. The men in this study also enlist companions for advice and guidance in the shopping process rather than to assist in warding off persuasion attempts. Thus, in this segment of consumers who are relatively inexperienced and vulnerable, seeker strategies prevailed. The finding that sentry strategies are not salient in this study reflects the fluidity of the seeker/sentry typology among certain segments of consumers. Finally, this research reveals the importance of females in the consumption process of fashion and grooming products by heterosexual men. We offer a discussion of possible drivers of this dependence on female others. This study enhances our understanding in a neglected domain of male shopping and consumption behavior, as well as extends the work on consumer response strategies to interpersonal influence. In addition, it provides managers with the tools to more effectively understand how interpersonal influence both aids in and deters men in the consumption of fashion and grooming products.

REFERENCES


Children’s Conceptualizations of Sales
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
A growing body of evidence suggests that children, at a very young age, understand the sequence of events involved in a shopping trip (Berti and Bombi 1998, Peracchio 1992, Karsten 1996). Children frequently accompany their parents to retail stores and amass a good deal of knowledge about aspects of shopping such as store layouts, product offerings, and exchanging money for goods (McNeal 1992). One particular aspect of the shopping experience that has not been studied much is children’s understanding of a sale. Retailers routinely use sales to encourage customers to make a purchase, drive traffic to their store, etc. They also communicate sales to customers in a variety of ways, including purely semantic cues such as “clearance” or in ways that indicate the amount of the price reduction such as take “30% off.” The aim of this paper is to broaden our understanding of how children conceptualize sales. Explicitly, we propose that the concept of a sale is established relatively early in the consumer socialization process, and that the manner in which sales are communicated has differential effects on children’s understanding of the sale and its impact on the transaction.

Three exploratory studies demonstrate that children have an understanding that sales lower the regular price of items. In our first study, participants were asked to look at a three picture series of a mother and son shopping for bicycles and write a story about what they thought was going on in the pictures. We find that younger children (first and second grade) evaluated the pictures by focusing on the perceptual features of the situation (e.g. people are shopping, bikes are blue), while older children (fifth grade) make statements about the price of the bikes, both comparing the price of one bike to the other bike in the picture and making judgments about whether or not they feel the prices shown are reasonable given the product.

Two follow-up studies also involved picture sequences. In one, children were shown a picture of a display of pudding snacks with the sign “Clearance Savings” placed above it, and were asked to describe what that meant. Most of the participants indicated that this meant that the product was “on sale” or “cost less money,” and some also mentioned that stores do this when they are trying to get rid of something they have too much of. In another picture sequence, children saw a display of pudding snacks with the sign “We Sell For Less” and a price sign of “$2.74” placed above it. Children were asked to estimate the regular price of the pudding snacks. Although there was considerable variance in the price estimates, 85% of the participants indicated a regular price that was greater than $2.74, demonstrating some understanding that the sale price must be lower. These three studies provide support for the notion that children by the age of 7 or 8 have at least a rudimentary knowledge of what the term “sale” means, why retailers might engage in them, and that sale prices are lower than regular prices.

We also hypothesize that the manner in which a sale is communicated will have differential effects on children’s estimates of dependent variables such as the absolute price of the item, the relative prices of items, the likelihood that the child will purchase it, and the likelihood that they could convince a parent to purchase it. We expect these effects to vary by age group. We conduct two experiments with second and fifth grade children. The first study was a between-subject design where we manipulate the description of a sale using four verbal cues: “sale,” “clearance,” “save,” and “special.” Although we expected younger children to be less accurate than the older children, we have no evidence of a difference between the groups. But, when analyzing the responses by word condition, we find an association between the term used and accuracy. The results indicate that the term “special” resulted in significantly less accuracy than any of the other three terms (“sale,” “save,” “clearance”), supporting our prediction that the framing of the communication of the sale can impact children’s understanding.

In the second study we use two different numeric cues to denote sales: dollar-off cue (e.g. “take $2 off”) and percentage-off cue (e.g. “take 10% off”). Unlike the first study, we find a significant association between age and ability to identify the least expensive item in both the dollar-off and percent-off conditions, where younger children are less accurate than older children. Additionally, in the dollar-off condition we find a significant association between age and accuracy of the estimates of sale prices. Moreover, we find that all the errors in sale prices were conceptual rather than computational. We conducted a similar analysis of the percent-off condition and again find a significant association of age and accuracy. Explicitly, none of the second graders were able to derive the correct new price of the item at either store, whereas 50% of the fifth graders were able to compute the sale price correctly. Further analysis shows that while the fifth grade errors were more computational in nature, the second grade errors were almost entirely conceptual in nature.

Our research demonstrates that young children seem to understand the concept that a sale reduces the regular price of a product. Furthermore, young children have a basic understanding of why a retailer may institute a sale, although the level of sophistication in understanding sales increases with age. Our results also suggest that children’s understanding is susceptible to the manner in which the sale is communicated. Also, when sales are presented in either dollar-off or percent-off terms we find that younger children are more likely than older children to make conceptual errors, and that a percent-off cue proves to be difficult computationally for older children.

REFERENCES
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

People often have two different perceptions of their relationship to others. That is, one may have a conception of oneself as either as separate from other persons (i.e., an independent self-concept) or as connected to others (i.e., an interdependent self-concept, Markus and Kitayama 1991). These two self-concepts are associated with distinct knowledge representations that can coexist in memory and that can be brought to mind (i.e., primed) at different times, depending on the situation (Trafimow, Triandis, and Goto 1991). Abundant research has shown how these alternative self-concepts affect persuasion (e.g., Agrawal and Maheswaran 2005), judgments (e.g., Mandel 2003), and choices (e.g., Briley, Morris, and Simonson 2000). Frequently, researchers rely on a motivational explanation for their findings arguing that the activation of the distinct motivations associated with the temporary accessibility of these two self-concepts (i.e., independence vs. relatedness, Markus and Kitayama 1991) lead individuals to make judgments and take actions instrumental for these motivations (see Kim and Drolet 2003; Torelli 2006). However, recent research that shows that a temporarily accessible self-concept can be more likely to influence judgments under certain conditions (see Agrawal and Maheswaran 2005; Torelli 2006) suggests that there are situations that facilitate (or inhibit) the activation of the high-level motivations associated with a given self-concept. In this research, we study the impact of people’s mindsets on the activation of the distinct motivations associated with the temporary accessibility of an independent and an interdependent self-concept.

Mindsets are general cognitive orientations that facilitate a given task (Gollwitzer 1996) and that can have an impact on motivation-related variables (Freitas, Gollwitzer, and Trope 2004). In particular, abstract and concrete mindsets have been found to affect the types of goals one attends to in a situation (Freitas et al. 2004). An abstract mindset facilitates individual’s focus on the high-level, abstract aims of a situation, whereas a concrete mindset facilitates the focus on the low-level, concrete aspects and experiences of the same situation. As cognitive operations, mindsets are subject to activation (Bargh and Chartrand 2000). Once activated, there is increased likelihood that these operations will be used in upcoming tasks to interpret new information (Freitas et al. 2004; Higgins 1996). Thus, the activation of a particular mindset (i.e., mindset priming) can affect the level of abstraction at which an individual constructs a situation in a subsequent task.

Priming a given self-concept can increase both its accessibility in memory and that of its associated motivations and cognitions (Trafimow et al. 1991). A vital part of these activated mental representations are goals-means associations that can guide individual’s future behavior (Markus and Nurius 1986). These goals-means associations are conceptualized as goal hierarchies that include a fundamental goal, close to the core sense of self, at the top of the hierarchy that is served by a larger number of concrete activities, or means (Carver 1996; Shah, Kruglanski, and Friedman 2003). Thus, priming independent or interdependent self-concepts can bring to mind distinct goal hierarchies with goals of independence and competition at the top of the hierarchy (as in the case of the independent self-concept), or with overarching goals of relatedness to others (for the interdependent self-concept).

Distinct goal hierarchies brought to mind by a temporarily accessible self-concept would make more likely the activation of their corresponding high-level goals when individuals are in an abstract mindset. In this context, the more abstract goal activated by a higher-level identity would be upper in the goal hierarchy (Carver and Scheier 1999) and closer to the channeling out of fundamental, self-relevant motivations (Levy, Freitas, and Salovey 2002; McClelland, Koestner, and Weinberger 1989). In contrast, individuals in a concrete mindset would focus on goals at the lower-level of the hierarchy and/or concrete experiences from the situation, which would take them away from bringing to mind high-level goals linked to the self, regardless of the accessible self-concept. We then hypothesize the following:

\[ H1: \] Individual’s mindset would moderate the goals brought to mind after being primed with a given self-concept:

\[ H1a: \] Upon the activation of an abstract mindset, individuals primed with independence (interdependence) would be more likely to bring to mind independence (relatedness) goals than their counterparts primed with independence (relatedness).

\[ H1b: \] Upon the activation of a concrete mindset, individuals primed with independence and interdependence would focus on concrete goals, and they would not differ in terms of the independence and relatedness goals they bring to mind.

Four experiments provided empirical support for these hypotheses using varied operationalizations of goal activation. In experiment 1, participants listed their thoughts related to performing specific tasks. In experiment 2, we assessed the goals participants spontaneously projected onto a hypothetical consumer. In experiment 3, participants made inferences about the traits of a hypothetical user of a product. Finally, in experiment 4, we assessed the subordination of feasibility to desirability information. Overall, the findings support the notion that priming one’s interdependent self activates a motivation to relate to others and priming one’s independent self activates a motivation to be independent and seek personal achievements. However, these motivations are more likely to be brought to mind when individuals are in an abstract mindset. When individuals are in a concrete mindset, they are more likely to focus on concrete processes and experiences of the situation, which inhibits their focus on the high-level motivations linked to the temporarily accessible self-concept.

A key contribution of this research is showing the importance of mindsets as cognitive processes that can interact with people’s self-representations and impact the way in which individuals interpret consumer situations, which adds to the growing view of human actions that integrates motivation and cognition into synergistic frameworks with more explanatory power (Sorrentino 2003). Findings from this research can help to understand the impact of self-concept on people’s actions under the presence of factors that can affect the level of abstraction used by individuals to interpret their actions. We discuss in the paper some of these factors like temporal distance, level of personal agency, and level of familiarity. We also derive some implications from our findings in the areas of persuasion, self-regulation, and decision-making.

REFERENCES


The Dilution Model: How Additional Goals Undermine the Perceived Effectiveness of a Common Means

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Goals are attained through various means (i.e., an object, an action, or a place) connected to it by functional associations. For example, one may go to a café to get coffee and to get lunch. A question that arises is how learning that this café shop serves sandwich in addition to coffee would influence one’s judgment of the coffee that it serves, and the subsequent decision to buy coffee here when sandwich is not desired. More generally, this article considers the question of how adding more goals to a given means affects the individuals’ motivation to employ it when only one of these goals is activated.

Based on the goal systems theory (Kruglanski et al. 2002), we propose a dilution model of goal pursuit, and suggest that the perceived effectiveness of a given means to goal attainment, and the resulting motivation to pursue it, are determined by the strength of the association between the means and the goal, with stronger associations leading to higher perceived instrumentality. Because an efficient means is likely to be used a great deal, and hence come to be strongly associated with the goal, individuals may assume that the opposite direction of causality also holds and that a greater association of a means to a goal attests to greater efficacy.

According to this model, the associative strength between a goal and a means, and the resulting motivation to pursue the means, are determined by several factors. First, it depends on the number and frequency of instances in which the two entities (the goal and the means) have appeared together in the past. A stronger association between a means and a goal is expected if they have appeared together frequently. Second, the means-goal associative strength may depend on the uniqueness of the association, that is, on the number of additional means related to the goal or the number of additional goals related to the means. According to a spreading activation model (Anderson 1983; Anderson and Bower 1973), as the number of associations attached to a mental construct increases, each association becomes weaker, as demonstrated by a lower retrieval rate of the target when the central construct is activated.

Similarly, it is plausible to hypothesize that adding more goals to a given means dilutes the means-goal association, and this dilution might reduce the perceived effectiveness of the means with respect to the goal. Third, the strength of the means-goal association may further depend on the extent to which the goals simultaneously connected to certain means differ from each other. The more distinctively different goals are believed to be, the stronger their tendency to undermine each others’ association with the common means. When a single means is assumed to satisfy multiple distinctive goals, it might therefore be seen as less effective in satisfying each of these goals, because of the weakened degree of association between the means and each goal.

The aforementioned predictions were tested in four experimental studies. Specifically, Study 1 tested the general hypothesis that an increase in goal number decreases the perceived effectiveness of the means for any specific goal attainment. This study found that when participants listed one goal that certain means satisfied, the means were judged to be more effective for the attainment of the original goal than when they listed three goals that the means satisfied. Study 2 tested whether perceived goal distinctiveness moderates the degree of the dilution effect, and illustrated that, for the same two goals, participants who elaborated on how the two goals were similar perceived the means to be more effective for serving both goals than participants who elaborated on how the two goals were different. This study demonstrated that the dilution of means-goal associative strength depends on the distinctiveness between goals. Study 3 manipulated the strength of the association between the means and one goal, and tested whether the change in associative strength between the means with one goal impact the perceived effectiveness of the means for an alternative goal connected with the means. In this study, strengthening means-goal association subliminally by pair them together in a sequential prime task made participants believe the means was more effective for serving this goal, but was less effective in satisfying an alternative goal that was also served by the means. Finally, Study 4 used a behavioral measure and examined whether the dilution-induced changes in perceived effectiveness correspond to changes in preference for certain means in actual choice. This study found that when a single means served two (vs. one) goals, it was less likely to be chosen as a means for an activated goal than when it served this activated goal only.

Taken together, these studies provided empirical evidence for a dilution model of goal pursuit, whereby adding goals to a single means reduces the perception of its instrumentality with respect to the original goal. Several specific hypotheses followed from the model were tested in the current research: First, adding more goals to a single means renders this means less instrumental for the attainment of each individual goal. Second, the degree of reduction in instrumentality depends on the perceived distinctiveness of the goals connected to a single means, with more distinctive goals having greater impact on the perceived effectiveness of means. Third, the degree of reduction in instrumentality is directly related to the reduction in associative strength between a goal and a means. Fourth, means that are associated with multiple goals are less likely to be chosen and pursued in the course of self-regulation toward any particular goal.

REFERENCES

The Dilution Model: How Additional Goals Undermine the Perceived Effectiveness of a Common Means


Hungry for Money: The Desire for Caloric Resources Increases The Desire for Financial Resources and Vice Versa

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

One of the strongest motivations for people living in modern societies is the desire to obtain money. Notwithstanding the cultural dominance of money, for most of mankind’s history ‘resources’ have connoted food rather than money (Diamond 1997). Collecting or producing enough food to survive has always been man’s main challenge. It seems reasonable then to consider that people’s desire for money is a modern derivative of their evolved desire for food.

The canonical economic model assumes that the utility from money is indirect, and is only valued for the goods or services it can procure (e.g. Camerer, Loewenstein, and Prelec 2005). While food is generally considered as a primary reinforcer, money can be consumed only indirectly. As a consequence, standard economics consider the desire for food and the desire to obtain money as two different strivings. However, some neurological evidence suggests that the relationship between money and food might be more entangled than most economists would predict. The orbitofrontal cortex, for example, is known to be activated by monetary rewards (Breiter, Aharon, Kahneman, Dale, and Shizgal 2001), as well as food rewards (O’Doherty, Deichmann, Critchley, and Dolan 2002). The overlap in neural activation suggests a common pathway to the processing of money and food rewards, which may have major implications for the standard economical perspective on the utility for money.

Some behavioral evidence is consistent with the proposed entangled relation between financial and caloric resources. Nelson and Morrison (2005) found that men who either feel poor or hungry prefer heavier women than men who feel rich or satiated. They suggested that preference for women’s body weight is determined by people’s individual experience of resource scarcity. This is consistent with the finding that in cultures with scarce resources, heavier women are preferred to slim women (e.g. Pettijohn and Jungeberg 2004). As male financial and caloric deprivation appears both related to perceived ideal female body weight, we suggest that cues signaling scarcity in one domain might also motivate people to acquire or maintain resources in the other domain. Thus, we claim that people are less likely to sacrifice money when they desire food and eat more when they desire money. Three studies tested this hypothesis.

In Study 1, we manipulated hunger and measured participants’ willingness to donate to charity. The participants received a donation scenario and a taste test. To fill in the taste test, all participants had to eat a big piece of cake. In the hunger condition, the donation scenario preceded the taste test. In the satiated condition, the order was reversed. The results showed that hungry participants were less likely to donate to charity than satiated participants. To rule out reciprocity (for receiving the cake) as an alternative explanation, we manipulated the desire to eat food by means of an olfactory food cue in Study 2. Participants had to play a ‘give some game’ in a room that either was or was not scented with freshly baked brownies. Exposure to an olfactory food cue is known to increase craving, liking, and the desire to eat the cued food (e.g., Federoff, Polivy, and Herman 2003). Like Study 1, Study 2 revealed that desire for food made consumers more likely to hold on to their money. Finally, in Study 3, we tested the inverse relationship. We manipulated participant’s ‘desire for money’ by inducing lottery-winning fantasies (the manipulation was pretested relying on Bruner and Goodman’s ‘size of coins’ (1947), which reflects participants’ desire for money) and measured the amount of candy eaten in a subsequent taste test. Respondents in the high-desire-for-money condition consumed more candy than respondents in the low-desire-for-money condition, but only for unrestrained participants.

In sum, three studies demonstrate a symmetric association between the incentive value of food and money. To our knowledge, we are the first to test the psychological link between money and food empirically. Part of our contribution therefore exists in providing support to evolutionary psychologists’ assumption that findings involving money are informative about findings involving food and vice versa. Our results may further provide a partial explanation for Nelson and Morrison’s (2005) finding that financial and caloric deprivation appears both related to perceived ideal female body weight. The preference of lower income men for heavier women, as well as the acceptability of a larger body size for lower income women for example, might be interesting social phenomena that can be well predicted from our findings. In addition, our findings might yield an alternative explanation for (at least part of) the findings of Nisbett and Kanouse (1969) that food deprivation differentially affects obese and nonobese shoppers (see also Steinberg and Yalch 1978). Normal weight shoppers tend to purchase more when deprived than overweight shoppers. Perhaps, obese persons are not that sensitive to internal hunger cues as nonobese people because they possess more caloric resources. Considering our findings, we might predict that obese people would be more likely to donate to charity than nonobese people. Further research is needed to address this question. Finally, common intuition suggests that we should not negotiate on an empty stomach or that hungry consumers are less cooperative and thus, probably, are less likely to agree with a sales pitch or, in the context of fund raising, less inclined to donate some money. Our findings indeed imply that we should not ask people to donate before an upcoming meal or at the entrance of a bakery.

An avenue for future research is to investigate the overlap in neurological activation due to ‘desire for money’ on the one hand, and to ‘desire for food’ on the other hand. The emerging evidence that both reward systems share a brain region (e.g. Breiter et al. 2001; O’Doherty et al. 2002) raises the question to what extent this region is involved in the processing of all kinds of rewards (Montague and Berns 2002; Wilson and Daly 2004). The idea that many rewards are processed similarly in the brain has important implications for economics, which assumes that the marginal utility of money depends on what money buys.

REFERENCES

Hungry for Money: The Desire for Caloric Resources Increases The Desire for Financial Resources and Vice Versa


Does Silence Matter? Effect of Time Taken to Respond on Bargaining Outcomes & Evaluations

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Bargaining, the decision making process through which buyers and sellers establish terms of trade, is a fundamental phenomenon in inter-firm exchange behavior (Perdue and Summers 1991). Extant research on bargaining can be categorized as either examining the influence of contextual factors or negotiator related factors on bargaining outcomes and evaluations (Neale and Northcraft 1991). While a relatively large literature examines the influence of contextual factors (e.g., Kim, Pinkley and Fragale 2005; Pinkley, Neale and Bennett 1994) and negotiator’s cognitions (e.g., Bazerman 1983; Thompson 1991) on bargaining outcomes, relatively few studies have examined the influence of negotiator interaction process factors on bargaining outcomes and evaluations (e.g., Galinsky, et al. 2002).

This paper examines how negotiator interaction process factor (hence forth also mentioned as ‘process factor’) that emerges from within the bargaining environment, such as the time taken to respond to an offer, affects bargaining evaluations and outcomes. Moreover, the influence of contextual factors and negotiator related factors on bargaining outcomes and evaluations has been studied in isolation. Thorough understanding of human behavior in social settings, however, is gained tremendously when, in addition to the main effects, the interactions between several predictors are taken into consideration (Beersma and De Dreu, 2002). Behavioral negotiation theory (Neale and Northcraft 1991) posits that bargaining outcomes are a product of the interaction of contextual and negotiator related factors (which includes interaction process between the negotiators). Accordingly, we examine how an interaction process factor such as time taken to respond to an offer, that emerges from within the bargaining environment affects bargaining outcomes and evaluations in presence of contextual factors as well as opponent role.

Study 1 examines evaluations of bargaining outcomes as a function of time taken to respond when an offer is either accepted or rejected, and traces the relationship between bargaining evaluations and inferences about opponents’ bargaining position (e.g., reservation price). Study 1 demonstrates that the time taken by an opponent to respond affects bargaining evaluations in both positive and negative domains (i.e., when the first offer is accepted and rejected, respectively).

Study 2 tests the condition under which time taken to respond to an offer does and does not influence bargaining evaluations. Study 2 shows that evaluations of bargaining outcomes were perceived to be superior in the delayed versus the immediate acceptance condition only when the bargaining opponent was an individual bargaining on his behalf. In contrast, time taken to accept the offer had no impact when the opponent was a salesperson.

Overall, this research examines the influence of an interaction process factor that may emerge from within the bargaining environment on bargaining outcomes and their evaluations and highlights the interaction between a negotiator interaction process factor such as time taken to respond to an offer and a contextual factor such as opponent’s role. Together, our results suggests that silence does matter in bargaining setup, but does not always influence bargaining outcomes and evaluations as consumers do have mechanisms by which they guard falling prey to opponent’s silence as can be seen in the results of study 2.

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**SESSION OVERVIEW**

The three papers in this session share a common concern that existing work on brand equity and brand extensions has been overly narrow in both its conceptual focus and its methodological approach. As we will argue, these limitations matter since incorporating new dimensions of brand equity and introducing greater variation in experimental methodology will challenge some of our prevailing beliefs about the nature of brand equity and the ease with which it can be extended. At a general level, these three papers aim to broaden our conceptualization of brand equity and encourage researchers to question some commonly endorsed branding strategies. At a more specific level, these papers attempt to answer three questions: How can we reliably and meaningfully measure the concept of brand experience? Can widespread concerns about brand dilution be addressed by small changes in branding strategies? And lastly, has prior brand extension research overestimated the importance of fit and underestimated the importance of quality?

In the first paper, Zarantonello, Schmitt, and Brakus address the nascent area of brand experience—a concept that has gained popularity in marketing practice, but has not received as much attention in academic branding research. To fill this void, the authors propose a conceptualization of brand experience based on the theory of mind modularity and develop a reliable and meaningful scale of brand experience consistent with this framework.

In the second paper, Sood, and Keller not only challenge common concerns about the diluting effect of low quality brand extensions on the equity of the parent brand, but also deviate from the commonly used methodology in brand extension research by having participants actually experience the extension products. In a series of experiments, they demonstrate that brand name structure influences the processing style that consumers employ when evaluating brand extensions, and that this processing style in turn leads to differences in extension evaluations and dilution effects.

Lastly, the paper by Meyvis, Goldsmith, and Dhar presents a series of studies which test the effect of consumers’ mindset on their response to brand extensions and, in doing so, highlight important limitations of the methodology used in prior brand extension research. The authors demonstrate that the hypothetical, abstract mindset that is common in most brand extension research tends to overly emphasize the fit between the brand and the extension category. In contrast, when consumers are in a more concrete mindset (as is common in a regular shopping environment), they focus more on factors that promise concrete rewards, such as the quality of the parent brand.

These three papers investigate consumers’ perceptions of brands from multiple theoretical perspectives and employ a variety of methods to uncover the processes behind consumers’ brands experiences and brand extension preferences. In addition, the session also raises issues of ecological validity in consumer research, specifically in research on branding. C. Whan Park, who has contributed widely to branding research, will lead a discussion aimed at facilitating a broader understanding of brand experience and brand extension preference construction that we anticipate will be insightful and engaging.

**EXTENDED ABSTRACTS**

“Development of the Brand Experience Scale”

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The topic of “experiential branding” has attracted great attention from marketing practitioners, and several trade books have appeared in the market (Andersson and Andersson 2006; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999, 2003; Shaw and Ivans 2002; Smith and Wheeler 2002). However, little conceptual and empirical work has been done on that topic. One major reason may be the lack of a brand experience scale, compared to other brand-related areas where scales exist, e.g., the Brand Personality Scale (Aaker 1997) or the Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics Scale (Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003).

Here we present our research to develop a theory-based reliable and valid brand experience scale. Drawing on the theory of mind modularity (Fodor 1983; Pinker 1997; Plotkin 1998; Tooby and Cosmides 2000) and an experience categorization by Dewey (Dewey 1922; 1925; see also Dubé and LeBel 2003), we propose that consumer experiences with a brand arise when consumers are exposed to brands and pay attention to the experiential aspects of brands executions. Experiential cues appear as colors, typefaces, emoticons, smiley faces, word games and the like, on brand communications such as print and TV advertising, packaging, in events and stores, on web sites and mobile electronic communications and, at times, on the product as such. We propose that brand experiences consist of five types: sensory, affective, social, bodily, and intellectual. Empirically, we develop a scale that measures each facet of experience and show that different brands can be differentiated on these experience factors.

**Item Generation**

We first generated items that cover the five facets of experience. An extensive literature review and search for concepts was undertaken. For sensory items we examined research related to aesthetics (Arnheim 1974; Berlyne 1974; Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003; Feibeleman 1945; Postrel 2003; Schmitt and Simonson 1997). For affective items we reviewed the literature on affect and emotions in consumer behavior (Cohen and Areni 1998; Edell and Burke 1987; Holbrook and Batra 1987; Richards 1997) and on the psychology of emotions (e.g. Izard 1978; Plutchik and Kellerman 1989). We covered intellectual experiences using Guilford’s (1956) intelligence research, and we also looked at creative thinking and applications of creative thinking in advertising (Smith and Yang 2004; Torrance 1987). For consumer bodily experiences, we reviewed the literature on physical/behavioral and lifestyles aspects (e.g. Brehm and Kassin 1990; Helman and De Chernatony 1999; Richards 1983; Solomon 2004). Finally, for consumers’ social experiences, we reviewed the literature on brand communities (Cova and Cova 2002; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001).

After initial face-validity screening and empirical screening by an expert panel of consumer researchers and experience consultants, who rated on a Likert scale the degree to which the items referred to brand experiences, a set of 125 applicable items was
Challenges and Extensions to Standard Beliefs in Branding Research

retained: 24 sensory, 29 affective, 26 intellectual, 23 bodily, and 23 social items. Of these items, about one third were presented as negatively worded.

Next, a sample of 30 university students participated in a study on brand experiences. After explaining the concept of brand experience to the students, we asked them to evaluate to which extent the 125 items were descriptive of their experiences with brands, using a 7-point scale (1=“not at all descriptive”, 7=“extremely descriptive”). Additional open ended questions were asked to assess the quality of the items. We retained items with a mean value greater than 4.0 and with a standard deviation smaller than 2.00. A total of 83 items was left: 23 (7 negative) for sensory, 13 (7 negative) for affective, 10 (8 negative) for intellectual, 18 (7 negative) for bodily and 19 (7 negative) for social experiences.

Brand Selection

Next, 68 university students were asked to think of three distinct product categories. They were also asked to pick one brand for each product category that they believed was marketed in an experiential fashion and one that they believed was not marketed in an experiential fashion.

Brands with the highest rating were retained for a total of 21 brands: 16 experiential (Abercrombie & Fitch, Apple, Barnes & Noble, BMW, Coca Cola, Jet Blue, McDonald’s, Nike, Reebok, Sony, Starbucks, Target, Tiffany, Virgin, W Hotels, Whole Foods) and 5 non-experiential (Dell, Gristedes, IBM, Poland Spring, Wal-Mart).

The 21 brands were then randomly split into five groups, and to assess internal consistency, one brand (Apple) was included in each of them.

Factor Analysis

293 students from three universities completed a questionnaire on brand experiences, by judging to which extent the 83 items described their experiences with the 5 brands listed. To reduce primacy and recency effects, five different versions of questionnaire were prepared. After excluding 4 items which were not properly understood by more than 10% of participants, a factor analysis using Varimax rotation resulted in a nine factor solution using the eigenvalues>1 criterion, but only the first five factors were significant based on scree plot. The first factor contained mostly intellectual items, the second included affective and social items, the third included sensory items, the fourth comprised bodily items, and the fifth included sensory items again. We also conducted another exploratory factor analysis by restricting the number of factors to 4. Results showed that sensory items grouped together, and that the other three factors contained respectively intellectual, bodily, and a combination of affective and social items. The total variance explained was 62%. For each factor, those items with a loading greater than .7 were retained, for a total of 19 items (6 sense, 5 feel/relate, 6 think, 2 act). Each factor (i.e., subscale of the Brand Experience Scale) had a high or acceptable coefficient alpha (think: .93, sense: .92, feel/relate: .92, act: .78).

The mean values of the 83 items for each of the 21 brands were then calculated. All the “experiential brands” had higher mean values (Abercrombie & Fitch: 3.70; Apple: 4.96; Barnes & Noble: 4.19; BMW: 4.92; Coca Cola: 3.93; Jet Blue: 4.20; McDonald’s: 4.06; Nike: 4.61; Reebok: 3.52; Sony: 4.18; Starbucks: 4.32; Target: 3.73; Tiffany: 4.44; Virgin: 3.95; W Hotels: 3.74; Whole Foods: 4.74) than all the “non-experiential brands” (Dell: 3.48; Gristedes: 3.10; IBM: 3.25; Poland Spring: 3.47; Wal-Mart: 3.22). Moreover, the Apple means were highly consistent (all means ranged from 4.81 to 5.03).

Confirmative Factor Analyses

We then worked on a shorter version of the scale, which consisted of 12 items. As sensory items we had “I find this brand interesting in a sensory way”, “This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses”, and “This brand does not appeal to my senses”. Emotions were addressed with items such as “This brand induces feelings and sentiments”, “I do not have strong emotions for this brand”, and “This brand is an emotional brand”. The intellectual sphere was investigated with the items “This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving”, “I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand”, and “This brand does not make me think”. Finally, as behavioral items we had “I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand”, “This brand results in bodily experiences”, and “This brand is not action oriented”.

We also prepared another series of brands and we divided them randomly in 6 groups of five brands each (Adidas, American Express, Ben & Jerry, Blackberry, Calvin Klein, Clinique, Crate & Barrel, Dannon, Disney, Ferrari, Gatorade, Gilette Mach3, Hallmark, Harley Davidson, Hershey’s, iPod, L’Oreal, La Prairie, Lego, Motorola, Nokia, Prada, Puma, Samsung, Starbucks, Sudoku, Toys’r’us, Tropicana, Viagra, Victoria’s Secret).

Then, we asked 193 students from Columbia University to evaluate their brand experiences with the 125 items: 83 items were descriptive of their experience with the brands listed, by using a 7-point Likert scale (1=“strongly disagree”, 7=“strongly agree”). Exploratory factor analysis revealed three factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The three factors explained 67.17% of variance. After the Varimax rotation was applied, a clean factor structure emerged. Three “sense” and three “feel/relate” items loaded on one factor (with one loading equal to .59, another equal to .63, and the rest greater than .72); three “act” items loaded on the second factor (all loadings greater than .72); finally, three “think” items loaded on the third factor (all loadings greater than .75).

We then ran another exploratory factor analysis on the six “sense” and “feel/relate” items that loaded on the first factor in the analysis above. After we applied the Varimax rotation, this subsequent analysis revealed two “nested” factors—the “sense” factor (all loadings greater than .72) and the “feel/relate” factor (all loadings greater than .69). These two factors explained 74.3% of variance generated by these six items only.

Consequently, it seemed that the best model was the three factor model: “act” items loading on one factor, “think” items loading on another factor, and the two “nested” factors within the third factor—“sense” and “feel/relate”.

After we analyzed a number of models, the confirmatory factor analyses confirmed that the best models were the one that emerged in the exploratory analysis (the three factors plus two “nested” factors; see above) and the conceptually similar four-factor model: sense, feel/relate, act, and think. Its GFI was equal to .92 and CFI to .92; the lower bound of the 90% confidence interval of the RMSEA estimate was .08 indicating borderline reasonable fit. Since it is easier to implement the four factor “non-nested” model as a measurement tool, we decided to further work with that model.

Current Work

We are now testing both the divergent and predictive validity of the Brand Experience Scale. More specifically, the fourth study aims at testing the scale measures a construct different from that measured by other scales, i.e. the Brand Personality Scale. The fifth study wants to demonstrate the impact that the brand experience has on brand loyalty, brand attitude, customer delight, and customer satisfaction.
References
Sanjay Sood, University of California, Los Angeles
Kevin L. Keller, Dartmouth College

The structure of the name used to launch a brand extension has become an increasingly important topic in academic research. For example, Park, Jun and Shocker (1998) showed that the type of co-brand name significantly influences extension evaluations. More recently, Desai and Keller (2002) showed that the type of ingredient brand name significantly influences the acceptance of extensions.

In this research, we examine a naming structure known as sub-branding, where new products are introduced by combining the parent brand name with an individual brand name (e.g., Quencher by Tropicana cola). We propose that traditional family branding becomes an increasingly important topic in academic research. For example, Park, Jun and Shocker (1998) showed that the type of co-brand name significantly influences extension evaluations. More recently, Desai and Keller (2002) showed that the type of ingredient brand name significantly influences the acceptance of extensions.

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branding strategy constant (Keller and Aaker 1992; Milberg et al. 1997; Loken and Roedder John 1993; Roedder John, Loken, and Joiner 1998; Romeo 1990). One limitation of this past research is the exclusion of direct experience with the extension. We propose that the compelling, vivid nature of a negative product experience with an extension is more likely to dilute brand equity than simply informing consumers about negative extension performance as in past research. We find that dilution does consistently occur when consumers have a negative extension experience, but only with family branded extensions in similar categories. Interestingly, sub-branding shields the parent brand from dilution, apparently by invoking a piecemeal processing strategy that sends a signal to consumers that the extension is different from the parent brand.

In the first experiment we measure brand extension attitudes and response latencies to provide initial support for the category vs. piecemeal processing models. Respondents were asked to evaluate several brand extensions in a survey administered on a computer. The experiment involved a 2 (similarity: similar or dissimilar) x 2 (name: family or sub-brand) mixed design. Some respondents in the similar (dissimilar) condition evaluated a new cola from Pepsi (Tropicana) as family named extensions; other respondents evaluated these same new products with a sub-brand name (e.g., Quencher by Pepsi). Consistent with our prediction, there was an interaction between similarity and name such that similar family branded extensions were evaluated higher than dissimilar family branded extensions, but there was no difference for sub-branded extension evaluations. In addition, family branded extensions were evaluated more quickly, consistent with category-based processing whereas sub-branded extensions were evaluated more slowly, consistent with piecemeal processing.

In the second study we added product experience to the experiment to form a 2 (similarity: similar or dissimilar) x 2 (name: family or sub-brand) x 2 (experience: favorable or unfavorable) design. Respondents were given the same brand extensions along with a trial taste test for each new product. Some of the new products provided a favorable experience in that the sample was either actual Pepsi or Tropicana. Others in the unfavorable experience condition tasted a diluted version of the drink. This experiment replicated the evaluations of the first study with experience in the favorable experience conditions. That is, family branded extensions were influenced by similarity and sub-branded extensions were not, even though everyone had tasted exactly the same drinks. The results also showed significant parent brand dilution but only for similar family branded extensions. Interestingly, sub-branding eliminated any dilution effects.

The remaining experiments investigate boundary conditions of these effects. Experiment 3 contrasts direct experience via product trial with indirect experience via Consumer Reports. We find that direct experience has a much larger effect on evaluations, even when the Consumer Reports evaluations are in conflict with the product trial experience. Experiment 4 investigates the structure of the sub-brand name. We change the dominance and prominence of the elements in the sub-brand name by changing the order of the elements and the diagnosticity of the individual name. We find that the individual component has to be dominant and meaningful in order for sub-branding to have the most beneficial impact on extension evaluations and dilution effects.

Collectively, our studies provide evidence that brand name structure can invoke different types of information processing strategies and therefore influence both extension evaluations and dilution effects. Specifically, the sub-branding results suggest that slight changes to the extension name structure can result in large changes in consumer responses. Whereas family branding consistently resulted in similar extensions being evaluated higher than dissimilar extensions, even in the presence of product ratings, sub-branding neutralized these category similarity effects due to the induction of piecemeal (vs. category-based) processing. In terms of dilution effects, sub-branding evidently sends a credible signal to consumers that helps diffuse negative attributions and separates the locus of the extension’s failure from the parent brand. In addition, experience was found to guide evaluations more than product ratings, presumably because the self-generated information related to the former led to greater perceptions of diagnosticity. Finally, the results also indicate that dilution effects can be avoided if consumers are provided with some rationale, either via sub-branding or external information, as to why an extension may perform poorly.

“Beyond Survival of the Fittest: The Influence of Mindsets on Consumers’ Response to Brand Extensions”
Tom Meyvis, New York University
Kelly Goldsmith, Yale University
Ravi Dhar, Yale University

Treating their brands as assets, many businesses have attempted to leverage their brand equity by using established brand names to launch new products as brand extensions. Previous research on brand extensions has identified the fit between the brand and the extension as an important determinant of a positive consumer response to the new extensions. Regardless of how it has been conceptualized, be it as overlapping category associations, compatible skills (Aaker and Keller 1990), or overlapping benefit associations (Broniarczyk and Alba, 1994), researchers have argued that a good fit between the brand and the extension category is a necessary condition for favorable consumer reactions. However, some recent work (Klink and Smith 2001) suggests that the impoverished presentation of extension information in past brand extension research has led to an overestimation of the importance of fit.

In the current research, we propose that the relative importance of fit will depend on the mindset that the decision maker adopts. In most brand extension studies, participants are asked to provide separate evaluations of hypothetical extensions. We argue that this encourages participants to adopt an abstract, hypothetical mindset as opposed to a more concrete, pragmatic mindset. As research on psychological distance (e.g., Liberman, Trope, & Stephan 2005) has suggested, decision makers who adopt a more hypothetical mindset are more likely to be guided by abstract principles. We therefore propose that participants who are asked to evaluate hypothetical extensions will rely on their lay beliefs and their general principles about how the marketplace should be structured, rather than concrete quality concerns that would drive their actual purchase decisions. In other words, those participants may adopt a more abstract perspective and overstate their sensitivity to the fit between the brand and the extension. Conversely, shifting people’s perspective from an abstract to a more concrete mindset should reduce the impact of general principles such as fit and increase the impact of factors that promise concrete rewards, such as brand quality.

Consistent with this proposition, results from five experiments indicate that when the decision context is made more concrete, people’s preferences shift from extensions of high fit, low quality brands to extensions of low fit, high quality brands. In a first study, participants were presented with hypothetical extensions to the same product category of a high fit, low quality brand (e.g., ShopRite cottage cheese) and a low fit, high quality brand (e.g., Haagen Dazs cottage cheese). In the separate evaluation condition, participants were asked to separately evaluate each extension (every participant rated both ShopRite and Haagen Dazs, but they were separated by other products); in the joint evaluation condition,
participants also evaluated each extension, but the two extensions to the same category were presented adjacently; and in the choice condition, participants chose between the two brand extensions in each category. Consistent with previous findings in the literature, participants in the separate evaluation condition rated the high fit (low quality) extensions more favorably than the low fit (high quality) extensions. However, when participants made choices between extensions in the same category, or when they jointly evaluated these extensions, they preferred the low fit (high quality) extensions instead. We propose that the comparisons between brands in the same category resulted in more concrete product representations (and increased similarity to regular purchase behavior) and reduced reliance on abstract principles such as fit, in favor of the immediate benefits associated with brand quality. The reduced reliance on fit was supported by results from a second study that replicated the separate evaluation and choice conditions, but also asked participants to list the thoughts they relied on for their decision. As expected, people in the separate evaluation condition were significantly more likely to mention fit-related thoughts than were people in the choice condition.

To further test the effect of inducing a more concrete mindset, we conducted a third study in which all participants made a choice between a high fit, low quality extension (e.g., CVS deodorant) and a low fit, high quality extension (e.g., Nike deodorant). For half the participants, we increased the ease of imagining the extensions by providing a picture of the product. The picture showed a typical product in that category and was identical for both extensions. Even though the picture did not convey any additional information, providing the picture significantly increased participants’ preference for the low fit, high quality extension. A fourth study replicated this effect and also asked participants to list their thoughts when choosing between the extensions. As expected, participants who had been provided with pictures were significantly more likely to mention quality-related thoughts (very few participants mentioned fit-related thoughts in either condition). Finally, in a fifth study, participants were again asked to choose between the same extensions as in studies 3 and 4, but no pictures were shown. Instead, for half the participants, the choice context was made more concrete by asking them to think about the extensions before making a choice. Similar to the picture effect, thinking about the extensions before choosing increased the preference for the low fit, high quality brand. Together, these last three studies indicate that as the decision context becomes more concrete (by making the extensions easier to imagine), the benefits offered by high-quality brands become more persuasive, and violations of general principles become less problematic.

These findings illustrate the malleability of consumers’ evaluative response to brand extensions and provide further support for Klink and Smith’s (2001) contention that previous brand extension research has overstated the importance of fit. However, this work also highlights a concern in consumer research in general, and in branding research in particular. When asking people how they would decide in hypothetical situations, we implicitly encourage them to adopt an abstract, hypothetical mindset that may increase their reliance on abstract principles and lay theories. This is of particular importance to researchers who study consumers’ reactions to changes in brand strategies, as they are at risk of measuring consumers’ lay beliefs about the decisions that managers ought to make rather than how they would react as consumers in the marketplace. To reduce this risk, researchers can encourage participants to adopt the concrete mindset that is common in typical purchase situations by facilitating the concrete representation of the choice options.
Development of the Brand Experience Scale
Lia Zarantonello, IULM University, Italy
Bernd H. Schmitt, Columbia University, USA
Joskó J. Brakus, University of Rochester, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The topic of “experiential branding” has attracted great attention from marketing practitioners, and several trade books have appeared in the market (Andersson and Andersson 2006; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999, 2003; Shaw and Ivins 2002; Smith and Wheeler 2002). However, little conceptual and empirical work has been done on that topic. One major reason may be the lack of a brand experience scale, compared to other brand-related areas where scales exist, e.g., the Brand Personality Scale (Aaker 1997) or the Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics Scale (Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003).

Here we present our research to develop a theory-based and valid brand experience scale. Drawing on the theory of mind modularity (Fodor 1983; Pinker 1997; Plotkin 1998; Tooby and Cosmides 2000) and an experience categorization by Dewey (Dewey 1922; 1925; see also Dubé and LeBel 2003), we propose that consumer experiences with a brand arise when consumers are exposed to brands and pay attention to the experiential aspects of brands executions. Experiential cues appear as colors, typefaces, emoticons, smiley faces, word games and the like, on brand communications such as print and TV advertising, packaging, in events and stores, on web sites and mobile electronic communications and, at times, on the product as such. We propose that brand experiences consist of five types: sensory, affective, social, bodily, and intellectual. Empirically, we develop a scale that measures each facet of experience and show that different brands can be differentiated on these experience factors.

Item Generation
We first generated items that cover the five facets of experience. An extensive literature review and search for concepts was undertaken. For sensory items we examined research related to aesthetics (Arneheim 1974; Berlyne 1974; Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003; Feibeleman 1945; Postrel 2003; Schmitt and Simonson 1997). For affective items we reviewed the literature on affect and emotions in consumer behavior (Cohen and Areni 1998; Edell and Burke 1987; Holbrook and Batra 1987; Richins 1997) and on the psychology of emotions (e.g. Izard 1978; Plutchik and Kellerman 1989). We covered intellectual experiences using Guilford’s (1956) intelligence research, and we also looked at creative thinking and applications of creative thinking in advertising (Smith and Yang 2004; Torrance 1987). For consumer bodily experiences, we reviewed the literature on physical/behavioral and lifestyles aspects (e.g. Brehm and Kassin 1990; Helman and De Chernatony 1999; Richins 1983; Solomon 2004). Finally, for consumers’ social experiences, we reviewed the literature on brand communities (Cova and Cova 2002; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001).

After initial face-validity screening and empirical screening by an expert panel of consumer researchers and experience consultants, who rated on a Likert scale the degree to which the items referred to brand experiences, a set of 125 applicable items was retained: 24 sensory, 29 affective, 26 intellectual, 23 bodily, and 23 social items. Of these items, about one third were presented as negatively worded.

Next, a sample of 30 university students participated in a study on brand experiences. After explaining the concept of brand experience to the students, we asked them to evaluate to which extent the 125 items were descriptive of their experiences with brands, using a 7-point scale (1=“not at all descriptive,” 7=“extremely descriptive”). Additional open-ended questions were asked to assess the quality of the items. We retained items with a mean value greater than 4.0 and with a standard deviation smaller than 2.00. A total of 83 items was left: 23 (7 negative) for sensory, 13 (7 negative) for affective, 10 (8 negative) for intellectual, 18 (7 negative) for bodily and 19 (7 negative) for social experiences.

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293 students from three universities completed a questionnaire on brand experiences, by judging to which extent the 83 items described their experiences with the 5 brands listed. To reduce primacy and recency effects, five different versions of questionnaire were prepared. After excluding 4 items which were not properly understood by more than 10% of participants, a factor analysis using Varimax rotation resulted in a nine factor solution using the eigenvalues>1 criterion, but only the first five factors were significant based on scree plot. The first factor contained mostly intellectual items, the second included affective and social items, the third included sensory items, the fourth comprised bodily items, and the fifth included sensory items again. We also conducted another exploratory factor analysis by restricting the number of factors to 4. Results showed that sensory items grouped together, and that the other three factors contained respectively intellectual, bodily, and a combination of affective and social items. The total variance explained was 62.06%. For each factor, those items with a loading greater than .7 were retained, for a total of 19 items (6 sense, 5 feel/relate, 6 think, 2 act). Each factor (i.e., subscale of the Brand Experience Scale) had a high or acceptable coefficient alpha (think:.93, sense: .92, feel/relate: .92, act:.78).

The mean values of the 83 items for each of the 21 brands were then calculated. All the “experiential brands” had higher mean values (Abercrombie & Fitch: 3.70; Apple: 4.96; Barnes & Noble: 4.19; BMW: 4.92; Coca Cola: 3.93; Jet Blue: 4.20; McDonald’s: 4.06; Nike: 4.61; Reebok: 3.52; Sony: 4.18; Starbucks: 4.32; Target: 3.73; Tiffany: 4.44; Virgin: 3.95; W Hotels: 3.74; Whole Foods: 4.74) than all the “non-experiential brands” (Dell: 3.48; Gristedes: 3.10; IBM: 3.25; Poland Spring: 3.47; Wal-Mart: 3.22). Moreover, the Apple means were highly consistent (all means ranged from 4.81 to 5.03).
Confirmative Factor Analyses

We then worked on a shorter version of the scale, which consisted of 12 items. As sensory items we had “I find this brand interesting in a sensory way,” “This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses,” and “This brand does not appeal to my senses”. Emotions were addressed with items such as “This brand induces feelings and sentiments,” “I do not have strong emotions for this brand,” and “This brand is an emotional brand”. The intellectual sphere was investigated with the items “This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving,” “I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand,” and “This brand does not make me think”. Finally, as behavioral items we had “I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand,” “This brand results in bodily experiences,” and “This brand is not action oriented”.

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Then, we asked 193 students from Columbia University to evaluate to which extent they agreed the items were descriptive of their experience with the brands listed, by using a 7-point Likert scale (1=“strongly disagree,” 7=“strongly agree”). Exploratory factor analysis revealed three factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The three factors explained 67.17% of variance. After the Varimax rotation was applied, a clean factor structure emerged. Three “sense” and three “feel/relate” items loaded on one factor (with one loading equal to .59, another equal to .63, and the rest greater than .72); three “act” items loaded on the second factor (all loadings greater than .72); finally, three “think” items loaded on the third factor (all loadings greater than .75).

We then ran another exploratory factor analysis on the six “sense” and “feel/relate” items that loaded on the first factor in the analysis above. After we applied the Varimax rotation, this subsequent analysis revealed two “nested” factors—the “sense” factor (all loadings greater than .72) and the “feel/relate” factor (all loadings greater than .69). These two factors explained 74.3% of variance generated by these six items only.

Consequently, it seemed that the best model was the three factor model: “act” items loading on one factor, “think” items loading on another factor, and the two “nested” factors within the third factor—“sense” and “feel/relate”.

After we analyzed a number of models, the confirmatory factor analyses confirmed that the best models were the one that emerged in the exploratory analysis (the three factors plus two “nested” factors; see above) and the conceptually similar four-factor model: sense, feel/relate, act, and think. Its GFI was equal to .92 and CFI to .92; the lower bound of the 90% confidence interval of the RMSEA estimate was .08 indicating borderline reasonable fit. Since it is easier to implement the four factor “non-nested” model as a measurement tool, we decided to further work with that model.

Current Work

We are now testing both the divergent and predictive validity of the Brand Experience Scale. More specifically, the next study aims at showing that our scale measures a construct different from that measured by other scales, i.e. the Brand Personality Scale. Another study wants to demonstrate the impact that the brand experience has on brand loyalty, brand attitude, customer delight, and customer satisfaction.


SESSION OVERVIEW

The importance of nonconscious processes in determining consumer behavior is gaining increased attention among consumer behavior researchers, but the range of effects of subtle influences on cognition and behavior has yet to be determined. Moreover, less is known about how and when these processes can influence and interact with the emotional and cognitive components that serve as inputs to consumer behavior. The present session seeks to provide an integrative look at nonconscious affective and cognitive effects on choice decisions by examining the main and interactive effects of emotional and cognitive components on automatic behavior.

The first paper, by Zemack-Rugar and Bettman, provides evidence that specific emotion constructs can be activated through subliminal priming procedures. The authors show that specific, equally valenced emotions (guilt and sadness) can be subliminally primed, remain inaccessible to conscious awareness, but yet affect indulgence and helping behavior. Moreover, in their third and fourth studies they use a delay paradigm to find that it is the motivational component, and not the semantic emotion-related component, that drives behavior. Hence, this paper shows that specific emotions can be nonconsciously activated by subliminal priming and affect important consumer behaviors.

The second paper, by Maimaran and Wheeler, examines activation of cognitive constructs by priming stimuli and shows that active automatic construction processes can lead even novel and impoverished priming stimuli to exert significant effects on construct accessibility and choice. Specifically, they show that participants spontaneously extract higher order cognitive constructs (e.g., uniqueness) upon incidental exposure to novel arrays of shapes (e.g., one square among five circles). More important, they show that such stimuli can also significantly affect fundamental choice propensities such as seeking uniqueness and variety. Hence, this paper shows that higher order cognitive constructs can be activated by very primitive visual stimuli and exert congruent effects on choice.

The third and fourth papers examine how emotional and cognitive processes can moderate nonconsciously instigated processes. The third paper, by Fishbach and Labroo, shows that mood can significantly affect nonconscious goal pursuit. Because positive mood signals to approach accessible goals, individuals in positive moods should be more likely to adhere to subtly primed goals, regardless of their content. Because negative mood signals to avoid accessible goals, individuals in negative moods should be less likely to adhere to subtly primed goals. Using a variety of dependent variables, the authors show that positive-mood individuals are more likely to pursue both subtly activated self-improvement and mood-management goals than negative-mood individuals.

In the fourth paper, Wood, Poyner, and Chartrand present a new individual difference scale of priming susceptibility. Using a range of individual difference variables, they show that individuals with dispositional propensities to attend to the environment and engage in associative processing exhibit larger effects of primes on their behavior. These various individual difference variables are distilled into a single Susceptibility to Priming scale that has great potential utility for both consumer behavior researchers as well as advertising practitioners. Additionally, the isolation of these two factors lends additional insight into the critical processes responsible for prime-to-behavior effects.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Effects of Specific, Nonconscious Emotion Primes on Behavior”

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Gavan J. Fitzsimons, Duke University

Research in nonconscious emotion priming has been limited to showing effects of positively versus negatively valenced affect. Such research has utilized two methods, subliminally priming participants with positively or negatively valenced words (Chartrand et al., 2006) and subliminally priming participants with pictures of people with positive versus negative facial expressions (Winkielman et al., 2005).

We introduce a new paradigm of nonconscious emotion priming that goes beyond valence and demonstrates novel effects. Although specific, equally valenced, conscious emotions lead to different behaviors (Lerner & Keltner, 2000), it has not been shown that these effects extend to nonconsciously primed emotions. We show that specific, equally valenced emotions (guilt and sadness) can be subliminally primed, remain inaccessible to conscious awareness, and still differentially affect behavior. We prime emotions by subliminally flashing emotion adjectives. Individuals report no differences in their consciously experienced emotion across the prime conditions, yet behave consistently with the specific emotion primed. We argue that two interrelated processes underlie these effects: nonconscious activation of emotion-constructs and nonconscious activation of emotion-regulation goals (Chartrand & Bargh, 2002).

First, subliminal emotion priming nonconsciously activates emotion-constructs associated with each emotion type (Lazarus, 1991; Lerner & Keltner, 2000). Subsequently, activation of these negative emotion constructs leads to automatic and nonconscious activation of emotion-regulation goals (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Erber, 1996; Larsen, 2000).

Such emotion-regulation goals are pursued differently by sad versus guilty individuals. Individuals feeling sad find an unpleasant helping task unappealing for emotion-regulation (Isen & Simmonds, 1978), whereas individuals feeling guilty may find such a task appealing and useful (Bybee, 1998; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Similarly, individuals feeling guilty find indulging unappealing for emotion regulation (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Bybee, 1998) whereas individuals feeling sad find indulgence helpful (Rehm & Plakosh, 1975). Hence, guilt-primed individuals are expected to show reduced indulgence and increased helping compared to sadness-primed individuals.

However, emotion-regulation goals are also pursued differently based on individual coping characteristics, such as guilt-proneness (Morris & Reilly, 1987; Tangney et al., 1992). Specifically, individuals feeling guilty and high in guilt-proneness typi-
In study 1 participants are subliminally primed with either four sad words or four guilty words using Chartrand and Bargh’s priming paradigm (1996). Then, an enhanced PANAS scale including the word primes and additional guilt adjectives (previously shown to differentiate conscious guilt and sadness; Zemack-Rugar, 2006) is administered. Next, participants complete a “consumer survey” and indicate how much of a $50 coupon (which they may win) they would like to allocate to either school supplies or a CD/DVD (pretests show CD/DVDs are considered an indulgence); dollars allotted to the CD/DVD is the main dependent variable. Finally, participants complete the TOSCA measure of guilt-proneness (Tangney et al., 1992).

As expected, participants primed with guilty words and high in guilt-proneness show lower levels of indulgence than all other participants. Additionally, a hanging neutral control condition indicates that the reduction in indulgence is absolute. Importantly, participants in the sad, guilty, and neutral conditions report equal conscious levels of positive, negative, and guilt-specific emotions. Despite lack of conscious awareness of the prime or the activation of the emotion construct, participants behave in accordance with the prime they received and their individual coping characteristics.

In study 2 participants complete the same subliminal priming procedure, followed by an option to participate in an unpleasant helping task for charity. The amount of time allotted (0-20 minutes) is the main dependent variable. As predicted, participants primed with guilty words and high in guilt-proneness allot more time to the helping task than all other participants. A hanging control condition reveals that this increase in helping is absolute. As in study 1, participants in all conditions report equal positive, negative, and guilt-specific emotions.

The findings of studies 1 and 2 may have been generated by two possible mechanisms. One mechanism is semantic or ideomotoric (Prinz, 1990); certain emotions are semantically linked to certain behaviors, so that verbal activation of those emotions can lead to enactment of linked behaviors. Alternatively, the emotion-behavior link may be motivational, with activation of a negative emotion-construct leading to activation of an emotion-regulation goal (Morris & Reilly, 1987; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). To examine whether the effects are goal-driven, an established dissociation paradigm is utilized (Bargh et al., 2001; Dunn & Kirsner, 1988) by adding a 5-minute time delay between the emotion prime and the behavior of interest. If behavior is semantically driven, effects should fade with delay (Anderson, 1983); however, if behavior is goal-driven, performance should not fade over time (Atkinson & Birch, 1970).

In a pretest we demonstrate that performance on a semantic task (word-search with prime-related words) diminishes over time, whereas performance on a goal-driven behavior (indulgence) does not. In studies 3 and 4 we add a 5-minute time delay and replicate our prior findings. This persistence of the behavioral effects after a 5-minute time delay suggests that the effects are driven by an emotion-regulation goal.

“Circles, Squares, and Choice: Graphical Priming Effects on Uniqueness and Variety Seeking”
Michal Maimaran, Stanford University
S. Christian Wheeler, Stanford University

Research on human information processing shows that people are adept at disambiguating ambiguous stimuli and making generalizations from limited information (e.g., Higgins, 1996; Schank & Abelson, 1977). These processes can occur spontaneously, without the intention or awareness of the perceiver (e.g., Uleman, Newman, & Moscovitz, 1996). In this paper, we test the limits and implications of these processes by examining whether people will extract higher-order constructs from impoverished stimuli that have no inherent meaning, such as arrays of geometrical shapes, and whether exposure to such arrays will systematically affect consumers’ choices without their awareness or intention.

Specifically, we propose that individuals spontaneously and unintentionally extract abstract concepts from simple arrays of shapes, such as OOOOXO. Being primed with these types of arrays, we argue, can lead to activation of abstract concepts (in the above example, the concept of uniqueness), making them more accessible. We further propose that the activation of such constructs can affect consumer choice in a manner congruent with the activated construct. In contrast to most prior research on priming and automatic behavior, which has employed words (e.g., Bargh, Chen, & Burros, 1996) or pictures with inherent meaning or existing associations as the priming stimuli (e.g., Kay, Wheeler, Bargh & Ross 2004; Aarts & Dijksterhuis 2003), our paradigm uses novel arrays of shapes without any inherent meaning or preconditioned associations.

We conducted three studies in which we found effects on cognitive accessibility of uniqueness concepts, preference for uniqueness, and preference for variety seeking. We initially focused on these concepts because of their importance and centrality to consumer behavior. Nevertheless, we believe our findings can be generalized to other concepts, such as cooperation and defection in strategic situations. More generally, these arrays can be used in very mundane situations, such as logo selection by brands, to subtly convey various concepts.

In Study 1, we presented participants with either “uniqueness” arrays (e.g., OOOOXO) or “homogeneity” arrays (e.g., Oooooo). These and subsequent arrays were pretested to ensure that they conveyed the appropriate concepts. During the priming procedure, participants were instructed to count the number of circles and squares in each stimulus array. The presentation of arrays was combined with a lexical decision task, in which participants were asked to identify as quickly as possible whether a string of letters is a real word or not. As hypothesized, we found that participants shown uniqueness arrays were faster in recognizing “uniqueness” words (e.g., ‘unique’, ‘single’) than either “homogeneity” words (e.g., ‘similar’, ‘uniform’) or “neutral” words (e.g., ‘review’, ‘thirsty’), indicating a greater accessibility of the uniqueness concept. Importantly, in all studies, careful debriefing revealed that no participants consciously perceived any pattern to the stimulus arrays or believed that exposure to the arrays affected their behavior.

In Study 2, participants were presented with either “uniqueness” arrays or “homogeneity” arrays and were asked to count shapes as in Study 1. As compensation, participants were given the opportunity to select one from a set of milk chocolates. As hypothe-
esized, those shown uniqueness arrays were significantly more likely to choose the unique chocolate (a milk Hershey’s kiss wrapped in a different color) than those shown homogeneity arrays.

In the third study, we extended our examination to variety seeking. We presented participants with either “variety” arrays (e.g., OVOXOVXO) or “homogeneity” arrays (see above). As compensation, participants were offered a choice of three chocolates. As hypothesized, those shown variety arrays were significantly more likely to exhibit variety seeking in their choices (i.e., choose three different types of chocolates) than those shown homogeneity arrays.

Taken together, these studies show that individuals spontaneously extract meaning from ambiguous stimuli and their behavior unintentionally follows in kind. These studies reflect two key themes in the study of human perception and behavior: that individuals extract concepts beyond those inherent in the stimuli they encounter and that individuals’ behavior is driven by factors of which they are unaware. That these studies used impoverished stimuli for which individuals had no prior associations illustrates the pervasiveness of these tendencies and suggests that the applicability of these broad principles to consumer behavior processes may be greater than suggested by prior research and theorizing.

“Be Better or Be Merry: How Mood Affects Self-Control”
Ayelit Fishbach, University of Chicago
Aparna A. Labroo, University of Chicago

Are happy (vs. unhappy) consumers more or less likely to read an emotionally disturbing charity appeal and donate money toward the advocated cause? Are happy (vs. unhappy) consumers more or less likely to attend to an ad appeal that warns them about the adverse effects of caffeine consumption and advises them to change their wayward ways? Such issues that involve motivating consumers to incur short term pains for long term gains are often at the helm of public policy planning, and whereas the literature suggests that consumer moods will affect self control and adherence to goals, the evidence on what the effect will be and what the underlying process may be is mixed. On the one hand, the literature on mood indicates that happy individuals are more likely than neutral or unhappy individuals to seek positive and avoid negative stimuli, which suggests that they would be less likely to engage in unpleasant tasks involving self control. On the other hand, the literature also reports that happy (vs. unhappy) individuals seek out negative information when it is self relevant, which suggests that at least on some occasions they may be more likely to engage in self control.

The current investigation addresses this controversy from a perspective of recent research on goal priming. Since the pursuit of many long-term consumer goals requires overcoming conflicting short-term motives (e.g., Loewenstein, 1996; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999), contextual primes for an overriding goal are often not sufficient to promote goal-congruent actions. Under these conditions, happy (vs. neutral) individuals are better able to pursue primed long-term goals because positive mood is a signal to approach any accessible goal, whereas unhappy (vs. neutral) individuals are more likely to deter from pursuing primed long-term goals since negative mood is a signal to avoid an accessible goal. Importantly however, happy (vs. unhappy) individuals are expected to demonstrate increased self-control only when the higher order long-term goal is primed. Since positive mood serves as a booster, facilitating adherence to any primed goal, happy individuals are further expected to adhere to a contextually primed short-term goals such as maintaining their positive mood, whereas unhappy individuals would deter from such goal. As a result, happy individuals work harder on a task that serves an accessible long-term goal of self-improvement, but abstain from this task when primed with an incompatible mood-management goal. On the other hand, unhappy individuals deter from a task that serves an accessible long-term goal of self-improvement, which they are more likely to pursue when primed with an incompatible mood-management goal.

Four studies tested whether happy (vs. neutral and unhappy) individuals adhere to accessible goals regardless of their content (self-improvement or mood maintenance). These studies manipulated participants’ mood (happy, neutral, and unhappy) and accessible goal (self-improvement vs. mood maintenance) and measured performance on self-control tasks. Study 1 indicated that happy (vs. unhappy) individuals with an accessible self-improvement goal donated more to a charity campaign that involved exposure to negatively valenced emotionally draining materials; however, they withheld their donations (compared to unhappy individuals) when their accessible goal referred to mood-management. Study 2 expanded these findings to performance on a difficult and challenging creativity test depicted to be a valid indicator of future professional success. It finds that individuals in a happy mood with a salient self-improvement goal performed better on the test compared with unhappy individuals, but happy mood led to lower test performance among participants whose accessible goal referred to mood-management. Study 3 indicates that a positive mood further facilitates physical endurance, as measured by persistence on squeezing a handgrip described to participants as an indicator of future healthiness, but only when the task was compatible with a primed self-improvement goal. When the task was incompatible with a primed goal of mood-management, happy individuals did not express greater physical endurance than others. Finally, Study 4 examines the effect of mood on recalling negative information and it finds that happy individuals spent more time than others recalling the health consequences of caffeine consumption and that they ended up recalling more information—but only to the extent that they were primed with self-improvement rather than mood-management goal.

By addressing the effect of moods on adhering to accessible goals, this research integrates two lines of research of the relationships between mood and self-regulation: research on mood as the ultimate goal of self-regulation (e.g., Diener, 2000; Gilbert et al., 1998; Kahneman, 2000) and research on mood as a resource for self-regulation (e.g., Aspinwall, 1998; Leith & Baumeister, 1996; Raghunathan & Trope, 2002). We propose that when people experience mild positive mood, they are more likely to adhere to contextual goal primes. Under these conditions, when the mood-management goal is accessible, positive mood discourages choice of actions that undermine this goal. However, when the accessible goal refers to self-improvement, positive mood improves performance and hence it serves as a resource for self-regulation. Task performance thus depends upon whichever goal is more salient because of contextual primes. Happy individuals are better able to regulate either of these accessible goals.

“Individual Susceptibility to Priming Effects”
Stacy L. Wood, University of South Carolina
Catherine Poynor, University of South Carolina
Tanya Chartrand, Duke University

New research in priming suggests that our old beliefs about the inefficacy of subliminal advertising may need to be qualified (Bargh 2004). Researchers have demonstrated, in diverse paradigms, how people may respond to concepts that they have been exposed to below conscious awareness. Although priming effects are robust across reported studies, within-study variance suggests that some individuals are more impacted by the primes to which they are exposed. The purpose of this research is to test this concept and identify the characteristics that would contribute to individual differences in susceptibility to priming (STP). While priming
researchers may benefit from an STP scale as a useful covariate, consumer behaviorists are likely to be interested in the concept of STP due to its implications for advertising efficacy. If advertisers use priming to make salient those goals, ideas, or evaluative criteria that are most advantageous to the company, which consumers are most likely to be vulnerable to this nonconscious influence?

**Hypothesis.** We posit that people who are confident, socially poised, creative, and thoughtful are those who are most susceptible to priming. Stated broadly, one may interpret this as counterintuitive because of an expectation that those consumers who would be most at risk from subliminal advertising (or any form of manipulative advertising) are those who are characteristically vulnerable due to lower than average capabilities in cognition or communication. Yet, the mechanisms by which priming work suggest the opposite. Priming works through a spreading activation process in which a premise (e.g., a concept like “luxury”) automatically activates related nodes without the conscious control of the individual. Thus, primes require 1) physical (but not necessarily aware) exposure and 2) associative processing. This suggests two paths to priming susceptibility. First, individuals who are confident and socially poised may be more likely to exhibit an “approach” attitude to the environment and thus may naturally attend most to their immediate environment—this promotes physical exposure to a prime. Second, individuals with high need for cognition and creative or association-based thought (e.g., imaginative or interdependent thinkers) may favor thought processes that facilitate the spreading activation of primes.

**Study Protocol.** To test this hypothesis, we measured a population (n=112) on eight different trait scales that tapped into attentional or associative factors (Self Esteem, Need for Cognition, Self Monitoring [Attention to Emotion and Ability to Modulate], Action-Orientation, Imaginativeness, Interdependence, and Closemindedness) prior to their attendance at a research session. At the later session, participants engaged in several unrelated tasks, one of which was a priming study. Procedures similar to those used by Chartrand and Bargh (1996) were used to prime memory goals. Participants were randomly assigned to either the memory-prime or no-prime exposure condition. After the prime exposure, participants were directed to an ostensibly unrelated task in which a computer program self-guided participants through a product evaluation task. Participants received information about a new type of sports drink and were asked to read it. The screen then displayed 11 statements about the drink. After the 11 statements had been displayed, participants were given a questionnaire that asked them to recall as many statements as possible about the sports drink. Thus, priming effects would be demonstrated by primed participants recalling more words than unprimed participants.

**Results and Discussion.** Two coders, both blind to the study hypothesis, counted the number of discrete thought units correctly listed in participants’ free recall. Participants in the memory prime condition recalled significantly more words (M=9.91) than those who received no prime (M=8.54; F(1,108)=5.16, p=.025). We then considered each individual difference score separately to assess its impact on priming efficacy. A median split for each scale created two groups who scored either higher than or lower than the median. Five of the eight traits had a material influence on the priming effect as indicated by significant Prime x High/Low [scale median split] interactions. These traits included two attention-oriented tendencies (Self-Esteem and Attention to Emotion) and three associative tendencies (Action-orientation, Imagination, and Closemindedness).

A post-hoc formative scale to measure STP was constructed by selecting representative items from each of the scales. We selected the two items that had the highest item-to-total correlation within each respective scale. This 16 item scale showed remarkable reliability (Cronbach’s alpha=.672) despite its amalgamation from several distinct constructs. We then divided the participants into two groups based on a median split of the STP scale (median=77). As expected, the Prime x High/Low STP interaction is significant (F(1,104)=6.14, p=.008, one-tailed). Those who scored high on the STP scale showed a significantly stronger priming effect; primed participants recalled more words (M=10.89) than unprimed participants (M=7.79). This simple contrast is significant (F(1,46)=11.09, p=.002). For those low in STP, the prime did not have an effect on the number of words recalled (Mprime=9.08; Mno prime=9.03; p>.95). This protocol was repeated in a second study that examined a different type of priming task (achievement goal).

Overall, we demonstrate that people are differently susceptible to priming influences. This finding, and the development of a short-form STP scale, offer interesting implications for psychology, consumer behavior, public policy, and advertising and would generate an interactive and insightful discussion within the ACR forum.

**SELECTED REFERENCES**


Twenty eight scholars gathered at Exploring the Co-Evolution of Possession Constellations, Self, and Identity, a 2005 ACR roundtable session, to discuss the intersection of possession constellations (Solomon and Assael 1987), self, and identity. The quantity of participants, and quality of the discussion, demonstrates that this theme provides a common thread linking seemingly diverse topics in consumer research. Representative topics thus linked include: self-extension (Belk 1988), possession attachment (Ball and Tasaki 1992; Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988), possession value (Richins 1994), authenticity (Grayson and Martinec 2004); identity salience effects (Reed 2004), identity schemas (Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993), Diderot effects (McCacken 1988), possession collections (Baker and Martin 2000); brand communities (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001), disposition (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2004; McAlexander 1991; Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000), involuntary possession loss (Sayre 1994), and anti-constellations (Hogg and Mitchell 1997).

Discussion at the 2005 roundtable was lively, engaging, and generative. Thematically, the discussion emphasized identity issues. After the 2005 roundtable, several participants volunteered their interest in continuing the discussion at another roundtable, with emphasis to be placed on the ordinary product side of the identity/possession dialectic.

The ordinary products an individual uses in day-to-day living–food eaten for breakfast, a pen to jot a note, a scraper to remove ice from a windshield–are neither dramatic nor seemingly extraordinary. Perhaps because such products seem so ordinary, their consumption is often overlooked in consumer research. Yet, ordinary consumption objects fill consumer’s homes, and the consumption of them pervades consumer’s daily lives (Douglas and Isherwood 1979). Consumers spontaneously use mundane objects such as “utensils, chairs, clothing, foods, and cleansing products” to “account, or provide a perspective for action” on a regular, ongoing basis (Heisley and Levy, 1991, p. 263) suggesting that such everyday objects are not so ordinary, on a functional level. Moreover, mundane consumption objects contribute to, and reflect, identity (e.g., Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993). The most common and pervasive identity projects in which consumers engage often involve the most ordinary objects. Occasionally, mundane objects precipitate extraordinary, unintended consequences (McCracken 1988), or become objects of attachment (Ball and Tasaki 1992; Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). Ordinary consumption objects used regularly have extraordinary implications.

The goals of this Part 2 Roundtable are to:

- Continue and complement conversations initiated at last year’s roundtable, “Exploring the Co-Evolution of Possession Constellations, Self, and Identity.” Twenty eight (28) scholars participated in the 2005 roundtable. Discussion was lively, engaging, and generative. Thematically, the discussion emphasized identity issues. After the 2005 roundtable, several participants shared their interest in continuing the discussion at another complementary roundtable at which the primary emphasis is placed on the ordinary product side of the identity/possession dialectic. Hence, discussion at this roundtable will emphasize mundane consumption.
- Bring together consumer researchers interested in exploring the intersection of identity and consumption generally, and the role of mundane ordinary products in consumer’s daily lives specifically.
- Initiate establishing a research agenda to further understand such mundane consumption.
- Enable networking of interested scholars leading to research alliances to further understanding of mundane consumption.

REFERENCES


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**SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY**

**Space, the Final Frontier: Consumer Adaptation, Resistance and Redefinition of Spatial Limitation in the Marketspace**

Teresa Pavia, University of Utah, USA
Marlys Mason, Oklahoma State University, USA

**SESSION OVERVIEW**

Anyone who has broken a leg can attest that most people go through their day blissfully oblivious to small gradations in slope, curbs, cramped aisles or tight parking places. Near-sighted baby boomers are discovering that poorly lit aisles make reading labels or credit card numbers difficult. Parents of newborns quickly realize that their prime shopping opportunities are often late at night when stores may be closed but, thank goodness, the internet is open. In each case, marketers have assiduously worked to fine-tune the place component of the marketing mix, only to have consumers face idiosyncratic spatial impediments that limit the exchange process.

The focus of this session is to explore the meaning that consumers attach to their spatial relationship with and spatial movement through the marketplace, particularly when experiencing spatial impediments. The topic is approached from a theoretical perspective propelled by existing theories in sociology, geography and semiotics. The social construction of the market defines normative “movement” and thus identifies consumers who cannot participate like everyone else as other. Social exclusion is a term used in policy discourse in relation to individuals that are outside the mainstream of the labor and citizenship (e.g., illegal workers, the homeless). At its heart, social exclusion reflects both isolation and segregation (Sommerville 1998), elements that normally reflect abstract notions of separateness as well as physically grounded spatial disconnection. Research in the area identifies physical disconnection as a manifestation of abstract separateness (e.g., unwillingness to leave the neighborhood due to language barriers) or as impediments to inclusion (e.g., the persistence of enclaves of minorities) (Massey and Denton 1993).

Using ethnographic and interview methods, the presenters investigate the meaning of moving through market space to engage in exchanges via the lens of consumers who face specific challenges, either in mobility restrictions, homelessness, or information processing deficits. The three papers address questions of 1) how consumers adapt to being denoted as other in this setting, 2) how they resist this demarcation, and 3) how they redefine the market space to make it inclusive rather than exclusive. Building on existing theory in socio-spatial relation that addresses the spatiality of social life (Richardson and Jensen 2003) and extending this thinking into the spatiality of market exchange, the presenters draw from their empirical work to argue that the inherent nature of space, the control of the space, norms and rules about space, and even the language of space are socially constructed and closely linked to power.

**REFERENCES**


**EXTENDED ABSTRACTS**

“Expanding Retail Spaces: Website Accessibility for Consumers with Visual Impairments”
Carol Kaufman-Scarborough, Rutgers University
Terry L. Childers, University of Kentucky

“When I go to store I find it embarrassing I can’t find what things are without touching them and have to ask for help and sometimes people can’t or will not help. I have to go with people. Shopping online lets me be independent (Teresa, 24).

When examining the experiences of persons with a specific disability, such as vision impairments, it is unclear exactly what their experience of shopping space has been and what, if any, new opportunities are offered by shopping online. The goal of this study is to address these questions building on the work of Baker (2006, 2001) and her work with visually impaired consumers in the physical marketplace.

As Baker (2006) notes, retail store “spaces” are designed assuming that most customers have usable vision and are able to fully experience the colors, décor, displays and signage. Essentially, the physical shopping market defines normative “movement” as being able to drive, walk, or take mass transit to shopping locations, and often is constructed so that the shopper relies on visual cues to determine their route through malls and stores. Moreover, a basic assumption is that all customers can search on their own, navigate through each store, and respond to store cues in making their decisions and purchases. Nothing is further than the truth for consumers who are affected by significant visual impairments, since the limitations and effort of traveling to the retail space, navigating through unseen or poorly seen space, and receiving help in shopping may undermine the degree of independence or normalcy that these consumers experience.

The built or physical environment has been criticized being designed from an “ableist” perspective, assuming that physical places are constructed so that persons who are able-bodied will participate (Chounard 1997; Imrie 1999). Basically, persons who are not able-bodied are not expected to participate, and thus are not “expected customers.” Such criticisms are typically made of the built environment rather than the virtual world of the Internet. In essence, shopping in cyberspace “should” be like taking a trip to the mall without the physical limitations found in most built shopping spaces. That is, it allows persons with disabilities “to transcend the issues of time, space, communication, and the body” (Seymour and Lupton 2004), and more importantly, allows the shopper to feel “normal” in that setting (Baker 2006).

Depth interviews were conducted with 45 persons who have visual impairments in order to examine their comparisons of physical spaces with the virtual space of online stores. Each was interviewed for approximately 30 to 60 minutes concerning their use of the Internet, their assistive technologies, and the web access issues that they felt were most important. The participants had web access and varying degrees of experience and expertise with online shopping. Results show that multiple themes emerged from analysis concerning individuals’ concern for independence, empower-
ment, and quality of information that is engendered though availing themselves of online access to shopping. Additionally, interviews identified a series of impediments to their online shopping experience. These impediments included; the nature of website construction (the lack of Alt tags on pictures), the need for assistance from others to fulfill certain online purchasing tasks (e.g., completing purchase forms), and in many cases, the ambiguity of product descriptions (e.g. ambiguous color names).

Preliminary analysis indicates that the question as whether they choose electronic markets over physical markets because of problems with bricks and mortar stores is a simplistic one. There are multiple issues involved.

- Independence: Many enjoy shopping in physical stores, but complain that their shopping trips are limited to “purpose-driven” outings restricted to the sections of their destination stores that either store employees or personal assistants choose for shopping. Areas with spatial challenges are avoided, eliminating the merchandise from these areas well.
- Empowerment: Some gather and analyze product and store information online, with subsequent purchase in stores or by telephone. Browsing becomes possible for the first time.
- Improved quality of information: The web provides information that is inaccessible in many store spaces, such as reading product labels (such as, through screen readers) or enlarging patterns and designs.
- Less information: Unable to touch certain types of products for examination.
- Unanticipated problems in store space: They indicate they may avoid the physical store space due to problems that they have encountered, such as spilled items that present dangers to their guide dogs.

When Baker’s dimensions of normalcy are considered:

- Online shopping not only maintains a feeling of participating in the marketplace for persons with visual impairments. In many instances it increases it.
- To some extent, online shopping allows them to feel treated as individuals, but they prefer personal contact in stores for social interactions.
- Online shopping allows them to feel empowered with new access to information.
- With online shopping, persons with visual impairments feel a more equal access to products and information. A new equal access to written information such as labels can be found.
- Websites are uneven in their accessibility and may assume visual scanning by the user. Information may lack necessary detail to be useful. Designs of certain web elements may not be compatible with assistive technologies.

Our analysis gives new insights into spatial tradeoffs that persons with visual impairments make when choosing a market space for their shopping purposes. It is not an “either-or” decision, but instead each type of market space presents its own opportunities and challenges.

“The Homeless Renegotiating Marketspaces: Hey! Why is Your Store in Our Living Room?”

Natalie Ross Adkins, Creighton University
Susie Pryor, University of Nebraska

Hill and Stamey (1990) boldly ventured into a previously unresearched area in the consumer behavior field when they sought to understand how the homeless acquire possessions and attach meanings to them. Their research vividly stresses how the homeless face multiple structural impediments to basic interactions within traditional marketplaces (Hill and Stamey 1990; Hill 1991). Homeless consumers routinely experience multiple disadvantages and increased risks for victimization due to their social structural location and “restricted access to housing, employment, and public spaces” (Gatez 2004; Roschelle and Kaufman 2004). Raising rates of homelessness especially among families exacerbate these risks. The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates the magnitude of people without domiciles in the United States to approach nearly 3 million people per year and more than 750,000 people per night with more than half being comprised of homeless families (www.endhomelessness.org 2005).

For many domiciled consumers and consumer researchers, the homeless are invisible with only occasional glimpses into this reality offered when approached by a panhandler on a city street corner. Due in part to negative public sentiment, disengagement and self-marginalization, and harassment by society and police, many of the homeless avoid use of public spaces for shelter and other living necessities (Hill and Stamey 1990). In sharp contrast, this research examines the socio-spatial dynamics of homelessness in a well-defined downtown retail area (DRAs).

Marketing scholars’ understanding and investigations of the interplay of social and commercial elements in market spaces, like DRAs, remain limited, although a growing body of work recognizes DRAs’ roles in community development and life (Shils 1997; Presti 2003). Drawing upon the marketing literature on co-production which primarily focuses on its proximal benefits for co-producers (i.e., efficiencies for marketers and services from products for consumers; Bendapudi and Leone 2003; Vargo and Lusch 2004), this research examines other less proximal and more general consequences, including the production and negotiation of marketplace meanings by merchants, domiciled consumers and the homeless inhabiting the research area. We will discuss how in a given community, the creation of meaning is renegotiated through the symbolism of the marketplace and is a source of identification for those involved (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002).

Specifically, we explore how the homeless in a downtown retail area negotiate and survive in the physical space of the marketplace which was neither “designed nor intended for residence and basic subsistence activities” (Harter, Berquist, Titsworth, Novak and Brokaw 2005, p. 315). Similar to the findings of Adkins and Ozanne’s (2005) study of consumers with low literacy, homeless consumers who successfully reject and renegotiate the negative label and derogatory identities associated with it feel empowered to exert control, choice, and influence in the marketplace (Buffalo and Rogers 1974; Hill and Stamey 1990; Pryor 2006).

The study site was a downtown retail area in a Midwestern city with a population of approximately 90,000. The area encompasses 27 block sides with 130 stores, service establishments, and restaurants. Data collected over a 3-year period using multiple ethnographic methods including participant and non-participant observation; semi-structured field interviews; long interviews with retailers and domiciled consumers; and secondary data collection of artifacts (including marketing collaterals and communication materials).
Marketers and consumers who used the DRA in different ways expressed different views about its meanings. These meanings were social, cultural, economic, and political, as well as consumption-related, in nature. Additionally, tensions and inconsistencies in their views about the marketplace’s formal, commercial, festive, and other qualities exist between the various groups (Pryor and Grossbart, forthcoming; Peñaloza 2000; Sherry 1990). Yet, there are socially acceptable variations in marketplace meanings because, as it has in other settings, the resulting social capital in the area fosters tolerance or reconciliation of differences (Flora and Flora 1993).

Historically, the merchants and the domiciled consumers in the DRA organize and support charitable events designed to provide resources for the needy and homeless. However, more recently, the merchants in the area have become actively involved in pressing the city to move social service resources out of the DRA and for the passage of additional ordinance and policies governing the transient population and to protect the aesthetic qualities and appeal of the downtown area. As one merchant explained,

“I am entirely tired of the street musicians who hang out across the street from my business,” he said. “Many of my customers are senior citizens who find them intimidating and frightening.” (FN, DLI meeting, 2001)

We explicate the manner in which several of the homeless engage in co-production with an established spatial area and add “flavor” to the marketplace environment. By actively co-opting marketplace symbols and structures for their own purposes, such as “homeless Santa” who uses the commercial symbolism of Christmas to panhandle and street musicians who sit by entrances to retail outlets singing and playing for a coin, the homeless in the DRA are challenging local merchants efforts to define the space without them.

“Marketspace Power Struggles: Families Confronting Spatial Limitations”
Marlys Mason, Oklahoma State University
Teresa Pavia, University of Utah

As most parents of newborns discover, the ability to move through the marketplace that most able-bodied adults take for granted is immediately changed by the arrival of a child. Over time, families become adept at meeting the physical challenge of engaging as a parent-plus-child consumer aided, in part, by marketplace adaptations such as car seats that integrate into a carriage or parking spots reserved for parents with small children. While physical impediments may be overcome or accommodated, various marketspaces, are understood to be off limits to the parent-with-child consumer due to social norms (e.g., a very fancy restaurant), legal restrictions (e.g., bars or strip clubs), or environmental stresses (e.g., extreme adventure travel). For a variety of reasons most people believe such social exclusion policies are not only acceptable, they are commendable and proper.

The dark side of social exclusion, however, is condemned. Laws and policies have been enacted to ensure equal access to marketplace regardless of diverse attributes (e.g., race, ethnicity, disability). Sellers portray their spaces as accessible and open to all, with mixed races, ethnicities and genders commonly appearing in promotional materials. Is the space of the market really accessible and open to all though? This question raises two issues: can the individual physically move into the marketplace, and is the individual socially excluded from the marketplace. Families with a child who has a disability provide a window into the complex relationship that consumers have with the space of the market, exclusions consumers experience, and notions of activities that are appropriate for the public sphere.

In the U.S. approximately 20% of the 54.4 million non-institutionalized children between 5 and 20 years of age are designated as having some type of disability (US Census Bureau 2005, Table 34). Although the disabilities in question span a wide range of cognitive, physical, and sensory disabilities, all families of children with special needs remain challenged by barriers that the marketspace presents for far longer than the average family with a typical newborn or able-bodied child.

Using a phenomenological approach, this paper explores the lived experience of families with a special needs child in marketspaces constructed with ‘normal’ consumers and families in mind. Following prolonged immersion into the special needs community, twenty two in-depth interviews were conducted, with each lasting approximately 1-2 hours. The interviews were largely unstructured using broad guiding questions as initial prompts.

Specifically, we investigate 1) the spatial challenges (both physical and social) that families face in marketspaces, 2) the means that families use to adapt to these challenges, and 3) identifiers of the “other” that consumers experience in the marketspace. This research has descriptive findings that center on concrete elements of spatial exclusion, and theoretical findings that address the abstract exclusion experienced by the “other”. On the concrete level, all informants describe retail environments as not understanding special needs children and families when designing the marketplace. For example, they discuss too few handicapped parking spaces, inappropriate store services and displays targeted to normal kids that trigger inappropriate outbursts in those with behavioral impairments. These negative consumption experiences elevate the family’s awareness of the disability and at times create such difficulties that the family voluntarily excludes themselves from the marketspace. To accommodate the special need, our informants discuss making adjustments in fundamental and specific areas such as shopping (e.g., locations, time, medium), travel and vacations, recreation and leisure, vehicles, living spaces, celebrations and holidays, etc. They also discussed larger shifts related to consumption including employment choices that allow the parent the flexibility to work, and major shifts in family roles, particularly roles related to movements between different spatial spheres of the family (e.g., teen doing routine grocery shopping, a shift to traditional gender roles of the mother at home, care giving, and the father outside the home as breadwinner).

The theoretical contributions of this research center around persistent inversions of commonly held notions of spatiality that these families face. Scarry (1985) argues that a unique aspect of pain derives from “an almost obscene conflation of public and private” in which activities that are normally private (such as crying or vomiting) become public, and activities that are normally public (such as eating or conversation) must be done in solitude. The pain of the marketplace for consumers living with physical/mental limitations arises in part from public aversion to a body that does not follow convention public/private norms. At the same time, informants express distress that the acutely visible limitations they display appear to evoke no market response in terms of new products, environments or understanding.

Demarked as the other, parents report both avoidance and resistance, depending on the situation. For example, informants move between in-your-face, up close and personal advocacy for their child, and striving, conformist behaviors such as dressing the child in brand name clothes for outings so he/she looks “cute”. Parents report managing their space in ways that increase privacy
and decrease the judgmental public stare: some assume health care
tasks specifically to remove other providers from the home, some
limit face-to-face confrontations by employing e-mail or letters,
and many refuse to meet other shoppers’/patrons’ eyes when in
public. Parents report assertively managing their environment, but
report that most victories are hard won and often transitory. That is,
small accommodations are made, but there are no changes to the
system to formalize the adaptation.

Our analysis highlights the symbolic meanings that the fami-
lies attach to their spatial limitations in the marketspace and their
adaptations. Consumer resistance is traced both as straightforward
complaining and as more subversive “rule bending”; consumer
conformance is noted primarily as an effort to fit in and be accepted.
These informants speak for other consumers who redefine what
they want and will accept from the marketspace and in doing so
simultaneously redefine spatiality in their consumption and de-
mand a renegotiation of power between themselves and the market-
place.

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SESSION OVERVIEW
Consumers often must estimate the lengths of time intervals when making decisions. For example, they might forecast the time until a payment will be received when evaluating interest rates, or might estimate how long they waited in line when deciding whether to revisit a store. These estimates are likely to be influenced by factors beyond objective duration, much as judgments of frequency or likelihood are often biased by ostensibly irrelevant factors (Gilovich, Griffin, and Kahneman, 2002). To further our understanding of how consumers perceive time, the papers in this session explore factors that make time intervals of equal objective length seem long or short. Specifically, these papers examine how the events involved in a time interval affect perceptions of that interval’s length.

Faro, McGill, and Hastie begin by examining how perceptions of a past time interval are affected by the relationship between the events denoting the interval’s beginning and end. They find that intervals seem shorter when their beginning and ending events have a strong causal relationship than when the causal relationship is weaker; they also find that the type of cause connecting the events heavily influences length judgments. Diehl, Levav, and Zauberaman augment this finding by focusing on the number of events perceived to have been caused by the beginning event. They find that intervals begun by an event that triggered many subsequent events seem longer than do intervals begun by an event that triggered few events. Finally, LeBoeuf and Simmons extend these findings to perceptions of future time. Building from the suggestion that past intervals seem longer when they contain more events, these authors investigate whether perceptions of future intervals are similarly affected by whether the intervals seem full of events, as opposed to empty. Daniel Read serves as the discussant; his work on intertemporal planning, and intertemporal choice, as discussed in the papers that here also suggest ways in which past and future time perception frame of time intervals, lends him an ideal perspective on this work.

This session highlights common themes emerging from these independently developed streams of research, thereby facilitating general conclusions about factors affecting time perception. These papers thus shed light on important practical issues, such as how consumers perceive, for example, the length of time that they wait for a shipment to arrive or the length of time that they must wait for an investment to mature. Interestingly, the papers presented here also suggest ways in which past and future time perception differ, highlighting the need for additional research to examine whether other established properties of past time perception hold in the relatively unexplored domain of future time perception. More broadly, this research has implications for theories of memory, planning, and intertemporal choice, as discussed in the papers that follow.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

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Consider the time that elapses between a cause and an effect. For example, the time between using a product and experiencing its benefit, placing an ad and seeing its impact on sales, or developing a new product and, in doing so, triggering a competitor’s response. Understanding retrospective judgments of the time between cause-effect events is important because people rely on these when they later face similar situations (“How long shall I wait for a pain killer to show its effect before I take another pill?”) and when they evaluate efficiency of actions (“How quickly did Microsoft react to Apple’s introduction of iPod?”).

Recent research has shown that people rely on their impressions of the strength of the causal relationship between two events as a cue to judge the time between them. A stronger perception of a causal relationship results in shorter judgments of time (Faro et al. 2005). The present work examines the psychological underpinnings of this tendency. We suggest the time-shortening effect of causality reflects a default physics-based view of causal mechanisms. Temporal proximity is an important cue in perceiving causality between physical objects (e.g., Michotte 1963). Given its prominence and early use, the temporal proximity cue might be generalized to other domains (Heider 1944). However, recent research showed that people do not always expect events to be proximate in time in order to link them causally. If the mechanism by which the events are believed to be related entails temporal delay, or a causal force that does not lose its impact over time, the events can be seen as causally related in spite of the lack of temporal proximity (Brickman et al. 1975; Buehner et al. 2003; Hagmayer and Waldmann 2002).

In the first two studies we manipulate participants’ salient mental model of causality and examine its effect on time estimates. Building on the above research, we hypothesize that if causes are perceived as factors that lose their force over time, a strong impression of causality will result in shorter time estimates. If, however, causes are perceived as factors that have stable or increasing force over time, an impression of causality will not shorten time estimates.

In the first study participants made elapsed time judgments for causally related pairs of events. Prior to making time estimates, participants were asked to choose (from provided lists) either a) which emotions are associated with the actors in the events, or b) which trait characteristics are associated with the actors in the events, or c) which situational factors are associated with these events. In a fourth, control condition, participants made time estimates without any choice task. We predicted that emotions would be perceived as a causal force that dissipates over time and hence focusing on these would result in shorter time estimates. In contrast, focusing on traits and situational factors, which tend to be causal forces that have stable impact over time, should result in longer time estimates. Results were in line with these predictions.

In the second study, prior to making time judgments, participants were asked to explain in writing the workings of three physical processes or three biological processes. We hypothesized that thinking about physical processes would trigger a view of causal forces that dissipate over time while thinking about biological processes would trigger a view of causal forces that increase over time. Participants in the physics-prime conditions judged the subsequent pairs of events to be closer in time than participants in the biology-prime condition.

The first two studies manipulated the type-of-cause and showed that the impression of causality shortens time for dissipative causes (emotions, physical forces) but not for stable or increasing causes...
(traits, biological forces). This suggests that the inference of short time from causality is a heuristic driven by people’s dominant physics-based view of causality. Previous research has shown that people who are low in NFC are more likely to use heuristics for judgment. This suggests that people who are low in NFC would give shorter time estimates for causally related events than people high in NFC. Participants in the third study made elapsed time judgments for causally related pairs of events, but also for pairs that were pre-tested to be causally not related. They then completed the NFC scale (Cacioppo and Petty 1982). Results revealed an interaction between NFC and type of event-pair. For the non-causal events, there was no difference between the time estimates for the high and low NFC participants, suggesting that NFC does not affect time estimates in general. For the causal pairs however, as predicted, low NFC participants gave significantly shorter time estimates than the high NFC participants.

The three studies reveal a common pattern. Participants gave shorter time estimates when they focused on dissipative causes. In addition, participants who tend to rely on heuristics gave shorter time estimates for cause-effect pairs of events. The findings suggest the time-shortening effect of causality reflects a default physics-based view of causal mechanisms where the force of a cause dissipates over time. The physics metaphor is a prominent mode of thinking about causality in other contexts and domains (Heider 1944). This form of thinking about causality and its shortening implication for time judgment might underlie the underestimation of time and the impatience with causal processes observed in many contexts.

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“1995 Feels so Close Yet so Far: The Effect of Event ‘Markers’ on the Subjective Feeling of Elapsed Time”
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Why do some events feel more distant than others? Past research has documented a number of factors contributing to this phenomenon, reporting positive correlations between feelings of recency and greater event importance, vividness, and emotionality. But what about events that are equally vivid or emotional? We argue that equally vivid or emotional events can feel more or less distant in time depending upon the perceived number of subsequent events precipitated by the target event. We call these subsequent events “memory markers.” We hypothesize that events associated with a larger number of markers will elicit feelings of greater temporal distance than equally vivid events that are associated with fewer markers.

Associative network models of memory predict a positive relationship between the number of events subsequent to a target initiating event and the activation of the target event. Greater activation—and stronger memories—should reduce feelings of temporal distance because people typically hold lay theories about the positive relationship between memory strength and memory recency (Schwarz 2005). We predict the opposite: Associating a greater number of subsequent events should divide time into more discrete segments, which will in turn increase the perceived temporal distance of the initiating event. This idea is most in line with the conveyor belt model of memory (Murdock 1974), which suggests that, when trying to assess an event’s timing, people scan backwards from the present to the target event. Recency is a function of the memory traces encountered in the scan. This model, however, was tested mainly in laboratory settings using simple word list tasks and has not been extended to the kind of emotional, real life experiences that are of interest to us here.

Note that we are not interested in people’s assessments of the exact time an event happened; instead, we focus on how long ago an event feels like it happened. In contrast, prior research has focused on people’s estimates of elapsed time by comparing respondents’ judged timing of an event with its actual calendar date (e.g., Thompson, Skowronski, and Lee 1988). Using the dating method, researchers have identified the phenomenon of “telescoping,” which refers to people’s tendency to report distant events as having occurred more recently than they actually did (forward telescoping) or the tendency to report that more recent events occurred in the more distant past (backward telescoping; e.g., Morwitz 1997).

We conducted a computer-based survey to investigate our marker hypothesis. Seventy-seven undergraduate students were asked to indicate how recent 19 vivid, national and school-specific public events felt to them. The study was conducted in November 2004 and all target events had occurred in the 2003 calendar year. For each event, participants first indicated their subjective feelings of when the event had occurred using a scale anchored at 1 (feels very recent) and 15 (feels very distant); they could also indicate that they were not aware of the event. Participants assessed their feelings of recency for all 19 events. They then rated the extent of their feeling that each event caused subsequent events on a scale from 1 (triggered no event) to 7 (triggered many events). They also indicated how well they remembered each of the target events (1–not at all, 7–perfectly) and how emotional they judged the event to be (1–not at all emotional, 7–extremely emotional). The order of the events participants responded to was randomly determined for each measure. Finally, they were asked to indicate the month and year that the event occurred.

Accuracy Results. While we were mostly interested in respondents’ subjective feeling of elapsed time, we assessed dating accuracy by calculating the difference in months between the dates provided by the respondents and the actual dates on which the events occurred. Using this measure, positive numbers indicate backward telescoping and negative numbers indicate forward telescoping. Across all events of which participants were aware (n=1150), we find some evidence of backward telescoping: participants dated the events as having occurred about 2.5 months earlier than they actually did (t(1149)=7.66, p<.0001). Unsurprisingly,
rating accuracy increased the more memorable the event \( F(1,76)=13.29, p<.001 \), but did not depend on how long the event was judged to be \( F(1,76)=0, p>.8 \) or the number of subsequent events that had been triggered \( F(1,76)=0, p>.8 \).

Subjective Feeling of Distance Results. Our main prediction regards the subjective feeling of elapsed time. Subjective feelings of elapsed time were positively and significantly correlated with the reported \( r=0.25, p<.001 \), as well as the actual \( r=0.15, p<.001 \), number of months passed. However these correlations were small, suggesting that factors other than objective time may drive feelings of elapsed time.

We performed a median-split based on participants’ assessments of the number of events triggered by a target event. For each event we calculated the median number of subsequent events reported. We then determined whether a given participant an event was perceived as having triggered many versus few subsequent events relative to that median. Next we estimated the effect of this dichotomous variable on participants’ experience of elapsed time, while controlling for actual time passed, event memorability, and event emotionality. As one would expect, actual elapsed time had a significant positive effect \( F(1,76)=35.41, p<.0001 \) and event memorability had a significant negative effect \( F(1,76)=44.39, p<.0001 \) on how distant the event felt to participants. Emotionality of the event did not have a significant effect \( F(1,76)=1.77, p>.18 \).

Since emotionality and memorability were significantly correlated \( r=0.52, p<.001 \), multicollinearity is a concern. However, estimating the same model excluding memorability also does not reveal a significant effect of emotionality at conventional levels of significance \( F(1,76)=2.39, p>.12 \). More important for our prediction, however, events perceived to have triggered many subsequent events were felt significantly more distant than events that triggered fewer such events \( F(1,76)=7.64, p<.01 \).

In sum, this study tests whether the perceived number of subsequent events triggered by a target event affects the subjective feeling of time elapsed since the target event. Our findings support the notion that feelings of elapsed time depend on the perceived number of memory markers, even after controlling for the actual time elapsed since the event as well as the event’s emotionality and memorability. To test our explanation further, in our next experiment we will manipulate the number of subsequent events that are associated with the target event.

References

“Perceptions of the Length of Future Time Intervals: A Simulation Perspective”
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Joseph P. Simmons, Yale University

Consumers often make decisions about future events and transactions. These decisions range from the relatively mundane (e.g., scheduling dental appointments) to the potentially life-altering (e.g., saving for retirement). While researchers have examined specific questions about how consumers discount future dollars (see Loewenstein, Read, and Baumeister 2003, for a review) and plan future tasks (Buehler, Griffin, and Ross 1994), relatively little work has examined the more basic question of how consumers perceive future time. Even the influential construal-level theory (Troepe and Liberman 2003), which discusses how consumers react differently to near-future versus far-future events, is relatively silent on the factors that might make a given event seem near or far. In this paper, we explore such factors to understand what makes future time intervals of equal objective length seem relatively long instead of short.

Our work builds on research on past time intervals, and particularly on the finding that past intervals containing many events tend to be estimated as having lasted longer than intervals containing relatively few events (Fraisse 1984). We investigate whether a similar pattern characterizes the perception of future time intervals. Our work also builds on the recent finding that extent-described future events (e.g., “four months”) tend to be perceived as longer than equivalent date-described intervals (e.g., “June 1 to October 1”), potentially because the former descriptions direct attention to interval length in a way that the latter do not (LeBoeuf 2006). This finding suggests that consumers may be more sensitive to nuances in interval presentation when intervals are described by extents instead of dates.

We thus predict that future time perception should be affected by whether future intervals seem “full” instead of “empty,” and that fullness effects should mainly manifest for extent-described intervals. More specifically, our hypothesis is an interval-simulation one: those facing extent descriptions may naturally simulate interval passage whereas those facing date descriptions may not; this may lead participants facing extents to be more affected by factors, such as the number of intervening events, that might impact simulations to make an interval “feel” long or short.

Study 1 therefore had a 2 (interval description: date or extent) x 2 (number of events: 0 or 6) x 2 (interval length: four or six months) design. Length was varied within subjects, and the other factors were manipulated between subjects. Some participants were asked to list six things that would happen during a presented interval, whereas others were not; all participants then rated the perceived length of that interval on a seven-point scale ranging from “seems very short” to “seems very long.” As predicted, filling date-described intervals did not impact length perceptions. However, filling extent-described intervals made those intervals seem shorter than did contemplating empty intervals. Thus, the perceived length of extent-described intervals was sensitive to fullness, but, unlike full past intervals, full future intervals seemed shorter than empty ones. This finding makes sense if people naturally simulate the passage of extent-described intervals: Simulating an empty interval may suggest that the interval will feel like a long wait. Simulating a full interval, however, may lead to perceptions of a busy interval passing by quickly.

Study 2 explored the impact of the type of event with which participants filled extent-described intervals. As before, prior to rating interval length, some participants contemplated an empty interval, whereas others were asked to fill the interval with any six unspecified events. A third group filled the interval with six “rare” events, and a final group filled it with six “frequently occurring” events. We predicted that filling the interval with frequently-occurring events would make the interval seem busy, and hence shorter, whereas filling the interval with rare events would make the interval seem empty and long. We found once again that filling the interval with events of unspecified frequency made the interval seem shorter than did filling it with no events. We also found, as predicted, that filling the interval with frequent events made it seem shorter than did filling it with rare events. These results thus suggest
that length judgments depend not only on whether participants fill the intervals, but also on inferences about how full the intervals seem, with fuller-seeming intervals appearing shorter.

An alternative explanation is that length judgments are driven by difficulty, rather than perceived fullness. It may be harder to list rare than frequent events; increased difficulty, rather than decreased perceived interval fullness, may have led intervals in the “rare” condition to seem longer. Study 3 pitted these two explanations against each other by requiring participants to either list five or twelve events in an upcoming six-month interval. If fuller intervals seem shorter, the twelve-event interval should seem shorter than the five-event interval, but if easy-to-fill intervals seem shorter, one would expect the opposite (as participants found it easier to generate five events than to generate twelve). Twelve-event intervals were rated as shorter than five-event intervals, suggesting again that perceived fullness drives length judgments.

Thus, our findings support an interval-simulation hypothesis: when judging the length of an extent-described interval, participants may mentally simulate interval passage. Intervals that feel full and busy seem to “fly” by and are judged as short. Intervals that feel empty are judged as long. Individuals facing intervals described by dates seem less affected by these factors, perhaps because the date format does not lend itself to natural simulation. These results have implications not only for the psychology of time perception, but also for consumer decisions about future events. Consumers scheduling future services, for example, may be affected by how long the intervening interval seems (and thus, by whether that interval is presented as full or empty). Similarly, discount rates will likely be affected by factors, such as those identified here, that increase or decrease perceived interval length. This investigation into future time perception should aid theorists and practitioners alike in their attempts to understand and anticipate consumer behavior.

References
SESSION OVERVIEW

Understanding whether and how consumers react to the possibility of dying is becoming an important issue in marketing. Car accidents, terror attacks, cancer, and other causes of death are becoming more salient in individuals’ minds due to their increasing frequency and extended media coverage. Terror Management Theory (TMT; Greenberg et al. 1997) provides an explanation for behaviors exerted when individuals are prompted to think about mortality. TMT suggests that when individuals are reminded of their death they experience existential anxiety, which they try to relieve by bolstering cultural worldviews and/or enhancing self-esteem. In Western cultures, consumption is an important source of self-esteem. The research in this session contributes to the literature by examining the impact of mortality salience on different consumption and choice patterns. In particular, the first paper shows that different death causes impact differently consumption behavior and product evaluation, as a result of a desire for control. The second paper provides an in-depth view into the moderating effect of mortality salience on the desire for control. The third paper investigates how and why mortality salience changes consumption choices and focus.

The first paper, by Herzenstein and Horsky, compares predictions drawn from TMT with how individuals in terrorized areas behave. Three experiments and numerous in-depth interviews were conducted in Israel where terror attacks are frequent. The authors find that these attacks have caused individuals to behave in ways that presumably exert some individual control over the uncertain situation (in order to mitigate their fear of death and continue with their lives). This systematic change in behavior affects products’ evaluations and choices. Specifically, luxury items that symbolize high status within the culture were more appealing to participants who were prompted to think about death (by causes such as cancer or car accidents) compared with those who were prompted to think about dying in a terror attack. Luxury products with characteristics that may allow individuals to feel more in control of their environment were also rated higher on the luxury scale by those in the death condition, but those in the terrorism condition stated higher purchase intentions for those products. Individuals’ locus-of-control moderated this relation.

In the second paper, Ferraro and Agrawal suggest that one way to relieve anxiety resulting from mortality salience is by bolstering self-esteem through desiring and exerting control. Having a greater desire for control counteracts the lack of control over one’s death. The authors test this prediction in two experiments. In study 1, they directly measure desire for control and in study 2, they compare the benefits individuals may experience when choosing from a larger set with the psychological costs of such a choice. They find that when mortality is salient, having “too much choice” leads to greater satisfaction than having only limited choice.

The third paper by Mandel and Smeesters examines how mortality salience affects how much consumers buy and how much they spend. Across five studies the authors demonstrate that individuals who are primed to think of their mortality choose to purchase more of the same product for a weekly consumption, buy more products within a food category and spend more money than individuals in the control condition. The authors attribute these results to consumers’ need to “die broke” and not to their need to endorse the cultural norm of consumption. The effects of mortality salience on consumption were more pronounced for consumers with low self-esteem, as spending their money makes them feel good again.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Marketing under Frequent Terror Attacks”
Michal Herzenstein, University of Delaware
Sharon Horsky, IDC, Israel

Becker (1973) suggested that fear of death must be present in all human functioning so that the organism is able to arm itself toward self-preservation. However, Becker added, it can not be present constantly in an individual’s mental functioning; it must be repressed so he can function normally. Building on that, Terror Management Theory (TMT; Solomon, Greenberg and Pyszczynski 1991) posits that events making an individual’s death and mortality more salient lead to existential anxiety. TMT suggests two mechanisms to relieve this anxiety, defending one’s cultural worldviews and bolstering one’s self esteem. That is, individuals may avoid experiencing existential anxiety by making an enduring mark on the world, for example, through acquisition of items that symbolize high value within their culture (Mandel and Heine 1999). Despite Becker’s suggestion that an individual should repress his/her fear of death to allow normal functioning, there are situations in which repression is difficult. For individuals who live in terrorized areas, not thinking about their mortality is practically impossible. For instance in Israel, since September 2000 there have been over 7,000 civilian casualties from more than 80 terror attacks (taking into account population size, this is equivalent to 445,000 casualties in the U.S.). Attacks occurred in buses, coffee shops, restaurants, shopping malls, markets and streets of major cities.

We suggest that when terror attacks are frequent and therefore death is constantly in mind, individuals account for the possibility of dying in a terror attack in their daily functioning, and systematically change their behavior. We confirmed this hypothesis through in-depth interviews we conducted with men and women of diverse ages that live in different cities in Israel. Further, we analyzed secondary data–interviews that were conducted in Israel in 2002. We found that interviewees consistently spoke of ways by which they are managing the risk of terror, and of their need to feel in control. For example, a young man said “when I go out I go only to a specific pub, because it has one door, no glass walls and I sit in the back. So if there is an attack, by the time the suicide bomber comes, I will be able to run away”. That is, when the possibility of death is constantly in people’s minds, they try to control it by behaving in a calculated manner.

In this research we show that predictions drawn from TMT regarding consumption behaviors do not hold when terror is frequent. Specifically, TMT suggests that concerns about death increase the appeal of products that imbue their owners with status. However, we show that this only occurs when individuals are prompted to think about death as a result of accidents, health related etc. This will not be the case when individuals are prompted to think about their death as a result of terror attacks. We tested the above hypothesis using luxury and non-luxury products in three studies. Participants were undergraduate students at a private college in Israel. In our studies we manipulated mortality salience to create three conditions: terrorism, death (other means of death), and
control (visiting the dentist). We followed standard mortality salience manipulations. The choice of Israel is straightforward as consumers live with daily terror; nevertheless given the globalization of terror the results of this research are indicative for other places.

Following Mandel and Heine (1999), in study 1 after the manipulation and distraction task, participants received four advertisements: two for luxury products (Jaguar and Rolex) and two for non-luxury products (local brands of pretzels and soft drink). After seeing each advertisement, participants were asked three questions (that were combined with good reliabilities): effectiveness of the advertisement, interest in product category and purchase intention for the specific brand. We found that Jaguar appeals more to those in the death condition compared with those in the terrorism and control conditions (results for Rolex were directional and marginally significant). However, there were no differences in the appeal of the non-status products among the three groups. The first study confirmed that while participants in the death condition follow predictions drawn from TMT, participants in the terrorism condition did not. As expected, participants in the terrorism condition did not find luxury products as appealing as those in the death condition.

TMT posits that the protection afforded by subscribing to a cultural worldview confers a sense that the world is stable and controllable. According to Arndt and Solomon (2003), reminders of death should increase people’s desire for personal control when they have faith in a cultural worldview. However, when faith in the worldview is tenuous, or a basic tenet of the cultural worldview is threatened, the world may seem chaotic rather than controllable. Under these circumstances, Arndt and Solomon found that mortality salience engenders less desire for personal control. However, we found that the frequency of terror attacks has led individuals to behave in ways that presumably exert individual control over an uncertain situation. Further, their need for controllability impacts their products’ evaluations and changes their consumption patterns. Therefore, we suggest an exception to our findings from study 1: when high-status products are perceived as fulfilling consumers’ controllability need, those in the terrorism condition will state higher purchase intentions but those in the death condition will state higher evaluations. Therefore, the products will be rated higher on the luxury scale by those in the death condition, but will be purchased more by those in the terrorism condition. Locus of control, which assesses the extent to which individuals believe they control their own destiny, will moderate this relation. Specifically, higher purchase intentions will be among those in the terrorism condition that have internal locus of control, as they believe in their ability to control their fate.

The second study featured a 2 (mortality: terrorism vs. death) X 2 (locus of control: internal vs. external) between subjects design. While the first condition was manipulated, the latter was measured. After the manipulation and distraction task, participants saw an advertisement for a high-end home espresso machine. We tested whether home espresso machines could substitute going out to coffee shops (where many terror attacks took place). Results show that participants in the death condition rated the espresso machine as more luxurious than those in the terrorism condition. However, those in the terrorism condition reported higher purchase intentions for espresso machines. In addition, we found that participants in the terrorism condition who have internal locus of control had higher purchase intentions compared with all others.

In the third study, we further investigated the need for controllability. The design was 3 (mortality: terrorism, death, control) X 2 (controllability: high vs. low) between subjects. Controllability was manipulated by creating two advertisements for the same espresso machine, one suggesting that consumers can invite friends and family to their in-home coffee shop instead of going out (high controllability—no need to go to coffee shops where a terror attack may occur); and the other only mentioned that this espresso machine makes great espressos and cappuccinos (low controllability). Similar to study 2, participants in the death condition rated the espresso machine higher on the luxury scale compared with those in the terrorism and control conditions. Furthermore, those in the terrorism-high-control condition had higher purchase intentions for the espresso machine compared with the other conditions.

In sum, across three studies and numerous in-depth interviews we show that the possibility of an individual’s upcoming death has a significant role in how he/she reacts and behaves. The need to feel in control of one’s environment is more pronounced when the possibility of death by terror is high. As a result, predictions drawn from TMT do not hold—individuals do not need to perceive themselves as people of significance in the cultural drama to which they subscribe through acquisition of luxury items. The exception of this finding is products that are perceived to allow individuals the feeling of control over their destiny.

“Mortality Salience, Control, and Choice”
Rosellina Ferraro, University of Maryland
Nidhi Agrawal, Northwestern University

Given that people are exposed to death on a regular basis (e.g., a murder on the TV news, a movie with violent themes), it is likely that awareness of mortality can lead to systematic changes in people’s behaviors. Recent research in marketing has also suggested that mortality salience (MS) can have an impact on consumption related behaviors, including regulatory choice (Maheswaran and Agrawal 2004; Ferraro, Shiv, and Bettman 2005).

Terror Management Theory (TMT; Arndt et al. 2004) posits that MS leads to existential anxiety and that people cope with this anxiety through bolstering self-esteem or cultural worldviews. The TMT research suggests that after mortality has been made salient, people will seek opportunities to express themselves, to behave materialistically, and to exhibit control over their environment. Based on these findings, we build the case that mortality salience may influence consumers’ desire for more options in choice contexts.

A traditional view of choice suggests that more choice is better. Indeed, most people would prefer to choose from larger sets (Iyengar and Lepper 2000). Choice may be seen as an expression of control and empowerment, and so choosing from larger sets might be more desirable and empowering. Choice also provides a sense that people have the opportunity to select the best item and reinforces materialistic opportunities. But choosing from larger sets might also lead to psychological costs resulting from having “too much choice” (Iyengar and Lepper 2000) which manifest in lower satisfaction with the chosen alternative. As a result, while people like to choose from larger sets, they may be more satisfied with options chosen from smaller sets. However, there might be conditions when people are able to overcome the psychological costs of choosing and to experience the pleasures of too much choice.

We propose that MS alters perceptions of the psychological benefits (i.e., the opportunity to express control over one’s environment) and costs (i.e., difficulty of making the choice) of choosing from large sets, resulting in the benefits overriding the costs. When mortality is not salient, there is no pressing need to exert increased control or acquire the best option so the costs of choice override its benefits. We suggest that MS will reverse set size effects such that
people under MS will be more satisfied with a chosen alternative if they chose it from a large (vs. small) set. When mortality is not salient, we expected to replicate past research showing that people are more satisfied with options picked from small (vs. large) sets.

Study 1 was a 2 (mortality salience vs. control) X 2 (small vs. large set size) design. MS was manipulated by asking participants to think about their own death or dental pain. Participants were presented with an assortment of six (i.e., small set) or 30 (i.e., large set) chocolates on the computer screen (Iyengar and Lepper 2000). They were asked to hypothetically choose a chocolate from the given assortment. Participants then rated their anticipated satisfaction with the option they selected and with the choice process. There was a significant interaction between MS and set size on satisfaction with the choice process. Participants in the MS condition with 30 options felt more positive about the choice process than did participants with only six options. Participants in the control condition felt equally positive in the small and large set conditions. Also, the results indicate a significant interaction between MS and set size on feelings of having too much or too little choice. In the dental pain condition, participants with 30 options felt they had too many options to choose from while participants in the six-option condition felt they had too few to choose from. This effect was attenuated in the MS condition, with both those having six-options and 30-options feeling more comfortable with the number of options available. This suggests that participants whose mortality was made salient were not overwhelmed by larger sets.

Study 2 was a real choice situation. It was a 2 (mortality salience vs. control) X 2 (small vs. large set size) design. MS was manipulated using drunk-driving advertisements. In the MS (vs. control) condition, participants read a print ad that explicitly mentioned (vs. did not mention) death as a possible consequence of drunk-driving. Participants were presented with an actual assortment of six or 30 chocolates and asked to choose and taste a chocolate from the assortment. Participants then rated their satisfaction with the selected option and with the choice process. Consistent with prior research, in the control group, participants’ satisfaction with the chocolate was lower in the 30- vs compared to six-option condition. In contrast, in the mortality salience conditions, participants’ satisfaction was higher in the large set than the small set. This same pattern was found for participants’ feelings about making the choice. There was also a significant interaction with regards to experienced regret. In the control group, participants experienced more regret at having selected the given chocolate in the large rather than small set condition. The effect was reversed in the mortality salience condition, with less regret exhibited in the 30 option condition.

What is the underlying reason why this would occur? We posit that the psychological benefits of more options override the costs under mortality salience due to increased perceived control over the choice environment. We expect that mortality salience increases people’s desire for control and this then affects perceptions of control over the choice context. In Study 3, we examine whether mortality salience increases people’s desire for control. Indeed, participants in the mortality salience condition expressed a greater desire for control. This effect persisted even after controlling for participants’ trait anxiety. Furthermore, the differences in desire for control were not driven by mood.

These findings enrich the literature on both MS and choice. We identify how consumers might use choice situations to exert control and consequently deal with the anxiety produced from mortality salience. Our studies identify MS as a moderator of set size effects as well as explore when and how the benefits of “too much choice” may override its costs.

“Shop ‘Til You Drop: The Effect of Mortality Salience on Consumption Quantity”
Naomi Mandel, Arizona State University
Dirk Smeesters, Tilburg University

Since September 11, 2001, Americans have become increasingly aware of their own inevitable mortality. Many people believe that “danger seems to lurk in every corner of life, from children’s toys to McDonald’s coffee, anthrax to secondhand smoke, West Nile virus to SARS.” (Spencer and Crossen 2003). One way that individuals cope with their existential concerns is through their purchasing habits. For example, Mandel and Heine (1999) found that consumers exposed to death-related information demonstrated increased interest in purchasing luxury brands, such as Lexus and Rolex, which may reinforce a consumer’s perceived value within a consumer-driven culture. These results have also been replicated among Japanese consumers (Heine, Harihara and Niiya 2002). However, because the above researchers did not control for the prices of the items chosen in their study, an alternative explanation for their results is that mortality salient individuals simply want to spend more money than do control individuals, regardless of the status of the products purchased.

To investigate this possibility, the current research examines whether exposure to death-related stimuli can affect the quantity of items purchased, as well as the dollar value of the purchase. Unlike the few studies that have previously addressed the effects of mortality salience on consumers (e.g., Ferrarro, Shiv and Bettman 2005), this research focuses on the quantity of products purchased and consumed, rather than consumers’ choices between a given assortment of products. In a series of experiments, we demonstrate that consumers who have been recently reminded of their own impending mortality wish to purchase higher quantities of products, such as food and drinks, than do their control counterparts. We also examine several possible explanations for our results. The various explanations we test are all derived from Terror Management Theory, because mortality salience can affect individuals through various paths.

In Study 1, the mortality salient (MS) group wrote a short essay about their thoughts regarding death, while the control group wrote a short essay about going to the dentist (both of which should result in negative affect, but not necessarily death-related thoughts). Participants were then told to circle all of the items from a prepared grocery list that they intended to buy in the next week. MS participants selected significantly more total items (M=306.4 vs. 23.28; F (1, 30)=7.47, p<.05) than did control participants, including significantly more fresh vegetables, fresh meats, canned meats, and frozen foods, as well as snacks and drinks. Therefore, it is unlikely that our participants simply wished to “eat, drink, and be merry” (Ferrarro, Shiv and Bettman 2005), since they increased their consumption of both healthy and unhealthy foods. Study 2 utilized the same manipulation as study 1, but asked participants to imagine that they were hosting an informal party for friends, and to circle the items on a hypothetical shopping list of items they might buy for a party. MS participants selected more items from the grocery list (M=25.64 vs. 22.73; F (1, 384)=4.84, p<.05), spent more total dollars (M=$139.85 vs. $125.02; F (1, 384)=4.70, p<.05), and spent a higher percentage of their budgets (M=131% vs. 113%; F (1, 384)=5.84, p<.05) than did control participants. Study 3 replicated these results with individuals’ choices of snacks and drinks, and also established self-esteem as a moderator. The MS effect was more pronounced for low self-esteem individuals than for high self-esteem individuals.

The goal of study 4 was to examine whether activating mortality salience also activates the cultural norm of conspicuous
consumption, causing individuals to purchase more as a way to prove their value to society. If this explanation holds, we might expect that activating mortality salience should also activate constructs related to consumption and materialism. Therefore, participants should be more likely to complete word fragments with words related to shopping, money, and/or eating. We also altered the control manipulation (from “dentist” to “pain”) to control for an unintended alternative explanation for our prior results: that people simply don’t like to think about eating immediately after going to the dentist. And while we replicated the main effect of mortality salience found in studies 1-3, there were no significant differences in the number of word completions of investment words, shopping words, or eating words as a result of the MS manipulation. Therefore, the cultural norm explanation was not supported.

Study 5 explored whether MS individuals wish to consume higher quantities in the present time frame because they have a higher discount rate. In other words, perhaps because they believe that they might die soon, they would rather spend their money on items that can be consumed immediately, rather than to save their money, which will be useless to them upon their deaths. If this reasoning is true, they should be willing to spend more money than control subjects in order to consume a product now, rather than at a later date. Following a procedure similar to that of Loewenstein (1988), in one condition we asked participants how much they would be willing to pay to speed up delivery of a purchased item, and in a second condition we asked participants how much less they would be willing to pay in order for the delivery of an item to be slowed down (from its expected delivery date). Manipulations were as in study 4, resulting in a 2 (Prime: death vs. pain) X 2 (Delivery Change: Slow down vs. speed up) between-subject design. As predicted by the “die broke” explanation, MS participants were willing (in both the slow-down and speed-up conditions) to pay a higher premium than were control participants to receive both an iPod (M=$39.33 vs. $25.31) and a gift card (M=$27.29 vs. $18.52) immediately, rather than later.

In sum, we demonstrated consistently the effect of MS on consumption quantity, using different manipulations of MS and different measures of consumption quantity and spending. We also tested various explanations for this effect. The results indicated that consumers engage in higher consumption and spending, not because they want to endorse a predominant cultural norm (i.e., the norm of consuming), but rather because they want to “die broke”. Consumers may also want to boost their self-esteem by spending their money to make them feel good again. Therefore, effects were more pronounced for low self-esteem consumers than for high self-esteem consumers.

REFERENCES


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REFERENCES


Ordinary Resistance as a Parasitic Form of Action: A Dialogical Analysis of Consumer/Firm Relations

Dominique Roux, Paris 12 University-IRG, France

INTRODUCTION

Holt’s (2002) article on dialectical relations between consumers and brands has usefully stressed the centrality of the market as the locus of construction of people’s identities. Postmodern as well as critical approaches of resistance tended previously to overemphasize either consumers’ freedom through emancipatory projects (Firat and Venkatesh 1995) or the market’s domination through imposed codes and seductive practices (Murray and Ozanne 1991). But it seems as inaccurate to idealize consumer power, as it is to overvalue market dominance. In challenging the first perspective, poststructuralist approaches have unveiled the mechanisms by which individuality is originally constructed by social fields that tend to shape and reproduce a system of tastes (Bourdieu 1984). As a consequence, consumers are neither ontologically free to choose, nor ontically free to escape socially constructed mental structures acquired primarily through language (Elliott and Ritson 1995). For that reason, individuals are constrained, most often unwittingly, by a web of power-based relations.

Conversely, the taken-for-granted hegemony of firms needs also to be reconsidered. Firms mainly owe their existence to a sufficiently long-lasting willingness on the part of consumers to buy their offerings. They can be challenged both by dissatisfied consumers who denounce their social or commercial practices (Kozinets and Handelman 1998) and by alternative forms of communities, which create shared solidarity upon adversary actions (Giesler and Pohlmann 2003; Hemetsberger 2006). Both parties—firms and consumers—are in fact indissolubly linked by common interests (Holt 2002). Moreover, since each interpretation seems to be shaped by a particular socio-ideological framework, they tend to conceal the inherent nature of power—which is both dialogical and dialectical and cannot be grasped, except in a simplistic manner, from a single perspective. As Foucault (1982) pointed out, resistance must be regarded as the telltale sign of power relations, just as power relations should be considered as inherent elements of social relations. But resistance is also a contingent reaction: though coextensive with human interplay, it does not necessarily happen everywhere, all the time, among all consumers or in opposition to everything. It represents a specific type of response that occurs at the intersection of individuals and their interpretations of a situation. It acts as a sometimes vehement, but other times silent, denunciation of the discourses and practices of power (Hirschman 1970).

In accordance with this dialogical conceptualization of power and resistance, this paper first puts forward a theoretical framework capable of grasping and classifying a wide range of resistant behaviors that have been identified and depicted in recent consumer research literature. Three levels of resistance are suggested—each of them corresponding to a specific means used by firms to make consumers act in expected ways: against the discourses and codes they mobilize through brands and advertising; against the practices and mechanisms they deploy; and finally against firms themselves, rejected as relationship partners.

The paper then defends the idea that uncovering the dynamic and dialectical process by which consumers interact with markets requires going beyond an analytical and often static standpoint. To this end, a phenomenological research approach was chosen as best suited to the exploratory nature of the study. A two-stage procedure, involving introspective essays followed by three in-depth interview sessions, was adopted over an 18-month period. Eight consumers whose profile was delineated as reflexive and critical-minded were recruited by networking through colleagues. The aim of the investigation was to examine which dynamics resistance followed over time, and how it could be related to biographical information. The results are discussed in the third section, in accordance with this constructed and dialectical perspective of resistance. They reveal the importance of the psychic economy of individuals (Bourdieu’s concept of illusio) through the way people act and respond to firms’ strategies.

THEORY

The existing literature on consumer resistance covers a wide range of critical or emancipatory positions adopted by consumers. Writers of a primarily Marxian inclination tend to stress the ideological domination of the market and the consequent need for reflexivity and code-conscious distancing (Hetrick and Lozada 1994; Murray and Ozanne 1991). Within this perspective, consumers are perceived as targets, victims of semiotic formatting through advertising discourses, fashion and constructed mythologies (Barthes 1972; Baudrillard 1998). Exaggerated systems of status differentiation are thus exposed as the result of a constant production of signs. Some authors also accused the system of taking control of the desire of individuals (Dichter 1960), transforming them into conformist and other-directed personalities (Riesman 1950). More recently, other commentators have elaborated approaches to emancipation based upon consumer practices and “bricolage” in a fragmented world (de Certeau 1984; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Such contributions highlight the various ways in which consumers appropriate goods, discourses and codes in a subtle and creative manner through individual or collective actions (Elliott and Ritson 1995; Thompson and Haytko 1997; Thompson, Pollio, and Locander 1994). Resistance to cultural ideologies is thus manifested by the ability of consumers to decipher and contest meanings embedded in products and services (Duke 2002), sometimes beyond their own conscious awareness (Moisio and Askegaard 2002; Thompson 2004). Communal consumption has also revealed its emancipatory and oppositional power by generating, around a shared outlook, dialectical positions of differentiation and integration/exclusion (Giesler and Pohlmann 2003; Hemetsberger 2006; Kozinets 2002; Muniz and Hamer 2001). Nevertheless, if consumption can be conceptualized as an arena where individuals collect a range of cultural components for constructing their personal or social identities, very little research has given prominence to the interactive construction of resistance (Holt 2002). As made clear by Giesler and Pohlmann (2003), the prevailing static approach to consumer emancipation and the lack of a dynamic perspective calls for new studies able to capture the tensions between consumers and markets.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Of particular relevance to the present research context are Foucault’s writings on power (1982), which emphasize the dialogical nature of social relations and the inescapable and structural...
presence of forces and tensions therein. In this work, we extend his interactionist model of power by examining how resistance is produced as a response to the practices, discourses and even existence of firms. Our conceptual framework supports the idea that resistance would benefit from being analyzed as a diachronic process.

Micro-Physics of Power

Beyond Weber’s ([1968] 1921) macro-level conception of political and sovereign power, Foucault (1982) has depicted a micro-level theory of power as the very essence of social relations. Power is defined by Foucault as the ability to govern the actions of others and to structure the scope of their activities. Power works on the field of possibilities of active subjects by prompting, inducing, diverting, facilitating or impeding their room for maneuver. It is always a means of acting on other people’s actions and controlling their behavior. Yet power is not violence, nor does it imply submission. On the contrary, power exists only in relation to free subjects who face a wide range of potentialities and have various ways to react. When situations are completely determined, as in slavery, there are no power relationships, only force or physical constraint. Hence, power and liberty are not mutually exclusive; rather freedom is the necessary condition for the existence of power. According to Foucault, power relationships and insubmission are structural components of social interplay:

‘Power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstituted ‘above’ society as a supplementary structure whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of... A society without power relations can only be an abstraction’ (Foucault 1982, p.208)

In social relations, this micro-physics of power can be located anywhere, although some institutions are more likely than others to exert this type of disciplinary control over individuals (Foucault 1975). Prisons, schools, army camps, hospitals and churches in particular combine both discursive and non-discursive practices that aim at breaking in bodies and commanding souls through internalized mechanisms. Constant self-examination, evaluation and confession are examples of how the micro-physics of power contributes, through individualization, to the binding of subjects to themselves and to ensuring their submission to others. In line with Foucault’s approach, the disciplinary power of marketing practices has been analyzed by Marsden (2001) in terms of three main instances: market research information technology as a tool of surveillance; segmentation as a means of categorizing and labeling individuals; and advertising as a way of channeling prescriptive and corrective messages. In contrast to Weber’s theory in which power is considered predominantly as domination, Foucault’s approach gives a less rigid, deterministic and top-down reading of the distribution of forces. Although institutions and organizations may try to exercise power through disciplinary techniques, subjects are likely to free themselves from these constraints. Power and rebelliousness do not confront each other in a simple oppositional relationship, but exist in a permanent state of provocative tension.

Strategies of Legitimization By Firms and Consumer Tactics of Resistance

By considering the position of manufacturers and retailers, Emerson (1962) and Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) showed how the uncertainty of consumer markets threatens the long-term dominance or even survival of firms. By refusing to buy their products, consumers can adversely affect the achievement of company objectives. They have power over firms to the extent that firms depend on their cooperation. Because power is primarily founded on dependence, Pfeffer (1981) suggests that legitimization is a relevant strategy to alleviate the vulnerability of firms, by trying to persuade consumers that their offerings are of particular importance for them. To this end, they draw on consumer representations and attempt to alter them in favor of their own interests. They mobilize information, expertise, and selective interpretation of rules, language and symbols to present their corporate decisions as coinciding as closely as possible with the presumed outlook and thinking of their targets. Such legitimization tactics are likely to succeed insofar as they suggest consonant decisions, so reducing the gap between consumer objectives and those of the company. In order to persuade consumers to make the hoped-for decisions, firms can act at three levels (Bourgeois and Nizet 1995): through the products and services they offer; through procedures whose enactment and performance must appear fully to respect consumers’ freedom of choice; and by presenting themselves as valued partners in the exchange process. These three levels of legitimization are also implicitly the echo chambers in which consumer discontent is amplified. As shown in Table 1, we propose analyzing the motivations for consumer resistance as specific responses to different companies’ modes of action. First of all, the content of presumed relevant and congruent decisions presented to consumers are swept aside by consumer claims to freely chosen codes and signs. The repudiation or avoidance of products and brands (Fiske 1994), engagement in oppositional practices, and rejection of mass-marketed meanings and discourses exemplify some reactions of this type. Secondly, consumers can also feel saturated and repelled by the manipulative, if ineffective, advances made by companies (Fournier, Dobscha, and Mick 1998). Selling tactics and “capture plans” are resisted in the name of autonomy and ethics. Complaints, negative word-of-mouth, retaliation, boycotts, subversion and “culture jamming” (Handelman 1999) are among the expressions of dissatisfaction, feelings of harassment and moral sanction applied against companies. And finally, consumers get to the point of questioning the very existence of certain companies as acceptable current trading partners and as responsible actors for future generations. Whereas firms urge consumers to trust them, consumers often choose to ignore or avoid them, and instead opt for voluntary simplicity, patronize alternative distribution channels such as second-hand markets or favor gift-giving and consumer-to-consumer exchanges.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Consistently with the exploratory and discovery-oriented nature of the research, the methodology consisted of a survey carried out over an eighteen month period in a major European capital city. Informants were selected via a “snowballing” technique, initiated by asking colleagues to introduce the researcher to acquaintances they felt to be resistant consumers. A brief definition of resistance was given to identify potential informants, following Fournier’s (1998) conceptualization of it as a continuum of opposing forces, ranging from avoidance behaviors to active revolt. Eight volunteer participants of varied gender, age, origin and religious affiliation were finally recruited after agreeing to participate in the two-stage research program.

Stage 1 consisted of a diary study in which participants were asked to note down over a 6-month period (1) perceptions, judgments and feelings they could express in relation to their day-to-day life experience as consumers, and (2) example accounts of what was likely to trigger their distrust, dissatisfaction, irritation and other negative emotions and opinions about the discourses, offerings and practices of companies. Through introspective essays, they were also encouraged to recall, as far as they could, how they had come to react in such a way, against what in particular, and why. They
TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of legitimization by companies</th>
<th>CONTENT OF DECISIONS</th>
<th>BEHAVIORS in commercial (capture devices, selling tactics), environmental, social and ethical terms</th>
<th>COMPANIES as themselves or as qualified partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual expressions of resistance</td>
<td>Freedom of choice (code-conscious)</td>
<td>Autonomy (trap-conscious)</td>
<td>Electivity (self-definition of who to deal with)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>Complaining behaviors</td>
<td>Alternative channels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bricolage” Oppositional Loyalty</td>
<td>Negative word of mouth</td>
<td>Second-order marketing systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective expressions of resistance</td>
<td>Boycotts, Buycott Subversion, Attacks, activism, hackativism</td>
<td>Retaliation</td>
<td>Voluntary simplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boycotts, Counter-cultures Subcultures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communal consumption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were also asked, in terms of possible reflexive changes in their consumption choices, what had evolved over time.

Stage 2 consisted of three in-depth interview sessions, each lasting from one to three hours. The first interview aimed at bringing out more information about the events and stories recounted in the introspective essays, in order to acquire a clear sense of the informants’ perceptions and meanings. In particular, special attention was paid to potential changes they might have noticed over time in their own feelings toward the functioning of the market. The second interview was guided by a set of questions related to their general consumption choices, life styles and values. This phase was helpful for understanding how their stories could be related to the critical attitude to consumption expressed and enacted in their day-to-day lives. The third interview consisted of a conversation about salient autobiographical elements, i.e., the socioeconmic, family, cultural and religious environment in which they had grown up. This stage provided further information for a deeper understanding of informant backgrounds, sensitivities and ways of reacting. The profile was also supplemented by additional interviews with informants’ acquaintances in order to triangulate across sources. The interviews took place in the homes of the participants and were loosely structured. All interviews were recorded and transcribed before they, as well as the diaries, were analyzed in terms of content.

Despite the small size of the sample, respondents were almost equally distributed by gender and age, and belonged to several occupational categories (see Table 2). No claim of representativeness is made here, since the research objective was to gain deep insight into their individual trajectories using a biographical framework for analysis. However, several criteria were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. The first criterion was persistent and prolonged engagement, which is one of the basic techniques for obtaining a rich description in a research field (Geertz 1973; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Wallendorf and Belk 1989). In this qualitative in-depth study, reliance was placed on lengthy acquaintance with the personalities and stories of informants. Secondly, triangulation was made across sources and methods, using different ways of capturing what informants meant. Thirdly, feedback was obtained by submitting the author’s conclusions to the informants. Most respondents agreed with these conclusions, and any that were questioned were re-examined. Finally, variety and contrast were taken into account for recruitment, with respondents chosen sequentially and selectively in a constant comparative method and search for varied ideological beliefs and critical positions in relation to consumption (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

FINDINGS

Conflicts of representations, denunciations and levels of resistance

The accounts of the informants present themselves as acts of enunciation and of denunciation of what places them in opposition to the discourses and practices of firms. From this standpoint, introspective essays and interviews have functioned, as Boltanski, Thévenot and Porter (2006) show, as opportunities for revealing conflicts that individuals maintain with the commercial world and for justifying values they defend. The main claims underlying their critiques chime with the three levels of resistance referred to in the theoretical approach: resistance to the stratagems deployed by firms, that threaten their autonomy; resistance to promises, injunctions and temptations that hamper their freedom; and, ultimately, choosing consumer practices more in keeping with their own system of representations, their values or sometimes their utopias. Secondly, their discourses also reveal how different psychic economies transmit dominant tonalities to their modes of reaction, of which we attempt to sketch the main elements from their personal trajectories.

Resisting Stratagems, Pressures and Manipulation

“Grandmother, what big teeth you have got! “All the better to eat you up with.”

The first salient theme of the testimonies brings to light the sense of pressure and manipulation that the respondents perceive on the part of firms. Following the deconstruction made by Cochoy (2004) on the snares used by the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood, consumers are aware of the “capture devices”, sometimes crude and often visible, which firms use against them. Three types of practice are thus denounced. Echoing the long-established but still relevant findings of Vance Packard (1957), advertising discourses appear first always as the prototypical instrument of their seductive and dishonest intentions, as indicated by the following example:
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TABLE 2
Summary of respondent characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation, marital status, background, income level</th>
<th>Personal profiles and salient values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>International business student single. Hispanic origin. No income</td>
<td>Artist milieu. Fair Trade and anti-brand oriented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary school teacher. Divorced. 2 teenage daughters. Greek origin. Low/middle income</td>
<td>Self-defined as an intellectual rebel. Secondhand and savvy shopper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Telecom engineer. Married. 2 children aged 13 and 15. French origin. Middle/high income</td>
<td>Involved in charities, union and green activities. Voluntary simplifier and anti-advertising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>German teacher. Single. German origin. Middle/high income</td>
<td>Independent. Hoarding behavior, reluctance to spend, high discernment when shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Retired nurse. Divorced. 1 daughter aged 40. French origin. Low income</td>
<td>Independent and not easily influenced. Wary and strongly attached to personal freedom. Practicing Catholic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“…You know the Taillefine de Lu biscuits from Danone? They chose a name that makes you think it’s diet product, but in fact they’re laughing at us. The more you eat, the fatter you become!” [Sandra]

Secondly, some respondents denounce “tricks designed to justify higher prices for non-recognized benefits” in brands [Patrick]. The status and effects of fashion in particular are arguments that they dismiss in favor of reasoning based on the use value of a product and its value for money. Finally, some respondents particularly blame sales techniques, which they denounce for their heavy-handed approach and which reveal, not uncynically, paradoxical realities. For example, they draw a parallel between the “humanized robots” that companies use for their vocal servers and the “robotized humans” working in call centers “who articulate stereotyped discourses” [Sandra]. Among some respondents this dehumanization creates a sense of general discomfort, which sometimes gives rise to intense aggressiveness towards remote sales services departments accused of “transforming people into selling machines for other people who have become buying machines.” [Barbara]

Resisting Discourses, Promises and Temptation

“*The serpent deceived me, and I ate*” - *Genesis 3:13*

The second resonant theme concerns the content of decisions that firms suggest to consumers. Numerous illustrations insistently evoke the lack of congruence between the images and representations conveyed by advertising, brands and companies, and the values of the respondents. They feel themselves interpellated in registers that do not correspond to them and which seem to negate their feelings, personality and individuality. Echoing the criticisms of the Frankfurt School on mass culture (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 1972), the various comments often call into question the multinationals and the uniformization they produce. To this largely cultural resistance to advertising and the media are added other criticisms in different registers: economic and political (the effects of globalization), environmental (pollution and destruction of resources) and spiritual (anti-materialism and a refusal of excessive commoditization). As a result, resistance is experienced in accordance with three registers, of which the ethical underpinnings are clearly perceptible:

- first, not to give in and to fight against a loss of autonomy that is perceived as a weakness. Recalling the biblical story of the serpent, the temptation is primarily experienced as a loss of self-control,
- next, to draw satisfaction, pride and spiritual elevation from the strength of character that enables these attempts at seduction to be repulsed,
- finally, to accede to a sense of justice that covers various forms of condemnation of firms—their perceived power, the ideological representations they are accused of conveying,
or what they do to vulnerable sections of the population such as children or socially disadvantaged layers. Or, as one of the respondents expressed it:

“While visiting the Greenpeace website or those of other ethical vigilance associations, I see also those which sell GMOs without saying so, or which break the labor laws, or employ children, or make junk products, none of which they mention in their advertising. And I sanction them by not buying their products.” [Daniel]

Selective Consumption: Modulating the Choice of Products and Channels

Since the practices and discourses of firms are central to consumers’ themes of resistance, their choice of consumption is built or is modified over time according to their changing relation to the market. The procession of representations and lived experience lead them to avoid the products, brands and firms which become distant from their value system, in accordance with a distinguishing process (Bourdieu 1984). This reasoned identification of a non-self, marked out and kept at a distance, leads them to tailor their repertory of consumption through rejection and avoidance or by selecting alternative partners, whether they be competing companies that are more respectful at the economic, social or environmental level, or other market or non-market exchange networks. Thus some respondents say that they turn towards sustainable commercial products [Barbara, Elisabeth], some prefer to supply their needs from secondhand markets [Daniel, Marc, Sandra] or through barter [Daniel], and others tend to reduce their consumption [Marc, Vath, Patrick]. The practices chosen are in any case not mutually exclusive and reflect rather an idiosyncratic blending of micro-practices consistent with their preoccupations. While Holt (2002) has shown how individuals on the margins of society construct themselves in and through the market, we attempt here to show how ordinary consumers, professionally and socially well integrated, question the meaning of their actions, try to find acceptable compromises and reorganize their mode of consumption by mobilizing devised selective repertories within, but also outside of, conventional distribution channels. In contrast to militants attached to alternative associations, who engage in serious, costly efforts highly oriented toward the type of resistance they support (Ferrando Y Puig 2005), these “ordinary” consumers try to cobble together sufficiently satisfying solutions and make use, in an opportunistic and irregular fashion, of the various means that best meet their material and symbolic needs.

Save Our Souls: Resistance as a Path to Salvation

Some interviewees mainly manifested an attitude of defiance in relation to the market, which was expressed in aggressive forms of practices and discourses [Sandra, Barbara, Daniel]. Their comments reveal the moral discomfort produced by their immersion in a society, which they felt they had not chosen. Conscious of being unable to escape it, but nevertheless constrained to participate in it, they tend to make their choices on the basis of combative postures, as if the blacklisting of certain firms and products or boycotting the market as a whole helped, through an intense emotional release, to relieve their conscience. Strong moral or religious sensibility in fact betrays a powerful sense of guilt either in relation to the feelings that the market cynically conflicts with, or in relation to the weakest social groups, which they feel they have robbed of a degree of happiness. This guilt then seems able to be considerably attenuated through a critical and distanced attitude towards consumption, as was expressed by one of the respondents:

“When one buys a product, one should ask oneself whether it’s toxic, whether or not it contributes to polluting the planet over and beyond the immediate advantages it brings, who it was made by, how much the workers from the Third World were paid, and how many local jobs it’s going to destroy.” [Elisabeth]

As Kozinets and Handelman (1998) have shown on the subject of individual boycott practices, resistance can represent a form of moral hygiene and be a means of self-transformation as a corollary to the hope of transforming the world.

The Three Wise Consumers: “See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil”

In contrast to the preceding correspondents, others develop a form of voluntary ignorance and mental deafness in relation to situations that disturb them [Maria, Vath]. This tactic serves to save the psychological effort which would consist of taking the risk of exposing themselves to messages in order then to be obliged to protect themselves from the emotional consequences of the content (tempting psychological stimuli and the conflicts that stem from them). As expressed by one of these two respondents:

“I don’t look at ads. I see them, of course—on TV, in the street, in newspapers, but I’m not interested in them. Unconsciously, I don’t want to be aware of trends or novelties. This enables me to think, in a way, that I resist the various techniques used by advertising to manipulate us and tempt us.” [Vath]

Forewarned is Forearmed: Positive and Reasoned Modes of Adaptation

Some consumers, on the other hand, stress the importance of adopting an informed, vigilant and adaptive attitude toward consumption [Elisabeth, Marc, Patrick]. Their reactions reveal fewer negative emotions—anger or avoidance—in favor of considered observation of the mechanisms of marketing functioning and a rational analysis of their scope of action. For them, consuming is a game in the sense of illusion (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992): an investment in the field of consumption which is not clearly codified, but the implicit recognition of which matches up to the energy it involves. These aware consumers, mobilizing their intellectual or cultural capital in decoding the practices and discourses of firms, try correctly to anticipate the tactics deployed—no longer being influenced by the latest advertising claims and constantly deconstructing
the stratagems used. Having the appropriate outlook and attitude for understanding the world of marketing, they enjoy participating in the game—not the game of believing the claims of the “adversaries” and of submitting to them, but of remaining actively present in the competition to which they feel themselves invited and whose scope they perceive. Resisting is experienced as an adventure, which calls for a vigilant attitude: against the ease suggested by the prevailing discourse, they thus set up a necessary reflexivity of which the stakes are precisely those of deciphering the day-to-day workings of the market.

DISCUSSION

The biographical backgrounds of the respondents make clear the strong links between the socio-psychological details that have shaped them and their modes of reaction as consumers. The field of consumption is therefore but one specific site of expression of their learned predispositions or habitus (Bourdieu 1984). Some respondents recognize themselves to have been instinctive rebels since childhood and their relation to the world of marketing is one situation among others where their propensity to resist is manifested. This tendency to revolt can be acquired in reaction to a parent, a milieu or an imposed education. For example, Sandra implicitly recognizes that her manner of purchasing is strongly colored by an almost structural vindictiveness in regard to firms—which she views as incompetent, unsatisfactory, and ultimately persecuting—as if the animosity that she says she feels toward her mother was displaced onto other more abstract and substitutive entities. Conversely, resistance can derive for some correspondents from their identification with parents who are themselves anti-authority, committed, militant or simply attached to certain ideas or values. Thus Daniel’s parental home, where the outside world is seen as threatening and full of traps, was able to train him to acquire the intellectual and cultural resources needed for an effective decoding of reality. Barbara reveals that the artistic milieu in which she grew up helped her discover her own clothing codes without having felt the need to conform to fashion, nor to have suffered the consequences of doing so in her relations with her peers. Similarly, among those respondents who favor avoidance over confrontation, philosophical, religious or spiritual trajectories can be found at the root of their tendency toward detachment and psychological distance. Vath, for example, feels himself to be strongly influenced by Buddhism, which both in regard to the world of marketing and in his life in general encourages him to distrust desires and the potential suffering that accompanies them. Maria makes numerous references to the Catholic education she received during childhood in support of her wish to distance herself from advertising discourses viewed as enticing.

While social class and income criteria do little to cast light on the results, the same cannot be said of age and the cohort effect it results in. Thus the oldest respondents are influenced by the very duration of their consumption experience. Born in less economically advanced times, they testify to a degree of disorientation in relation to the acceleration of technology and the overabundance of products, but also acknowledge an acute sense of wastage linked to the increasingly ephemeral nature of commodities [Maria, Patrick, Marc]. Conversely, the youngest, immersed in today’s shifting and evolving system are more aware of the spatial dimension of the world they inhabit. The abolition of distance by the media in general and the Internet in particular gives them a consciousness of universal belonging, which often makes them more sensitive to geographically distant peoples [Vath, Barbara, Elisabeth]. Between these two groups, young adults refer to their educational aspirations for their children, in whom they wish to instill an awareness of consumption that is as reflective and rational as possible, and for whom they already weigh up the harmful consequences of uncontrolled development [Daniel, Sandra].

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to give another perspective on the exploration of consumer resistance strategies, of which many recent works have described the practices and modes of operation. In line with interactionist and contingent approaches to power (Foucault 1982), this paper proposed examining more closely the finely woven fabric of relations between consumers and the market, and going to the source of their resistant postures, using an in-depth approach drawing on their life histories.

As summarized in Figure 1, the main results of the research could make a contribution in terms of three points. First, resistance works like a reverse discursive mirror on the legitimation processes of firms, and does so at three levels: it dismantles the procedures used by companies to make consumers act in accordance with corporate interests; it deconstructs the meaning of decisions offered to them—discourses, products, codes—which they feel fail to correspond to their own value systems; and ultimately they question the legitimacy of companies as valid exchange partners.

Secondly, in view of this reflexive capacity for decoding practices and discourses, the tactics of resistance vary, depending on the respondents, between confrontation, avoidance and reasoned adaptation. Their psychological profiles predispose them either to engage in the game with offensive or even aggressive energy; or to adopt defensive attitudes based on inertia, evasion or calculated ignorance; or to compose and assemble selective consumption/non-consumption within and outside of the conventional channels by mixing different supply systems.

Thirdly, individual commitments to the game depend on the intellectual and cultural capital that they are in a position to mobilize and which their own dispositions shaped by the environment predisposes them to use. In all cases, confrontation, avoidance and positive adjustment participate in a struggle against certain market realities and in using this to construct an identity-project (Castells 1997). From this angle, the conclusions drawn by Holt (2002) deserve to be re-examined. Although the market does not seem to be threatened overall by the resistance which it lives on and recycles, it does however seem to be parasitized by the critique that it helps feed.

The discourses and devices of firms participate in an exacerbation of decoding reflexes, deconstruction and critical distancing by consumers. Permanently playing with signs can both produce experts and give rise to habituation, saturation and disenchantment. The standard forms of frustration, retreat or guerilla warfare noted in this research are certainly not constructive or politically effective in the way emphasized by some observers or defenders of political consumption (Micheletti 2003). Nevertheless it would be a mistake to underestimate their interest or impact on the pretext that these acts are expressed only in the private sphere and develop in a sporadic and unstable fashion. Work on defection (Hirschman’s ‘exit’ 1970) and retaliation (Huefner and Hunt 2000) has already invited us to pay attention to opposing or reactive behaviors that crystallize an often silent and invisible rejection of the dominant ideology of consumption.

Though apparently inconspicuous and harmless, these behaviors do represent resistance as we defined it. Moreover, their covert nature makes them particularly dangerous for companies, which could easily underestimate their offensive potential. Indeed, many research avenues remain unexplored concerning the analysis and assessment of what de-consumption, alternative ways of acquisition, boycotts, negative word-of-mouth or disloyalty all together represent in terms of monetary losses and for firms and the overall
Ordinary Resistance as a Parasitic Form of Action: A Dialogical Analysis of Consumer/Firm Relations

Where the market’s capacity for recuperation and regeneration has been emphasized as dependent on the very existence of resistance (Holt 2002), it can be said also that these forms of resistance live, in the manner of a parasite, at the expense of the actions and resources of firms whose everyday existence it nourishes. As in biological eco-systems, parasites, though having detrimental effect on their hosts, play however an important part in the regulation of populations. One suggestion, deriving from this metaphor and paralleling Holts’ (2002) conclusion, would be that only those companies operating with respect and authenticity are in a position to resist consumers’ deeper critical vigilance.

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Globalization and Rituals: Does Ramadan Turn into Christmas?
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ABSTRACT
This study explores how the dynamics of consumer culture and globalization interact with Islamic beliefs, rituals and behaviors, and revive and modify local rituals in order to fit with modern consumption-driven lifestyles. Specifically, we focus on urban Turkey and discuss how Ramadan rituals are being reinvented, modified and reinterpreted at the marketplace. We argue that the commercialization of Ramadan is neither an instance of cultural imperialism nor an instance of postmodern disorder. Rather, commercial logic and consumerist ideology hybridize Western and non-Western traditions and practices, creating new expressions of existing rituals.

INTRODUCTION
Across the Muslim world, there are numerous signs that Ramadan, a time of fasting, prayer and reflection, is transforming from a religious month to a cultural and commercial holiday. The spirit of capitalism is felt in practices ranging from the marketing of specialty items (e.g., fasting calendars, lanterns) emblazoned with company logos to the Ramadan feasts promoted by restaurants and hotels, the Ramadan greeting cards, the Ramadan sweepstakes, and the Ramadan themed shopping malls and supermarkets. During the holy month in 2005, to the surprise of many, a shopping mall in Dubai even featured “a Ramadan display with an uncanny resemblance to a nativity scene, complete with moving camels, a village elder reading stories and a desert scene” (Fattah 2005). It appears that Ramadan has taken on the commercial trappings of Christmas and Hanukkah and is transforming from a religious ritual to a holiday marked by consumption. Intrigued by these developments, our paper explores how the dynamics of consumer culture and globalization interact with Islamic beliefs, rituals and behaviors and reshape them to fit with modern consumption-driven lifestyles. Specifically, we focus on urban Turkey and discuss how Ramadan rituals are modified, reinterpreted, and reinvented in the marketplace. We begin our paper by offering a brief review of the literature on holiday rituals and their transformation under the logic of capitalism and consumerism. Next, we present the findings of an ethnographic study conducted in the fall 2005 in the cities of Ankara and Istanbul in Turkey and outline the market and consumption related actors, activities, and experiences observed in the enactment of the Ramadan ritual. We conclude by discussing the implications of commercialization of rituals for consumers as well as consumer researchers.

RITUALS AND THE CONSUMER CULTURE
Following the interest in rituals as incidences of symbolic consumption (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry 1989; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Rook 1985) several studies investigating numerous consumption rituals appeared in the marketing literature (see Otnes and Lowrey 2004 for a recent anthology). Much of this work deals with the nature and implications of consumption during ritual occasions such as Christmas (Belk 1989; Sherry and McGrath 1989), Thanksgiving (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), birthday parties (Otnes and McGrath 1994), and wedding (Lowrey and Otnes 1994). In contrast to Rook’s view of rituals as “extremely resistant to innovation or deviation” (1985, p.253), many studies demonstrate that rituals, ritual artifacts and ritual meanings are subject to dynamic changes (Goodwin, Smith and Spiggle 1990; Otnes, Kim and Lowrey 1992), that rituals are influenced by and influence social and cultural contexts (Belk 1989; Otnes and Scott 1996), and that new rituals can arise as a result of rapid social changes (Kreinath et al 2004).

Studies of consumption rituals observed in non-Western contexts provide more insights into understanding the dynamism of rituals and the relation between rituals and structural developments, such as the effects of modernity and globalization. For instance, in their study of the Chinese religious rituals practiced in Singapore, Kong and Kong (2000) show that because conditions of modern living—smaller dwellings with new spatial arrangements—altered the conceptions of sacred space, related rituals had to be redefined and even replaced by invented rituals. Similarly, work on henna night (Ustuner, Ger and Holt 2000) and dowry (Sandikci and Ilhan 2004) rituals in Turkey reveal that both rituals went through a period of demise, mainly as a result of changing lifestyles and roles of women, but then were reinterpreted and recontextualized in accordance with the conditions of modern living.

Another set of studies focus on the effects of globalization and discuss how Western-originated rituals get adapted in non-Western contexts. Prominent in this research stream is the work on Christmas and its global spread. As these studies document, Christmas is celebrated in non-Christian countries as diverse as Japan, India, Trinidad, and China (Bodenhorn 1993; Miller 1993; Moeran and Skov 1993; Kimura and Belk 2005). Yet these are creolized or hybridized adaptations, which help incorporate Christmas into local culture. Similarly, Creighton’s (1993) work, which offers an exegesis of Valentine’s Day in Japan, reveals how foreign rituals are not just adopted but domesticated.

Overall, research suggests that modernity, capitalism and globalization influence rituals in two major ways. On the one hand, one can observe revitalization of certain local rituals, resulting in reinterpretation of a disappearing or already lost rite through the lens of the contemporary consumerist lifestyle (e.g., henna night in Turkey). On the other hand, some rituals travel to cultures that did not historically observe them. In such instances, the ritual often gets reinterpreted in the imported context and is experienced through a combination of ‘original’ and ‘new’ artifacts, scripts and performances (e.g., Christmas in Japan). Whether proof of Western cultural imperialism and global homogenization or instances of hybridization and local appropriation, both the spread of Western rituals in non-Western countries and the revitalization of local rituals in new forms in diverse parts of the world are eminent. Furthermore, what is also eminent is that these processes are aided by multinational as well as local companies and media, who gain significant financial benefits from such adopted or reinvented rituals.

Indeed, commercialization surfaces as a key vector underlying the experience of rituals, be it Christmas or Ramadan, and the synergy between celebration and commerce continues to grow strong. Commercial logic and consumerist ideology hybridize Western and non-Western rituals, creating new forms of traditions. We argue that Ramadan in Turkey, and in many other Muslim countries, have become a mix of local and global, old and contemporary, religious and secular artifacts, performances, and meanings.
THE STUDY

Each year, during the ninth month of the lunar calendar, Muslims perform their religious obligation of Ramadan fasting. For a whole month, from sunrise to sunset, adult Muslims whose health permits abstain from food, drink, and sexual activity. Many modern Muslims consider Ramadan “the most important of the ritual duties” and “even if a person does not comply with the requirements of five prayers a day, observance of the fast is still likely” (Rippin, 1993, p. 133). Ramadan is regarded as a time for reflection and spiritual discipline, for expressing gratitude for God’s guidance and forgiveness of past sins, for acknowledgment of human dependence on God, as well as remembering and responding to the needs of the poor and hungry (Esposito, 1991). The month of Ramadan traditionally includes post-sunset feasts (iftar) and celebrations that are usually rather private and family centered (Jomier, 1991, cited in Keenan and Yeni, 2003) and followed by special night prayers. Nightly dinners are commonly provided for the needy, but here too, the focus tends to be on parents, children, friends and community alms-giving.

However, in recent years performance of Ramadan rituals in Turkey began to take place more in the public space and in a visibly consumption-oriented manner. For instance, five-star hotels offer lavish Ramadan feasts, Ramadan festivals take place in high-traffic historical sites, and shopping malls transform into Ramadan themed environments offering a variety of shopping and entertainment experiences. Underlying such changes are both state agencies and private companies who cooperate with each other to revive the interest in public celebrations of Ramadan and attract visitors. Indeed, more and more, Ramadan looks like other Western-originated holiday rituals such as the New Year’s, St. Valentine’s Day, and Mother’s and Father’s days that are already celebrated in Turkey but almost exclusively as holidays of consumption.

In this study we focus on three contexts that Ramadan celebrations take place. First, we look at Ramadan festivals organized by the Istanbul municipality. Each year, the municipality organizes three major festivals at three different sites: in the square next to the Blue Mosque, which is a major tourist area in Istanbul; in Feshane, a historical building converted to a convention center in the late 1980s; and, Talimhane, a recently renovated historical street next to Taksim square, which is both a commercial and tourist area. The second context that we explore is shopping malls, specifically, Bilkent Shopping Centre and Migros Shopping Mall in Ankara. Bilkent Centre is located in an upper class neighborhood whereas Migros Mall is located in a lower class district. Both places can be accessed by public transportation. Finally, we focus on upscale hotels and restaurants in Istanbul and Ankara that offer iftar meals. These feasts were initially offered only by the five star hotels and upscale restaurants. Observing their success, nowadays, several establishments have introduced iftar meals to a variety of market segments at a variety of prices.

We collected data in the fall 2005, before, during and after the month of Ramadan. The primary data collection method employed was an ethnographic participant observation of the different contexts. Observations were made in Istanbul and Ankara, in several shopping malls, Ramadan festival sites, streets, hotels and restaurants. Informal interviews with retailers participating to the different festivals as well as with the shopkeepers in the malls were conducted. Moreover, a collection of secondary data sources, comprising of advertisements, magazines, newspapers and Internet websites, informs our analysis. Once the data collection was over, the authors independently went through the field notes, photographs and the visual archive in order to identify conceptual categories and themes. Next, the categories and themes identified were discussed among the authors and any disagreements were resolved.

RAMADAN FESTIVALS

Since the takeover of the governance of Istanbul by the Islamist Party after the 1992 local elections, the municipality has been organizing Ramadan festivals. Although there are some variations across the festivals conducted at different locations, what these festivals commonly involve are a wide selection of food and ample opportunities for shopping and entertainment. The municipality promotes the festivals as an attempt to revitalize the spirit of “old” Ramadan and constructing a space that brings together people from all social classes and creates a sense of community (Istanbul Bulteni, 2005). As no entrance fee is charged, indeed people with limited income can visit the festival areas; however, in order to partake in the joy of the festivals one needs to spend money, i.e., on food and entertainment activities.

The biggest and oldest of these festivals is the one held at the square next to the Blue Mosque. During October 2005, for a whole month, the area was transformed into a big market place, packed with more than hundred stands selling food and beverages as well as all kinds of paraphernalia. In each day of the Ramadan month, thousands of visitors crammed the square before the sunset and waited until the time that daily fasting would be over. After the meals were eaten shopping and enjoyment of various cultural activities began. The activities included religious panels addressing different aspects of Ramadan and Islam as well as artistic performances. The performances mostly included traditional art forms, such as karagöz (traditional shadow show) and medbah (an earlier form of stand-up shows), which have been very popular during the time of the Ottoman Empire but were long forgotten in the modern era. On the other hand, for those who were interested in shopping, the stands offered a wide range of selection from religious objects, such as Qurans and spiritual books, to electronic appliances and Chinese-made decorative ornaments. Moreover, several local and global companies promoted their products by distributing samples and other promotional materials. As in other festival areas, the stands were built in the style of the traditional Ottoman houses and the vendors were dressed in traditional Ottoman attires. Replicating the Ottoman house transformed the stalls into stores that tell stories, places that create a memorable consumer experience (Kozinetz, et al., 2002).

Similar activities and goods were visible at the festival conducted at Feshane. Past the entrance gate to the building, one was confronted with the food court named as the “Ottoman Street.” Here as well, all the food stalls were in the form of miniature replicas of traditional Ottoman houses. After the iftar meal, visitors enjoyed their coffees and teas in a traditional coffeehouse located near to the food court. Next to the coffeehouse was a small theater where plays and concerts were performed. However, this entertainment was available only to those who paid the $10 cover charge. The main building, on the other hand, was almost like a trade show; several companies were busy promoting their products by distributing free samples. Unilever Company, for example, distributed bowls of its newly launched instant soup and cups of Lipton brand flavored teas. There were also several brands of cars and motorcycles on exhibit. Many people waited in line to be photographed standing next to their dream car or motorcycle, while others posed with Celik, a cute robot functioning as the symbol of a local appliance manufacturer. At both festival places, a very popular activity was being photographed as an
Ottoman sultan. For $10, one could be easily transformed to a sultan or his wife, complete with the period attire and look, and immortalize this instance with a color photograph. Couples as well as families rushed into, creating long queues every night. Candy and beverage stalls spread all over the festival areas were very popular as well.

While the Blue Mosque and Fesihane festivals had a more mass appeal, the Talimhane festival claimed to offer a more “authentic” and exclusive Ramadan experience. The stalls placed alongside the street were again in the form of replications of the traditional Ottoman houses. However, instead of selling food and cheap paraphernalia, these stalls hosted craftsmen who were invited from all over Turkey by the municipality in order to promote and sell their art to the tourists as well as the upper-middle class residents of Istanbul. Along with handicraft replications of Ottoman art and jewelry the decorations used in the area attempted to create a more “authentic” revival of the past. Several real-life size black and white photographs portraying scenes from everyday life in the Ottoman period were placed next to the stalls. For example, visitors drinking Turkish coffee and smoking hookahs were sitting in front of a photograph of a traditional coffeehouse, while at the background of the visitors resting on an Ottoman style couch was a photograph of a living room of an Ottoman house. Moreover, actors dressed in Ottoman style dresses were strolling along the street, posing frequently with visitors to be photographed. Overall, for a month Talimhane was transformed to a nostalgic Ottoman neighborhood complete with the images of the Ottoman house, the grocery store, the coffeehouse, the spice store, and the whirling dervishes.

Taken as a whole, the municipality, by creating these festive consumption spaces, makes Ramadan an attractive event to the retailers, residents and tourists. In the mean time, the municipality also profits as it rents the stalls for around $10,000. Through the intersection of sacred (religion and history) and profane (shopping and leisure), public authorities and retailers, attempt to sacralize the ordinary commercial commodities (O’Guinn and Belk, 1989), most of which are commonly available. Similar to theme parks like Disneyland, a “dedifferentiation of consumption” is evident as different institutional spheres become increasingly interconnected with each other (Bryman, 1999, p.33). This tendency is also evident in the Ramadan festivals as we see a tendency for eating, shopping and leisure to become “inextricably interwoven” and very difficult to separate (Bryman, 1999). Through a selective portrayal of history (Goulding, 2000), the Ramadan festivals also resonate with the trend of the “commodification of history” (Barthel 1996), which involves consumption practices related to the past. This themed past however, is cleansed from all the negative effects that may break the marketable theme and thus, places present a simulation of the Ottomans’ glory.

SHOPPING MALLS

Shopping malls become another site for the revival of the commodified version of the Ramadan ritual. The literature provides evidence that shopping malls have become venues for activities other than shopping and destinations in their own right (Bryman, 1999). Malls nowadays, provide a wide variety of services, such as restaurants, banking facilities, cinemas and leisure facilities for children, allowing individuals to participate in activities other than shopping (Sandikci and Holt, 1998). During the month of Ramadan, both of the shopping malls that we examined were turned into festive places themed with Ottoman symbols. Similar to the festivals organized by municipalities, the malls after iftar provided live music, shadow shows, and plays for the children.

The main entrance of the Migros Shopping Mall was decorated with some massive gold colored Tulips, which welcomed the visitors with a reference to the old Ramadan days. The mixture of gold and tulips reminds the entrances of the luxurious Ottoman palaces with their renowned gardens and rich interiors, often described as paradises on earth. Located next to the main entrance were a miniature of the Blue Mosque in purple color and a miniature of an Ottoman neighborhood. The interior of the mall was further decorated with lively colored fezzes, which were initially used by the Ottoman soldiers and then were adopted as an everyday hat by the Ottoman men. Lively colored ribbons similar to the ribbons hold by the Ottoman army band were hung between the fezzes. The corridors were decorated by purple lanterns, which connoted the lanterns used to light the streets in the Ottoman Empire. The decorations combined the pre-modern symbols of the most significant era of the Turkish history with modern and fashionable colors, such as turquoise blue, green, red and purple.

Apart from the decoration, the mall was transformed into a festival space after the post-sunset iftar feast. A traditional coffeehouse, with its stools and small tables, was set up on the third floor of the mall. In the same area, a small stage, where traditional performances (e.g. karagoz and meddah) and live music performances were housed. Individuals could watch these activities from the upper floor as well, where the food court is located. Additionally, small stands were located all over the mall, which sold nostalgic candies and beverages (e.g., cotton candy, toffee apple, cotton halva).

Although the decorations in the Bilkent shopping mall were less spectacular, the atmosphere was similar. Here as well, a stage to host various performances was built. With Oriental lanterns and fabrics, Turkish carpets, a wooden carriage full of Ramadan candies, straw sprinkled down on the floor and waitresses dressed in Ottoman clothing, the place was reminiscent of the Ottoman past. The spirit of Ramadan also transformed the supermarkets located at the malls. Ramadan streets featuring different stands selling snacks eaten when breaking the fast, such as olives, dates and pitas, were built inside the supermarkets in both malls. The decorations at the Migros supermarket were an extension of the decorations used inside the shopping mall, colored fesses and ribbons, gold tulip-like decorations and different kind of lanterns were placed all over the shop. In the supermarket at the Bilkent shopping mall, there was a Ramadan Street comprising of stands made to look like the facades of the Ottoman houses. A wide variety of snacks and products that were related with Ramadan were available for purchase.

Overall, both malls attempted to create a simulation of the pre-modern agora or bazaar. The prehistoric market was essentially social, characterized by crowds, close physical context, and highly personal interchange, which provided for an exciting, festive environment (Gumpert and Drucker, 1992). Malls nowadays attempt to replicate the feeling of market through design and atmospheres, recreating a simulated controlled “urban” environment (Gottdiener, 2001). Likewise, shopping malls, through the commodification of social experience, seek to re-construct the spirit of the publicly-celebrated Ramadan experience, an experience that has lost its public appeal during the making of the modern republic. The Ottoman theming allows consumers to experience the collective but forgotten past through fantasy, similar to Disney’s Main Street, which allows consumers to experience a suburban town in America (Holak and Havlena, 1991). But although nostalgia draws from the past, it is clearly a product of the present. As Panelas (1979) argues nostalgia is always evoked in the context of current modern fears and anxieties. Shopping malls resolve the modern societies’ anxieties through providing security in all their entrances, offering a controlled environment cleansed from the unexpected events (pickpocketing, street fights etc.) that contaminate the municipality festivals.
HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

From fast-food chains like McDonalds to luxurious five star hotels, restaurants offer different menus in a variety of price ranges. The most conspicuous consumption of iftar feasts occurs in five star hotel and restaurants, which through advertising try to create an alternative “elite spirit” of Ramadan. The market offers to its’ elite Muslim followers the ability to experience the sacredness of the month at an exclusive environment. However, rather than being available to anyone wishing to attend (Procter, 2004), luxurious hotels and restaurants re-produce differences in class positions, as iftar dinners cost $30 or more per person.

Similar to the other contexts, hotels and restaurants promote the revival of the ritual by emphasizing the Ottoman references. For example, the advertisement for Polat Renaissance Hotel portrays the Blue Mosque in the days of the Ottoman Empire. The picture shows Ottoman merchants gathered around the garden of the mosque dressed in the attires of that epoch. The ad attempts to draw an analogy between the mosque and the hotel by alluding to the fact that religious centers were also commercial centers in the pre-modern times (Ibrahim, 1982). Similar to the religious centers of the Ottoman epoch, the hotel creates a sacred centre in their commercial space. The hotel claims an “authentic” revival of the past and welcomes its visitors to the most “authentic” experience of Ramadan. Another five star hotel in Istanbul, Ceylan Intercontinental, associates its brand name with the word iftar. Just after sunset when the fasting is over, televisions channels declare the end of the fast by the announcement “Now, it is the time for Iftar”. Alluding to the announcement, the Ceylan Intercontinental advertisement reads “Time for Ceylan in Ramadan”. The ad also features the characteristic signature of the Ottoman Sultan in the form of a music note, which further emphasizes the courtly quality of iftar at Ceylan Intercontinental.

The Ramadan feast at the five-star hotels and up-scale restaurants included a plethora of dishes, starters, main dishes and sweets, which reflect the abundance of choices presented to the modern consumer. Consumers enjoyed their iftar either in set menus or in American style buffets. The choice of a menu dining was not limited to a single fixed menu. Rather, hotels and restaurants offered at least four different menus in order to respond to their customers’ tastes. Moreover, individuals could create their own customized menus. The food offered was a combination of the rich cuisine of the Ottoman Empire and a variety of options among Turkish and World cuisines (e.g. Mexican, Italian and Greek cuisine). The consumer was not limited to the local tastes of his/hers country; rather, food acquired a global taste. Not only the choices of the food, but also the presentation of the food created an elite feast. The food is often served in copper cutleries, which used to be the tableware at the Ottoman Empire. Live traditional Turkish music also was performed throughout the feast. In some of the restaurants, even Whirling Dervish performances were carried out. Some restaurants revived traditions that were long forgotten, such as “Di? Ki?as”. During the Ottoman times, when a family invited visitors for the iftar feast, the hosts also gave small gifts to their guests. Modernizing this ritual, an upscale restaurant, Asitane offered gifts like silver cigarette cases and amber rosaries to its patrons.

The nostalgia created in these contexts are based on an elite longing for the past, a longing for the lives of the Sultans and the life at the Ottoman palaces, rather than a longing for a collective past (Holak and Havlena, 1991). Ottoman Sultans enjoyed all aspects of the imperial glory such as the art, leisure and richness of the cuisine, without having to wait for the sacred month of Ramadan (Sakaoglu and Akpinar, 1999). Through their sophisticated decorations, selection of dishes and entertainment activities, the up-scale restaurants and five-star hotels attempted to create a simulation of a Ramadan celebration at the Ottoman palace. Thus, although Ottoman theming was present in all three contexts that we discussed and similar cultural motifs were used to invoke the Ottoman past, their differential use enabled companies to differentiate the offerings in order to appeal to different consumer markets (Gottdiener, 2001).

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the literatures on rituals and globalization by studying how rituals are modified, reinterpreted, and reinvented in the marketplace. We discuss how the interaction of the global and local revive and transform the practices and the meanings of Ramadan ritual. In their study of Christmas celebrations in Japan, Kimura and Belk argue that Western holidays like Christmas, Valentine’s Day, and Halloween, which have complex cultural ideologies behind them, “threaten to displace traditional local holidays” (2005, p.325). However, we argue that in some cases, rather than displacing, they might revive and modify existing local rituals. Our findings indicate that the commercialization of Ramadan is neither an instance of cultural imperialism where Western life forms erase local life forms under the disguise of globalization (i.e., McDonaldization, Ritzer, 1995), nor an instance of postmodern disorder, characterized by liberating experiences and themes erasing the limits of the modern project (i.e., Disneyziation, Bryman, 1999). Ramadan is rather like “traffic in things” (Jackson, 1988) and a process of glocommodation (Ram, 2004). Jackson (1998) argues that commoditization is like traffic, in which various agents encourage the revival and transformation of meanings and responses. Similarly, Ram (2004, p. 27) discusses global commodification as a dual process that “combines structural uniformity with symbolic diversity”.

At the symbolic level, there are distinctive characteristics that differentiate the ritual of Ramadan from other holidays and create a unique experience for the Muslim followers. Different forms of post-sunset iftar feasts and celebrations together with the use of the symbols of the Ottoman Ramadan festivals encourage a local heterogeneity. On the other hand, contemporary rituals are still edited in accordance with the needs of the profit-oriented industries (Schmidt, 1991), and thus reproduce the deep-seated social relationships involved in their production and consumption (Ram, 2004). The global consumerist ideology facilitates and strengthens the consumption of “sacralized” commodities in the form of products, services, places, and experiences, and offer consumers a new occasion for shopping and leisure. Ramadan turns into a “glocommodified” (Ram, 2004, p. 27) ritual, combining a variety of symbols connoting religious values and beliefs as well as markers of global consumption ethos. Theming, which underlies all three contexts we discussed, operate as a major instrument of commodification.

Although this glocommodified ritual encompasses many features that appear to fit postmodern theories, many modern foundations shape the ritual. Unlike, Beardshaw and Bryman (1999), who argue that themed environments include many of the reassuring securities of modernity such as physical safety, comfort and hygiene, we argue that more powerful actors such the nation state and the existing social hierarchies reproduce modern foundations. Our results indicate that local municipalities and the market have forged close ties for the revival of the religious ritual. Municipalities transform religious and historical places into temporary commercial markets. While the local government profits from organizing the sites, retailers profit by finding another channel to market their products. However, what underlies this cooperation is not only the profit motive, but also the state’s political ambitions.
The Islamist party, which controls the governance of major cities as well as the country, emphasizes both the religious and Ottoman values for the contemporary Turkish identity and takes advantage of any incidence that can be converted into some form of cultural and religious propaganda. As Kopytoff (1986) argues the commoditization of holidays is significantly related to “the cultural and ideological premises that suffuses its working.” Thus, in contrast to postmodernist theories, rather than an erosion of the state’s ability to forge national and in this case religious identities (Firat and Dholakia, 2003), the nation state becomes a primarily agent in the revival of the ritual.

A second feature that contradicts the liberating experiences of post-modernity is the reproduction of social structures, which creates a deprived experience of the ritual for many individuals. In contrast to the conceptualization of festival celebrations as being available to anyone who wishes to attend (Procter, 2004), Ramadan festivals reproduce social inequalities. For example, the luxurious feasts in five-star hotels and restaurants and certain forms of entertainment in the municipality festivals, which require payment of a cover fee, limit accessibility. Rather than acting as a ritual that emphasizes ultimate unity and equality of all believers before God (Esposito, 1991; Creighton, 1993), Ramadan festivals reinforce accepted social hierarchies.

Overall, this study offers an initial attempt to explore the forms of revival and modification of local rituals in the marketplace. As this study was primarily composed of an analysis of representation, more insights can be gained through conducting in-depth interviews with the agents that have the power to edit rituals, as well as the individuals, who consume these rituals. Questions of how rituals influence each other and how consumers make sense of the cultural values for the contemporary Turkish identity and takes advantage in Egypt: A Content Analysis with Elaboration on Selected Items”, Journal of Media and Religion, 2 (2), 109-117.


REFERENCES


INTRODUCTION

Sponsorship as a marketing tool has grown remarkably during the last two decades, especially with respect to the endorsement of worldwide sports events. Besides the FIFA World Cup™ or the Olympic Games, the Formula One is the only event with a comparable global character taking place in 17 countries all over the world, ranging from Brazil to Japan, from Australia to Italy and, for a short time, the US. It consequently stands to reason, that especially many big international companies use Formula One as a platform for building, strengthening and holding up their brand equity. With its extension to Shanghai in 2005, the Formula One has become fully globalized.

The Formula One Circuit is financed predominantly out of sponsorship money, while TV broadcast and entrance fees are of only minor importance. In the past, the Tobacco Industry has been one of the biggest contributors to the Formula One. Since the European Union ordered the tobacco companies to back out of the sponsorship deals by 2006, the teams now have to find new business partners. Consequently many global players like Emirates, Red Bull and Intel are entering the Formula One. However, companies that engage in Formula One sponsorship have to be sure about the effectiveness and efficiency of their engagement. Companies expect an effect of sponsorship on the brand, more specifically on brand awareness and on brand image dimensions. Brand awareness relates to the strength of a brand in memory, and the likelihood and ease with which the brand will be recognized or recalled under various conditions (Silverman et al. 1999). Brand image is defined as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller 1993). The favorability, strength and uniqueness of brand image permit the brand to be strategically differentiated and positioned in the consumer’s mind.

In the present paper, I take a closer look at the Formula One activities of Toyota and its impact on the brand awareness and brand image dimensions in the German consumer market. In the last decades, the Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) has been subject to several studies and been a main attraction to both competitors and the scientific communities (e.g. Womack et al. 1990). While the specific capabilities of TMC in technology, total quality management (Kaizen) and efficiency (Kanban) contributed to its current dominant position in most world markets (above 10 percent market share world wide), its market position in Germany remains weak (about 4 percent market share in 2004; Frank 2004). Especially in Germany, Japanese brands are valued for their functional attributes but are evaluated poorly concerning the non-attribute based image such as personality and character, attractiveness and likeability (Vogel et al. 2006). One of Toyota’s most important aims in the Formula One is to improve its non-attribute based image (Toyota 2005).

I contribute to the literature by analyzing (1) antecedents of sponsorship recall that can be explained through prominence heuristics and involvement, (2) consequences of sponsorship recall on the evaluation of brand awareness and brand image dimensions that are explained with mere exposure effects. (3) Both antecedents and consequences are analyzed for two measuring points using a panel of 2,116 (1,131) consumers. (4) Finally, I take a look at the change of brand awareness and brand image between the two measurement points and assess, whether the “fit” between the image of formula one and the sponsoring brand plays a critical role in the process of image transfer.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

As sponsorship became more and more important in terms of growing budgets since the late 1980s, research on sponsorship had been intensified accordingly to this development. Five research streams (nature of sponsorship, managerial issues, measurement of sponsorship effects, strategic aspects, and legal and ethical issues) have been identified by Cornwell and Maigman (1998) and updated by Walliser in 2003 including later—primarily European—research. In this study, the issue of measurement of sponsorship effects is addressed.

Measurement of sponsorship effects is still a topic that is of growing interest to both the scientific community and practitioners. Sponsorship has been found to affect (1) brand awareness (e.g. Quester and Thompson 2001), (2) brand image/associations (e.g. Javalgi et al. 1994; Pope and Voges 1999, ), (3) employees (e.g. Grimes and Meenaghan 1998), (4) purchasing intention (e.g. Bennett et al. 2002; Pope and Voges 1999, 2000; Speed and Thompson 2000), (5) and even investor relations and stock market prices (e.g. Cornwell, Clark and Pruitt 2004; Cornwell and Pruitt 2001). Especially the potential influence of sponsorship on brands has been subject of several studies (e.g. Grohs et al. 2004; Gwiner and Eaton 1999; Javalgi et al. 1994; Speed and Thompson 2000).

However, the analysis of the effect of sponsorship on brand image over time has been only subject of very few research works (e.g. Quester and Farrellly 1998; Becker-Olsen and Simmons 2002; Grohs et al. 2004; Pitts and Slattery 2004). A reason for that could be the lack of sound theoretical underpinning of the effects of sponsorship.

For instance, Cornwell, Weeks and Roy (2005, p. 21) claim, that research on sponsorship effects “is lacking theoretical frameworks of how sponsorship works in the minds of consumers” and provide a number of theoretical explanations of sponsorship effects. More precisely, they identify a number of processing mechanisms that provide a theoretical explanation of sponsorship on a cognitive, affective and behavioral level (Cornwell, Weeks and Roy 2005, p. 22).

For my investigation of effects in the context of Formula One Sponsorships, I draw back on (1) prominence heuristics, (2) the mere exposure effect and (3) balance theory.

(1) Prominence heuristic, as analyzed by Pham and Johar (2001), proposes that well-known brands are recalled more frequently in comparison to less known brands. They claim, that sponsorships for brands that are less known should be avoided, when other—well known—brands are engaged in a sponsorship in the same field.

More specifically, sponsorship recall is influenced by existing knowledge about the brand, and the involvement of a particular person with the product category of the brand and the sponsored event. Following the heuristic of brand prominence, one can argue that high brand equity—which is defined as difference in consumer choice between the focal branded product and an unbranded product given the same level of product features (Yoo et al. 2000) will make it more likely that a specific sponsor is recalled. This rationale
is confirmed by the findings of Pham and Johar (2001). Therefore, one can hypothesize that

\( \text{H1A:} \quad \text{The higher the brand equity of a specific sponsor, the more likely it will be recalled.} \)

Furthermore, it could be expected that product-related involvement and involvement with the specific event will lead to a higher probability, that a person will recall the sponsorship stimulus. In a low-involvement condition, consumers will process the stimulus less intensively (Krugman 1965, 1966). This rationale is confirmed by the findings of Grohs et al (2004). Hence, it is proposed that

\( \text{H1B:} \quad \text{The higher the product-related involvement, the more likely the sponsorship will be recalled.} \)

\( \text{H1C:} \quad \text{The higher the event-related involvement, the more likely the sponsorship will be recalled.} \)

(2) The mere exposure effect suggests that in absence of other stimuli (Baker 1999), repeated exposure to a stimulus will lead to an affective reaction (Zajonc 1968). Sponsorship is similar to advertising—often directed to respondents in a situation where they pay low attention to the stimulus (e.g. because of concentrating to the event). Therefore, it has to be repeated several times in order to attract the attention of a respondent’s mind (Baker 1999). Existence of the mere exposure effect is confirmed by several studies (e.g. Bennett 1999; Olson/Thümmler 2003).

On the basis of the existence of mere exposure effects, it is proposed that if a person is able to recall Toyota as a Formula One sponsor or advertiser, the awareness and image of the brand (as defined in the introduction of this article) will be significantly more favorable than for persons that do not recall the any of those two stimuli. This is in accordance with findings in existing literature (e.g. Bennett 1999). Hence, I hypothesize that

\( \text{H2A:} \quad \text{If a sponsor is recalled, its brand awareness will be significantly more favorable.} \)

\( \text{H2B:} \quad \text{If a sponsor is recalled, its brand image will be significantly more favorable.} \)

(3) The attitude toward the event (i.e., event image) is supposed to influence the processing of the sponsoring stimulus. Many authors claim, that a “fit” between the sponsored event and the sponsoring brand is essential to realize an image transfer (e.g., Cornwell et al. 2005; Dean 2002; Haste 1980). However, learning is less likely to take place if sponsor and sponsored event are already perceived as “congruent”. Following balance theory (Heider 1946, 1958), I propose that a positive distance in evaluation of the event relative to the brand in t=1 will lead to an increase in awareness and image transfer (increase in favorability of brand dimensions) in t=2. According to balance theory, people that identify a sponsor to be associated with an event or team in the first place and have a relatively negative opinion about the sponsoring brand in comparison to the sponsored event will evaluate the brand more positively over time. Based on assimilation-contrast theory (Sherif and Hovland 1961), a decrease in favorability of the brand dimensions is expected, if the brand is evaluated better than the event in t=1 using the same explanation as above. Since the brand is evaluated more positively than the event in the first place, the knowledge of a relatively negative cue (i.e., that the brand is engaged in sponsoring an event with a negative image) will lead to a less favorable evaluation of the brand in t=2. No effect is expected for a “fit” i.e. a relatively similar evaluation. Therefore, it is hypothesized that

\( \text{H3A:} \quad \text{A positive difference in evaluation of the event image relative to brand awareness/brand image leads to an increase in brand awareness/brand image favorability.} \)

\( \text{H3B:} \quad \text{A negative difference in evaluation of the event image relative to brand awareness/image leads to a decrease in awareness/brand image favorability.} \)

**METHODOLOGY**

**Questionnaire Development and Pretesting**

To measure the respondents’ perceptions with regard to brand awareness and brand image a pool of sample measures was generated based on literature review (see appendix). The items were pretested using a sample of 20 German undergraduate marketing students. These subjects did not participate in the following field survey. Regarding question content, wording, format and layout there were no signs of any misunderstanding reported by the respondents.

**Measurements**

On that basis a questionnaire was developed consisting of three different parts. In the first part, the respondents were asked to name car brands they could remember from (1) advertising and (2) sponsoring a Formula One team. Following Baker et al. (1986) and Keller (1993), I decided against asking for ad/sponsorship recognition, since the unaided awareness of a brand is supposed to be a required condition for the purchase of more complex products e.g. cars. Moreover, the measurement of recognition would be subject to several biases, e.g. interest of a person in the brand (Bennett et al. 2002, p. 177) and, more importantly, to a bias in the second survey.

In the second part, the respondents were asked to evaluate several brand related constructs (brand awareness, brand equity and several image attributes) for Toyota and one of 13 other brands. These brands were only included in the questionnaire to avoid a possible identification of the questionnaires purpose in the second survey. Sponsor-related variables were measured using multi-item scales. All items are measured on 7-point Likert-type scales, with anchors of 1=strongly agree and 7=strongly disagree. Based on Yoo et al. (2000) 3 of their items were used to measure a sponsor’s brand awareness and 4 items to measure brand equity. Several items from Verhoeef et al. (2004) and from the Allison-Fisher Barometer of Awareness and Imagery (as described in the article of Scott and English 1989), see appendix for the list of items) were used to measure brand image and the image of the sponsored event. Conceptualizing brand image, Park and Srinivasan (1994) postulate that brand image consists of an attribute related dimension and a non-attribute component. I follow Park and Srinivasan (1994) and postulate that brand image (in the case of automobile brands) consists of two dimensions: Functional trust, which consists of attributes that are closely linked to quality and hedonic image which is built by attributes that represent the personality and imagery of a consumer.

Finally the respondents were asked for their interest in cars in general, their involvement with the Formula One and socio-demographics.

**Sample and Data Collection**

To test the hypotheses, data was collected via internet. A questionnaire was mailed to 40,927 E-Mail addresses in Germany.

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1These 14 brands were selected because they account for 86.06 % of the German car market in 2004. The remaining 13.94 % if the market contains several niche producers with little relevance to the market as a whole.
The population was chosen based on a selection of E-Mail addresses that is representative to Germany concerning age, gender and region with support of CIAO Online Surveys. A total of 4,173 respondents answered the first survey in January 2005, 2,116 of them also participated in the second survey in July 2005 (one week after F1 season height in Hockenheim, Germany), equaling a response rate of 10.2 % (50.5 %). 48.1 % (51.4 %) of the participants were male, average age of the participants was 38.9 (standard dev. 11.6) and 38.5 (11.9) in the second survey. The first dataset was split into two equal parts. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted and all constructs were identified as proposed above. One item was eliminated from the brand awareness construct due to low indicator reliability (BA2) and from the event image construct (IF1) for the same reason. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis with the second part of the dataset are depicted in table 1 below.

### RESULTS

To test the effect of brand equity and involvement on the recall of Toyota as a sponsor of a Formula One-team, a logistic regression was conducted with the dichotomous variable “recall” as dependent, and brand equity, product-related involvement and event-related involvement as independent variables for one measuring point. Studentized residuals, Cook’s Distance and multicollinearity were examined to determine if assumptions of logistic regression were violated.

As can be seen from table 2, all three constructs exhibit statistically significant positive influence on the likelihood a sponsor is to be recalled. The influence of event-related involvement is highest, followed by brand equity and product-related involvement. All three Hypotheses H1A, H1B and H1C are confirmed, also with the replication using the second dataset. The model fits well since only four iterations were needed until no further improvement of the likelihood was achieved (improvement<.001) and the likelihood-ratio test led to highly significant results. Nagelkerke’s R² (NR²=.232/.184) is satisfying.

The effect of Ad and Sponsorship recall on the dependent constructs is tested by conducting a MANCOVA. The required assumptions were checked as discussed in existing literature (e.g.

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Indicator Reliability</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>Average Variance Extracted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product-related involvement</td>
<td>IP1</td>
<td>0.834</td>
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<td>0.889</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IP2</td>
<td>0.753</td>
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<td>0.886</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IP3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.723</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event-related involvement</td>
<td>IE1</td>
<td>0.955</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IE2</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.954</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IE3</td>
<td>0.733</td>
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<td>0.875</td>
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<td>Event image</td>
<td>IF2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IF3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IF4</td>
<td>0.874</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IF5</td>
<td>0.712</td>
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<td>0.673</td>
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<td>Brand equity</td>
<td>BE1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BE2</td>
<td>0.865</td>
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<td>0.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BE3</td>
<td>0.914</td>
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<td>0.829</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand awareness</td>
<td>BA1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>BA3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.498</td>
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<td>Attribute-based image (functional)</td>
<td>F1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2</td>
<td>0.925</td>
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<td>F3</td>
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<td>0.613</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-attribute-based image (hedonic)</td>
<td>H1</td>
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<td>0.927</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H2</td>
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<td>0.930</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H3</td>
<td>0.623</td>
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<td>0.691</td>
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<td></td>
<td>H4</td>
<td>0.696</td>
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<td></td>
<td>H5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>H6</td>
<td>0.579</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Goodness-of-fit statistics: CFI (0,942); TLI (0,933); RMSEA (0,071); SRMR (0,035).
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Tabachnik and Fidell 2001 pp. 282 and pp. 329). Since the assignment to different groups (dependent on recall of the independent stimuli) could not be randomized by default, group sizes vary strongly. Therefore, the dataset was reduced in order to achieve equal group sizes (random samples from the larger groups). The constructs are not normally distributed and homogeneity of variances of the dependent variables was slightly different. According to Olson (1974, pp. 894) and Bray and Maxwell (1985, pp 33), these violations can be accepted if the dataset is large enough and the group sizes are equal. As described in table 3 below, cell size in the first dataset is 270 (2x2x270=1040 total) and 196 (2x2x196=784 total) in the second dataset.

Unweighted means of the item scores were used as values for the dependent constructs. The construct of event-related involvement interacts with the independent factors, therefore only product-related Involvement is used as a Co-Variable. Results of the MANCOVAs of the two measurements indicate significant main effects and an insignificant interaction effect. The influence of product-related involvement is also significant in both surveys.

Follow-Up-ANCOVAs were conducted to determine the effect of the stimuli and Co-Variable on each dependent construct. As can be seen from table 4, all main effects are significant for each construct. However, the strength of the effects differs largely. In the first round, the effect of ad recall on brand awareness and non-attribute-based image is much higher than in the second survey, on the contrary, the effect of sponsorship recall is much stronger in the second survey. Since Toyota was relatively successful in the Formula One Season 2005 up to the measuring point in late July (57 points compared to a total of 8 points in the 2004 Season), this offers a possible explanation of the increase in sponsorship effect. The weakening of the ad effect could be explained due to the fact that one of the most expensive advertising measures of Toyota—the role of media presenter of the German Soccer League “Bundesliga” – was absent for more than a month because of the season break.

Lastly, post-hoc-tests were conducted to check, whether the hypothesized effects show into the proposed direction. As described in tables 5A (first survey) and 5B (second survey), the knowledge of a stimulus leads to a significantly better evaluation of each brand construct. Therefore, our Hypotheses H2A and H2B can be confirmed.

Finally, I take a look at the change of brand awareness and brand image dimensions between the two measuring points. As proposed in Hypothesis H3, we a more positive evaluation of the brand Toyota in t=2 is expected if the image of Toyota is evaluated relatively worse comparing to the image of Formula One in t=1. Only consumers are included in this analysis that could at least once recall Toyota as a Formula One sponsor. Results in table 6 show that only the group that evaluated Toyota relatively worse comparing to Formula One (“positive distance”) in the first place has a significant awareness/image enhancement, giving support for Hypotheses H3A and H3B.

**IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study confirm that sponsorship recall is significantly influenced by perceived brand prominence (brand equity) and both product- and event-related involvement. There-

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**TABLE 2**
Logistic Regressions of drivers of Sponsorship Recall (measuring times 1/2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient b (Significance)</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product-related involvement</td>
<td>-0.139***/-0.099***</td>
<td>0.038/0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event-related involvement</td>
<td>-0.383***/-0.335***</td>
<td>0.029/0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand equity</td>
<td>-0.112***/-0.134***</td>
<td>0.033/0.032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.1; Nagelkerkes R²=0.232/0.184; Model ended after four/four iterations.

**TABLE 3**
Results of MANCOVA (first dataset/second dataset)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Wilks-Lambda</th>
<th>F-Value</th>
<th>Eta-Square (η²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Effect</td>
<td>Ad recall</td>
<td>0.923/0.952</td>
<td>27.326***/12.051***</td>
<td>7.7 %/4.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sponsorship recall</td>
<td>0.980/0.960</td>
<td>6.752***/9.947***</td>
<td>2.0 %/4.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Effect</td>
<td>Ad recall x Sponsorship recall</td>
<td>0.997/0.990</td>
<td>0.946/2.366*</td>
<td>0.3 %/1.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Variable</td>
<td>Product-related involvement</td>
<td>0.938/0.978</td>
<td>21.450***/5.283***</td>
<td>6.2 %/2.2 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.1; n₁=1040/n₂=784
### TABLE 4
Results of Follow-Up-ANCOVAs (first dataset/second dataset)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faktor</th>
<th>Brand awareness</th>
<th>Attribute-based Image (Functional)</th>
<th>Non-attribute-based Image (Hedonic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad recall</td>
<td>53.058*** (5.1 %)/ 10.973*** (1.5 %)</td>
<td>46.453*** (4.5 %)/ 34.288*** (4.6 %)</td>
<td>63.261*** (6.1 %)/ 21.590*** (2.9 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship recall</td>
<td>5.840** (0.6 %)/ 19.858*** (2.7 %)</td>
<td>18.368*** (1.8 %)/ 19.380*** (2.6 %)</td>
<td>3.071* (0.3 %)/ 4.609** (0.6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad recall x Sponsorship recall</td>
<td>0.642 (0.1 %)/ 0.009 (0.0 %)</td>
<td>0.396 (0.0 %)/ 1.049 (0.1 %)</td>
<td>2.691 (0.3 %)/ 5.220** (0.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product-related involvement</td>
<td>28.992*** (2.9 %)/ 0.464 (0.1 %)</td>
<td>26.952*** (2.7 %)/ 5.502** (0.8 %)</td>
<td>0.036 (0.0 %)/ 1.173 (0.2 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F-Values ($\eta^2$ in Percent) of Follow-Up-ANCOVAs; ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.1.

### TABLE 5A
Results of Post-hoc-Tests (first dataset)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Ad recall</th>
<th>Sponsorship recall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brown-Forsythe MV (SD) Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand awareness</td>
<td>53.736***</td>
<td>3.11 (1.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribute-based image (functional)</td>
<td>42.368***</td>
<td>2.74 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-attribute-based image (hedonic)</td>
<td>67.555***</td>
<td>3.62 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.1; MV=Mean Value; SD=Standard Deviation

### TABLE 5B
Results of Post-hoc-Tests (second dataset)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Ad recall</th>
<th>Sponsorship recall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brown-Forsythe MV (SD) Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand awareness</td>
<td>12.739***</td>
<td>3.12 (1.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribute-based image (functional)</td>
<td>31.731***</td>
<td>2.75 (1.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indir. effect Ad Recall x Sponsorship Recall</td>
<td>Ad Recall</td>
<td>.450 n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Ad Recall</td>
<td>6.732**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.1; MV=Mean Value; SD=Standard Deviation
fore, the sole measure of recall does not offer an unbiased conclusion of sponsorship effectiveness. Moreover, the impact of sponsorship on the brand has to be separated statistically by other possible influences. A first attempt was made in this paper by including advertising recall as a complementary promotion action of companies. The change of brand awareness and brand image dimensions over time was found to depend on the relative evaluation of event image vs. brand image in the first place. This result is in accordance with balance theory and attribution-contrast-theory but contradicts empirical results of other authors (e.g. Speed and Thompson 2000; Dean 2002).

Further research should focus on gaining insights about how the sponsorship message is processed by consumers. Possibly experiments are particularly suitable to deepening the understanding about processing of the sponsorship message in comparison to field studies. However, especially from a practitioner’s perspective, rigorously conducted field studies in a real context can lead to an improvement of current sponsorship evaluation practice which is often based on recall measures solely or evaluation of broadcast time. The use of panel data is adequate to analyze individual responses (e.g. change in attitudes or behavior) over time.

**REFERENCES**


APPENDIX
List of Items

Product-related involvement
IP1 I am very interested in cars in general
IP2 I know a lot about cars
IP3 I regularly catch up on news about new car models

Event-related involvement
IE1 I regularly watch Formula One
IE2 Formula One is important for me
IE3 Formula One means a lot to me

Event-Image
IF1 Formula One stands for sportiveness
IF2 Formula One is likeable
IF3 Formula One is unique
IF4 Formula One is attractive
IF5 I can identify myself with the Image of Formula One

Brand Equity
BE1 It makes sense to buy X instead of any other brand, even if they are the same
BE2 Even if another brand has the same features as X, I would prefer to buy X
BE3 If there is another brand as good as X, I prefer to buy X
BE4 If another brand is not different from X in any way, it seems smarter to purchase X

Brand Awareness
BA1 I can recognize X among other competing brands
BA2 Some characteristics of X come to my mind quickly
BA3 I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of X

Attribute-based Image (Functional)
F1 I can trust X
F2 I can rely on X
F3 X is a really dependable car
F4 Cars of Brand X last a long time
F5 Cars of Brand X are excellent in workmanship

Non-attribute-based Image (Hedonic)
H1 Cars of Brand X are good looking
H2 X builds cars with personality and character
H3 Cars of Brand X are sporty
H4 Cars of Brand X are attractive
H5 Cars of Brand X are desirable
H6 Cars of Brand X are young
The Commercial Appeal of Communism. Semiotic Tensions in the U.S. Stoli Advertising Campaign

Natasha Tolstikova, University of Maine, USA
Matthias Bode, University of Hannover, Germany

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In 1994, the advertising campaign for Stolichnaya vodka appeared in the U.S. consumer magazines. The original works of young Russian artists were united into a campaign with the slogan “Freedom of Vodka.” The ads attracted attention with colorful images created in the style of what a few in the U.S. have been familiar with as Russian Lubok, Russian Constructivism, and Socialist Realism. The Stoli advertising campaign is a juncture where several topics that have been the preoccupation of recent advertising studies, such as the predominance of visual imagery in contemporary advertising, the relationship between art and advertising, and the changing nature of advertising in postmodern age. The campaign provides a ground for advancement in the analysis of advertising. This article establishes a new visual figure of speech called “semiotic tension.” Semiotic tension is the syntactic relation that binds two elements in their negative relation to each other. The specific quality of semiotic tension is the affective interpretive pleasure of tension. The moment of closure is focused more on the recognition of tension than the emergence of a coherent semantic solution. The dominant syntax of the Stolichnaya ads is based on the juxtaposition of opposites, driven by the basic antagonism of addressing North-American consumers with an anti-capitalist, Soviet-style aesthetics.

The time of the binary division between the “hard-sell” advertising with its logic and the “soft-sell” advertising, with its emotional appeal, is long gone. Instead, advertising together with the western affluent societies became more colorful, faster, louder, and more complex. The science of semiotics offered a set of tools to make this new world readable: as Saussure defined it, “a science which studies the life of signs at the heart of social life” (1974, 16).

In our analysis of the Stolichnaya campaign we want to demonstrate a semiotic process that has been neglected in advertising semiotics so far. We suggest a “layers of tension model,” that emphasizes an advertisement feature charged by a tension between elements within the ad. First, tension can be constructed on the level of re-contextualization, based on the use of referent systems in the ad. The second level of tension can occur in setting up the syntactical relationship between the relevant elements of the ad. While we take on a structuralist perspective in the textual mechanism of the ad, we do not assume a requisite resolution of the tension between the elements. In this aspect, we adhere to a post-structuralist perspective, emphasizing a more active reader in the negotiation of meaning and the possible openness of realized meanings.

Semiotic tensions are similar to the ad feature of resonance, developed by McQuarrie (1989), McQuarrie and Mick (1992). They define the rhetorical figure of resonance as a repetition of elements within the ad which echo with one another and lead to a multiplication of realized ad meanings. Resonance does not include simple ambiguity or opaqueness, but a doubleness of elements. Semiotic tension is also based on a syntactic relation, but, rather, the echo rests upon the negative feature of oppositions than the resonant positive feature of sameness. Metaphorically, the two semiotic features share a similar force binding two elements and can be distinguished as adhesion based on tension and cohesion based on resonance. Contrary to resonance, semiotic tension emphasizes more the interpretive process than the final semantic result. Based on the aesthetic theory of Berlyne (1971) and Meyer (1956) we argue that for a positive affective aesthetic response to an ad the activated expectation is temporarily inhibited. In the semiotic tension model the disparate elements are the cause of the inhibition. Contrary to the post-structuralist position of permanently inhibited closure, we see the moment of closure in the perceived tension.

All the images of the 1994 Stoli advertising campaign have several features in common, such as original art stylized to look like early Soviet propaganda arts and the slogan, “Freedom of Vodka,” written across each image. On the macro level, these features create a common tension in each image, such as a negative echo between the goals of public agitation, aiming to change the mentality of the whole human being versus commercial agitation, aiming to change one aspect of life, the purchasing patterns. Another persistent semantic tension is between the different meanings of freedom to the Soviets and Americans. While ideological propaganda claimed that Soviets were free from the oppressive forces of capitalism and hailed a freedom from unemployment, the U.S. ideological propaganda elevated freedom of choice, especially in the consumer goods realm; free to choose Stoli over other vodka. In addition, each ad contains individual tensions created by relations between elements that have to do with the meaning of symbols in a different cultural contexts.

The 1994 Stoli advertising campaign can be viewed as an act of symbolic cannibalism where representations of the enemy’s ideology are appropriated. On an ideological level it definitely helped that the old enemy was brought down and lost the power of a latent threat. However, the old symbols still regained a certain charge, defined in a symbolic opposition.

We argue in this paper, that the quality of the campaign remains abstruse when analyzed in a post-structuralist and postmodern perspective. To see the Stoli ad as another example of a free-floating signifier chain is missing the point of a connectedness between the sign elements that comes from the negative echo of semiotic tension.

With our paper we nourish the hope for a more semiotically enlightened analysis of advertising that remembers again the virtues of methodological pluralism and gets over the choking postmodern fixation.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction
The validity and reliability of attribute-importance measurement is highly method-dependent. We propose to evade this method-dependency by shifting our attention to decision makers’ value functions of attributes and investigate if and how the global and local shape of these value functions relate to different dimensions of attribute importance.

Attribute-value functions reflect the idiosyncratic valuation of an attribute at different attribute levels, relative to decision makers’ reference points (Tversky and Kahneman 1991). We investigate the relationship between the global shape (i.e., S-shape, convex, concave) and the local shape (i.e., reference point, loss aversion, diminishing sensitivity) of attribute-value functions and the global and local importance of attributes (Goldstein 1990). The global importance of attributes reflects the importance of an attribute as a stable characteristic that does not depend on a specific stimulus set. The local importance of attributes reflects the importance in judgment and depends on the stimuli set under consideration.

Theory and Hypotheses
Our main proposition is that the shape of attribute-value functions relates to the importance of attributes. First, we hypothesize that the global importance of an attribute polarizes and thus relates to decision makers’ reference points (H1), increases decision makers’ loss aversion (H2) and increases decision makers’ diminishing sensitivity (H3). These hypotheses are based on the notion that decision makers for whom an attribute is important based on personal values and needs (i.e., high global importance) will purchase products that perform maximally on that attribute and consequently develop a reference point that equals an attribute level at the end-poles of the relevant range of attribute levels (Kalyanaram and Winer 1995) (H1). Furthermore, the global importance of an attribute will positively influence the effects of changes in the attribute levels as reflected in decision makers’ loss aversion (H2) and diminishing sensitivity (H3).

Building on the hypothesized effects of the global importance on decision makers’ reference points, loss aversion, and diminishing sensitivity, we hypothesize that the global importance of an attribute increases from decision makers with a convex value function for the attribute to decision makers with an S-shaped and concave value function (H4).

The local importance of an attribute is generally operationalized based on the differences in valuation of attribute levels in a judgment or choice task. The difference in valuation depends on decision makers’ reference points and loss aversion, which results in a steeper value function in the loss domain. Hence, if (most of) the attribute levels in the judgment or choice task reflect a loss, the local importance will be larger than when (most of) the attribute levels in the judgment or choice task represent a gain (H5). The relationship between the global shape of a value function and the local importance of an attribute follows a pattern comparable to that of the relationship between the global shape and the local importance of attributes (H6).

Study
To test our hypotheses, a study, involving 189 participants at a large southern university, was conducted. We studied rental rooms on two attributes: monthly rent and size (square feet). The global importance of both attributes is determined using the direct rating method (1=not important, 9=important). A measure for the local importance of both attributes was obtained using a full factorial judgment task with five levels for each attribute. To determine the global and local shape of the value functions of both attributes, we asked the participants to rate their valuation of the full range of 12 relevant attribute levels for one attribute at the time. Participants rated their valuation of rooms with 12 different rent levels as well as their valuation of rooms with 12 different sizes (0=I do not appreciate it, 100=I highly appreciate it). The global shape of the value functions is estimated using the EXP-IPT technique, which fits the attribute-level valuations for each individual to both the negative exponential function (EXP) and the log of the inverse power transformation function (IPT) (cf., Pennings and Smidts 2003). The former function is either fully concave or fully convex over the entire value function. The latter function is S-shaped.

Next, the reference points for both attributes were determined by asking participants to indicate what the rent and size of their current room is. To establish participants’ loss aversion and diminishing sensitivity, we rely on the direct-rating data and employ the two-piece value function technique. Based on the self report reference points, we divide the value function into a gain and loss domain and estimate the EXP function separately for both domains. The loss aversion for an attribute is calculated by establishing the ratio of the slope of the value function in the loss domain and the slope of the gain domain. To establish the diminishing sensitivity concerning an attribute, we use the second derivative of the EXP function, calculate the relative change in valuation for each pair of independent variable levels, and determine the average diminishing sensitivity across domains.

Results
In line with H1, H2, and H3, we find significant relationships between the global importance of attributes and participants’ reference points, loss aversion, and diminishing sensitivity. In line with H4, we find that the global importance of an attribute is highest (lowest) among participants with a convex (concave) value function. The global importance of those with an S-shaped value function falls in between. We find a significant relationship between participants’ reference point and the local importance of both attributes, confirming H5. In line with H6, we find that the local importance of an attribute is highest (lowest) among participants with a convex (concave) value function for the attribute.

Finally, we examined the predictive validity of the global and local shape of value functions and find that the global and local shape of attribute-value functions predict choice up to 85.3% correctly.

Conclusions
We conclude that the shape of attribute-value functions relates to the importance of attributes, and as such drive judgment and choice behavior. Hence, measuring decision makers value functions for an attribute may yield more valid and reliable attribute-importance measures.
Why Not Buy the Leading Brand? A Preliminary Investigation of the Dynamics of Brand Choice
WoonBong Na, KyungHee University, Korea
YoungSeok Son, Hallym University, Korea
Roger Marshall, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

BACKGROUND
In most markets there is an identified market leader and several market followers. It has been suggested in the recent literature that although this is sometimes merely a pioneer effect, it may also be a consumer effect (Rettie et al. 2002). If the leading brand does indeed have a compelling competitive advantage, the question arises of why anybody should bother buying the follower brand?

We will first construct a (SEM) research model of the consumer selection process, couched in terms of perceptions of hedonism, utilitarianism and price fairness. These three latent variables are developed below. Differences in the evaluations of purchasers of leading and following brands, which might explain why people do sometimes opt for what appears at first sight to be a sub-optimal purchase solution, are then explored.

Price Fairness, Utilitarian and Hedonistic Perceptions
Cost-benefit perceptions are colored by the preconceptions of consumers about what is fair in regard to the price demanded in a trade (Kamen and Toman 1970); thus price fairness could form a reasonable perceptual proxy for actual price in a purchasing situation. Two items are drawn from Monroe (1990) to indicate the “Price fairness” latent variable in the research model.


Hedonism represents the emotional side of purchasing (Ruth 2001). Brand feelings, from Keller (1993) and Keller and Davey (2001), is the most “generic” aspect, and forms the first indicator variable for the latent construct. Symbolic imagery, the second indicator variable, is the emotion related to the socially visible icon used in the marketing of the service or product (Solomon 1983). Once the imagery evoked in a brand has been interpreted, a consumer will relate the image to his or her own life and infer either positive or negative emotional values to them. This aspect of hedonism, our third indicator variable, is referred to by perceived brand performance, quality and credibility.

Hedonism stems from prior experience with the brand (Keller 1993; Mathwick et al. 2001). Once the imagery evoked in a brand has been interpreted, a consumer will relate the image to his or her own life and infer either positive or negative emotional values to them. This aspect of hedonism, our third indicator variable, is referred to by perceived brand performance, quality and credibility.

RESEARCH METHOD
A short questionnaire was designed, and used with 405 university student. Responses provide information about their actual brand choice, and their perceptions of the price fairness, utilitarian and hedonic features of the brand selected and the brands in the unselected category. Each of the observed variables is represented by a single 7-point Likert-type item using questions drawn from the established scales used in the literature discussed above.

When we consider the perceptions of purchasers of Following brands, a different picture emerges. Although there is no perceived difference in Hedonism between the brands, both Price fairness and Utilitarianism are seen to be superior for the Following brand (Price fairnessLeading=4.15, Price fairnessFollowing=4.49, p<.001; UtilitarianLeading=5.90, UtilitarianFollowing=6.37, t=4.06, p<.001).

DISCUSSION
Fundamentally, the differences between purchasers of leading and following brands lie in the trade-off patterns. Leading brand buyers trade off hedonism and utilitarianism with relatively little regard to price; whereas purchasers of Follower brands trade off price against utilitarianism with comparatively little regard to hedonism. Purchasers of leading brands believe that they gain greater utilitarian and hedonistic benefits from the purchase of the leading, rather than following, brand. Their counterparts—those who purchase one of the second-tier brands—believe that they not only get a fairer price but also get superior utility from buying the second brand. For these consumers, then, the trade-off is about price and utilitarian benefits.

Consideration of these results leads marketers back to basics. Functionality remains paramount—poor quality or low functionality...
will surely result in the loss of custom even for Leading brands. Nevertheless, it seems as if perceptions of hedonism attached to brands is a differentiating factor between Leader and Follower buyers, although satisfaction stems primarily from utilitarian benefits. While those buying leading brands have no problem paying a price premium, price seems unimportant as an element of satisfaction relative to hedonistic and functional benefits.

REFERENCES
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Although often viewed as a suboptimal consequence of price competition by many academics and marketers (Chandon, Wansink and Laurent 2000), sales promotion is not readily to be replaced by other sales policies such as everyday-low-price. Over years consumers and retailers seem to have an unceasing interest towards products in a deal. However, the fundamental question in promotion research—why consumers respond to the deals, has always been a controversial one. Behavioral literature on promotions is generally focused on either consumer demographics, or economic benefits from the deal (Chandon, Wansink and Laurent 2000). The psychological process under consumers deal responses are often either neglected or oversimplified. The present research addresses consumers’ response to promotion from the information perspective and explores its underlying cognitive process.

Classical economics theory stresses maximization of utility under the assumption that consumers are rational buyers who maximize the economic gains from a purchase transaction. Richard Thaler (1985) came up with the theory of acquisition-transaction utility that consumers evaluate transaction by total utility, which is the sum of acquisition utility (utility derived from the purchased good minus the price paid for the good) and transaction utility (internal reference price minus the purchase price). The idea that consumers base their purchase decision on total utility has been widely accepted and applied to marketing research, especially in the sales promotions area (e.g., Grewal, Monroe, and Krishnan 1998; Lichtenstein, Netemeyer, and Burton 1990).

However, in the real life consumers often seem to disobey the principle of total utility. As indicated by the phenomena that nearly everybody’s house contains something we bought in a deal but seldom or never use, consumers might fall for an attractive deal even when the total utility from the purchase is negative. There could be many reasons accounting for such blindness to utility, including consumers’ deal proneness, overestimation of their consumption, etc. However, deal proneness alone cannot fully explain why a consumer would buy worthless things when the total utility is zero or negative, but reject an unattractive deal even if it does no harm to the total purchase value (Simonson, Carmon and O’Curry 1994).

The present research tries to address consumers’ response to promotion from an information processing perspective, as well as explore the underlying process for consumers’ deal reactions. In this paper we propose the notion of utility blindness, which claims that under limited information processing, consumers would base their purchase decision solely on the perceived gains from the deal (i.e. transaction utility) rather than total utility. When the deal is attractive enough, people would buy products even when the total utility is little or negative; on the other hand, an unattractive deal would decrease people’s purchase likelihood even when the total utility is not affected by the promotion.

Three lab studies are described to test the existence and underlying process of utility blindness. In the first study, utility blindness is showed to exist even in knowingly “rational” groups like PhD students of economic/business major. When the deal is attractive enough, they would fall for the deal despite that buying the product would lead to little or negative total utility.

In study 2 we not only identify the salience of transaction utility as a moderator of utility blindness, but also demonstrated two sides of the coin: when people perceive positive transaction utility in a deal, they are willing to buy the product regardless the total utility; while when they perceive transaction disutility (negative transaction utility) in the deal, they are not likely to buy the product even though total utility remains the same.

In a third study, we demonstrate that utility blindness occurs when people process the deal information in a limited manner. Priming subjects with different information focus (focusing on either benefit only or both benefit and cost) in a preliminary task should change their information focus, hence the tendency to fall for utility blindness. Effect of utility blindness is moderated by cognitive load, since it impairs people’s capability and resources in information processing. People are more likely to fall for utility blindness when they are under cognitive load and when the transaction utility is salient. Such blinding effect of a deal is in spite of individual differences in deal proneness, mood, involvement, prevention/promotion focus, risk attitude, and need-for-cognition.

Contributions, managerial implications, and limitations of the present research are summarized in the conclusion section. For future research utility blindness could be extended into bad-deal-good-product scenarios, other economic contexts (time, money and effort) and social relationship problems.
The Effect of Mindsets on Consumer Decision Strategies
Alison Jing Xu, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Robert S. Wyer, Jr., Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Purchase decisions often involve two steps. First, consumers tentatively decide whether or not they want to make a purchase, based on the options available and their immediate need for the type of product being considered. Then, if this process results in a positive decision, consumers decide which of the potential alternatives they prefer. This sequence of mental actions is represented as a purchasing procedure in memory. Generally, a procedure is composed of subgoals that are causally or temporarily related. Thus the attainment of each subgoal is a precondition for pursuing the one that follows it. Consequently, the consideration of any subgoal presupposes that the previous goal has been attained successfully.

We propose that consumers whose attention is called to the first subgoal of deciding whether to buy are likely to engage in the operations required to attain it, and, if the decision is affirmative, they may proceed to the next subgoal in the sequence. However, if consumers are induced to consider a subgoal at a later stage (e.g., deciding which to buy), they will presumably employ routines to identify the most preferred alternative. However, they are unlikely to reconsider whether they want to make a purchase at all. Instead, they will assume that they have already decided to buy something. As a consequence, consumers are ultimately more likely to make a purchase in the second case than in the first one.

Further, we propose that in the second case, consumers may develop a “which to buy” mindset that will guide them to make a selection among the alternatives. In the mean time, however, this mindset may also prevent them from considering the preceding segment of the purchasing procedure (i.e., whether to buy). If consumers are asked to consider whether to make a purchase at all at the outset, they are likely to develop a “whether to buy” mindset. Once a mindset is activated, it will also persist to influence one’s reactions to subsequent activities. Specifically, we propose that consumers who develop a “which to buy” mindset in one situation will be more likely to consider alternative activity is better in subsequent scenarios instead of considering whether or not they want to engage in the type of activities. If consumers develop a “whether to buy” mindset, however, they are more likely to consider whether they want to engage in the type of activities at all in response to the same subsequent scenarios. In addition, the same reasoning suggests that people who develop a mindset in one situation will exhibit a similar mindset in a later purchase situation. Therefore, consumers who have a “which to buy” mindset are more likely to make a purchase again in an unrelated situation.

Three studies examined these possibilities. The first study showed that participants who were primed to consider which computer they prefer at the outset (preference-first condition) were more likely to make a purchase than those who were primed to consider whether or not they would like to purchase one of the computers at the outset (whether-first condition). And this is true regardless of whether the two computers had all unique features, unique positive and common negative features, or unique negative and common positive features. The assumption that participants in the first two conditions developed a “which to buy” mindset was further evident in the thoughts they generated in response to eight unrelated scenarios describing decision situations in daily life. That is, their thoughts pertained more often to which of two activities they prefer or dislike to engage in rather than whether to engage in either.

The third study showed that participants who were induced to consider which computer they prefer in the first situation were more likely to choose one of two vacation spots in a subsequent situation (rather than deferring decision). Both the two computers and the two vacation spots had unique positive attributes and unique negative attributes. Thus the different purchase rates we observed in this study are consistent with our hypotheses but cannot easily be addressed by earlier theories of choice deferral (e.g., Dhar and Nowlis 2004; Dhar, Huber and Khan forthcoming).

REFERENCES


“Confidentially Yours”: Restricting Information Flow Between Trustees Enhances Trust-Dependent Transactions

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In marketing and social networking it often happens that an agent would like to build relationships with a multitude of other agents under resource constraints. For example, a firm may give discounts to a portion of customers to cultivate loyalty, but it cannot do too much of that to too many customers at the peril of profit margins. Moreover, discounts or other forms of relationship building gestures do not guarantee future benefits; much depends on the reciprocating propensity of the receiving agents.

Another important factor that potentially influences such strategizing is whether the receiving agents are allowed to communicate with each other about how much benefit they have received. The extent of information flow between receiving agents varies from case to case. In some types of buyer-supplier contracting, for example, the transacting parties are bound by the contract terms not to disclose deal information to third parties.

Our main objective in this paper is to study how restricted information flow influences the amount and distribution of resources put into relationship building. We attempt to abstract the relationship building aspects of the above mentioned scenarios into one involving a trusting agent and a number of potentially reciprocating agents, and study it through an extension of the well-known trust game or investment game in experimental economics. We investigate how restricting information flow between trustees can enhance trust and reciprocity in trust-dependent transactions through extending the traditional one-to-one trust game to settings involving N>1 trustees. We consider: (a) investor’s strategy in deploying investments, and (b) trustees’ responding behavior, under conditions that vary in two parameters—the value of N and, more importantly, an information condition relating to whether a trustee only knows the amount received by her or whether every trustee knows the investment received by every other trustee.

We propose that, if the investor considers the problem based on a simplified, “baseline” model of expected trustee reciprocity, the optimal strategy of a risk neutral investor is one with which positive investment packages at no more than two different levels are sent out to some—but not necessarily all—of the trustees, while the remaining trustee(s) receive nothing (a set of investment packages has one level if all the packages are of the same amount, two levels if all the packages are of either one of two different amounts, and similarly for higher levels). We then investigate the effect of non-baseline concerns including investor risk aversion and, under the unconstrained information condition, (a) effects on reciprocity induced by uneven distribution of investments, (b) free-riding of the moral obligation to reciprocate, and (c) distributional fairness. In our theoretical development, we argue that the basic characteristics of the investor’s optimal strategy in the baseline model would be preserved even if these additional concerns are included under the constrained information condition. Under the unconstrained information condition, our theoretical conclusion is that the investor’s optimal strategy would include up to only one positive investment level, rather than two in the constrained information condition. Moreover, total investment would decrease when information flow is unconstrained, compared to when it is constrained.

We then report two experiments designed to investigate investor strategy and trustee behavior. In Experiment 1, we focus on investor behavior. Subjects were randomly divided into investors and trustees (neutral terms were used in the instructions). The investor had an endowment of HK$50 (1US$=HK$7.8) in each played game, while the trustees had no endowment. Any investment of the investor was tripled when it reached the trustee. The strategy method was used on the investors’ side. That is, each investor was asked to decide how to invest in seven games varying in information condition and number of trustees; at the end, only one of those games was actually played with randomly and anonymously matched trustee(s). Within-subject analysis of the data lends support to all our investor hypotheses. Total invested amount decreases and investment portfolio exhibits a greater variety (i.e. more levels of investment) when information flow between trustees is restricted, compared to when it is not so. We also observe, as predicted, that the number of trustees receiving positive investments does not change across information conditions; the increase in total investment is predominantly driven by an increase in average investment among trustees who receive positive investments.

Experiment 2 was designed to test trustees’ behavior—in particular to try to isolate evidence of reaction to unfairness and moral obligation free-riding. Again, subjects were randomly assigned to be investors or trustees such that each investor was matched randomly and anonymously with two trustees. Both investors and trustees were presented with a menu of six investment patterns for the N=1 game and 12 investment patterns for the N=2 game with full information condition. The players’ endowments and the general rules of the games were as in Experiment 1. Each trustee was then asked to decide, for each investment pattern, how much to reciprocate (if at all) if that investment pattern was chosen by the investor to be actually played. Within-subject analysis of the trustees’ stated reciprocated amounts supports our conjectures regarding trustee behavior and considerations. Fundamentally, it shows that, in the full information condition, a trustee’s reciprocating behavior is dependent not only on her received amount but also on the other trustee’s received amount. The data are also consistent with our hypotheses about trustees’ reaction to non-uniform investment distribution and moral obligation free-riding, although reaction to increased overall generosity may have weakened some of the predicted effects. In particular, we find evidence that a trustee’s propensity to reciprocate in the full information condition can be undermined in the face of any unfair distribution of investments, including when the trustee him/herself is receiving more than the others—a significant example of scenarios in which being treated preferentially does not necessarily lead to better “performance” in return.

REFERENCES

The Effect of Superstitious Beliefs on Consumer Judgments

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Despite their large impact on the marketplace, we currently know very little about how superstitious beliefs influence purchase likelihood ratings and consumer satisfaction. In a series of studies, we show that consumers are less (more) satisfied with products following product failure for which they hold positive (negative) superstitious associations. Furthermore, we demonstrate that consumers are more (less) likely to purchase products with prices for which they have positive (negative) superstitious associations, even compared to the identical product priced lower (higher). These effects are limited to Asian consumers for whom the superstitious associations with the particular colors and numbers exist.

While academic research has recognized the importance of various elements of the social and cultural environments in marketing (e.g., values, Han and Shavitt 1994; goals, Aaker and Lee 2001; or language, Luna and Peracchio 2005), individuals’ superstitious beliefs and their impact on consumer behavior have received very little attention. This lack of investigation into superstitious beliefs is all the more surprising given its strong impact on the marketplace. For example, between $800 and $900 million is lost in business in the United States each Friday the 13th because people do not want to go to work or tend to business in general that day. Additionally, an increasing number of U.S. companies are adopting the principles of feng shui, often hiring feng shui experts who apply these superstitious Chinese practices to offices in such esteemed companies as Smith Barney and Morgan Stanley (Tsang 2004).

However, we currently know very little about how superstitious beliefs (e.g., Vyse 1997) affect consumer behavior, and the current paper seeks to address this shortcoming. Over a series of studies, we explore how positive and negative superstitious beliefs influence purchase likelihood ratings and consumer satisfaction. Specifically, individuals often rely on superstition or superstitious rituals in the hope that these behaviors will help them perform better. Analogously, we expect that superstitious associations with product attributes will also influence expected product performance, and, importantly as investigated in this research, consumers’ satisfaction following product failure. For example, Ang (1997) finds that quality expectations are greater for products with brand names for which consumers hold positive superstitious associations. Differences in expectations, in turn, are likely to influence how satisfied consumers will be (Oliver 1980; Oliver and Bearden 1985). Accordingly, we suggest that consumers are likely to be less (more) satisfied with a product for which they hold positive (negative) superstitious beliefs following product failure.

In Study 1a, we test if Taiwanese consumers would be less satisfied following the failure of a product for which positive superstitious associations with its color exist. In particular, we show that participants expect to be less satisfied with a red (positive superstitious beliefs) versus green (neutral) rice cooker following product failure. Next, in Study 1b, we generalize the previous findings from positive superstitious associations to negative superstitious associations, and to a new attribute (price). We show that Taiwanese participants are more satisfied with a failed product priced at TW$ 6,444.44 than the same product priced at TW$ 6,555.55.

While the first two studies demonstrate the effect of superstitious beliefs on satisfaction, the next two studies address the question of whether superstitious beliefs will actually influence how likely consumers are to purchase a product. In particular, Study 1c test if participants are more likely to purchase a product with which they have positive superstitious associations, as compared to higher-priced product with which they do not. As expected we show that purchase likelihood for a portable radio is greater when it is priced at a “lucky” TW$ 888 than at a “neutral” TW$ 777. Next, Study 1d generalizes the previous findings from positive superstitious associations to negative superstitious associations and demonstrates that participants are less likely to purchase a product priced at an “unlucky” TW$ 6,444.44 than the same product priced more expensively at a “neutral” TW$ 6,555.55.

Study 2 tests and rules out an alternative explanation for these results that suggests that participants may have formed quality associations, expecting the higher priced radio or digital camera to be of better quality, which in turn may be reflected in the higher purchase likelihood. Eliminating the potential confound of price/quality inferences, we next investigate superstitious beliefs concerning numbers by manipulating the quantity of a product sold in a set. Additionally, Study 2 investigates the cultural basis of superstitious beliefs by including both Taiwanese and US participants. That is, if the findings we have obtained are based on culturally shared superstitious beliefs as we hypothesize, then we should replicate our previous results with the Taiwanese participants, but not with the US participants whose culture does not include these superstitions.

Providing evidence for the robustness of the effect of superstitious beliefs on satisfaction, Study 2 shows that following product failure, Taiwanese consumers expect to be significantly less satisfied with products that contain an attribute (i.e., the number in the set) with which they have positive superstitious associations, as compared to products that do not. However, confirming the culture-bound nature of superstitious beliefs, this effect is only obtained for Taiwanese consumers for whom the number 8 is associated with good luck. Additionally, we once again show that superstitious beliefs also affect purchase intentions. In particular, we find that superstitious associations with the number 8 led Taiwanese participants to indicate greater purchase likelihood for a set that contained fewer tennis balls, while the reverse was found for the US participants for whom superstitious associations with the number 8 do not exist.

Our studies thus demonstrate a robust effect of superstitious beliefs on Chinese consumers’ behavior, including instances when superstitious beliefs cause consumers to make purchase decisions that run counter to economic rationality. That is, Taiwanese consumers are more likely purchase a product at the higher “lucky” price, are less likely to purchase a product with a lower “unlucky” price, and are more likely to purchase the “lucky” product with fewer units contained in the package. In contrast, the US consumers, for whom no such superstitions exist, adhered to the more rational choice paradigm.

REFERENCES


Ambivalent Relationships and Projection onto Indexical Objects
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ABSTRACT

It is well-established in consumer culture theory that an object’s meaning often resides in its ability to represent or trigger memories of others or relationships with others. The context of familial intergenerational transfers of gifts and heirlooms has been a particularly fertile area for investigating this phenomenon. This article draws on the findings from a study of heirlooms. It merges insights from the semiotic perspective of objects representing others with a projection perspective where consumers project their ambivalence about relationships with others onto their relationships with the objects that index those others.

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we focus on the projection of ambivalent feelings regarding relationships onto objects which index those relationships. We discuss the importance of the construct of projection in making sense of this behavior. This behavior is most pronounced when the feelings are negative and possibly even socially unacceptable. Three examples are drawn from a study of intergenerational transfers to illustrate this phenomenon. In our data, consumers act out their ambivalence about significant relationships with objects that index those relationships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ambivalence

Levy’s work demonstrates his “…preoccupation with the inherent ambivalence that characterizes and energizes our cognitive and emotional lives.” In “Stalking the Amphisbaena,” (1996/1999) he chooses the mythological creature with a head at both ends to symbolize that ambivalence. We recognized the ambivalence toward familial relations evident in our data and corresponding acting out behaviors directed toward indexical objects. As we reviewed the consumer behavior literature to glean an understanding of this behavior, we were able to build several models of signification to help us understand the relationships between the consumer, objects, the origin of the objects, and groups. Finally, we turned to the projection literature to better understand the acting out behavior that we saw emerging as a result of consumer ambivalence.

Objects Represent Others

Consumers often have special possessions that represent other people in their lives. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) find that, when asked to name their favorite things, many people identify photographs, heirlooms or other such objects because they remind the owner of a loved one. Belk (1988) mentions heirlooms repeatedly in his discussion of the extended self, and adds “the acquisition of possessions of another person that have been intimately associated with that person” (p. 151) to Goffman’s (1971) list of “six modes of interpersonal contamination.” Wallendorf and Arnould (1988) find that favorite possessions reinforce social relationships, often through their ability to stimulate memories of others. In Grayson and Shulman’s (2000) discussion of “irreplaceable possessions,” (p. 17), they apply Peirce’s semiotic model ([1897] 1940, pp. 98-101) and focus on the “indexical” function of irreplaceable possessions. They conclude that “irreplaceable special possessions are indices because they have a “real, factual, and spatial” connection with the special events and people they represent” (p. 19).

This literature invokes five elements (see figure 1). The first element of the model is the object. The second element is the origin of the meaning of the object. This origin is most often a person, but it can also be an event or a place. The third element is the contamination process by which the object’s meaning is individualized through association with the origin. The fourth element is the consumer. The fifth element is the indexical relationship between the consumer and the object. Our interest is in the consumer’s relationship with the object and with the origin. We are not concerned here with issues such as ownership status.

Objects Represent Relationships with Others

A more complex view of the semiotic process focuses on relationships. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) found that many people, termed “warm, value possessions because of the relationships those objects represent. In the consumer behavior literature, Wallendorf & Arnould (1988) established that objects can also represent our relationships with others (“social linkage”). Richins (1994a) found that when informants were asked to think of a possession that was important to them, at least sixteen percent discussed “sentimental objects representing interpersonal ties (e.g., gifts, photos, album, family heirlooms)” being outnumbered only by “assets (e.g. house, property, money)” and transportation as the most commonly reported type of valued possessions (p. 509). In Richins’ piece on materialism (1994b), content analysis of special possessions yielded the dimension “representation of interpersonal ties” with sub-categories of “symbolic ties to others, gifts, and symbols of family history” (p. 527). Curasi, Price and Arnold (2004) discuss keepsakes as “indexical symbols, items with an evidentiary function, able to serve as a testament to important life events (Grayson and Shulman 2000), of immediate descendents’ relationships with their deceased kinsfolk (Belk 1990), and provide vehicles for creating, shaping, and sustaining memories (Finch and Mason 2000)” (p. 610). The relationship model becomes a bit more complex (see figure 2). There is a relationship between the origin and the consumer, the origin contaminates and individualizes the object, and the object then serves the consumer as an index of his or her relationship with the origin.

Objects as Iconic Representations of Group Membership

In their study of intergenerational transfers within kin groups, Curasi, Price, and Arnold (2004, p. 619) differentiate between “the corporal indexical associations of irreplaceable individual cherished objects or keepsakes” and “inalienable wealth [which] is not an interpersonal, indexical symbol, as are keepsakes, but rather, in Pierce’s terms, an iconic one.” They go on to explain that “[a]lthough inalienable possessions lack the corporal indexical associations of irreplaceable individual cherished objects or keepsakes, they retain evidentiary associations that make them irreplaceable.” Thus, for inalienable familial wealth, the relationship between the consumer and the origin is not necessary. The origin individualizes and contaminates the object. The object becomes an iconic representation for the group. The consumer’s relationship with the object then serves as an index for their relationship with the group (see figure 3).

1We thank Sidney Levy for comments on an earlier draft.
Object Relations: Conceptual Grounding

Kleine, Kleine, and Allen (1995) studied “person-possession relationships” (p. 327) from the perspective of the self. They point out that one “archetypal theme” in the development of the self is “affiliation versus autonomy seeking.” “Affiliation seeking is apparent when possessions reflect connections with others, with one’s heritage or tradition, or with occasions spent with important others or reflect being in touch with or cared for by others” (p. 328). Again, semiotically, this is viewed as indexicality (Grayson and Shulman 2000). Kleine, Kleine and Allen go on to explicate the importance of consumers feeling that an object is “me” or “not me” in determining their attachment to the object. The “me-not me” distinction was previously mentioned by Levy (1963/1999) in his discussion of symbolism and lifestyle.

Fournier (1998) and Ahuvia (2005) establish brands as worthy of relationships and objects as worthy of love (respectively). Fournier points out that brands can become “animated, humanized, or somehow personalized” and that this is one way to “legitimize...
the brand-as-partner.” That is, she first establishes that a brand can represent an “other,” and then argues that this representation makes the brand a legitimate relationship partner. She identifies three processes of animism. The relevant process for our study of ambivalence and indexical objects is when “these brands can become so strongly associated with the past-other that the person’s spirit comes to dwell in the brand and is evoked reliably with each use” (“[a] brand of air freshener that grandmother kept in her bathroom, a floor cleaner that an ex-husband always used”) (p. 345). Again, this represents indexicality. Ahuvia (2005) establishes a person’s ability to “love” an object, a term that is in a more limited sense reserved for living things. He concludes that love objects can “serve as indexical mementos of key events or relationships in the life narrative” (p. 179).

Neither Fournier’s or Ahuvia’s informants articulate the ability of an object to be equivalent to a person (instead of indexing one) and to therefore be an appropriate relationship partner as the following informant does:

“This [painting] is my great, great grandfather. I’ve had it since childhood. It’s more than just a portrait—it’s a person!” (Rochbert-Halton 1984, p. 171), as quoted in Belk 1988, p.149).

One could argue that for this informant, the object has moved beyond indexicity to iconic representation in which the object serves as more than a referent but as a veritable illustration or representation of the person (Grayson and Shulman 2000) or the relationship.

**Object Relations: Behavior**

The literature on the disposition of special possessions (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005; Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000), and on the creation of families’ inalienable wealth from individuals’ cherished possessions (Curasi, Price, and Arnold 2004) observe how a consumer’s relationship with an object impacts his or her behavior toward it.

Price Arnould & Curasi (2000) examine ‘older consumers’ disposition of special possessions’ and determine that these possessions had meaning as “narrative mnemonic life tokens,” “totems (totemic symbols of skills and competence),” or “emblems of kinship structure” (p. 187). Notably they do link relationships with the object to disposition behaviors. However, they are examining a donor-object-recipient relationship from the perspective of the donor. We examine the behavior toward the indexical object from the recipient’s perspective.

More relevant to our interest in ambivalent relationships and indexical objects is the Lastovicka and Ferandez study on how “interpersonal relationships influence product disposition” (2005, p. 814). It builds on Kleine, Kleine and Allen’s (1995) work and examines how informants dispose of objects that have a negative valence and are either “never me” or are “extensions of a past-undesired self” (2005, p. 815). Similarly, Grayson and Shulman (2000) refer to a “negative case analysis” where “an indexical possession might be devalued (such as its representation of a disliked parent…” (p.21). It is this sort of negative affect and socially undesirable feeling that encourages consumers to project their consumer-origin or consumer-group relationship onto the consumer-indexical object relationship.

Karen, one of Fournier’s (1996, rev. 1997) “brand-person relationship” informants, provides an example of how consumer behavior toward an indexical object can mirror feelings toward the origin. “Well, we were using the Hellman’s because that was the brand Jim [ex-husband] wanted. He hated the Miracle Whip…I didn’t care much but now that I am alone, we’re back with the Miracle Whip. No more Hellman’s” (p. 15). Curasi, Price, and Arnould (2004) also discuss the behaviors surrounding inalienable wealth as “kratophony” when “caretakers are likely to encase objects in protected environments, subject them to ritual use, and limit who handles them” (p. 617). They mention display, careful packing, and storage. They also discuss the “failure of transmission” (p. 615) and the “stories of objects that should have been but were not kept” (p. 618) that indicate ambivalence.

**Projection**

Rook (2006) presents an excellent review of the use of projective techniques in marketing. Rook reports that the use of projective techniques in market and consumer behavior research declined dramatically in the 1970’s, but is now enjoying renewed interest. The seminal piece that renewed interest was Sidney Levy’s “Dreams, Fairly Tales, Animals, and Cars” (1985/1999). As Rook points out (p. 5), the use of projective techniques has been carried on mostly by a set of researchers who have been affiliated with Levy and the Marketing Department at Northwestern University at some point in their career (Rook 1988; Heisley and Levy 1991/1999; McGrath, Sherry and Levy 1993/1999; Belk, Ger and Askegaard 1997; Zaltman 1997).

Our data is not about projective techniques, but “projection” done by people in their symbolic life among objects and other people. Our informants use objects that index others or their relationship with others to act out their ambivalent feelings toward those people and/or relationships. The interpretation of the data requires an understanding of the psychological process of projection. Freud (1950) describes projection as a process that occurs in mentally normal persons; “The projection outwards of internal perceptions is a primitive mechanism” (p. 64). Internal perceptions (senses, emotion, cognitions), of which the person may not be even aware, are “ejected … into the external world, and thus detached from them and pushed on to [something] else” (p. 62). Projection, in which the person is unconscious of the internal perceptions that have been projected to the external world, is more likely to occur when such projection would result in a relief of conflict (p. 92). This serves as a defense function, in which negative or conflict-laden emotion is “displaced” onto an object (p. 61). However, Freud maintains, projection “also occurs when there is no conflict” (p.64).

Projection is a psychological process that has been much studied. As a general phenomenon it involves the transference or displacement of internal or “primary” emotions and cognitions onto secondary objects such as other people, experiences, and physical objects. Derived from psychodynamic study, the concept helps to explicate various behavioral processes of externalization. Harold Lasswell applied psychoanalytic theory to political processes, and referred to the displacement of private affects onto public objects in the political sphere (Baas 1979).

Projection serves to reduce conflict (ambivalence) that is often unconscious so that one tends to assert one response or the other, often denying negative feelings, saying one thing and doing another. Some forms of projection are called “acting out,” to indicate that the behavior is responding unreasonably to situations or objects in expression of inner needs. It was the resonance between our informants’ ambivalence in their relationships and their acting out toward the objects that indexed those relationships that in turn led us to the concept of projection.

**METHODOLOGY**

Nineteen in-depth interviews were conducted by trained graduate students at a major West Coast business school. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 2 hours in length. The interviews were
transcribed verbatim, resulting in hundreds of pages of data. Interviewers and researchers completed bracketing exercises and kept journal notes. All informants discussed the intergenerational transfers they had received. Nine of the informants had also been donors of intergenerational transfers. The sample consisted of 13 women and 6 men. The informants ranged from working class to upper-middle class. Informants were from twenty to eighty years old, represented all marital statuses, and were of Judeo-Christian background (including Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant). They represented different family structures, including families with adoptions, stepchildren, various ages of biological children, and childless adults. Sometimes we interviewed multiple informants from the same family. Data was thickly coded. In this article we highlight three instances of ambivalence, projection, and acting out from the 18 interviews.

THREE ILLUSTRATIONS

Similar to Mick and Buhl (1992), Fournier (1996 rev. 1997, 1998) and Ahuvia (2005), we will draw on three particular case studies to illustrate ambivalence, projection, and acting out.

Michael’s Crystal

Michael goes to great lengths to save objects that were from his father, much as he tried to salvage his relationship with his estranged father. Mindy described some ‘heirlooms’ that her husband, Michael, bought at the estate sale conducted when his absentee father died. Of particular concern to Mindy are the crystal glasses that have broken but with which Michael refuses to part. Mindy offers her own interpretation of the meaning behind Michael’s fanaticism about keeping the broken crystal:

Mindy: “Also…I wanted to get on tape that heirlooms count extra in these ‘dysfunctional’ families. They don’t have love. He [husband, Michael] is very sensitive about his heirlooms. He bought some [of the heirlooms] from the estate…so they would still be in the family.

[Some of the stuff was moved] from garage to garage, and the stuff was not wrapped correctly. We came across some broken crystal; the wine glasses’ stems were broken. Then when we unpacked the stuff, he says ‘this stuff can be fixed’ and I looked at him, [and said] ‘this cannot be fixed.’ I have to tell you, I am super sensitive, but some of this cannot be fixed. [He told me,] ‘I cannot throw this out; you will have to throw this out.’ These were not glasses to him; it was like throwing out love.

Having no heirlooms I do not understand this, but I do know that his father was not around in his life. His father left when he was five. Never sent him a birthday card, and then when Michael was 20 he went to search for his father, he found him up in L.A. and he made a relationship with his father and his father’s wife Joyce. He forged this relationship. But from ages 5 and up, I mean, we are talking no father, no nurture.

I guess the crystal means a lot more than broken glass. He couldn’t throw it out; I had to throw it out. Some of it we saved [because] he thinks it still can be fixed, [it only has] tiny cracks. He says somebody can file the glass down. I don’t know, eventually he will want it. He loves using stuff from his father and from his father’s father.”

Michael’s father had abandoned Michael at a young age. Upon his father’s death, Michael bought the crystal glasses to keep them from leaving the family, much as he had tried to keep his father in the family. Even when the crystal breaks, much like the family was broken; Michael tries to save it, just as he tried to forge a relationship with his father. Others may not see much use for the box of broken glasses, just as some people might not have thought his father could be of much use to the family after having abandoned Michael. Michael holds hope that the glass can be fixed, just as he held hope that he could fix the relationship with his father, a relationship he worked hard to “forge.” Michael is maintaining his relationship with his father through his hope about the broken glass. This example demonstrates the recipient’s relationship with the object (Michael tried to save the crystal) as a projection of the recipient’s ambivalent feelings about his relationship with the donor (Michael tried to “forge” a relationship with his father).

Sarah’s Bracelet

Perhaps the most powerful instances of projection occurred when informants described negative actions and/or attitudes toward heirlooms that mirrored, though not necessarily consciously, relationships with the donors or recipients. They were often able to verbalize feelings about the relationships with the objects (representing the donors) that they might not have been willing or able to talk about if directly asked about the relationship with the donors.

One’s relationship with heirlooms can reflect the anger, pain and disappointment that people experience in their families. For example, Sarah, an upwardly mobile MBA student, was resentful of her parents’ working class background and their discomfort around nicer things. Sarah’s mother kept her heirlooms (beautiful possessions that fit poorly in the working class existence) stored away in a box and, according to Sarah, had “no appreciation whatsoever for beautiful objects or objects of value. Like she doesn’t care. She’d prefer that they didn’t exist around her.” Sarah is an upwardly-mobile, successful career woman. She aspires to those finer things around which her mother felt discomfort.

Striking projection occurs with Sarah’s story about a bracelet she had been given from her family. Sarah is separated from her family by social class and through emotional distance. This distance is reflected in Sarah’s actions toward an intergenerational transfer:

Sarah: “Although I don’t consider it an heirloom, I did lose a really beautiful silver bracelet that had been my grandmother’s or my great-grandmother’s, I’m not really sure whose it was to begin with. But it was really, really pretty, and I wore it all the time and I thought it was so awesome, like totally, I always had it on. And when I was in Paris, it fell off. And you know what’s really bizarre? This is really weird. I sort of knew that I had dropped it, I kind of felt it falling off, but I didn’t stop for some reason. Like I’d look at my wrist, and in the back of my mind have the sense that I was losing my bracelet. Anyhow, it fell off. I never saw it again…

“How did I feel? I felt like, ‘Shit, I should have…’ I felt like, three hours later, ‘Oh my God, I really did lose it back there.’ I thought that was really stupid that I sort of sensed that I was losing it and didn’t stop to see if it was on my wrist or not. So mostly I felt dumb and stupid because I lost it.”

Sarah was at a point in her life when she was trying to maintain a connection to her family while simultaneously distancing herself from her working class background. She is shamed by her family’s class membership. As she is engaging in travel in Paris, a behavior that will contribute to her continued growth away from her working
class origin, her heirloom bracelet slips off of her wrist. She knows what is happening, just as she knows that her growth away from her family is happening, and she continues to walk down the streets of Paris, while her family literally slips away from her. Sarah’s behavior reflects her ambivalence toward the family that the object represents. We note that Sarah explicitly states that she does not consider this bracelet to have been an heirloom, and that Sarah claims to be unclear about the object’s history or origin. At a deeper level, Sarah’s story about the bracelet allows her to express regret about her loss, but does not set her up for social disapproval for her actions. She would not be able to easily tell the same story about how she did not “look back” while allowing the distance with her family to build. Her relationship with the bracelet serves not only as a mirror of her relationship with her family, but as a vehicle to express emotion, such as regret, in a socially acceptable manner.

**Deloris’ Victrola**

Deloris provided another example of how informants’ relationships with objects reflect their familial disappointment. Deloris was adopted as a baby, but grew up to know her birth mother and her biological sisters, who had been raised by her biological parents. Deloris received only one object from her biological mother, a “tiny Victrola” that had “old fashioned, tiny records.” Her behavior toward that object resonates with her relationship with her biological mother:

*Deloris:* “I sold it [loud squawk]. I wanted to lie to you and say I still had it, but I couldn’t. I sold it, and it broke my heart afterwards.”

*Brent:* “Why did you sell it? You just didn’t feel you had any use for it?”

*Deloris:* “Well, at the time…I had it in one of the garages and we had a garage sale, and someone, a fellow said, ‘Did you have any old things?’ And I said, ‘Oh well, come back to this old garage I have in the back.’ And so he saw that and offered me some money, and I said okay. Never again, mm-mm. I really feel bad about that.”

*Brent:* “And why do you feel bad about it?”

*Deloris:* “Cause it’s cute and it’s antique and you’ll never see another one like that. That was gorgeous. I must’ve been out of my mind when he wanted to buy it. I said okay. But I had so many things around; I wanted to get rid of things. And that’s what happened.”

Similarities between Deloris, the Victrola, and her adoptive family to build. Her relationship with the bracelet serves not only as a mirror of her relationship with her biological mother.

**REFERENCES**


The Spyglass Self: A Model of Vicarious Self-perception
Noah J. Goldstein, Arizona State University, USA
Robert B. Cialdini, Arizona State University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT:
How do we as consumers come to know who we are, and how does that influence how we act? Over a hundred years ago, Cooley (1902) described reflected appraisals—how people come to define themselves by observing how others appraise and respond to them—as the looking-glass self. We propose that consumers come to know who they are not only through a looking glass, but through a spyglass as well. That is, in addition to defining themselves by registering how others respond to them, we propose that observers can also define themselves by examining how psychologically close others respond—not to them, but rather to circumstances relevant to the observers’ self-concepts.

In light of self-perception theory (Bem 1967), which posits that we infer our own attitudes and attributes from observing our own behaviors, and research demonstrating that individuals’ self-concepts often expand to include close others, we suggest that when observing a behavior carried out by a close other, the attributes individuals infer from that person’s behavior should carry over to inferences about their own attributes—almost as if they had observed themselves performing that behavior. This change in self-perception should drive these individuals to behave consistently with these new attributes, often leading them to conform to the originally observed behavior.

In this study, we propose and test a model of these vicarious self-perception processes and examine implications for behavioral conformity. According to the model, observers will internalize the attributes demonstrated in the actor’s behavior to the extent that the observer feels a sense of shared identity with the actor. In addition, self-perception changes on the part of the observer should only occur if the actor’s behavior appears to be free of powerful situational forces—that is, changes should occur when observers have reason to make dispositional rather than situational attributions for the actor’s behavior.

To test the central hypotheses of this model, participants read the transcript of a purported interview in which the interviewee helped give directions to a stranger who was lost before reading the transcript, half of the participants were informed that the interviewee’s brainwaves greatly overlapped, creating a sense of merged identity; the other half were given no brainwave feedback. In addition, half of the participants learned that the interviewee helped because he or she was paid to do so (a powerful external controlling force for the behavior), whereas the other half of the participants did not learn this information. After filling out questionnaires assessing their perceptions of their own attributes, participants were asked if they would be willing to help the researchers collect additional data. As Freedman and Fraser (1966) demonstrated in their investigation of the foot-in-the-door technique, participants need not see a clear connection between the content of the first request and the second. If changes in self-perceived attributes are driving these increases in prosocial behavior—which they appear to be—then the similarity of the details between the two requests is not of paramount importance; instead, what is critical is simply that the changes in self-perception following the first behavior are relevant to the attributes necessary to engage in the second.

One implication of these findings is that influence agents could potentially make use of vicarious self-perception processes in what could be considered the “vicarious-foot-in-the-door technique.” In utilizing such a strategy, an influence agent attempting to secure a target consumer’s compliance to a sizeable request could, in the presence of the target, make a smaller, seemingly unrelated request of someone with whom the target feels close. After securing compliance from the close other, influence agents could then make the larger request of the original target. So long as the target perceived the close other to have freely chosen to comply with the first request, this strategy should be effective, an outcome due to the target’s self-perception changes after observing the close other comply with the first request. The target need not see a clear connection between the content of the first request and the second. Instead, as suggested above, what is pertinent is that the attributes relevant to the close other’s compliance following the first behavior are relevant to the attributes necessary to comply with the larger request.

Although the current paper focuses on individuals’ self-perceptions related to the area of prosocial behavior, a severely understudied area in consumer research, vicarious self-perception processes should operate in other areas as well. For example, if consumers observe someone with whom they feel close purchasing a product indicative of risk-taking (e.g., skydiving lessons), they should come to see themselves as more risk-taking. This change in self-perception should, in turn, affect the types of products that these consumers would consume, including products outside the domain of the observed behavior (i.e., in this case, outside the area of leisure activities). Specifically, such consumers might choose a product whose image is associated with greater risk-taking (e.g., Mountain Dew over Coca Cola), a hypothesis open to empirical verification.

FULL CITATIONS

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SESSION OVERVIEW

Over the last decade or so, customer communities have become established venues of marketing action for many products and services. The surging academic interest in this area can be traced to Muñiz and O’Guinn’s (2001) seminal paper, in which they defined brand community as “specialized, non-geographically bound communities, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand” (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001, p.412), and laid the theoretical groundwork for studying such communities.

In many cases, brand communities are organized, sponsored, and orchestrated by marketers; in other cases, they are entirely developed and run by enthusiast customers. Brand communities are interesting for various reasons. One reason is that they are relatively new, and so, from a managerial standpoint, much remains to be learnt regarding how to make them work effectively as marketing programs, how they compare with more traditional programs like image advertising or event sponsorships in reaching the desired outcomes, and what their limits and limitations are. From a consumer behavior standpoint, there are many interesting psychological and sociological processes at work within these communities, often in conjunction with each other, that haven’t yet been studied.

In this session we bring together cutting-edge research studying the processes and outcomes of consumer-consumer interactions within brand communities. The findings of the first paper by Muñiz and Schau reveal that the use of community-generated content impacts brand community members in interesting and significant ways. Using a netnographic approach, they studied the firm-sponsored community of the Jones Soda Company, and discovered it to have all the key markers of community that prior research had identified (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001). Yet, the firm tried to make the brand marginal to the community by strategically providing choices of flavors, promotional materials and distribution. The authors consider the theoretical and practical implications of this approach.

The second paper by Prykop, Tavassoli, and Herrmann bases its analysis on the sociological concept of scenes (Irwin 1973) where a shared fascination with an activity or topic provides a feeling of belonging to participants. The authors then adopt a social psychological lens to study the role of self-definition and social identification on brand choice within customer communities organized around product categories. They also studied how to persuade customers effectively under the different conditions, employing a structural equation model to test their hypotheses.

The third paper by Almeida, Dholakia, and Vianello uses a netnographic approach to compare customer behaviors and outcomes of managerial significance in firm-managed and customer-managed communities. They found that firm-sponsored communities tend to be targeted toward specific, well-defined consumer segments and seem to be used by consumers more for instrumental purposes. In contrast, customer-managed communities are more broadly appealing and are used for “off-topic” conversations and activities.

Despite the diversity in these papers, as evidenced by authors’ different disciplinary perspectives, their use of diverse methodological approaches, and differences in the specific issues emphasized in the studies, they all unequivocally show that empowered and socially interacting consumers are transforming the way marketing is practiced by consumer-oriented firms.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“The Impact of Market Use of Consumer Generated Content on a Brand Community”
Albert M. Muñiz, DePaul University
Hope Jensen Schau, University of Arizona

Many studies have demonstrated that members of brand communities are capable of extensive, and increasingly professional, creation of brand content (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry; Schau and Muñiz 2006). Indeed, the ascendency of communally-embedded, empowered consumers is now a marketplace reality (Flight 2005; Ives 2004; Morrissey 2005). However, little work has examined how the use of such community-generated content impacts the community or its members. While several marketers have played lip-service to this idea, and a few have included token amounts of user-authored content in advertising campaigns (Ferriss 2002), only a few marketers have made extensive efforts to use consumer-created content. As a result, we have no insight into how extensive use of consumer-generated content will impact a brand community.

Jones Soda relies heavily upon its community of loyal users for the creation of branding content (Business Week 2005). From product innovations (flavors) to packaging (labels, cap quotes), promotions (stickers, web content, price points) and advertising, Jones Soda gives its 12-24 year old target consumers considerable input into the brand’s attributes and personality (Underwood 2005). Through the Jones Soda interactive website, consumers are asked to rate suggested new flavors and are invited to submit photos and copy that would fit in advertisements and on the packaging. Jones Soda representatives follow up website research with a mobile Jones promotional vehicle that arrives at events like the X Games and high schools sports competitions to give away promotional material and have consumers try and rate Jones soda products. The promotional vehicle stocks flavors of interest (new and experimental) and actively solicits consumer feedback on site.

Jones Soda thus has several points of departure from most previously encountered brand communities. It is a new brand, which actively solicits and applies user input. It is from a product category not previously examined-consumer package goods-and thus represents a broadening of focus. It is largely inorganic, a corporately created brand community. Based on these differences, one could expect a vastly different form of brand community.

We conducted a netnographic study (Kozinets 2002) of the Jones Soda brand community. This community possesses all three of the markers of brand community identified by Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001). We found a brand community that relies extensively on the Internet to organize an immediate feedback loop between consumers, the firm and the marketplace. We also witnessed an attempt by the marketer to make the brand marginal via the strategic choice of flavors, promotional content and distribution strategy. This strategy may have been designed to instill “desired marginality” (O’Guinn and Muñiz 2005) in the brand and community. Finally, we found ample room for personal transformation and consumer empowerment via the Jones Soda brand community.

The construct of brand community is well-defined and yet still currently under-researched and under-theorized. This study of Jones Soda allows us to demonstrate the power of inorganic communities to harness consumers’ creative efforts for marketing
success. Beyond the focus group approach to product development and marketing, Jones Soda has brought consumers into the production of value and given them unprecedented input into all marketing related decisions.

“How to Get in With the in Crowd”
Catja Prykop, Credit Suisse
Nader T. Tavassoli, London Business School
Andreas Herrmann, University of St. Gallen

Our findings contribute to the literature on brand communities (e.g. McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002, Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001) and consumption-related interactions in high-risk leisure consumer contexts such as skydiving, where interactions represent strong interpersonal bonds: “a shared of ritualistic experience that transcends ordinary camaraderie” (Celsi, Rose and Leigh 1993; p. 12). Findings from this literature are most descriptive of consumers with a high degree of identification with a social category. Building on research on the notion of “collective” social identity, we find that there are qualitative differences to previous research in contexts with strong interpersonal bonds, in that different levels of self-definition represent distinct forms of self-representation with different origins, sources of self-worth, and social motivations (Brewer and Gardner 1996). Relatedly, we find that the drivers of brand choice are moderated by the strength of consumers’ social identification with a scene.

The overwhelming focus of previous research has also been on the fabric and dynamics of the community and to some degree, in the case of brand communities that are centered on and supported by a single brand, their relationship to the focal brand. In contrast, our focus is on brand choice—among a competitive set of brands—for consumers affiliated with non-brand centered social categories. We base our theoretical framework on the sociological concept of scenes (Irwin 1973) where a shared—even mundane—fascination with an activity or topic provides a feeling of belonging. We tested our theoretical framework in a large-scale empirical study (N=1570) in two leisure scenes: the golfer scene and the snowboarder scene. We show that intra-personal (personal identity; Sirgy 1982) and interpersonal (social identity) aspects of the self jointly affect brand choice. We further demonstrate that (1) the effects of brand-self congruity and brand-scene congruity are mediated by functional-, emotional-, and social brand values, and (2) that these effects are moderated by consumers’ level of social identification with the scene.

We further tested a managerial implication from the results of a structural equation model in an experimental study on advertising effectiveness. We found that ads advocating products’ functional benefits provide a more successful positioning for individuals with low scene identification, whereas ads positioned around social benefits are preferred by individuals with high scene identification.

“Understanding Differences between Firm-Managed and Customer-Managed Brand Communities”
Stefânia Ordovâs de Almeida, University of São Paulo
Utpal M. Dholakia, Rice University
Silvia Viannes, Università Ca’ Foscarini di Venezia

Grappling with the waning effectiveness of advertising campaigns, the growing consumer resistance toward aggressive direct marketing programs, and increasingly empowered consumers, many marketers have become more and more interested in organizing, nurturing, and monitoring brand communities where their customers can interact with one another (Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann 2005; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995).

Despite having considerable practical significance, little research has examined differences between firm-managed and customer-managed brand communities. This issue is especially pertinent to many firms that have recently launched community sites only to find pre-existing thriving communities established and managed by their own customers. Some unanswered questions that we focus on are: Do customers favor a particular type of community and are they entrenched within it? Does company involvement reduce the enthusiasm of participating customers? Which communities have a greater number of social interactions and are more effective in disseminating knowledge? Do these communities favor different sorts of interactions? To examine these questions, we compared and contrasted brand communities supported by the firm and those organized by customers for two different branded products: NI’s LabVIEW software and the Microsoft XBOX game console.

Results of our Netographic analysis (Kozinets 2002) revealed considerable overlap in customer memberships across the firm- and customer-managed communities. Many of the most active participants tended to post and respond to messages actively in both community venues. However, there was a clear demarcation in what these communities are used for. Firm-managed communities tended to be employed primarily for instrumental purposes by customers, such as seeking assistance with a specific problem, learning about upcoming product launches, events, etc. In contrast, customer-managed communities allow more for broader “off-topic” interactions not necessarily involving the firm’s products and brands. In these communities, we found the emergence of small friendship groups of a firm’s customers.

Furthermore, we also found firm-managed communities to be largely targeted toward specific, well-defined consumer segments by the firm. In contrast, customer-managed communities appeared less clearly targeted, and were likely be formed by members of customer groups that the firm may have overlooked. As such, customer-managed communities may enable the discovery of new marketing opportunities for the firm. Based on these and other findings, we will discuss how firms can manage their own communities more effectively, and how they can play a meaningful role in customer-managed communities. In the ACR session, we will also discuss the theoretical issues emerging from our research, as well as highlight promising research opportunities.

REFERENCES


SESSION OVERVIEW

More than 47 percent of the money Americans spend on food is spent away from home, mostly in fast-food restaurants and vending machines. To the relief of nutritionists and public policy officials, fast-food restaurants have shifted their focus from supersizing to offering healthier food and to making nutritional information more salient. For example, much of the success of Subway, the fastest-growing fast-food franchise, has been attributed to its “healthy” positioning (Barrett 2003). Similarly, McDonald’s will voluntarily add detailed nutritional information on hamburger packages. But why then are obesity rates showing no sign of abating?

The presentations in this special session examine whether objectively healthier food and better nutritional information may, ironically, contribute to obesity and whether a different approach, based on offering different portion sizes and bundles, may effectively lead people to choose smaller portions.

The first two presentations show that consumers may not be making healthier food choices when eating in healthier restaurants or when nutritional information is salient. Chandon and Wansink show that the restaurant brand (e.g., Subway vs. McDonald’s) and the presence of healthy items on the menu prime healthy or unhealthy anchors and bias consumers’ estimates of the number of calories contained in their fast-food meals. Calorie underestimation caused by healthy primes then lead people to indulge in high-calorie side orders or desserts. In the end, people may end up consuming bigger meals, yet believe that they consumed fewer calories at healthy restaurants than at unhealthy ones.

In the second presentation, Bloom and Bolton show that more accessible and easier-to-digest nutrition labels only improve food choice among ambivalent consumers. They find that the choices of consumers with either strongly positive or negative attitudes toward nutrition were not influenced by nutrition labels. These effects are robust, regardless of whether nutritional labels contain information on calorie and on the number of minutes on an exercise bike it would take to burn them off the calories or simple red flags, such as those adopted by leading food marketers.

What then can public policy and responsible marketers do to lead people towards healthier food choices? The third presentation suggests an innovative solution. Sharpe, Staelin, and Huber argue that simply adding healthier alternatives on the menu and providing better nutritional information may not be enough. They find that, because of extremeness aversion, simply offering one smaller portion size on the menu (e.g., a 12-oz drink) leads people to choose smaller drinks. In contrast, they find that the current established super-sizing practices lead people to choose larger portion sizes, even when the discount is minimal.
SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY

Do we Always Judge a Book by its Cover? The ‘How’ and ‘When’ of the Effect of Consumers’ Stereotypes on Evaluations of Products and Services

Shashi Matta, Ohio State University, USA

SESSION OVERVIEW

Research on stereotypes has an extensive history within psychology, and social cognition in particular. Stereotypes are beliefs about the characteristics, attributes and behaviors of members of certain groups (Hilton and von Hippel 1996). Consumer researchers have acknowledged the importance of stereotypes and have examined the role of consumers’ stereotypes in evaluations of products, firms and services. Stereotypes that have been researched in consumer behavior include gender (e.g., Gilly 1988; Fisher and Dube 2005), country-of-origin (Maheswaran 1994; Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000), and occupations (Iacobucci and Ostrom 1993; Babin, Boles and Darden 1999).

Researchers have long been fascinated by why, how and when people use stereotypes. More interesting, perhaps, are the questions of ‘how’ and ‘when’ stereotypes affect judgments that people make. In this special session, we address these questions by examining the multifaceted effects of consumers’ stereotypes, and how and when they affect consumers’ judgments. The four papers investigate consumers’ stereotypes of gender (Folkes and Matta), race (Faro and McGill; Morris), and consumption (Perkins, Pinter, Greenwald and Forehand) on judgments of products (Folkes and Matta; Perkins et al.), services (Faro and McGill; Folkes and Matta), and advertising (Morris). Each of these papers made a unique contribution to collectively enhance our understanding of the ‘how’ and ‘when’ of consumers’ stereotypes.

In the first paper, Folkes and Matta show that stereotypes about the gender of an organization’s leader influence consumers’ inferences about the quality of the organization’s product or service, and also about gender-typed attributes of the product or service. They vary the leader’s gender in a male dominated profession, and the ambiguity of information about the leader’s competence. Faro and McGill, in the second paper, continue this investigation of how stereotypes affect consumers’ evaluations of services. They examine racial stereotypes, and show that the social context of the judgment (in the presence of others or alone) and consumers’ self-monitoring moderate the effect of racial stereotypes on consumers’ response to advice by a service provider. Respondents in their experiments were asked to make an investment decision based on the recommendation of a financial advisor who was either White or Black. Consumers’ racial stereotypes also feature in the third paper, in which Morris examines the role of a lifestyle variable—urban identification—on consumers’ evaluations of ads with White or Black actors. While Morris investigates urban identification, Perkins and colleagues, in the final paper, examine the role of another kind of identification—implicit partisanship (a trivial connection between a consumer and a consumption group)—on evaluation of products consistent with group stereotypes. The session is therefore structured with links that facilitate the flow of ideas from one paper to the next.

Overall, the session attempts to present a rich and varied perspective on how and when consumer’s stereotypes affect judgments of products, services and marketing communication. Together, the four papers address both situation variables (e.g., information ambiguity, presence of others in judgment context, implicit partisanship) and individual difference variables (e.g., self-monitoring, urban identification) that affect the role stereotypes in consumer judgments, and provide evidence for the processes by which these variables affect that relationship. We believe that this session guides us towards an understanding of the ‘how’ and ‘when’ in stereotypes research.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“When Women Lead, Do Consumers’ Perceptions of Her Firm Follow?”

Valerie Folkes, University of Southern California
Shashi Matta, Ohio State University

Our research examines when consumers’ gender stereotypes influence perceptions of an organization’s products and services. In particular, we hypothesize that stereotypes about the gender of an organization’s leader influence consumers’ inferences about the quality of the organization’s product or service, and about gender-typed attributes of a product or service.

Consumers receive information about a firm’s leaders from a variety of sources, including news articles, publicity releases and advertisements. That information about the leader may influence consumers’ inferences about the organization’s products and services. A leader is perceived as a prototypical group member or one that represents the organization’s ideal (van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg 2005). In fact, leaders’ and members’ characteristics are related, with top leaders’ personalities and values being similar to those of employees’ (Giberson, Resick and Dickson 2005). People are likely to assume that leaders impose their values on the organization and that the organization selects leaders that reflect its values. Hence, consumers may generalize from their inferences about the characteristics of a firm’s leader to characteristics of the service delivered by subordinates, as well as to attributes of products created by the firm.

If information about leaders does influence consumers’ perceptions of products and services, then the leader’s gender may also affect those evaluations. Some research suggests that evaluations will be more negative when the firm is led by a woman. People respond negatively to a female leader because the traits associated with leadership are those more frequently linked to traditionally masculine stereotypes than traditionally feminine stereotypes (Powell and Butterfield 1989). On the other hand, research by Matta and Folkes (2005, study 3) found that a woman leader in a male dominated occupation was evaluated as more competent than a male leader when both performed in an excellent manner.

Our studies attempt to resolve the contradictory findings of Matta and Folkes’ study with previous research on negative evaluations of women leaders, as well as to investigate generalizations from the leader’s characteristics to the service delivered by subordinates and to the firm’s products. Few studies have examined the impact of a firm’s leader on products and services, and those few studies show mixed results. For example, Freiden (1984) compared effects of various types of product endorsers (the firm’s CEO, a typical consumer, a celebrity, an expert) portrayed in an ad for a fictitious product and found no endorser sex differences in spokesperson effectiveness.

We conducted two experiments that investigated consumers’ inferences from high level leaders on perceptions of the type of
service delivered by the leader’s subordinates. Both studies manipulated ambiguity of information about the leader’s competence. Previous research led us to expect that perceivers would be more favorable toward a female in a stereotypically male role when she performs in an unambiguously competent manner than when competence is ambiguous (Heilman and Haynes 2005; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs and Tamkins 2004). We reasoned that Matta and Folkes’ (2005) findings reflected the unambiguously excellent performance of the woman. Matta and Folkes’ findings should not extend to a leader if competence is ambiguous.

To enhance ecological validity, all studies presented participants with information about an actual organization and the organization’s leader. Participants read information about the leader in a male dominated occupation who was described to half the participants using her actual name and to the other half using a masculine name. Results showed that characteristics of the male leader in a male dominated profession were similar to subordinates, suggesting generalization from leader to follower. When the male leader’s performance was unambiguously competent, the service delivered by subordinates was rated more positively than when his performance was ambiguous. Further, inferences about his sex-typed characteristics (e.g., the extent to which he had agentic or communal traits) were similar to inferences about his firm’s sex-typed providers’ sex-typed characteristics.

Characteristics of the female leader were less likely to be generalized to her subordinates. As with the male leaders, less ambiguity about a woman leader’s performance led to more positive evaluations of her compared to when her performance was more ambiguous. Unlike the male leaders, the unambiguously excellent woman was considered more competent than her subordinates, whereas the ambiguously performing leader was considered less competent than her subordinates. Further, respondents were more likely to perceptually isolate the ambiguously performing leader from others in her firm, and to assume that her sex-typed traits were not generalizable to her subordinates.

Study 2 investigated effects of ambiguity and the leader’s gender on perceptions of subordinates as well as on product perceptions. Respondents had actual product experience and then evaluated the product. Respondents’ evaluations of the organization’s output reflected characteristics of the leader rather than characteristics of the subordinates. Hence, inferences that a woman leader had more feminine characteristics than did a male leader affected perceptions of product attributes, with respondents describing products as having more feminine characteristics when the leader was a woman than when a man. The results of these studies indicate that consumers’ gender stereotypes about an organization’s leader can influence evaluations of an organization’s products and services.

“Racial Stereotypes in Consumer Judgment: The Effect of the Presence of Others”

Davis Faro, London Business School
Ann McGill, University of Chicago

Stereotypes have been shown to play an important role in consumer judgments (e.g. Maheswaran 1994; Gurhan-Calni & Maheswaran 2000). In the present research, we examine the role of racial stereotypes in the evaluation of services and, in particular, how the social context of the judgment—in the presence of others or alone—may affect the influence of stereotypes.

Intuition might suggest that racial stereotypes would play less of a role in the evaluation of services in a more public context because buyers would want to avoid any appearance of prejudice. This intuition is consistent with recent consumer research that has highlighted how the presence of others may trigger processes of impression management (e.g., Ariely & Levav 2000; Fisher & Dube 2005; Ratner & Kahn 2002; Argo, Dahl & Manchanda 2005). In this view, consumers may downplay the role of race in their judgments or even provide “politically correct” judgments in which services provided by African-Americans are judged more favorably in public than in private. However, public contexts may cause other effects than those dictated by impression management concerns. Specifically, research on stereotypes has shown that control of stereotypical judgment requires cognitive resources that the presence of others may diminish (Gilbert & Hixon 1991). Therefore we might observe situations in which the presence of others would actually result in more stereotypical judgments (e.g. Lambert et al. 2003).

The present research examines these opposing predictions and relies on individual differences in self-monitoring to predict the direction of the effect that the presence of others would have on evaluations of services provided by minority groups (Snyder, 1974; Snyder & Smith, 1986). Self-monitoring shows particular promise in exploring opposing effects of social presence because it captures differences in sensitivity both to social cues to providing socially appropriate responses and to the distractions caused by the presence of others. Specifically, we predict that for high self-monitors, consistent with prior research on impression management, the presence of others will result in more favorable evaluations of services provided by an African-American (Fiske & Von Hendy 1992; Olivier, Snyder & Livingstone 2004). By contrast, low self-monitors tend to be more anxious in social circumstances and generally to look inward, rather than outward, for cues to behavior. This unease and inward focus might result in more stereotypical judgments in the presence of others, that is, less favorable evaluation of the service.

The first study examined these predictions in the context of an investment decision to be made based on a recommendation by an African-American (versus White) financial advisor. Participants were asked to allocate a sum of money to a stock recommended by the financial advisor and they made their judgments alone or in the presence of a white confederate. The confederate was merely-present in the room and was unable to see participants’ responses (Zajonc, 1965). Results revealed the predicted three-way interaction of social presence, race, and self-monitoring. High self-monitors invested more for Black advisor in public versus alone and, further, invested more for the Black advisor than the White advisor in public. This pattern of results reversed for the low self-monitors. Investment levels were lower for the Black advisor in public versus alone, and, further, lower for the Black than for the White advisor in public.

The results of the first study are in line with the account that high self-monitors were better able to control an activated stereotype in public than low self-monitors. The second study was designed to explore an alternative process by which self-monitoring may influence judgments. Specifically, high self-monitors may be so attuned to the demands of the social environment that these individuals may not even activate the stereotype. To test this account, participants in the second study completed the same investment task but also took part in a word completion task that was aimed at measuring activation of racial stereotypes (Gilbert & Hixon 1991). Results indicated that high self-monitors were not less likely to activate the stereotype. Further, the pattern of results from the first study was replicated, but only for those people who activated the stereotype, consistent with the view that results are driven by differences in ability of high and low self-monitors to control the stereotype when evaluating the service.
Results of these two studies demonstrate the opposing effects that public presence can have on the prevalence of racial stereotypes in the evaluation of services. Findings show that public presence can result in more or less politically correct evaluations, depending on individual differences in the sensitivity to social desirability concerns (self-monitoring). We expect that this pattern of results would extend beyond the context of service evaluations, to contexts such as judgments of foreign products or advertising messages involving minority members. The studies presented here reflect the multifaceted influence that public presence can have on consumers’ judgments.

“Beyond Demographics and Stereotypes: Effects of Urban Identification on Responses to Actor Race in Advertising”
Marlene Morris, University of Georgetown

Consumer behavior researchers have identified many criteria by which to segment consumers to explain and predict their behavior (Zaichowsky 1985; Bettman 1979). While marketers have historically viewed the marketplace in terms of demographics such as race, consumers are increasingly identifying themselves on lifestyle rather than demographic terms. Marketing research has also historically focused on segmentation based upon ethnicity to understand and predict consumer behavior, including specific measures of degree of ethnic identification, examining subcultures such as blacks (Whittler 1991, Williams & Qualls 1989, etc.), Hispanics (Webster 1994) and Jews (Hirschman 1981). In recent years, researchers have begun to follow marketers’ shift from the use of demographic data as the primary basis for understanding and categorizing consumers and predicting their behavior, to segmentation variables with more explanatory power such as subculture and lifestyle. One particular lifestyle segment that crosses racial, ethnic, age and geographic boundaries in an unprecedented fashion is the urban subculture. Despite the great deal of attention that the urban segment has received from marketing and advertising practitioners in recent years, there is currently little understanding of its effects on consumer behavior and effectiveness of marketing communications. The urban segment generally takes multiculturalism for granted and sees things less in terms of black and white than cool or un-cool, making demographic and ethnicity-based segmentation less insightful for newer generations of consumers and behavioral research. Identification with this segment and its characteristic ethnic diversity also creates some confusion about which cultural cues are now seen as stereotypically representative of a particular ethnic group.

Marketers have only recently identified and acknowledged the urban population as a lucrative consumer lifestyle and sociopolitical segment in and of itself, as well as a powerful mechanism for reaching and influencing broader audiences of consumers. The pervasiveness of this segment along with over $890 billion per year in buying power in the U.S. alone (Stavraka 2001) makes it a highly sought-after one for marketers. The current research seeks to examine the effects of urban identification on evaluations of advertising and shows that urban identification mitigates previous findings regarding similarity effects in advertisements.

Existing research in advertising has examined subjects’ responses to ads featuring same- and other-race actors. While studies consistently show that minority (i.e. black) subjects respond more positively to ads featuring same-race actors and related race cues (Appiah 2001), results for the larger majority population are inconclusive, with researchers assuming that there is no significant effect of actor race or race cues on non-black populations. The current study examines the effects of urban identification on majority populations’ responses to ads and finds that within a non-black population, non-urban identifiers prefer ads featuring white actors; however, non-black urban identifiers prefer ads featuring black actors with preference measured in terms of ad liking, similarity of ad to self, identifying with the actor, perceiving a similar style, personality, culture and style of actor’s dress and liking for the actor.

Study results call into question current advertising industry belief and practice, which focuses on demographics—specifically race—as the basis for market segmentation. It also challenges existing notions of stereotypes and effectiveness of in-group and out-group categorizations and cues by showing that particular psychographic and lifestyle variables–urban identification in this instance—mediate the effects of racial stereotypes on consumers’ responses to advertising.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Lend Me Your Attitudes….Implicit Attitude Formation As a Result of Group Membership and Consumption Stereotypes”
Andrew Perkins, Rice University
Brad Pinter, Penn State Altoona
Anthony G. Greenwald, University of Washington
Mark Forehand, University of Washington

Previous research has established that individuals’ cognitions and attitudes may form as a result of membership in a group to which that the individual belongs. This minimal group effect (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy and Flament 1971) suggested that the mere assignment of an individual to a randomly selected group resulted in discrimination against other competing groups. Recent research suggest that implicit partisanship may be unconscious in nature, in that individuals automatically self-associate with groups, leading to feelings of in-group bias and out-group discrimination (Greenwald et al 2002, Pinter and Greenwald 2004). Pinter and Greenwald found this robust effect across numerous experimental settings suggesting that implicit partisanship is a category level effect, such that a meaningful group membership is created automatically, with the potential to influence behavior. The current research extends these findings by exploring the formation of attitudes toward target objects that have been randomly associated with a novel group and consumption stereotypes tied to that group.

Two experiments were conducted to explore the potential for attitude formation toward novel objects (experiment 1) and fictitious brand names (experiment 2). Participants were initially told that they would be participating in a campus-wide scavenger hunt, and would be randomly assigned to one of two groups, designated as either team Triangle or Circle. Following random assignment to one of the groups, participants were instructed to complete a simple categorization task that prompted them to first examine a list of ten names of the other students who were members of the two five-member competing groups. Within the group that the participant was assigned, one of the names was replaced with “yourself”, an indication that the participant was a member of that group. Following a thirty second exposure to the list of fictitious student names, participants then completed a trivial categorization task that compelled them to separate the two groups of names using two behavioral responses, in this case, pressing either the ‘d’ key or the ‘k’ key on a computer keyboard. Thus, a participant who was assigned to the Circle team might be required to press the ‘d’ key whenever the name of his team was presented on the screen (as well as the word “yourself”), and press ‘k’ whenever the names of the other team members were presented on the screen. Following this task, participants were then instructed that they would be looking for the scavenger hunt targets: either analog or digital clocks described as present on campus (experiment 1) or fictitious automobile brands
said to be located around campus as part of a vehicle manufacturer’s promotion. In order to learn which target category of objects was to be scavenged, participants completed another categorization task that required the same behavioral response (again, pressing either the ‘d’ or ‘k’ key) when presented with either the target object or names of their own team. The work “yourself” was omitted in this task, so that the participant never directly associated a self-representative word with the target objects. Following the manipulations, participants completed two Implicit Association Tests (IATs; Greenwald, McGhee and Schwartz 1998) that measured self association and attitude toward the target object or brand. The experiments differed only with regards to the target object.

The results suggested that subjects spontaneously generated positive implicit self-associations as well as positive implicit attitudes toward the target objects that were sorted together with their group during the experimental treatments. Specifically, a participant assigned to the circle group, who categorized their group members with the Ace brand model names, subsequently self-associated with and generated a positive implicit attitude toward the Ace brand, even though there was no direct linkage of self with the Ace brand during the experiment. The formation of these types of attitudes may be explained within a cognitive consistency framework (Greenwald et al. 2002). Greenwald and colleagues suggest that links in memory spontaneously form in order to balance identity triads in memory. Extending these findings, the current findings suggest that these triads may be more complex than the relationships between three objects in memory. In essence, the current project posits that a link should form in memory between the self and a target object as a result of that individual’s group membership, and the subsequent association of that target object to the group, but not directly to the individual. These results suggest that consumers have an implicit bias toward products that are stereotypical for their in-groups, even when that stereotype is arbitrary and is not based on personal experience. Moreover, the findings suggest that consumption stereotypes (beliefs about the appropriateness of products and brands for a particular group) may drive preference without conscious deliberation. A third experiment is currently underway to assess whether attitudes formed in the way described above influence purchase intention and other explicitly stated behavioral outcomes.
Conversations continue around Philosophy and Consumption after last year’s roundtable attracted 45 participants, encouraging consumer researchers to reflect on philosophical concepts, frameworks, or philosophical figures that have impacted, and continue to impact, the way each of us asks questions, conceptualizes problems, and carries out our arguments and analysis. This session spurs interaction between scholars with a variety of interests and research paradigms who are engaged—whether implicitly or explicitly—in philosophically informed consumer research.

The session’s purpose is to continue conversations around recent efforts that draw upon philosophical and ethical concepts and theories in accomplishing consumer research. Examples include research on tragedy; consumer objects as resources for consumer identity work; constructions of “consumers that matter”; and consumer subjectivities constituted through interaction with brands and marketing representations. Just as crucial was the issue of inspiration: that is, certain ideas or the way things are said or connected together can inspire us to look at and engage with a question, or the world, differently. The goal is to gather together scholars who are engaged in philosophically informed consumer research, and to provide theoretical resources for interested researchers and consumers. The session’s organizer holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy and writes on consumer identity constitution, consumer agency, and ethical concerns in marketing and consumer behavior.

Some of last year’s group, and some new people as well, have been asked to provide insight into their own experience and contribute to this on-going conversation. Whereas last year every attendee (all 45!) introduced him or herself and said a bit about their interests, this year each of the invited ‘panel’ will prepare a five minute elaboration of a philosopher/thinker or a philosophical perspective, or a single concept or notion that has contributed, disrupted, or encouraged certain aspects of their own writing, questioning, and/or research. This brief presentation is not meant to provoke anxiety or suggest the need for deep and extensive knowledge about philosophers or history of ideas, etc. Rather, we each get to hear a little more about how others think, what creates a lasting, or only momentary, influence that makes a difference, as well as, opening up discussion around a diversity of interests and methodologies. Questions and discussion among all attending researchers will follow.

Clearly, the concerns of philosophy and the marketplace intersect. Moreover, turning to philosophy can help clarify assumptions, theory, and methods within consumer research. Philosophy questions, and thus adds rigor to, the coherence of arguments. At a pragmatic level, philosophical considerations and ethical investigations, and the ability to undertake both, allow for thoughtful, careful, and aware research, including an understanding of epistemological and ontological issues regarding, e.g. consumer identity, corporate social responsibility, and consumption generally.
SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY

Time and Decision: New Perspectives on Present-Biased Preferences

Selin A. Malkoc, University of Minnesota, USA

SESSION OVERVIEW

Consumers are constantly faced with decisions about the timing of their consumption. Consumers evaluate investments and savings (costs incurred now for future gain), redemption of cash refunds and rebates (a wait period followed by earnings) and indulgent consumption (benefits experienced now but with a cost (e.g., to one’s health) incurred later). Prior research has consistently shown that people have a preference toward the present, overweighting near outcomes compared to later outcomes. Furthermore, this impulsivity has been shown to decline with time (i.e., hyperbolic discounting or present bias; Thaler 1981). That is, when making a decision between smaller-sooner and larger-later rewards, individuals’ implied rate of discounting (or preference for smaller-sooner outcomes) is higher over a short compared to a long time horizon. This pattern of behavior has been attributed to impulsivility (Loewenstein 1996), to differences in cognitive representations between near and future events (e.g., Zauberman and Lynch 2005) or to an individual difference in time orientation (e.g., Zimbardo and Boyd 1999).

The papers in this special session propose new perspectives for understanding present-biased preferences. These papers challenge current theorizing in this domain and provide boundary conditions for existing findings. In particular, they demonstrate that impatience (1) is better measured by a motivational present value approach, (2) is better understood if prior consumer decisions are taken into account and (3) might not always be as robust as previous research has suggested.

The first paper, by Ebert and Prelec, argues that conventional measures of intertemporal preference systematically underestimate consumers’ present value of future outcomes. They develop a motivational measure that is based on the exerted effort to obtain outcomes at different times, and show that the traditional measures of time preference (e.g., WTA) systematically underestimate present value. The authors suggest that this may reflect how people assess rewards using a monetary scale and discuss the psychological differences in monetary and motivational measures.

The second paper, by Malkoc, Zauberman and Bettman, explores the role of previous tasks in consumer impatience. The authors demonstrate that prior decisions change processing concreteness (focus on the big picture versus details) and systematically affect present bias. Their results indicate that consumers show less present bias when in abstract mindsets, compared to when they think concretely (even when the prior task is unrelated) introducing a new conceptualization and showing that present bias is moderated by the extent of context-dependent thinking.

The third paper, by Read and Frederick, examines the longitudinal aspect of present bias. The authors note the cross-sectional nature of the experiments that demonstrated present bias and examine such intertemporal preference reversals in three longitudinal studies. They find support for preference reversals in line with hyperbolic discounting only when the sooner outcome is immediate. These findings suggest that present-biased preferences support a quasi-hyperbolic form. In addition, these results provide boundary conditions for present bias, indicating the importance of temporal proximity to the outcome.

Collectively, the three papers in this special session provide new insights about consumer impatience and time discounting, by offering new measurement, conceptualizations, and psychological drivers for present-biased preferences.

Following presentations, Drazen Prelec, the session discussant, provided an overview of how these papers inform and qualify the findings of previous research, as well as noting some of the ways in which the session offers diverging perspectives on intertemporal preferences.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“A New Method of Measuring Temporal Discounting: The Motivational Present Value of Future Rewards”

Jane Ebert, University of Minnesota

Drazen Prelec, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

A wide range of people’s behaviors in the present are motivated by longer-term or future concerns: employees work for future bonuses or to invest for retirement; students study to obtain a degree; and people exercise for future health. Many researchers and policy-makers are interested in the rates at which people discount such future concerns, or the value they place on them relative to the present, with the underlying assumption that this present value provides a measure of the importance or motivational power of people’s future concerns on their present behavior (e.g., Chapman et al. 2001; Kirby et al. 1999).

Measures of present value most commonly used ask people to explicitly state the present value of a future reward, such as “What is the equivalent value to you today of $120 in one year?” Obtained discount rates using such measures vary considerably, but overall they tend to be positive and rather high (see Frederick et al. 2002 for a review). If our goal is to use discounting measures to understand or predict those behaviors that are motivated by future concerns, then a present value should, ideally, represent the equivalent motivational power in the present of an event in the future. So, for example, a future reward of $25 that a person assigns a present value of $20 should have the same motivational power for that person as a present reward of $20. However, for several reasons we suspect that conventional explicit discounting measures may provide a poor measure of the present motivational value of future rewards, and, if anything, are likely to overestimate this present value and so underestimate the discount rate. So, even if people explicitly say that a future reward of $25 has a present value of $20, they may nonetheless behave, and even expect to behave, as if it has a present value of, say, $10. I.e., the discount rates people will demonstrate in their behavior, and even in how they expect to behave, will be higher than those measured using conventional discounting measures. We attempt to demonstrate and examine this in the current research, through the development of a new measure of discounting that assesses the motivational present value of a future reward.

In our first study, we develop a method that 1) pits effort against a future reward to assess the motivational value of the future reward (specifically, we assess how long people exert effort working on a simple task in the present in order to gain a future reward), and 2) calibrates the effort expended for the future reward against the effort expended for different immediate rewards to assess the motivational present value of the future reward. We compare the present value we obtain using this motivational measure with that obtained for the same participants using a conventional discounting
measure, and find that the present motivational values we obtain are lower than the present “explicit” values obtained on the conventional discounting measure: i.e., the future has less motivational force than we might expect given conventional discounting measures. This suggests that the present value captured by the conventional discounting measure is not the present motivational value we might wish to assess.

Two important features of our comparison of the motivational and explicit present values are: first, the same future rewards are used for both measures precluding arguments that people simply value different future quantities differently, and second, the calibration of the effort people expend for future rewards against the effort they expend on the same task for immediate rewards precludes arguments that people simply value different present quantities, e.g., effort versus money, differently.

In the second of our studies, we replicate this finding for future rewards and demonstrate that people are similarly inconsistent in their present values for uncertain or probabilistic rewards, where again the conventionally obtained explicit present values are lower than the motivational present values. In two subsequent studies we strengthen the conclusion of the first two studies, that participants’ motivational present values are inconsistent with their explicit present values, where the motivational values are systematically lower. We also examine whether the presence of effort in our motivational measure may account for this result and we compare participants’ motivational present value with the present values obtained on several alternative discounting or present value measures. In study 3, we develop a within-subjects version of our task, which aids consistent responding across the motivational and conventional discounting measure and so provides a stricter test of our result. In addition, we show that the presence of effort in our motivational measure of present value is unlikely to be responsible for our finding that present motivational values for future rewards are lower than people’s present explicit values. In study 4, we replicate these findings and examine the differences in present value obtained between several alternative discounting measures that resemble our motivational and explicit measures in different respects.

By attempting to measure the motivational force of a future reward, this research has taken a novel approach to understanding the myopic behavior people show in their day-to-day lives. Previous work interested in the motivational power of rewards in choices that trade-off desires in the present and the future has generally focused on the motivational power of immediate rewards, e.g., work on visceral effects (Loewenstein 1996) or mental effort (Baumeister and Vohs 2003) on self-control. In contrast, the current work on visceral effects (Loewenstein 1996) or mental effort that trade-off desires in the present and the future has generally interested in the motivational power of rewards in choices (Malkoc and Zauberman 2005; Zauberman and Lynch 2005). These accounts, however, have conceptualized intertemporal decisions independently of any tasks previously engaged in and have focused on responses triggered by the focal outcome, such as outcome-specific feelings (i.e., deprivations) or cognitions (i.e., representational proximity) as the driving force behind present bias.

In the current work, we suggest that the tasks people have previously engaged in have systematic effects on processing concreteness and that these changes in concreteness of processing might be sufficient to explain dynamic inconsistencies in preferences. Building upon ideas from the psychology of verbal processing (e.g., Paivio 1971) and processing orientation (e.g., Navon 1977), we argue that when in concrete processing mode, individuals are more myopic and context dependent, leading to present bias. When the processing mode is more abstract, however, preferences show more intertemporal consistency, attenuating present bias. Three studies manipulating processing specificity with prior tasks provide support for this prediction.

Based on research showing that abstract thinking is facilitated when evaluating non-comparable options (Johnson 1984; Malkoc et al., 2005), in Experiment 1 (participants (N=102) were provided with two cameras presented on seven attributes (either alignable or non-alignable) and were asked to compare them. Next, they were told to imagine shipping the camera and were asked how much they would need to save to delay its receipt by 3 and 10 days. As expected, we found a 2-way interaction between time horizon and alignability (F(1, 106)=5.653, p<.05), demonstrating an attenuation in present bias when participants evaluated non-alignable options.

Experiment 2 (123 participants) manipulated abstraction with an unrelated elaboration task. Participants first wrote their thoughts about the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and were directed to think either about implications for a specific and concrete consumer (their roommate) or for the more abstract notion of consumers in general. Next, participants completed a separate cash refund study where they delayed the receipt date of a $75 cash refund by 4 or 10 weeks. The analyses again found an interaction between abstractness of mindset and time horizon (F(1, 120)=4.309, p<.05), with less present bias shown when thinking about the broad implications compared to a specific exemplar.

In experiment 3 (231 participants), we manipulated processing concreteness with a supraliminal priming task to further test the boundaries of our effect. Participants first completed a word search puzzle that had either concrete or abstract words embedded in it. Presented as an unrelated task, participants next indicated their WTA to delay the redemption of a $75 gift certificate by 3 and 12 months. Results replicated the two previous studies, with a significant 2-way interaction (F(1, 229)=4.66, p<.05) indicating diminished present bias when participants were primed with abstract words.

In sum, the current work demonstrates that intertemporal decisions are systematically influenced by the previous tasks people engage in. That is, prior decisions change the specificity (concreteness vs. abstractness) of processing and have systematic effects on present-biased preferences. Specifically, we show that when in abstract mind sets, people act less present-biased compared to when they think more concretely, suggesting that the extent of present bias depends on the abstractness of mindset, which can be influenced via prior experiences.

“Longitudinal Time Inconsistency”
Daniel Read, University of Durham
Shane Frederick, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

We investigated the hyperbolic discounting model of intertemporal choice, according to which the discount rate is a function of delay-to-outcome, with shorter delays being associated with a higher discount rate. Its major prediction is that people will predictably change their prior plans with the passage of time.
Specifically, if we hold the interval separating two outcomes constant, preference will often switch from a larger-later outcome (LL) to a smaller-sooner one (SS) as the two options move closer in time. The general idea is illustrated below. Figure 1 shows that as time passes, SS becomes increasingly attractive relative to LL. Preferences always move in the direction of SS, and sometimes they will ‘reverse,’ as in the illustration, when SS becomes superior to the formerly preferred LL.

Most experimental tests of this prediction have not investigated it in the dynamic form just described. Rather, they have relied on a potentially misleading cross-sectional design involving many choices over different pairs of dated outcomes, taken from the vantage point of a single date, rather than a longitudinal design involving many choices between a single pair of dated outcomes, made from the vantage point of different dates. We conducted three experiments using a longitudinal design. These experiments were done over email with an international sample, mostly from the United States.

Respondents made choices at multiple times between Amazon gift certificates to be received at specific future dates outcomes, one smaller-sooner (SS) and one larger-later (LL). The dependent measure was the choice between SS or LL, and whether preferences shifted as time to receipt diminished. The delay between the final choice and SS differed across experiments, from less than a day to less than an hour. This is important because the quasi-hyperbolic discounting model, predicts preference reversals will occur if the time to earliest SS is very short, as shown in Figure 2.

In our experiment, the measure of interest was the ratio of preference reversals in the LL?SS to those in the SS?LL direction—the shift ratio. Models of hyperbolic discounting predict this shift ratio will be greater than 1. In our studies, we observed the following as shown in Table 1.

In Experiment 1, when SS was delayed by about one day, we observed no net tendency for “hyperbolic” preference reversals. In fact, there was a weak but clear tendency for preferences to reverse in the opposite direction. In Experiment 2, when SS was delayed by...
less than one day, there was a slight tendency for hyperbolic reversals. Only in Experiment 3, when the more immediate reward could be obtained in one hour, did evidence for hyperbolic reversals clearly emerge. Thus, these three studies provide support for the quasi-hyperbolic model.

In Experiment 3, we also asked people to explain their choices. Two reasons were frequently and clearly given for the LL → SS switches. Some offered remarkably explicit *psychophysical* explanations for hyperbolic discounting, pertaining to the perceived similarity of the two time points, as Rubinstein (2003) has postulated. Others referred to a desire to satisfy *immediate spending needs*. Usually, these needs were imminent, and often discovered over the course of the experiment—leading those who initially chose LL to switch to SS. Such explanations suggest an explanation for preference reversals and for various other phenomena in intertemporal choice. People are more likely to think of earlier needs than later ones. They are typically impatient because they are usually thinking of earlier needs. They become more patient with longer intervals because the delayed payoffs aren’t pertinent to imminent needs. However, as time to rewards elapses, imminent needs again become salient, causing an impatient shift. We also believe that the differential salience of needs can explain the magnitude effect, the delay-speedup asymmetry, and other empirical regularities.

REFERENCES


SESSION OVERVIEW

Much research in consumer information processing and decision making has been devoted to differences in thinking styles. Consumer behavior theorists and psychologists from different persuasions have distinguished between various thinking styles such as experiential versus rational modes of thinking (Epstein 1983, 1985), system-1 versus system-2 thinking styles (Kahneman 2003, Kahneman and Frederick 2002, Stanovich and West 1998, 2000), analytic versus holistic thinking styles (Nisbett 2001) and broad versus narrow thinking styles (Martindale 1985, Mednick 1962). Differences in thinking styles have been mostly attributed to dispositional differences (Martindale 1985, Mednick 1962) and cultural factors (Chiu 1972, Nisbett 2003, Nisbett and Miyamoto 2005). In contrast, little effort has been devoted to other important facilitators of thinking styles, particularly situational and task-related characteristics, which often guide consumer behavior (Belk 1975). A broad purpose of this session, therefore, is to push forward the boundaries of research on thinking styles by exploring situational and task-related factors that impact consumer information processing and thinking styles.

The specific objectives of this session are a) to outline new measures of experiential versus rational thinking styles engendered by the nature of task and b) to examine how task-related factors (e.g., constraints) and consumer environment can impact thinking process, specifically creative thinking process. Keeping in mind the broad range of audience that ACR conference attracts, the three papers in this session represent a diversity of topics in the domain of thinking styles that are relevant for marketers and consumers, ranging from the “task-specific thinking styles” (Novak and Hoffman), to the role of constrained thinking process on creative enjoyment and motivation (Dahl and Moreau), to overt visual attention and creative thinking (Shiv and Wadhwa).

The session will begin with a focus on “task-specific thinking styles”. Thomas Novak and Donna Hoffman will present their work that focuses on tasks as elicitors of thinking styles. More specifically, Novak and Hoffman develop a two-dimensional scale to measure the task specific thinking style. Novak and Hoffman demonstrate the importance of task specific thinking style over and above the dispositional thinking style for task performance. Furthermore, they show that the congruence of the task and task specific thinking style improves task performance, while incongruence between the task and task specific thinking style worsens performance on the task.

The focus of this session will then shift to the role of constraints on creative thinking on the enjoyment of and motivation on creative experiences. Page Moreau will present her work with Darren Dahl that examines how constraints imposed on creative thinking influence consumers’ motivation and overall task enjoyment. More specifically, Dahl and Moreau demonstrate that consumers enjoy the creative experience more in the presence of constraints such as receiving step-by-step instructions. However, they demonstrate that constraints imposed on the target outcome lower the enjoyment of the creative experience for high-skill individuals.

Finally, Monica Wadhwa will present her work with Baba Shiv focusing on the role of overt attention on creative thinking process. Shiv and Wadhwa demonstrate that the breadth of overt attention engendered in the process of scanning an external visual field impacts the breadth of covert attention (i.e., internal attention), which subsequently impacts creative thinking in a subsequent unrelated consumer creativity task. More specifically, the authors argue that scanning a broad versus a narrow visual field (e.g., watching a movie on a 40-inch versus a 17-inch screen) can broaden the scope of covert attention, which, in turn bolsters creativity on a subsequent consumer creativity task of coming up with creative gift ideas.

In an effort to increase audience participation, the session will have the services of Amitava Chattopadhyay as a discussant. Amitava has expertise in the areas of creativity, consumer decision making, branding and marketing communication. His work has appeared in several journals including the Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Marketing, Marketing Science and Management Science. Amitava, thus, has a unique perspective for discussing these papers and leading a discussion about an appropriate research agenda for continued work in this area.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

“New Measures of Task-Specific Experiential and Rational Cognition”

Thomas P. Novak and Donna L. Hoffman

Decades of theoretical and empirical research in social and cognitive psychology provide strong evidence that consumers process information in two distinct and qualitatively different ways: rational and experiential (Epstein 1994; Hogarth 2005; Kahneman and Frederick 2002, Kahneman 2003; Sloman 1996; Smith and DeCoster 2000; Stanovich and West 1998, 2000; and Strack and Deutsch 2004). A key commonality among modern dual process theories is the existence of two qualitatively different and interoperating systems, each best suited to its own purpose.

Despite this growing body of research, there has been surprisingly little research attention devoted to directly measuring how different tasks directly impact thinking style. Further, attempts to simultaneously measure the two dimensions of thinking style as either situation-specific or as an enduring state are even fewer and lack validation in a broad context.

To that end, we conducted three comprehensive studies. First, we developed and cross-validated new two-dimensional scales to measure what we term task-specific thinking style (TSTS) using a series of experimental tasks designed to induce primarily rational or experiential thinking. Our highly reliable TSTS measure was, as predicted, best fit by a two-dimensional factor structure. Rational TSTS was higher for rational tasks and experiential TSTS was higher for experiential tasks, providing empirical support for the idea that cognitive tasks can be arrayed along a continuum of cognition. Congruence of task and TSTS improved task performance, and incongruence worsened task performance; thus TSTS is an important process variable in understanding task performance. Both the task itself, as well as dispositional tendencies to adopt a particular thinking style, predicts TSTS. As expected, the TSTS adopted for a task is explained more by the task itself than by
dispositional differences in thinking style, supporting the use of experimental tasks to prime thinking styles and suggesting TSTS as a manipulation check for such tasks. Since dispositional tendencies predict TSTS, disposition influences the degree to which a priming task is likely to be effective, and thus disposition should be measured as a covariate when attempting to prime thinking style.

More importantly, we use TSTS to systematically test congruence effects between the demands of a task and the thinking style adopted when performing the task. We examine when congruence between thinking style and task increases actual and perceived task performance, decreases task difficulty, increases involvement, and improves mood—and if congruence effects are found for both rational and experiential tasks that require qualitatively different processing styles. Our findings contribute to the literature on congruence effects involving thinking styles, and argue for task specific thinking style being routinely measured as a process variable when considering performance on a broad range of consumer activities. For example, we find that for experiential tasks, a “low cognitive engagement” strategy results in relatively high performance, but at a personal cost to the respondent. This is a particularly interesting result since although low effort strategies hurt performance (accuracy) on rational tasks (e.g. Payne et al. 1993), but not on the experiential task—low effort strategies are psychologically detrimental as respondents employing a low effort strategy perceive the experimental task as more difficult and their mood and involvement suffers. This suggests that the effort-accuracy tradeoff may not apply to experiential tasks—thinking “too much” hurts performance, while thinking “too little” seems to help.

We also hypothesized that dispositional thinking style, an enduring predisposition toward predominantly rational or experiential thinking, plays a key role in determining the thinking style employed in a given task, beyond the demands of the task itself. Dispositional tendencies create heterogeneity in how different individuals approach the same task, contributing to congruence or incongruence of TSTS with the task. The results show that some of the variation in whether an experiential or rational thinking style is adopted for a task will result from dispositional tendencies. Thus, TSTS provides an important mediating link between a broad, dispositional cross-situational thinking style, and performance on tasks that are congruent or incongruent with a thinking style.

Our TSTS scales may also prove useful in reconciling apparent observed conflicts in thinking style. Some theories assume the two thinking styles work in a mutually exclusive manner (Brewer 1988; Fazio 1986). Others assume sequential processing, with the more rapid experiential thinking preceding rational thinking (Fiske and Neuberg 1988; Gilbert 1986; Wegener and Petty 1995). Our approach, following Epstein (1991) and other modern dual process theories, assumes the two operate both simultaneously and sequentially. While our experimental tasks indicated largely oppositional effects of the two styles, it is likely that other tasks might demonstrate synergistic effects, with both experiential and rational TSTS correlating positively with task performance (in this case, the “dual thinking styles” strategy we observed in some of our experiments would be optimal). For example, Donovan and Epstein (1997) demonstrated that priming intuitive knowledge can facilitate intellectual performance, and Norris and Epstein (2003a) demonstrated numerous situations in which both thinking styles predict in the same direction.

Our findings are also relevant for everyday activities consumers engage in. The thinking style differences we observed on laboratory performance tasks suggest we can and should expect to find differences in rational compared to experiential task-specific thinking for work vs. play (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994; Hammond, McWilliam and Diaz 1998; Wolfimbarger and Gilly 2001), directed vs. nondirected search (Bloch Sherrill and Ridgway 1986; Bloch, Ridgway and Sherrill 1989), choice among specific alternatives vs. navigational choice (Hoffman and Novak 1996; Deci and Ryan 1985), and planned purchases vs. impulse buys (Rook 1997).

Recently, cognitive neuropsychologists have utilized brain imaging tools such as fMRI to support the presence in the brain of dual thinking styles (Goel 2003; Goel and Dolan 2003) and biochemical theories of emotion speculate that “gut reactions,” for example, may literally reside in one’s stomach (Pert 1997). Our empirical results demonstrating the importance of task-specific thinking style over and above dispositional thinking style for task performance may provide further impetus to scientists seeking neurological and chemical pathways that correspond to human cognition and task performance.

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“`Thinking Inside the Box: Why Consumers Enjoy Constrained Creative Experiences”

Darren W. Dahl and C. Page Moreau

Since paint-by-number kits surged in popularity in the 1950’s, consumers have sought out products designed to assist them in being creative. “Self-expression for the time deprived” has created demand for products offered by firms ranging from specialty crafts (e.g., Martha Stewart) to home improvement (e.g., Lowe’s). Among the many products offering constrained creative experiences are kits (e.g., model trains, needlepoint), how-to guides (e.g., cook books, home repair, landscaping), and inspirational sources (e.g., home improvement programs). We consider these products as offering “constrained” creative opportunities because the products themselves explicitly constrain elements of the process (via a set of instructions) and/or the outcome (via a visual representation of the end product). The recent sales growth in these categories suggests that consumers value these constraints, and a central objective of this research is to understand why.

More specifically, the goals of this research are first, to understand consumers’ motivations for engaging in creative tasks and second, to examine how constraints influence the quality of those experiences. A qualitative study is initially used to address these goals. Two experiments then build on the qualitative results, offering the first experimental evidence documenting the conditions under which consumers enjoy creative activities. The experiments also measure and test specific mediators to explain why consumers enjoy such tasks.

In the qualitative study, twelve respondents from eight different hobby areas (woodworking, scrap-booking, sewing, cooking, model building, card-making, quilting, jewelry-making) discussed their motivations for undertaking their hobbies. They also explained how products in their areas (e.g., kits, books, classes) influenced their experiences. Data analysis from these interviews revealed seven different basic motivations for undertaking the creative tasks, with the needs of competence and autonomy the most frequently discussed. The data also helped to identify the key pros and cons offered by creativity products. Interestingly, most of the products influenced the needs for competence (positively) and autonomy (negatively).

The findings from the qualitative study suggested the relevance for cognitive evaluation theory (CET) for further studies of consumers’ creative experiences (Ryan and Deci 2000). The theory focuses specifically on two important determinants of self-motivation, the needs for autonomy and competence. Thus, we derive a series of hypotheses based on the theory to predict how the constraints imposed by creativity products (e.g., step-by-step instructions and target outcomes) will influence consumers’ motivations during and enjoyment of creative experiences. In the experimental studies, participants engaged in hands-on creative tasks: cookie-making and decorating.

In the first experimental study, two factors were manipulated between-subjects: (1) instructions (step-by-step provided vs. no provided) and (2) target outcome (picture of the final product provided vs. no picture provided). Participants were 100 undergraduate students who were each shown to their own cookie-making station which contained a set of tools, pre-made dough, pre-made white icing, food coloring, and cookie decorations. At that point, both experimental manipulations occurred and all participants proceeded in making their cookies. After completing the cookie-making process, participants completed a survey instrument that contained the dependent variables of interest: competence, autonomy, and task enjoyment.

The results reveal an interaction between the two constraints (instructions and target outcome) on task enjoyment, such that participants reported the highest levels of task enjoyment when a full set of instructions was provided without a target outcome. To better understand this interaction, we performed mediation tests which revealed that perceived competence fully mediated and perceived autonomy partially mediated the effect. When instructions were provided without a target outcome, perceived competence was at its highest. Perceived autonomy was also high under these conditions, and the relatively high levels of both of these factors resulted in the greatest enjoyment. Those receiving no target outcome and a set of instructions had both the ability to successfully follow task guidance (competence) and the freedom to create an individualized design (autonomy).

The first experimental study assumed no level of prior experience in the study participants, and through randomization, miti-
 gated any effects that such differences would have on motivation and enjoyment. However, prior skill levels are likely to have an important influence, not only on one’s likelihood of purchasing a creative product, but also on the likelihood of enjoying the experience offered. Thus, the second experimental study examined the influence of skill level and one constraint (target outcome) on motivation and enjoyment. In this second study, all participants were provided with a full set of instructions. Target outcome was manipulated between-subjects, and prior baking skill was measured and subsequently dichotomized to create a high and a low skill group. The task and procedure was largely the same as that described in the first experimental study.

The results from this second study revealed that prior skill level may be a critical segmentation variable for manufacturers of creativity products. Those participants with low skill levels were able to achieve levels of perceived competence and task enjoyment comparable to those experienced by the high skill participants when a target outcome was dictated. Under these conditions, people of all skill levels had similar perceptions of task difficulty. For those with high skill levels, however, perceptions of competence and autonomy declined significantly when a target outcome was specified and consequently, task enjoyment declined as well.

While the study of creativity has received growing attention, Sternberg and Dess (2001) note that “we do not know enough about this important psychological process” (p. 332). Certainly this statement also applies to our understanding of consumers’ experiences during and motivations underlying creative tasks. While restricted in its scope, our research is designed to initiate a more thorough examination of consumers’ creative experiences.

References

“The Eye’s Mind and the Mind’s Eye: Impact of Overt Visual Attention on Creative Thinking”
Baba Shiv and Monica Wadhwa

“Eyes cannot be held responsible when the mind does the seeing”...Publius Syrus

Scanning our visual environment is an activity, which human beings engage in most of our waking lives. As consumers, we constantly scan our market-environment for information. Furthermore, depending on the size of the visual field, scanning the market environment might involve either a broad or a narrow scope of overt attention. For instance, one could shop for a particular wine (say, Merlot) from an online wine-market with all the wines cluttered in a narrow visual area, thereby requiring a narrow scope of overt attention. Or, one could shop for the same wine from an online market with all the wines widespread in a broad visual area, which would require a broad scope of overt-attention. Take another example, that of watching a movie on a weekend. One could watch a movie on a 17-inch TV screen, which would require focusing on a narrow visual area, or one could watch it on a 50-inch TV screen, which would entail focusing on a broad visual area. A question that arises is, would scanning a broad visual field versus a narrow visual field to search for a wine, or watching a movie on a 50-inch rather than on a 17-inch screen make one more creative in a subsequent task of coming up with creative gift ideas for a friend? We posed this question in a short survey to twenty consumers. All the survey respondents replied to this question in the negative, suggesting that based on common intuition, scanning the environment in one task should not impact creativity on a subsequent unrelated task.

Contrary to the common intuition, however, we argue that the way we scan our consumer environment can impact our creativity on a subsequent unrelated task. Specifically, we propose that a broad scope of overt attention can broaden the scope of covert attention, which, in turn can bolster creativity on a subsequent task. Our predictions are consistent with literature on visual perception, which suggests that the mechanisms underlying perceptual and conceptual attention are high correlated (Grosbras and Paus 2002; Kosslyn 1980). Furthermore, research on creativity suggests that a broad overt attention associated with scanning a broad visual field is likely to enhance the covert breadth of attention, which can be beneficially applied to a subsequent consumer creativity task.

The results from our three studies support our predictions. In study-1, we utilized a movie-consumption (movie clips from the movie Top-Gun) task. Specifically, we manipulated the overt scope of attention by manipulating the size of the screen on which participants watched the movie. In the broad overt-attention, respondents watched the movie on a 50-inch screen, while in the narrow overt-attention respondents watched the movie on a 17-inch screen. Consistent with our predictions, respondents in the broad overt-attention condition generated more creative ideas than those in the narrow overt-attention condition. More interestingly, those in the broad overt-attention condition drew gift ideas from a significantly broader range of product categories than those in narrow overt-attention.

We replicated our results of study-1 in study-2 using a different consumption scenario. In study-2, respondents engaged in an online wine search task, and thereafter participated in the creative gift ideas task. Respondents were asked to search for Merlot wine from an online wine-market containing ten different wines. We manipulated overt attention by manipulating the size of the wine market. In the broad overt-attention condition, the wines were scattered across the screen covering the entire 15-inch display, while in the narrow overt-attention condition, all the wines appeared in the center of the screen in a small circle. Thereafter, as in study-1, all respondents participated in the creative gift idea task. As in study-1, those in the broad overt-attention condition generated more creative ideas and drew ideas from a significantly broader range of product categories than those in narrow overt-attention condition. These results suggest that overt-attention impacts covert-attention, thereby impacting creativity on a subsequent task.

Our exposition thus far suggests that the breadth of covert attention with its concomitant effects on creativity is influenced by the overt attention associated with the size of the external visual field. Specifically, we suggest that the broad scope of overt attention bolsters the breadth of covert attention, which can be beneficially applied to a subsequent consumer creativity task. If our exposition is valid, then narrowing covert attention by asking respondents to restrict eye-movement and focus on one object in the scene versus focusing on the entire scene during the external attention task should attenuate the visual field effects on creativity in the broad-overt attention condition. This logic formed the basis to provide stronger evidence for our conceptualization in experiment 3. In experiment-3, respondents engaged in a car race task. Respondents were shown cartoon-car race clips on either an 8-inch or a 30-inch screen. Half of the respondents were made to restrict eye-movement by asking them to focus on a specific car in the
center of the screen, while others were asked to pay attention to all the cars on the screen. Consistent with our predictions, we show that in the broad-overt attention condition, the effects of scope of overt-attention on subsequent creativity task were attenuated when respondents were asked to restrict eye-movement. However, restricting eye movement did not impact performance on the subsequent creativity task in the narrow overt-attention condition.

Our results from the three studies suggest that a broad overt attention associated with scanning a broad visual field as opposed to narrow overt attention associated with scanning a narrow visual field enhances the scope of covert attention, which can be beneficially applied to a subsequent consumer creativity task. Our results have important implications for marketers’ merchandising strategies. In these studies, we manipulated broad versus narrow visual attention using three different strategies—a movie consumption task, an online wine market task and a car-race task. However, broad versus narrow visual attention can be activated using various in-store strategies such as store placement. Moreover, a lot of time retailers end up with an overstock of goods that they put on sale. It is likely that just manipulating the size of display could help consumers think of more creative uses for such items and therefore buy more of the assorted on-sale items.

References
The Process by Which Brand Committed Consumers Evaluate Competitive Brands: The Case for Similarity and Dissimilarity Testing

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Most research on brand commitment has focused on how people defend their attitudes when faced with information that undermines their attitudinal position. However, the effects of attitudinal commitment may not be limited to mounting defenses only when an individual’s attitude is challenged. As Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly (1989) observe, individuals not only resist information that is counter to their preferred positions, but may also actively undermine information that “supports non-preferred positions.” The process by which committed consumers evaluate competitive brands even when those brands do not attack one’s preferred brand is studied in this research. Specifically, the cognitive processes that are involved in generating the bias is examined.

When asked to make a judgment about an object, it is not made in isolation, but is made with reference to some other object or a standard. We first argue that high commitment consumers will choose the brand that they are committed to as the comparison standard while low commitment consumers are more likely to select an exemplar, or a prototype as the standard (see Raghunathan and Irwin 2001).

Next, since low commitment consumers are not 'attached' to any one brand they are likely to be more 'inclusive' in their focus while high commitment consumers are 'exclusive' in their intent since their focus is on preserving the existing brand attachment and have a reason to limit their consideration set. This inclusive versus exclusive focus of low versus high commitment consumers should translate to how they evaluate an advertised brand. Low commitment consumers, because of their interest in including other brands, will tend to look at the similarities between the advertised brand and their current set of preferred brands. On the other hand, high commitment consumers, because of their interest in excluding other brands, will focus on the differences between the advertised brand and their preferred brand. These differences in the type of processing that an advertised brand is subjected to will translate into differences in attitudes toward the brand for high versus low commitment consumers. The focus on similarities will make low commitment consumers assimilate the advertised brand toward their preferred brand (assuming the advertisement message is strong and persuasive). The focus on differences will make the high commitment consumers contrast the advertised brand away from their preferred brand (e.g., Mussweiler 2003). Three studies are reported that examine these predictions.

In the first study, the objective was to show that consumers who are more versus less committed to a brand will rate a new competitive brand differently due to differences in the level of similarity or dissimilarity they focus on. As expected, when provided an advertisement for a new brand, high commitment participants seemed to generate more dissimilar thoughts while low commitment consumers seemed to generate more similarity thoughts.

In the second study, a more specific test for similarity/dissimilarity testing was adopted. It was argued that if both high and low commitment consumers are instructed to focus on the similarities between their preferred brand and the advertised brand, the effect of the instructions on low commitment consumers should be marginal because they already focus on the similarities, but the effect of the instructions on high commitment consumers should be greater because it changes the nature of their processing and makes them focus more on the similarities between the two brands. The focus on similarities should lead the high commitment consumers to report greater similarity between the advertised and their preferred brand than they would do in the absence of such instructions. Thus, compared to a control condition, high commitment consumers who are instructed to focus on the similarities between an advertised brand and their preferred brand would report greater similarity between the two brands and more positive attitudes toward the advertised brand, whereas there would be minimal effect of such instructions on low commitment consumers. The results of this study confirmed these expectations.

Finally, the third study was conducted to test the proposition that high commitment individuals invoke their preferred brand as the standard while low commitment individuals invoke either an exemplar or prototype as the standard for comparison. Using a priming manipulation and argumentation similar to that we employed in study 2, we find that high commitment individuals have a more positive evaluation of the advertised brand when asked to focus on the differences between an advertised brand and a less preferred brand (rather than their most preferred, and therefore committed brand). However, since low commitment individuals are more inclusive and use an exemplar or prototype brand for comparison purposes, having them focus on the differences between a less preferred brand and the advertised brand had a less effect on their brand evaluations.

These set of studies suggest that committed consumers are more likely to invoke their preferred brand and focus on how the advertised brand is different from it. This process, we find, results in committed individuals contrasting the advertised brand away from their preferred brand, and thus lower their evaluations. On the other hand, we find that less committed individuals’ focus is on the similarities between the advertised brand and the brand they invoke. Due to the focus on similarities, less committed individuals are more likely to assimilate the advertised brand towards the brand that comes to their mind, and thus generate more positive evaluations.

While Ahluwalia (2000) found that high commitment consumers employ various biased processing mechanisms to counter information that attacks their attitudes, it appears that the biased processing mechanisms that are employed by high commitment consumers are different when faced with information about competitive brands. When faced with an advertisement for a competitive brand, high commitment consumers instinctively appear to adopt a ‘rejection’ mode of processing where they are seeking out ways to undermine the brand. This is accomplished primarily by contrasting the advertised brand away from one’s preferred brand by focusing on how the new brand is different from their preferred brand.

REFERENCES


Agent Gender and Sex-Typed Social Influenceability in Online Communication
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Past research in gender and social influence has repeatedly found that men are generally more influential than women in most persuasion settings (Carli 2001). Men have power and status based on expertise and authority; the typical role of men is to lead, direct, and accomplish goals through job-related competence; thus, men are “agentic.” Since persuasion is about changing attitudes and dominating over other’s issue positions, persuasive attempts could basically be considered a masculine, rather than a feminine, task. Thus, it is not surprising that men exert more social influence when it comes to hard-core persuasion than women do. However, women might achieve social influence differently. The traditional social role of women is that of care-taker. Women are expected to be domestic, communal, and submissive. Having relatively lower social status and less power than men do, women are expected to be nice and benevolent, not necessarily display power, assertiveness, and dominance. Having genuine interest in others well being, benevolent and feminine individuals are trusted by others and their recommendations can be accepted equally well.

To date, gender research has found ample evidence that gender-stereotypical sex roles are prevalent in interpersonal relationships. In this study, I revisit gender influenceability in the e-commerce context where consumers interact with a computer agent while shopping. The context of human-computer interaction (HCI) provides a unique environment where social characteristics, such as personality, of a computer agent can be created or even manipulated (Moon and Nass 1996). For example, a computer agent can be given an artificial gender identity that emulates that of a human being. How would people treat a computer agent when the agent assumes a human-like gender identity?

In this study, a computer agent simulation is conducted where a computer agent with a contrived male or a female gender identity (the first experimental factor) interacts with consumers who are in the market for digital cameras. The “gendered” agent provides product information and shows four cameras with detailed attribute descriptions. During the consumer shopping process, the gendered agent uses two different levels of sales aggressiveness (the second experimental factor). I argue that an agent’s counter product recommendation for a more expensive item could be interpreted as a display of confidence, aggressiveness and even self-interest, all of which are strong male stereotypes (Bem 1974). Based on sex-role stereotypes, a male agent’s use of aggressive sales tactic may be viewed as more acceptable than a female agent’s use of the same sales tactic. An overtly dominating and aggressive sales tactic used by a female agent may likely face consumer distrust because such behavior violates the traditional female sex-role.

The social influenceability of a computer agent in online communication is enhanced through consumers’ perceptions of the agent’s competence and benevolence. The more competent and the more benevolent the agent is perceived to be, the more likely consumers are to have intentions to trust the agent. Thus, I associate the influenceability of a (male or female) computer agent with subjects’ trust in the agent. Next, I discuss the multi-dimensionality of consumer trust by examining cognitive, affective, and intentional aspects.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

In this paper, I examine agent influenceability in terms of consumer trust. The basic premise of this paper is that a communicator can achieve higher social influence when one is trusted than not. Therefore, earning consumer trust means acquiring social influence. The importance of trust in interpersonal relationships as well as online-based relationships cannot be overstated in marketing. Golembiewski and McConkie (1975) note that “perhaps there is no single variable which so thoroughly influences interpersonal and group behaviour as does trust...”. Trust is the fundamental driver of interpersonal relationships and social order (and disorder) and has been studied extensively. Trust facilitates one’s decision-making when finding relationship and/or business partners. In the sales literature, the dependability of a retail salesperson is among the buyer’s most critical concerns. Furthermore, trustworthiness is found to be of the greatest importance among the many characteristics of a salesperson (e.g., friendly relationship, personable style, patient buying assistance, and quick service) for the buyer to determine future business with the salesperson (Hawes, Rao, and Baker 1993).

Consumer trust is multidimensional—having cognitive, affective, and intentional aspects (Lee 2002). Cognitive trust is based on an agent’s competence. Lewis and Weigert (1985) views trust as predictions and expectations that an agent will perform a job competently. The definition of trust by Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna (1985) suggests that trust is merely the degree of confidence one thinks about a relationship. Another definition by Zaltman and Moorman (1988) suggests that trust represents the extent to which the parties can predict one another’s performance; having faith that the other party will perform in a responsive manner with expertise and knowledge.

Trust also has an affective component. Luhmann (1979) suggests that true trust begins where (cognitive) knowledge ends. Benevolence refers to genuine interests in the other party’s welfare (Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna 1985), and a “genuine responsiveness” to the needs of the other party (Friedland 1990). In close interpersonal relationships, trust is often conceptualized in terms of attributions concerning the partner’s benevolence (Deutsch 1962; Giffin 1967; Pearce 1974). Benevolent partners have genuine, friendly interests in the other party’s welfare (Rempel and Holmes 1986), aside from their egocentric motives (Mayer, David, and Schoorman 1995). Thus, perceiving a partner’s benevolence includes feeling close to and cared by a partner who is on the trustee’s side, because the partner cares about the trustee’s best interest, not his or her self-interest.

Finally, trust is intention. Giffin (1967) cites risk as an essential element of trust. When one trusts another, something is risked by the trustee. Zaltman and Moorman’s (1988) definition of trust adds the “intentional” dimension to the meaning of “trusting.” Often trust represents the trustee’s willingness to depend on the trustee in a complex, uncertain, and risky situation. According to Rousseau et al. (1998), trust is better understood as the intention to rely on a partner-a psychological state to accept vulnerability based on positive feelings (affective basis) and expectations (cognitive basis) (Rousseau et al. 1998, p. 395). If one truly trusts an agent, one must be willing to rely on the agent in the decision-making process (Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992), and willingly be ready to place one’s resources at the disposal of the agent (Coleman 1990; Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna 1985; Zand 1972). Accordingly, trusting intentions can be defined as the willingness to delegate decision power to the party to be trusted.

Given that consumer trust can have three aspects (competence, benevolence, and trusting intention), if a “gendered” agent demon-
strates a recognizable aggressiveness in his/her sales tactic, what role does the agent’s sex play in subjects’ evaluation of the competence and benevolence of the agent, and the intention to trust the agent?

HYPOTHESIS

Past research in gender influence has found that in general men are perceived to be more influential than women. Gender stereotyping includes greater scrutiny of women’s assertive leadership behaviors and greater acceptance of men’s display of competence and knowledge. Carli (2001) notes that “men have more right to act as authorities as than women do, and that women must communicate communal motivation more than men. As a result, not only would people generally be more open to the influence of men than that of women, but women’s influence would be more conditional than men’s, dependent on the use of an influence style that corresponds prescriptively to the stereotypical female role” (p.726).

As noted earlier, empirical evidence shows that women are in general less influential than men are in persuasive communication setting. Such influenceability differential by agent gender depends on the context of interaction with various moderating influences in operation. People are more open to the influence of men than that of women, and more importantly, whatever influence women can achieve may be more conditional than men’s. Gender-typing of the task is one example; women’s influence is found only in feminine and domestic tasks (Carli 2001). The importance of masculine competence might become more pronounced in masculine areas such as technology and management than in feminine areas (Carli 2001). The Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad and Wright 1994) also suggests that consumers expect the content and type of message (e.g., information on masculine products) to be consistent with the characteristics of a communicator (e.g., male gender identity).

Since competence and power are masculine traits, unless women temper their expertise or agency with displays of communality, warmth, and niceness, prescriptive sex stereotypes can reduce competent women’s likeability and influenceability (Rudman and Glick 2001). Such prescriptive sex stereotype can penalize women whose communication style appears to be too agentic and masculine (Rudman and Glick 2001). A male communicators’ display self-confidence can be taken as competence; while similar presentation of masculine assertiveness by a female communicator can create a backlash effect in the form of losing audience trust (Rudman and Glick 2001).

Agent’s sex and sales aggressiveness are the two focal manipulation factors in this experimental study. The experimental procedure and simulation protocols are as follows. Agent’s sex was manipulated using gender-typical names (John or Jane) and faces (a male or a female cartoon face with the warm script). In order to vary the levels of aggressiveness in sales tactic, recommendation price and a display of agent’s self-confidence were used. Under a more aggressive condition, the agent would counter the consumer’s original choice of camera with another camera that was 10% more (or less) expensive than the subject’s earlier choice of camera.

H1: As the agent adopts a higher, as opposed to a lower, level of aggressiveness in sales tactic:
(a) the perceived competence of a female agent will diminish to a greater extent than the perceived competence of a male agent will;
(b) the perceived benevolence of a female agent will diminish to a greater extent than the perceived benevolence of a male agent will; and
(c) subjects’ intention to trust a female agent will diminish to a greater extent than their intention to trust a male agent will.

In the next section, I explain the experimental procedure that tests the aforementioned research hypotheses using a computer agent simulation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a 2 (agent gender: male and female) X 2 (aggressive price recommendation: 10% less expensive and 10% more expensive) between-subject design. Subjects were recruited from a population of young adults (undergraduate college students) in a large land-grant US University. Undergraduate students were deemed appropriate for this online consumer behavior experiment, because they generally spend considerable time on the Internet. A total of 95 students participated in the experiment. Students were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions.

Interface Protocol. The experiment required some computer-programming resources in order to enable different social characteristics of the computer agent, e.g., agent gender. Macromedia’s Authorware 5.2 was utilized to create the prototype of the agent program. The base protocol of the shopping simulation included several sections including (1) a brief introduction of the agent (in the male agent condition, a male face with the name of John was projected on screen; in the female agent condition, a female face introduced her as Jane); (2) provision of information about important features of digital cameras (e.g., resolution, screen size, and zoom size) (3) Agent’s request for subject input regarding the importance of each feature when purchasing a digital camera; (4) Agent’s presentation of four cameras that could match the respondent’s preferences revealed from the preference inquiry in section #3; (5) subject choice of one camera among the four cameras shown in section #4; and (6) Agent’s recommendation of a different camera that had two levels of upgraded features and was 10% more (or less) expensive than the subject’s earlier choice of camera in section #5.

Measures. Competence is the confidence in the agent’s capability with respect to the role performance. The following measurement items were adopted and modified from what had been origi-
nally proposed by Smith and Barclay (1997), Geller (1999), and Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande (1992): (1) When it came to camera, [Agent name] knew enough to give me a good advice; (2) I trust [Agent name]’s expertise in cameras; (3) I had confidence in [Agent name]’s knowledge about cameras.

The following measure for benevolence were modified from the previously published scales by Ganesan (1994), Hawes, Rao, and Baker (1993), and Price and Arnould (1999): (1) [Agent name] seemed to care about me; (2) [Agent name] made me feel good; (3) [Agent name] was like a friend during the shopping experience; I felt close to [Agent name] during the shopping; and (5) [Agent name] responded to my needs in a caring way (a new item created for this study).

Trusting intentions were measured using the following items modified from by Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande’s measures (1992): (1) I was willing to let [Agent name] make important choice decisions for me; (2) I was willing to trust [Agent name] to make camera purchases even when I was unable to monitor his/her activities; and (3) I would be comfortable giving [Agent name] responsibility to make camera purchase decisions for me. At the end of experiment, respondents were debriefed and thanked for their participation. Reliability for the three trust scales was acceptable (Competence Chronbach’s alpha=0.77; Benevolence Chronbach’s alpha=0.90; Trusting Intention=0.74) and thus a summed score of each trust construct was used for subsequent statistical analyses.

Manipulation Check. All subjects answered correctly when asked about the gender of the agent they interacted with while shopping for cameras. Subjects were also asked to choose from the following whether the camera recommended by [Agent name: John or Jane] was (1) more expensive; (2) the same price; or (3) less expensive than their own choice. All subjects answered correctly. Respondents then evaluated the level of aggressiveness of agent’s sales tactic using a 5-point scale ranging from “not at all aggressive” (1) to “extremely aggressive” (5). Respondents evaluated the agent recommending a 10% price upgrade with strong self-confidence to be more aggressive (M=2.98) than the agent recommending a 10% price discount (M=2.58, t=2.06, p=0.04). In order to check for potential confounding, the agent’s attractiveness and likeability were measured using a seven-point semantic differential scale. The results of t-tests demonstrated that the male and female agents did not differ significantly in terms of attractiveness (t=0.29, p=0.76), likeability (t=0.08, p=0.93), attitude toward agent (t=0.51, p=0.60), perceived agent warmth (t=0.77, p=0.44), or perceived agent coldness (t=-0.32, p=0.74). In addition, for the item of “I was confident about the agent’s expertise,” the male and female agents did not differ significantly (t=1.41, p=0.16), although the male agent received a slightly higher mark (Mmale=3.66, Mfemale=3.44).

RESULTS

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted using the three summed scores of agent competence, agent benevolence, and trusting intention as dependent variables and two manipulation factors (agent gender and aggressive price recommendation). The mean figures are shown in Table 1. The multivariate test showed that the MANOVA model was overall significant (Wilks’ Lambda=0.02, p=0.00; Hotelling’s T=36.81, p=0.00). The multivariate main effect of agent gender on the three trust scales was only marginally significant (Wilks’ Lambda=0.92, p=0.00; Hotelling’s T=0.08, p=0.06), and the multivariate main effect of aggressive price recommendation was insignificant (Wilks’ Lambda=0.93, p=0.12; Hotelling’s T=0.06, p=0.12).

In order to test the research hypothesis, I examined the interaction effect between agent gender and aggressive price recommendation on each trust construct. Given the sex role stereotype, female agent’s aggressive product recommendation (i.e., recommending a product that is more expensive than the anchor price) is incongruous with the typical female sex role; it was earlier hypothesized that subjects’ trust perceptions about the female agent’s competence, benevolence and trusting intention would erode to a greater extent than their perceptions about the male agent would.

The results of planned contrast tests showed that H1 was overall supported. For the female agent, the perceived competence diminished significantly (F1, 46=4.03, p<0.05) when the agent adopted a more aggressive sales tactic (M=13.47) than when the agent adopted a less aggressive sales tactic (M=14.70). However, for the male agent, the difference in perception of the agent’s competence by the higher recommendation price (M=15.20) compared to the lower recommendation price (M=14.29) was not significant (F1, 45=1.29, p=0.26). Thus, H1a was supported. Interestingly, there was directional evidence, while insignificant, that the male agent could be perceived to be more competent when he recommended a higher-priced camera compared to when he recommended a lower-priced camera, which was opposite to what was observed with the female agent, because her attempt at up-selling did weaken subjects’ perception about the female agent’s competence. For the male agent, the perceived benevolence did not diminish significantly (F1, 45=0.30, p=0.58) as a result of increasing sales aggressiveness (Mhigh price=14.25 vs. Mlow price=15.03). However, the same attempt to switch subjects to a higher-priced item resulted in a significant weakening of the perceived benevolence of the female agent (F1, 46=5.28, p=0.02, Mlow price=16.59 vs. Mhigh price=14.28), thereby supporting H1b. The contrast test between the male and female agents again demonstrated female vulnerability in terms of trusting intention. A more aggressive sales tactic did not affect subjects’ intention to trust the male agent (F1, 45=0.79, p=0.37; Mhigh price=8.50 vs. Mlow price=9.18), but it negatively affected subjects’ intention to trust the female agent (F1,
I also checked for potential influences of subject sex on three trust constructs and found no significant main effect of subject sex, nor was the interaction effect between subject sex and agent gender on competence, benevolence, and trusting intention found to be significant.

**DISCUSSION**

Among various communicator attributes that enhance influenceability, competence and benevolence are essential factors people use to assess the validity of information provided by the communicator. A competent agent can provide valid information because s/he knows what is right and wrong based on expertise and knowledge. A benevolent agent will provide the best information within his/her knowledge based on genuine willingness to help and serve customers. Biernat and Fuegen (2001) note that “the very essence of gender stereotype defines men to be instrumentally competent and agentic compared to women” (p.707).

The gender stereotypes also prescribe women to be less task-competent and more submissive than men because women are traditionally associated with the homemaker role (Fuegen et al. 2004). Leadership traits are also gendered (Kawakami, White, and Langer 2000). Since leaders are expected to be competent, task-oriented, masculine, and even “charismatic,” a successful leadership role may conflict with the traditional female gender stereotype. Carli (2001) notes that since people are more open to the influence of men than that of women, whatever influence women can achieve is more volatile than men’s. Kawakami, White and Langer (2000) describe a women’s paradox. If women adopt a masculinileadership style, they will be disliked and if they adopt a nurturing female leadership style, they will be liked, but deemed incompetent. Thus, when women hold leadership positions, they are vulnerable to “prejudiced evaluations and lowered effectiveness” (Eagly et al 1995, p.126).

While the gender of a communicator could be a peripheral cue (background variable) rather than central (issue-relevant) information in the context of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM, Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983), subjects often associate communicator gender with content expertise, such as men have more expertise than women, for example in technology arena. The Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad and Wright 1994) proposes that experts deliver strong messages and non-experts deliver weak messages. Thus, male salesmen are expected to make strong recommendations based on competence and confidence, whereas female sales associates are expected to deliver weaker (and benevolent) product recommendations. When these expectations are violated, consumers might engage in deep cognition to look for an answer. If the source (a female agent) has an apparent self-interest (e.g., seeking more profits) in her advocacy for higher priced products, “the inconsistency between message and source is interpreted as a manipulative mal-intent and evokes a negative response” (Artz and Tybout 1999, p.52). My experiment results suggest that male communicators’ display self-confidence in technology can be taken as competence; a display of masculine assertiveness by female communicators can engender a backlash effect in the form of her losing consumer trust.

**IMPLICATIONS**

The results of this study shed light on salesmanship and leadership for both genders. For male salesperson, competence is the major influence factor and a male agent who is perceived to possess sufficient expertise and competence can make a strong sales recommendation to upgrade consumers’ product choice without losing his credibility. Introduction of higher-priced items by a male agent can be even viewed as a display of expertise and self-confidence in content knowledge especially in the sales of male-oriented products. On the other hand, women stereotypically are not expected to have much expertise in technology. Therefore, a female (and supposedly non-expert) agent’s recommendation of higher-priced cameras could have triggered consumer doubt of her hidden motives, and as a result, consumers might have readjusted their evaluation of her based on this evidence of dishonesty and self-interest. A better sales technique for a female agent that could have been a recommendation of an alternative which provides a better value to a customer. A subtle delivery of non-aggressive product recommendations by a female agent could have been taken as a sign that she is honest and cares about the customer, thereby possibly enhancing her influenceability via a display of feminine benevolence.

Given the fact that during the past decade, the number of women occupying and seeking managerial and leadership positions have grown exponentially, my results have important implications for women in leadership positions. Women in leadership positions in male-dominated areas should not lose benevolence and genuineness while they seek higher social influenceability through masculine charisma. A woman leader in a managerial position who appears to be competent and benevolent at the same time, demonstrating an androgynous leadership style may likely achieve higher social influence than a female leader who is simply masculine and dominating (Bem 1974).

**CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this experiment was to examine the sex-typed influenceability of male and female agents when a computer agent utilizes two different product recommendation styles. In one condition the agent attempted to switch consumers to a more expensive alternative, and in the other condition, to a less expensive product. If the agent were an effective persuader, subjects would likely trust the agent even after the price upgrade attempts. On the other hand, if the agent were not an effective persuader, such attempt would be detrimental to the agent’s credibility. How would the agent’s gender interact with individuals’ evaluation of the agent competence, agent benevolence, and their intentions to trust the agent?

This study revisited the issue of gender and social influence in the e-commerce context where consumers interacted with a computer agent program that had a contrived gender identity. The results of my study confirmed female vulnerability when she assumed an assertive salesman style that is inconsistent with typical female stereotype. It was found that the female agent suffered from a significant loss of influenceability when she adopted an aggressive recommendation style. Subjects thought that the more aggressive female agent was less competent, less benevolent, and thus they were less likely to trust her.

Based on the experimental findings that subjects’ judgment of agent’s trustworthiness was affected solely by the contrived gender identity, not by what the agent did or said, I argue that male and female agents could achieve social influence differently because an individual’s initial assessment of the agent’s trustworthiness is socially constructed, being affected by prevailing sex role stereotypes. Male salespersons could enhance their competence and product expertise to increase their influenceability. Female salespeople should communicate their genuine interest in the customer’s welfare and their willingness to serve the customer. In male-
dominated product areas, a female agent might not want to make aggressive product recommendations hastily, because the gender stereotype could cause a backlash and harm her credibility.

The limitation of this experiment is that I used only one consumer electronics product that could be rather male-oriented. Eagly, Karau, Makhijani (1995) found, in their meta-analysis, that leadership effectiveness depended on the gender-typing of a task, i.e., men are more competent than women in male-oriented domains, and women are more effective than men in female-oriented arenas. Future research should examine how gender product-typing can interact with communicator gender identity in achieving high social influence. For example, if a female product (e.g., lipstick) is used, a female, as opposed to a male, agent has higher content expertise. In such a case, will a female agent still be penalized for an aggressive upgrade recommendation? How will a male agent be viewed if he makes aggressive recommendations for the products he does not have much expertise? Since the current experiment provides evidentiary data of online viewers’ discriminatory practice toward female-gendered computer agents who behaved in a masculine style, future research needs to investigate whether online viewers would seek the same level of gender-norm compliance from male-gendered agents in online sales encounter.

In conclusion, by adopting a unique research context in which a computer agent interacts with human consumers, I found that computer agents in human-computer interaction (HCI) are not free from sex-role stereotypes, even if the gender identity of the computer agent is contrived. Female identity becomes a disadvantage when the job description requires an assertive salesman style that is inconsistent with typical female stereotype. Therefore, marketers are advised to select different sales technique if their online agents are “gendered.”

REFERENCES


Let Your Workspace Speak for Itself: The Impact of Material Objects on Impression Formation and Service Quality Perception

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ABSTRACT

Inspired by studies exploring the role of material objects in impression formation, the impact of personal and professional objects on person perception and service quality evaluation were investigated in a healthcare setting. Results showed that material objects affect service quality perceptions through a cognitive route, incorporating office professionalism and perceived competence of the physician, and through an affect-driven route, incorporating attractiveness of the office, agreeableness of the physician and experienced affect. In healthcare services, this affect-driven route seems to be of particular importance.

INTRODUCTION

Among consumer researchers, environmental psychologists, and marketers it is well established that products and material objects present meanings beyond their appearance and function; people surround themselves with possessions that express and reinforce a personal identity (Belk 1988). Schlenker (1985) assumed that by creating and altering their environments, people may try to display a more glorified picture of themselves. Not only do we use objects as a means for self-expression, but other people use such information in everyday settings to form impressions of what occupants of specific environments, e.g., houses or offices, are like (Gosling et al. 2002).

In order to explain the mechanisms through which individuals impact their personal environments and the ways in which observers draw inferences about occupants of such environments, Brunswik (1956) proposed his ‘lens model’. In his view, physical objects in the personal environment can serve as a lens through which observers perceive underlying constructs such as the occupant’s interests, personality or values. A framed picture of a happy family in an office, for instance, can serve as a lens ‘through’ which an observer perceives the occupant as empathetic or warm. Similarly, an observer may infer from a baseball hat on a cabinet that the occupant is interested in sports. Naturally, observers will try to attend to those cues that are most accurate in conveying the true identity of the target person.

The degree to which people attend to environmental cues is likely to vary with the type of setting. Particularly in novel or ambiguous situations, i.e., situations in which standardized scripts or clear-cut information are lacking, people are likely to form impressions, judgments and perceptions based on objects present in the physical environment (Kay et al. 2004). In order to reduce uncertainty, resulting from the absence of clear-cut information, customers are likely to attend to aspects of the tangible environment (Verhoeven, Pieterse, and Pruyn 2006). In services marketing literature, uncertainty is often assumed to vary with information verifiability. In credence services, dominant attributes cannot be verified by the average consumer (even after purchase and consumption), because (s)he lacks the technical expertise or the means to make a reliable assessment, or because claim verification would take an unrealistically long time (Darby and Karni 1973; Zeithaml 1981). It can be argued, therefore, that the effects of the physical environment on impression formation are more pronounced for services characterized by low information verifiability (i.e., credence services) than they are for services with high information verifiability (i.e., experience services).

Although the significance of environmental cues in commercial (Turley and Milliman 2000) and healthcare settings (Dijkstra, Pieterse, and Pruyn 2006) is well established, less is known about the effects of particular objects and the processes underlying this type of impression formation. Do objects in a doctor’s office, for instance, primarily affect us on an affective level or do they first and foremost impact our cognitions? To provide an answer to these questions, we employed an experimental design, using simulations of service environments, to study the effects of two types of objects commonplace in offices: objects relevant to the profession of the occupant and objects expressive of personal tastes and interests. It is our contention that these types of objects are particularly influential with respect to ratings of doctors on perceived competence and perceived friendliness or empathy: attributes referred to as ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ respectively (Driver and Johnston 2001). Since these constructs are considered primary determinants of service quality perceptions (Driver and Johnston 2001), we will also assess the relative contributions of these attributes on perceived quality of care. Before elaborating on our design, however, we will discuss studies that have explored the role of specific types of objects in organizational contexts.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Several studies have assessed the role of overall office design on perceived traits of office occupants (Cherulnik and Sounders 1984; Tedeschi and Melburg 1984). Cherulnik and Sounders (1984), for instance, showed that occupants of high-status offices are judged as more neat, critical, sincere, intelligent, proud, responsible, ambitious and less superstitious, gullible, lazy and noisy than occupants of low-status offices. Of particular interest to our present purpose are studies that have explored the role of particular objects using experimentally manipulated slides of offices (Campbell 1979; McElroy, Morrow and Wall 1983; Morrow and McElroy 1981). Morrow and McElroy (1981), for instance, showed that the presence of status symbols (e.g., diplomas) led to higher ratings on occupants’ achievement orientation and rank. They further found that friendliness, extroversion and feelings of welcome in office settings in part relate to the arrangement of furniture, mirrored in an ‘open’ (desk against the wall) or ‘closed’ (desk between occupant and visitor) setup (Morrow and McElroy 1981).

Although in these studies the effects of specific kinds of objects or set-ups were studied, environmental cues are not perceived in isolation; rather, their combined effects give rise to a holistic image that shapes subsequent consumer experiences, comprising both affective and cognitive components (Bloch 1995). In this process, observers ‘transfer’ perceived characteristics of the physical environment to the occupant. Clearly, design aspects of offices can, in line with the needs of office occupants, convey different ’messages’ (Ornstein 1989). People may in some situa-

1The authors gratefully thank Johan Jonker, Albert Polman and Dr. Job van der Palen for their assistance in developing the panorama photos.
tions desire to be looked upon as high-status or powerful (hard attributes), but at other times as involved, caring or friendly (soft attributes). Arguably, office professionalism impacts perceptions of physicians in terms of hard attributes whereas office attractiveness shapes perceptions of physicians in terms of soft attributes. With respect to financial services, e.g., a bank, it may be crucial (from a managerial point of view) to foremost foster impressions of competence or professional success, whereas our choice for a general practitioner may sooner be based on perceptions of the personnel’s friendliness or involvement.

This process of impression formation has been shown to play a particularly important role in Service Quality appraisal (Grove and Fisk 1989). As services are actions or performances rather than products, in the eyes of customers the employees delivering the service are the service (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremlier 2006). As a result, the evaluation of the service hinges on the consumer’s impression of the service provider. A similar line of reasoning holds that services are hard to evaluate due to the specific characteristics (i.e., intangibility, heterogeneity, simultaneous production and consumption and perishability), and that therefore customers form expectations about the quality of service based on their impressions of the organization and the employees (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1985). Several studies indicate that emotions arising from interactions with personnel and the environment (Mehrabian and Russell 1974) shape such expectations and are thus critical factors in the appraisal of service quality (Chebat, Davidow, and Codjovi 2005; Laroche et al. 2005). In line with these studies, we propose that affect positively influences perceived service quality. The foregoing discussion leads us to propose the conceptual model depicted in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1**
A conceptual model of cognitive and emotional effects of material objects

![Diagram](image-url)

**METHOD**

**Pretest**
To make an informed decision regarding the selection of stimulus materials for our study, a pretest was conducted among 54 students (13 males, 41 females; mean age 19.7) of the University of Twente. They were instructed to carefully watch 10 pictures of objects commonplace in a physician’s office and imagine what a male physician with the displayed object in his room would be like. For each of the 10 pictures, they were asked to rate the personality of the physician on a 39-item personality scale. The questionnaire consisted of the 35 items in the Big Five personality questionnaire (Goldberg 1992) and some traits typically relevant for physicians: ‘professional’, ‘expert’, ‘reliable’ and ‘involved’. For each of the 39 traits, participants indicated on a nine-point scale to what extent they considered these applicable to the physician. Each participant rated 10 pictures. In total, 20 pictures of objects were tested.

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 39 personality traits. Based on the total explained variance and the interpretability of the factor structure, a five factor solution was adopted. An examination of the terms composing each factor led to naming them as follows: Competence (e.g., professional, responsible, intelligent; \( \alpha = .95 \)), Agreeableness (e.g., warm, kind, involved; \( \alpha = .91 \)), Extraversion (e.g., energetic, talkative, assertive; \( \alpha = .90 \)), Emotional stability (e.g., calm, relaxed, at ease; \( \alpha = .83 \)) and Creativity (e.g., imaginative, creative, curious; \( \alpha = .73 \)). On the whole, this factor structure resembles the structure reported by Goldberg (1992). However, some traits of the original intelligence factor (‘intelligent’, ‘analytical’ and ‘reflective’) and some of the added items (‘professional’, ‘expert’ and ‘reliable’) loaded on the conscientiousness factor, broadening the meaning of the factor to ‘competence’. For this study, only the first two factors, deemed most important, will be discussed and elaborated on.

Out of the 20 objects, the six objects that received the highest scores on competence were selected for the professional condition: scientific articles, a medical illustration, professional books, a framed master’s certificate, a mockup of lungs and a mockup of respiratory organs. The six objects that scored highest on agreeableness were selected for the personally expressive condition: a miniature ship, African sculptures, toy cars, a speaker set, a soccer team shawl and a decorative hat. Interestingly, objects receiving
high scores on competence received low scores on agreeableness and vice versa: a physician displaying a professional object was judged as more competent ($t=16.38$, $p<.001$) and less agreeable ($t=6.09$, $p<.001$) than a physician displaying a personally expressive object.

In addition, participants were asked to rate four scenarios in order to check the verifiability manipulation (i.e., the degree to which a procedure can be evaluated after its completion). Based on these results, a ‘credence’ scenario (describing a procedure that cannot be evaluated after service delivery) and an ‘experience’ scenario (describing a procedure that can easily be evaluated) were selected. Participants indicated that, after the treatment, they were better able to evaluate the success of the ‘scar treatment’ (the experience scenario) than the success of the ‘Hepatitis B treatment’ (the credence scenario) ($t=11.57$, $p<.001$). Both scenarios are presented in the next section.

**Design and Procedure**

A two (professional vs. personally expressive objects) x two (experience vs. credence service) scenario design was employed for the purpose of this study. All 81 participants were individually invited into the research lab. The instructions and scenarios were displayed on a computer screen and read as follows:

**Scar treatment (experience condition):**
A scar on your cheek has been bothering you for quite a while. Now you really want to have it removed, so you decide to call for an appointment with a doctor. Not knowing what to expect, you search for information on the Internet. As it turns out, you will be able to evaluate the result of the surgery right after the procedure. At the time of the appointment you check in at the hospital. As the physician is not quite ready to see you yet, an assistant takes you into his office and asks you to wait. While waiting you take a good look at the physician’s room.

**Hepatitis B treatment (credence condition):**
You’ve recently paid a visit to a blood bank for the very first time. They tested your blood on several diseases. As it turns out, you are suffering from Hepatitis B, an infection of the liver. You never noticed anything and you don’t know what needs to be done. You decide to call for an appointment with a doctor. Not knowing what to expect, you search for information on the Internet. You learn that you won’t be able to evaluate the result of the intervention after the procedure since you did not, and will not, have any noticeable symptoms. At the time of the appointment you check in at the hospital. As the physician is not quite ready to see you yet, an assistant takes you into his office and asks you to wait. While waiting you take a good look at the physician’s room.

Prompted by the instructions, participants next explored a QuickTime 360 degree panorama photo of a room containing either the professional objects or the personally expressive objects (see Figure 2). Using the mouse, participants were able to control speed and angle of presentation. After 70 seconds, the view switched to a 6-second movie presentation of a doctor stepping into the office apologizing for the wait. Subsequently participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire.

**Measures**

To assess the impact of the experimental manipulation on participants’ impressions of the physician, participants were asked to rate his personality on a computer-administered 39-item personality questionnaire (identical to the one used in the pretest). In line with the results from the pretest, exploratory factor analyses revealed the same factorial structure. Cronbach’s alphas for the five factors ranged from .71 for Creativity to .94 for Competence.

The cognitive evaluation of the service environment was measured using a 13-item environmental appraisal scale, including the 10-item environmental appraisal scale (Bitner 1990) and the items ‘appearing friendly’, ‘comfortable’, and ‘clean’. Two factors emerged from an exploratory factor analysis conducted on these items: Professional (e.g. efficient, organized, professional; $\alpha=.82$) and Attractive (e.g. pleasant, attractive, comfortable; $\alpha=.92$). The emotional response was assessed with a 6-item pleasure scale (Mehrabian and Russell 1974). This scale proved to be one-dimensional and reliable ($\alpha=.93$). An adjusted SERVQUAL questionnaire (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988) was used to determine the evaluation of the service ($\alpha=.93$).

**RESULTS**

Analysis of variance showed that participants in the professional condition rated the office as more professional ($M_{\text{professional}}=5.18$) in comparison to participants in the personally expressive condition ($M_{\text{personally expressive}}=4.67$, $F(1,79)=4.09$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.049$). However, the office manipulation did not have a direct effect on perceived physician’s competence ($F(1,79)=.23$, NS) or agreeableness ($F(1,79)=.55$, NS). The office containing professional objects was judged as less attractive ($M_{\text{professional}}=2.76$) than the office containing personally expressive objects ($M_{\text{personally expressive}}=4.67$, $F(1,79)=7.41$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.086$). Consistent with the latter finding, participants in the professional condition reported to have less positive emotions ($F(1,79)=5.97$, $p<.04$, $\eta^2=.070$), and a lower perceived service quality ($F(1,79)=7.26$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.084$) than participants in the personally expressive condition. Contrary to our expectations, none of these effects were qualified by the experience-credence manipulation.

To better understand the relationship between these variables, Structural Equation Modeling was used to test the theoretical model. The direct and indirect effects were estimated by means of path-analysis using Amos. The model shown in Figure 3 has a very good fit ($\chi^2(10)=14.45$, $p=.15$, $\text{CMIN/df}=1.45$, $\text{GFI}=.96$, $\text{TLI}=.96$, $\text{CFI}=.98$, $\text{RMSEA}=.075$). All relationships are significant at $p<.05$.

Not surprisingly, a positive relationship ($\beta=.35$) exists between the objects in the office and perceived professionalism of the office, indicating that the office containing professional objects is perceived as more professional than the office containing personally expressive objects. The negative relationship between the objects in the office and perceived attractiveness ($\beta=-.29$) implies that the office in the personally expressive condition is perceived as more attractive than the office in the professional condition. However, the object manipulation accounts for only 9% of the variance in office attractiveness.

A direct relationship emerges between the two dimensions of service environment appraisal, suggesting that office attractiveness is a significant predictor of office professionalism ($\beta=.45$). Office professionalism in turn strongly affects the degree to which the physician is perceived as competent ($\beta=.64$), whereas office attractiveness strongly affects the perceived agreeableness of the physician ($\beta=.48$). In line with our predictions, these results indicate that observers indeed project specific attributes of the environment onto the physician. It should be noted that, as was the case with the environmental attributes, the physician’s personality traits are not unrelated: perceived agreeableness affects perceived competence ($\beta=.25$).

The emotional experience is greatly affected by both the perceived attractiveness of the office ($\beta=.70$) and to a much lesser degree by the perceived agreeableness of the physician ($\beta=.25$).
These two variables account for 73% of the variance in emotion. The significant relationship between perceived physician's competence and perceived service quality (β=.33) confirms our hypothesis that consumers evaluate service quality based on their impression of the service provider. The attractiveness of the service environment also directly affects service quality evaluation (β=.28).

As expected, experienced emotion is a significant predictor of service quality (β=.28).

**DISCUSSION**

The results of this study confirm our hypotheses about particular types of objects in a healthcare setting, thereby further advance-
ing our understanding of the ways in which environmental factors impact consumer experience. Although research assessing effects of interior design on consumers’ responses are not new, many studies suffer from a lack of experimental control, making it hard to demonstrate relations between specific types of environmental stimuli and consumer experience.

The presented model suggests two different response ‘routes’ in consumers’ evaluations of service encounters: a cognitive ‘hard’ route through which the physician’s competence is assessed, and a more affect-laden ‘soft’ route centered on perceived friendliness or agreeableness (c.f., Driver and Johnston, 2001). Perceived competence was shown to be primarily affected by professionalism of the office, and thus dependent on the presence of profession-related objects. Perceived friendliness, on the other hand, was shown to be primarily affected by the attractiveness of the office. Thus, offices containing objects expressive of personal tastes and interests were perceived as more attractive and elicited a more positive emotional response in comparison to offices containing profession-related objects. Interestingly, these findings are in line with findings reported by Pruyn and Smidts (Pruyn and Smidts 1998) indicating that perceived attractiveness of waiting rooms in healthcare settings primarily impacts consumers’ emotional response. These combined findings corroborate our assumptions that perceived attractiveness can be considered a soft attribute whereas perceived professionalism constitutes a hard attribute.

Perceived competence of the physician turns out to be an important predictor of perceived service quality. Attractiveness of the environment and perceived agreeableness of the service provider influence perceived service quality indirectly through experienced affect. The importance of such soft attributes is further underscored by the positive relation between office attractiveness and office professionalism, indicating that soft attributes also impact hard attributes. In literature, the relative importance of hard and soft attributes with respect to service quality appraisal is expected to vary with the type of service (Cronin and Taylor 1994; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1994). As one would expect, in high anxiety and high contact services, soft attributes play a greater role in service quality appraisal than hard attributes. For this reason, participants generate more favorable expectations with respect to service quality in the personally expressive condition than in the professional condition.

Contrary to our expectations, the effects of objects were not moderated by information verifiability. Although information verifiability was successfully manipulated, the scenarios may have failed to generate differences in perceived uncertainty. After all, it is this experienced uncertainty (arising from low information variability) that is expected to moderate the effects of the environment on service provider- and service quality evaluation. Another explanation relates to the fact that most consumers are unfamiliar with (technical) procedures in healthcare services, the outcome of which will always be somewhat uncertain. As such, healthcare services in general carry predominantly credence characteristics. Although it was clear in the experience scenario that the outcome could be evaluated after the treatment, no information regarding the outcome of the scar treatment was given, and the two service encounters might not have been distinctive enough along the verifiability continuum.

The ecological validity of our study was increased by simulating the office using QuickTime 360 degree panoramas rather than ‘standard’ photos and by introducing the target of impression formation (i.e., the physician) by means of a short movie presentation. In doing so we hoped to portray a realistic service encounter. In bringing physician and environment together (as is the case in ‘real life’), an interesting avenue for future research opens up. That is, in addition to investigating the impact of the physical environment on person perception, it would also be of interest to study the impact of person characteristics on environmental appraisal and consequent service quality appraisal. Variations in person characteristics such as age or self-assuredness may prompt consumers to attend to different aspects of the environment or lead them to evaluate environmental factors differently in terms of cue validity (Brunswick, 1956). The impact of profession-related objects (communicating competence), for instance, may vary depending on the degree to which the physician is perceived as confident or insecure; status symbols may trigger an image of high standing for an elderly man radiating confidence, whereas adverse effects may be anticipated if the office is occupied by a young inexperienced person.

Finally, our results are of interest in the light of recent findings in priming research. As Kay et.al. (2004) have shown, objects can subconsciously influence people’s behavior and evaluations. Future research will have to address the question to what extent and under what conditions (sub-)conscious processes underlie the effects of objects in servicescapes. With respect to healthcare settings, for instance, one could argue that soft (i.e., affect-related) attributes are activated without consumers being aware of the relevant influence, whereas awareness is needed for observers to draw conclusions about hard attributes. But regardless of how, and under what conditions, objects impact consumer experience, present research demonstrates the importance of attending to physical objects in service settings and the messages they convey.

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A Two-Step Model of Service Dissatisfaction: Theory and Evidence
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The literature on consumer (dis)satisfaction has largely focused on its antecedents, notably, expectations, disconfirmation of expectations, performance, attributions, and equity. Few empirical studies have addressed the consequences of (dis)satisfaction, let alone the consequences of service (dis)satisfaction. In addition, individual-difference variables rarely appear in previous (dis)satisfaction models.

This paper presents a two-step model (see figure 1) that highlights the moderating influences of two individual-difference variables, both on service dissatisfaction and on the ensuing complaining behaviors. It also reports a study that examined several hypotheses based on the proposed model.

Research Hypotheses
Previous research (e.g., Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999) has distinguished between process and outcome failures in service encounters. From the perspective of the consumer, the former involves the loss of social resources (e.g., status, esteem), whereas the latter involves the loss of nonsocial resources (e.g., money, time). We propose that the two types of service failure would trigger different patterns of consumer behavior, subject to individual differences in concern for face (CFF) and belief in fate (BIF).

Concern for face is defined as the extent to which an individual shows regard for and interest in the protection and enhancement of face (i.e., public self-image) in social interactions. Since services are performed for people by people, service failures are inherently face-threatening (Brown and Levinson 1987). Given the fundamental difference between a process failure and an outcome failure, however, face issues should be more salient in the former than in the latter. We thus predict an aggravating effect of CFF on service dissatisfaction, and that this effect would be stronger for a process failure than for an outcome failure.

Belief in fate is defined as the extent to which an individual believes in fate/luck as an impersonal force shaping events and outcomes. When service failures occur, the notion that “it is meant to be” or “I am just unlucky” would help alleviate discontent. However, fatalistic notions are seldom invoked when an obvious interpretation is available (Pepitone and Saffiotti 1997). Relative to an outcome failure, a process failure involves an unambiguous causal agent, namely, the service provider. Hence, we predict a mitigating effect of BIF on service dissatisfaction, and that this effect would be stronger for an outcome failure than for a process failure.

According to Singh’s (1988) taxonomy of consumer complaint behavior (CCB), dissatisfied consumers may engage in public actions (e.g., complaining to management) or private actions (e.g., negative WOM). Both CFF and BIF are expected to affect CCB over and above their influences on dissatisfaction.

Given the same level of service dissatisfaction, consumers higher (vs. lower) in CFF may be more motivated to restore “self-face” by complaining to management. Alternatively, however, they may be more restrained because of their concern for “other-face.” As far as private actions are concerned, consumers higher (vs. lower) in CFF are likely more motivated to spread negative WOM because it may signal to others their exquisite taste, thereby enhancing face.

The effects of BIF on CCB are predicted to be uniformly mitigatory. Consumers higher (vs. lower) in BIF should be less likely to complain to management or engage in negative WOM, by virtue of the perceived futility of attempts to change the status quo. The research hypotheses are summarized as follows:

H1: When a service failure occurs, consumers who are higher (vs. lower) in BIF will be more dissatisfied.

H2: The aggravating effect of CFF on service dissatisfaction will be stronger for a process failure than for an outcome failure.

H3: When a service failure occurs, consumers who are higher (vs. lower) in BIF will be less dissatisfied.

H4: The mitigating effect of BIF on service dissatisfaction will be stronger for an outcome failure than for a process failure.

H5a: Given the same level of dissatisfaction, consumers who are higher (vs. lower) in CFF will be more likely to complain to management.

H5b: Given the same level of dissatisfaction, consumers who are higher (vs. lower) in CFF will be less likely to engage in negative WOM.

H6: Given the same level of dissatisfaction, consumers who are higher (vs. lower) in CFF will be more dissatisfied.

H7: Given the same level of dissatisfaction, consumers who are higher (vs. lower) in BIF will be more likely to engage in negative WOM.

H8: Given the same level of dissatisfaction, consumers who are higher (vs. lower) in BIF will be less likely to engage in negative WOM.

Method and Results
The hypotheses were tested with a scenario-based experiment. Participants were 108 business executives from a part-time MBA program at a large, international university. They were randomly assigned to either a process failure or an outcome failure condition in a hotel scenario, and their CFF and BIF scores were measured after they gave their dissatisfaction ratings. The hotel scenarios and the measurement scales were adapted from previous research.

Confirming hypotheses 1 and 2, we found a CFF main effect and a CFF x failure type interaction. Participants higher in CFF were more dissatisfied, and this effect was more pronounced in the process failure condition. Nonetheless, the data supported hypothesis 4 but not hypothesis 3. There was no BIF main effect, despite a BIF x failure type interaction. Specifically, participants higher in BIF were less dissatisfied only in the outcome failure condition.

With the level of dissatisfaction controlled for, CFF had a negative (i.e., mitigating) effect on the intention to complain to
management but a positive (i.e., aggravating) effect on negative WOM intention. This pattern supported hypotheses 5b and 6. On the other hand, BIF had a marginally negative effect on the intention to complain to management, lending some support to hypothesis 7. This variable also showed an attenuating effect on negative WOM intention, thus confirming hypothesis 8.

**Conclusion**

This paper extends consumer (dis)satisfaction research by showing that CFF and BIF impact the (dis)satisfaction process at two junctures. They first interact with failure type to influence service dissatisfaction, and then affect the ensuing CCB. The two-step model has important theoretical and managerial implications, and points to many avenues for future research.

**References**


Consumers’ Arrogance: Construct Conceptualization and Preliminary Validation Evidence
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

People engage in self-promotion to impress others. Self-promotion can help achieve one’s goals when received positively but can lead to perceptions of arrogance when received negatively (Hareli and Weiner 2000). Consumer arrogance (CA) is more specific than general arrogance and is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct reflecting individuals’ tendency to communicate achievements via possessions and the abilities related to their acquisition. This definition recognizes that possessions can convey arrogance when used to symbolize success and achievements (O’Cass and McEwen 2004).

Research in psychology viewed arrogance as a dimension of narcissism (Emmons 1984) and conceptualized it as reflecting one’s sense of being a special person, who should only be associated with likewise individuals (Boyd and Helms 2005). Other lines of research focused on what makes individuals seem arrogant to others and showed that people seem arrogant when they communicate their quality publicly (Ben-Ze’ev 1993; Hareli, Weiner, and Yee 2006). Likewise, such a perception is enhanced when individuals communicate that their achievements were attained thanks to their desirable qualities. Although high achievers are admired, such communications are received negatively as arrogant people are disliked (Hareli and Weiner 2000; Wosinska et al. 1996).

We use the theoretical lens of possessions as an extension of the self to conceptualize CA as a trait. Possessions are a safe means to convey one’s image to express identity publicly (Tian et al. 2001). They symbolically signal accomplishments, making them a form of communication of owners’ superiority (Hirschman and Labarbera 1990). Thus, we conceptualize CA as a communicated exhibition of superiority through products and consumption. Individuals use verbal and non-verbal self-presentation strategies to impress others—the wider their range and the higher their frequency the higher their perceived CA (Baumeister 1982).

Verbally, individuals can exhibit superiority by stating their accomplishments or showing-off their possessions (Gauld and Shoter 1977). Hence, high-CA individuals should present their purchases as superior to others’ purchase superiority and show them off (showing-off through purchases). Third, high-CA individuals will perceive themselves as experts, opinion leaders, or market mavens (Feick and Price 1987). Thus, verbal CA includes perceived and expressed “I know best” mentality compared to others.

Non-verbally, consumers can use branded products (brand-name self-assertion), valued because of their inherent status (Dawson and Cavell 1987), to communicate superiority (O’Cass and McEwen 2004). Additionally, exhibitionism-based purchasing signifies individuals’ increasing conspicuous consumption (Powderly and MacNulty 1990; Riesman 1950; Vigneron & Johnson 1999).

Having conceptualized CA as a five-dimensional trait, we embarked on a study to develop a CA scale. An open-ended elicitation procedure was used first to generate an initial item pool which will be consistent with the public’s view of CA. Students (n=67) were queried about their perception of the expression of arrogance through buying, consuming, or using products. Then, in the second phase, an experienced editor reviewed all responses. She eliminated ambiguous/repeated statements. Three scholars reviewed the remaining 76 statements independently to identify dimensions and assign statements. This stage required agreement by all three. The dimensions were labeled brand-name self-assertion, exhibitionism-based purchases, “I know best” mentality, showing-off through purchases, purchase superiority, and unnecessary purchases. Except for unnecessary purchases, all CA dimensions were pre-conceptualized. However, since unnecessary purchases emerged, we incorporated it post-hoc and the final list included 46 items.

The purification stage was designed to meet the challenge of item parsimony and maintenance of the structure of CA. Data were collected from 130 students on the CA items and the CSI, status consumption, and price–prestige relationship scales. Reliability analyses and uni-dimensionality tests of CA dimensions reduced the list to 29 items corresponding to our five-dimensional structure with one new dimension. This phase also tested the CA scale for nomological validity and found that it was related positively to CSI, status consumption, and price-prestige sensitivity.

Since the motivation for CA is to elevate the possessor’s social status, future research should examine high-CA individuals’ tendency to consume products that can communicate superiority and achievements to others preferably using representative samples. Future research should also test the discriminant and nomological validity of CA through constructs such as vanity and materialism, preferably cross-culturally since CA is an individual trait, exhibiting it might be considered less desirable in collectivist cultures.

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ABSTRACT

While product involvement is a central concept used to define intense product-consumer interactions, recent researchers are contributing new constructs to better understand highly engaged brand relationships. In this study, the concept of sustained consumer fascination is introduced to help understand the intense and enduring relationships that arise among consumers and consumption activities. Based on online gardening diaries and in-depth interviews with avid gardeners, we propose that the concept of sustained consumer fascination is composed of surprise, creative engagement, restorative escape, and insight.
The Brand Dislike Construct: Scale Development and Application to Actual Brands
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Brand dislike occurs when consumers express explicit negative judgments toward a brand that can be either formed during the evaluation task or retrieved from a negative attitude stored in memory. There are several factors that lead to the emergence of brand dislike and even theoretical explanations are sparse and fragmented: the first section of the paper reviews the main research approaches that have addressed this topic, trying to integrate them in a single framework.

Specifically, three distinct stream of research will be reviewed and organized: customer/brand relationship (Fournier, 1998; Fajer, Schouten, 1995), the metaphorical, symbolic and relational properties of negative opinions and judgements (Wilk, 1997; Bourdieu, 1987; Douglas, 1996; Douglas and Isherwood, 1996) and finally, political consumption and consumer resistance (among others, Ozanne and Murray, 1995; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995 and Holt, 2002).

With this framework in mind, we have started the development of a research project to understand the brand dislike construct and to create the basis for measuring it. In detail, our research objectives in this paper are:

- A preliminary explorative qualitative analysis directed at understanding the concept of brand dislike from the consumer’s perspective (Dalli et al., 2006);
- the development and validation of a brand dislike scale integrating the dimensions emerging from the literature review and the results of the qualitative analysis;
- the application of the validated scale to actual brands to test the relevance of the dislike factors identified in the previous phase.

The main result that emerged from the qualitative analysis is a complex but coherent picture that is broken down into three levels (product, user and corporate) and several factors, each of which can be strictly related to the literature outlined in the paper. In this sense, the research purpose of giving a descriptive picture of the consumers’ perspective about disliked brands has been achieved.

The generation of a scale for measuring brand dislike has been the second step of this research project. Following the scale development procedure guidelines that Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (1991) proposed, we obtained a psychometrically sound and operationally valid measure for the brand dislike construct based on fifteen items.

Eight out of fifteen items clearly relate to the corporate level, broken down into three different factors: as we found in the previous phase of analysis, these three factors are “manipulation and deceit”, “carelessness toward the environment” and “outdated communication”. Five additional items relate to the user level and, differently from the previous phase of analysis, we found only one factor collecting all the items related to the user level. Finally, as we found in the scale validation analysis, two items relate to the product level and, particularly, to “poor product performance”.

Therefore, the factors identified seem quite stable and able to almost completely cover the theoretical model on which the empirical analysis is grounded.

The main contribution of the paper is in the direction of the development of a specific measurement tool for negative brand attitudes, provided that no special methods like this do exist, and that it’s a long time that attitude literature is claiming for the development of specific instruments to measure negative attitudes.

In addition, this new scale adds to the extant literature by establishing a basis for further theoretical advances on the relationship between brand dislike and buying behavior; the focus in this case should be on the nature and strength of this relationship, given the different impact of the six identified and verified factors on overall brand dislike. In fact, according to whether or not the consumer dislikes the brand because of one or another of the identified factors, the implications in behavioral terms are not necessarily the same and of the same intensity.

Finally, the application of the scale to actual brands has lead to interesting results and seems promising not only from a theoretical point of view but also from a managerial one. The 15 item scale can serve as a useful diagnostic tool; it allows to identify the factors on which consumers build negative evaluations and to set up the necessary countermeasures.

REFERENCES


Toward a Theory on the Content and Structure of Money Attitudes

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Rising consumer debt, compulsive buying, credit card abuse, and bankruptcy have focused attention on money attitudes, which are beliefs people hold about money and exchange situations. In this paper, we address the important need for systematic work toward a comprehensive theory on the content and structure of money attitudes. Building on work by Yamauchi and Templer (1982), we propose a theory on the contents and structure of money attitudes, develop a new measurement scale, and rigorously test its psychometric properties.

We define money attitudes as interpersonal, attitudinal [affective, behavioral, cognitive] beliefs that express [individual, collective, mixed] values concerned with money [independence...quality] and are evaluated in importance [very important to very unimportant] in order to guide behavior within the context of money and money situations. Our definition relies on the assumption that money is by its nature a medium that is intended to facilitate interpersonal exchange. Money situations, like all interpersonal situations, involve complex fields in which past and present interpersonal influences are embedded in an equally influential sociocultural matrix (Wiggins and Trobst 1997). We posit that money attitudes are attitudinal beliefs that are operant in money contexts and express individual, collective, and mixed values.

Yamauchi and Templer (1982) proposed five money attitudes: power-prestige, retention-time, distrust, anxiety, and quality. In our work, we note the value-expressive role of attitudes and their less central position in the human belief system, in which hierarchically-held values and attitudes are managed for consistency. We draw on Schwartz (1992) widely-accepted values theory to propose the motivational contents of money attitudes, noting our expectation that money attitudes will serve the same the universal requirements of existence identified by Schwartz: needs of individuals as biological organisms, requisites of coordinated social conduct, and requirements for the smooth functioning and survival of groups. Our conceptual approach allows us to distinguish nine money attitudes that are derived by refining and extending Yamauchi and Templer’s (1982) money attitudes.

We postulate that money attitudes will have a circumplex structure. The circumplex is the product of a motivational continuum at a more basic level, even though we discriminate among individual money attitudes in our theory. Consequently, following the logic employed by Schwartz (1994), we partition the circumplex into individual money attitudes that represent conceptually-insightful choices about boundaries between fuzzy sets. An examination of the content of our money attitudes suggests two underlying and possibly orthogonal bipolar dimensions underlie their structure. One bipolar dimension pits self-assurance (independence) against insecurity (anxiety, distrust, power). The other bipolar dimension opposes conservation (conservatism, ubuntu) and consumption (time-simplicity, stimulation, quality).

We construct a 49-item scale, the Money Portraits Survey (MPS), to assess the structure and contents of the theory, following the textual portraits approach of Schwartz’ Portraits Value Questionnaire (Schwartz et al. 2001). The approach asks respondents to compare textual portraits of people, who implicitly place priority on a particular money attitude. The direction of comparison is important, because it increases the likelihood that the respondent’s similarity judgment will focus on the implied values.

In study 1, which was a pretest, the MPS and PVQ were administered to 117 MBA students. Coefficient alpha internal reliabilities of the subscales were in the range .63-.87, with only two scales below .70. Following the procedure of Schwartz (Schwartz et al. 2001), we assess whether items intended to measure money attitudes are located in contiguous regions in the space (i.e., content) and whether the regions are located relative to one another as expected (i.e., structure). Thus, we adopt a confirmatory, configurational verification approach using similarity structure analysis (SSA), a nonmetric multidimensional scaling technique that is especially appropriate when testing hypotheses that array the constructs of interest on a continuum in space (Davison 1983; Dillon and Goldstein 1984). The money attitudes emerged in the hypothesized order. Forty-one items were located in the hypothesized regions while only seven items were located in adjacent regions to the hypothesized region. Just one item emerged in an unexpected region not adjacent to its hypothesized region. Money attitudes had expected relations with the PVQ values. After careful inspection, we selected 33 items for inclusion in two field assessments of the new scale.

In Study 2, we administered the MPS to 200 people using mall intercepts outside cinemas in major metropolitan areas. The money attitudes emerged in the hypothesized order, except that one emerged on the periphery of another (which is consistent with the theory). Thirty-one items emerged in hypothesized regions and only two items were located in adjacent regions. The fit of the SSA model was good (i.e., the model fit index, stress=.16, c.f. Johnson and Wichern 2002). When data parcels were created by averaging the scores of items intended to measure each money attitude and the model was assessed, the fit was excellent (stress=.04).

In Study 3, a professional marketing research company administered the MPS to 415 bookstore customers. SSA results were similar to Study 2 and fit to the hypothesized structure was acceptable (stress=.18). The hypothesized structure emerged, although two money attitudes reversed order, which is consistent with the theory. All items are located in hypothesized regions except two items located in regions adjacent to their hypothesized location. An SSA of the data parcels suggests an excellent fit (stress=.05).

The larger sample size in Study 3 allowed us to assess the fit of these data to a more rigorous circumplex structure using Browne’s covariance structure modeling approach (Browne 1992). The approach is analogous to the confirmatory factor analysis and provides information about model fit to a circumplex structure using some of the same indices. The results present an acceptable fit (2(17)=79.06, RMSEA=.097, RMSEA 95% confidence interval (.074-.115) (c.f. Browne and Cudeck 1992). The hypothesized structure is confirmed by the 95% confidence intervals of the polar angles.

The new MPS emerges as a reliable and valid tool to measure money attitudes that is easy to administer and analyze. Future work should focus on the antecedents and consequences of money attitudes.

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Does a Medium Context Have a Priming or an Interference Effect? It Depends on How You Look At It

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Previous literature has found that a medium context can have an effect on the responses to an embedded ad (e.g., Moorman et al. 2005). Some authors find a congruency effect between context and embedded ad (priming effect, e.g. Yi 1990a) and others find no effect or even opposing effects and this latter is attributed to the interference and/or contrast theory (Bryant and Zillman 1994). In case readers follow the page lay-out, the medium context is processed first and subsequently the embedded ad. However, most often no formal check for this is done, i.e. how people really read the magazine or newspaper pages is not traced. Hence, several questions can be raised: did people read the context first and subsequently the ad, did the ad attract so much attention that the ad was read first and subsequently the context, did people switch from medium context to ad and vice versa a number of times, and do these different reading sequences have an impact on whether congruency or contrast effects occur? If these reading sequences do matter, they could perhaps explain why previous results in mainly print setting were not robust with respect to the congruency and contrast effects that were found. Indeed, whether priming (a context serves as a primer, resulting in more positive ad responses) or interference (the target ad ‘melts down’ in the medium context, resulting in less positive ad responses) occurs may depend on the context-ad sequence (Furnham, Bergland, and Gunter 2002).

In this paper, by means of three studies, the priming as well as interference effects are studied. By means of eye-tracking we specifically focus on the attention path that respondents have when there is simultaneous exposure (i.e., context and ad are shown at the same time). The studies were operationalized in a medium in which different presentation orders of the stimuli (ad and medium context) are realistic, namely the web. More precisely, a computer ad was combined with a congruent computer web page or an incongruent car web page. Impact was measured by attitude towards the ad (four items) and click intention.

In the first study, we found that in a pure priming setting (a prime, followed by the web ad) the expected congruency effect was present for both attitude towards the ad and click intention. When the web ad and prime (web page) were shown simultaneously after the prime, this congruency effect vanished and for click intention, it even turned into a contrast effect. This finding warrants further research to the effect of context after an ad as well as the effect of medium context on the type of medium context effect that occurs, further research could try to focus on the suggested ‘backward priming the prime’ principle in order to study the possible effect of the time that the last prime is seen. Such a study may be operationalized in a real life study, where exposure times to medium context and ad are not forced. Hence, a clickable version of the experiment is recommended to find robustness for our results, although possible confounding effects must be taken care of. Further research could also examine the moderating role of context liking and context-evoked arousal, in websites as well as in other media (e.g., television).

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When Advertising Integration with Media Content Fails and Succeeds
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ABSTRACT
Consumers are exposed on a daily basis to more and more advertising. A key strategy that some advertisers have embraced in the face of this increasing level of media clutter is to integrate their advertising with media content. In Study 1, we show that if the viewer is highly engaged by the content and transported into the world of the program, then an integrated ad can be more intrusive to consumers’ transportation experience. In such cases, advertising effectiveness is reduced when consumers are more transported into the media content. However, Study 2 shows that if the advertising does not intrude on the transportation experience, an integrated ad could benefit from having similar themes as the media contents. Therefore, a high level of media transportation leads to increased advertising effectiveness.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This paper examines the social and business benefits of a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative and explicates the link between the social and business benefits. Social benefits refer to the impact of a CSR initiative on society, most notably on the intended beneficiaries of the initiative. The business benefits include both transactional outcomes such as purchase, and relational outcomes such as consumer advocacy behaviors toward the company/brand (e.g., word-of-mouth). We posit that trust, the key determinant of relational commitment (Garbarino and Johnson 1999; Ganesan 1994), is the mediating variable linking the social and business benefits.

We define trust as the perceived credibility and benevolence of a company (cf. Doney and Cannon 1997; Ganesan 1994). By making a difference to the social cause (i.e., generating social benefits), a CSR initiative could build consumer trust as it signals that the company is serious about bettering social welfare (the benevolence dimension of trust) and is competent in effecting positive social change (the credibility dimension of trust). Greater trust then leads to consumer loyalty and greater support for the company, as indicated by product purchase and consumer advocacy behaviors.

Persuasion knowledge model (Friestad and Wright 1994) suggests that consumers will naturally make attributions about the motives underlying a CSR initiative. Drawing upon literature on interpersonal trust (McAllister 1995; Rempel, Holmes and Zanna 1985), we posit that only intrinsic motives (i.e., a genuine concern for social welfare) are diagnostic of the company’s trustworthiness and therefore are likely to mediate the relationship between perceived social benefits and trust. Extrinsic motives (i.e., a desire to increase sales, to improve reputation, etc.) are unlikely to play a role in cultivating trust.

We use a quasi-experiment involving a real-world CSR initiative to test our hypotheses. Our empirical context is the Crest Healthy Smiles 2010 program, which is sponsored by Crest to address disparity in oral health by providing education, tools and access to dental care services to children in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods across the country. A key component of this initiative is the “Cavity Free Zones program”, in which Crest partnered with a national non-profit organization, Boys and Girls Club of America (BGCA), to teach dental health as well as provide dental care tools to underprivileged children. Our treatment group consists of Hispanic parents whose children have participated in the “Cavity Free Zones program”, and therefore have benefited from the initiative. The control group consists of Hispanic families who have not participated in the program, but have similar demographic characteristics and are selected from the same neighborhoods (i.e., as indicated by zip codes) as the treatment group. Difficulties in contacting members of the treatment group via BGCA organization resulted in a lower than desired sample size, a total of 53 complete surveys, as compared to 305 respondents in the control group. In the survey, we used several methods to reduce demand effects and the social desirability bias, such as putting questions about the Crest Health Smiles program at the very end, and when asking questions about Crest, we ask the same questions about Colgate so as to conceal our research purpose. Prior to conducting the survey, we did several focus groups with both the treatment group and the control group to get a richer understanding of the social initiative and to yield measurement items for our constructs.

Findings from the quasi-experiment provide support for most of our hypotheses. ANOVA analysis with group as the independent variable shows that, relative to the control group, the respondents in the treatment group reported that their children have greater motivation to engage in dental care behavior, and indeed are likely to floss and visit dentists more frequently. Such difference in health motivation and health behavior is indicative of the social benefits the Crest Health Smiles program has generated. Regarding the business benefits, we find that, relative to the control group, the respondents in the treatment group display greater trust in the sponsoring brand Crest, are more likely to purchase Crest products, and express greater intention to engage in relational behaviors toward Crest. Further, mediational analysis indicates that, as we expected, trust mediates the relationship between participation in the initiative and brand behaviors. To examine the dynamics of trust, we analyzed the data of the treatment group only. Consistent with our expectation, perceived social benefits of the CSR initiative are positively related to trust in the sponsoring brand Crest. In addition, intrinsic attributions mediate the link between perceived social benefits and brand trust, whereas extrinsic attributions are not related to either perceived social benefits or brand trust.

This research provides important insights into the phenomena of corporate social initiatives. It highlights the role of social benefits as a key antecedent to business benefits of a CSR initiative, showing social and business interests can be complementary. It provides a process explanation of how CSR initiatives generate business benefits: CSR initiatives yield business benefits via cultivating consumer trust, increasing consumer purchase and advocacy behaviors and thus improving the long-term business prospects of the sponsoring company/brand.

REFERENCES


The Effects of Different Category Context on Target Brand Evaluations
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Contrary to previous studies of contextual priming effects, which focus on the effects of priming same category exemplars or traits, the current study examines how the evaluation of a target brand is affected when the context is a brand from a category other than the one in which the target holds membership.

Only a few studies have investigated the effects of priming other category products on target evaluation. The predominant finding is an assimilation effect (e.g. Stapel et al. 1998; Raghunathan and Irwin 2001). However, Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1993) found a contrast effect when resource allocation was substantial. These observations raise the question of when a contextual prime from a different category will prompt assimilation and when it will stimulate contrast.

In understanding how other category products affect the evaluation of a target product, we posit that consumers evaluate a target product in a two-stage process: interpretation and judgment. At the interpretation stage, consumers first attempt to form a cognitive representation of ambiguous target information. If the information associated with another category product is accessible at this time, consumers are more likely to interpret the ambiguous target information as consistent with the context. This process will result in an assimilation effect. Assimilation is not the only possible effect of context that might occur during encoding. Making the context highly accessible may prompt consumers to recognize that the context influenced their representation of the target, and thus prompt them to correct for this bias. The process of correcting for the effect of context may result in a contrast effect if individuals overcorrect for the bias.

The judgment process is defined as locating the value of a stimulus along a specified dimension. To locate the value of the target interpreted at interpretation stage, it has to be compared to some referent or standard. If context information is used as a comparison standard at the judgment stage, the evaluation of the target is likely to be contrasted away from the context because the target and context are members of different categories.

Three experiments provide empirical support for the hypothesis. Experiment 1 investigates the moderating role of expertise on the impact of a contextual prime from a different category on target evaluations. We anticipated that experts would use a contextual prime when interpreting the target stimulus and exhibit an assimilation effect. Novices were expected use a contextual prime as a comparison standard that is manifested in a contrast effect. The results were consistent with this hypothesis. Novices exhibited a contrast effect whereas experts exhibited an assimilation effect when a different category context was primed.

In Experiments 2, the effects of increasing the accessibilities of the benefits associated with the prime on target evaluations were investigated. The notion is that increasing the accessibilities of the benefits will have different effects on novices and experts. We expected novices to include the benefits activated by the context prime when the benefits are highly accessible. On the other hand, experts were expected to correct their initial judgments because highly accessible benefits are likely to alert them of a biasing influence of the prime. The accessibility of benefits associated with the prime was manipulated by asking participants to write an appropriate word that best described the brand that was presented in the context. The results in the low accessibility condition replicated our previous findings. Consistent with our previous findings, experts exhibited assimilation and novices exhibited contrast. Different outcomes emerged when the benefits implied by prime were made accessible. Here, novices exhibited assimilation. They responded in the same manner as experts did in the control condition. On the other hand, increased accessibility of information related to the prime alerted experts to correct their initial judgments. In the process they overcorrected and thus exhibited a correction contrast.

Experiment 3 shows that even when the contextual prime is made highly accessible, reducing the resources available for the processing task results in a comparison contrast for novices and an assimilation effect for experts. To examine this possibility, respondents were asked to engage in a secondary task while evaluating the target product.

These findings have important implications for contextual priming literature. They suggest that contexts from other categories can affect a target evaluation and that the specific context effect found is influenced by the respondent’s knowledge of the target category and the accessibility of the contextual prime. The data also provide a means of distinguishing comparison and correction contrast by manipulating availability of cognitive resources. In so doing, the research questions whether factors such as the type of contextual prime (exemplar vs. trait) and the extremity of the prime are uniquely related to specific contrast effects, as has been suggested in the literature (Moskowitz and Skurnik 1999).

REFERENCES
SESSION OVERVIEW

Generally speaking, the longer a gambler plays in a casino, the more likely that gambler will lose. What motivates consumers to gamble in casinos? How and why do gamers play the games that they do? What is likely to trigger their urge to gamble? What role does the casino marketer play in gambling consumption? What aspects of the casino servicescape contribute to problem-gambling behavior?

These are important questions, given the massive increase in commercial gambling in North America. In 2003, there were 443 commercial casinos in the United States (not including racetrack casinos, or ‘racinos’). From 1993 to 2003, U.S. consumer spending in commercial casinos rose from $11 billion to $27 billion. This means that in the U.S., consumers spend more in casinos than they spend on movies or amusement parks (American Gaming Association 2004). In terms of visits to casinos, about 53 million Americans visited a commercial casino in 2004, and the average number of trips to a casino, for those who have been, is almost 6 trips per year (American Gaming Association 2004). This means that Americans now move more visits to casinos than they do to major league baseball games. Although actual numbers in Canada are smaller (there are 60 government run casinos in Canada), the proportional increase in casino gambling is about the same. This seems particularly striking, as casino gambling basically began in Canada about 1993, yet casino revenues climbed to CDN$4 billion by 2003 (Statistics Canada 2004).

There is a long history of research into gambling, across many disciplines. Historically, researchers focused on the pernicious effects of gambling, particular on the lower classes (see, for example, Veblen, 1899). Studying the underlying motives for gambling has also been popular across many social science disciplines: sociology (Bloch 1951; Fisher 1993; Frey 1984; Goffman 1967; Martinez 1983; Zola 1963), psychoanalytic theory (Bergler 1957; Fuller 1974), psychology (Custer 1982; Kysuszyn 1984; Montgomery and Kreitzer 1968; Moody 1992; Skinner 1953; Walker 1992), and the interdisciplinary study of play and leisure (Brenner and Brenner 1990; Caillios 1979; Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Herman 1967, 1976; Huizinga 1955; Smith and Abt 1984). As Cotte (1997) points out, the variously studied motives for gambling can be categorized into three general groups: economic (e.g., gambling as rational utility-seeking), symbolic (e.g., gambling as risk-taking, gambling as symbolic control, gambling as love), and hedonic (e.g., self-esteem enhancement, pure pleasure-seeking and play). What is still missing, however, is study on gambling as consumption (one exception is Loroz 2004). That is, gambling is more than a leisure behavior. It is a consumption site, albeit a unique one, and a place to explore consumer identity negotiation and the role of the market system (and marketers) in consumer behavior, at both more meso and individual levels. In short, casino gambling offers a fruitful opportunity to study consumer culture and its societal implications, making a contribution to consumer culture theory (CCT) (Arnould and Thompson 2005).

This session brings together three sets of researchers who have investigated the topic of casino gambling from a variety of different perspectives, and with diverse methods. The first presenters take a public policy perspective, demonstrating the impact of casino design on resultant gambling behavior. From a different methodological perspective than traditional CCT projects, these researchers are nonetheless focused on how consumers interpret the casino servicescape, and the possibly pathological outcome of a failure to deal well with the marketer-designed aspects of the casino environment. The second group of researchers takes a more managerial perspective, examining the meanings of casino gambling loyalty programs to consumers. The final presentation does not directly address societal implications, or managerial implications, but is focused on uncovering the identity projects gambling consumers are engaged in as they integrate regular gambling into their day-to-day lives.

In the first presentation, Finlay et al. examine the effects of varying environmental elements in casino design on the resultant emotional experiences of both problem and non-problem gamblers. The effects of casino lighting and color scheme were tested in two very different styles of casino theme: the playground design and the gaming design. They discuss the important implications for both casino design and treatment programs for problem gamblers. Their study adds to our understanding of the impact of the casino servicescape on dark-side consumption behavior.

From a more managerial perspective, Hendler and Braun-LaTour study whether casino loyalty programs create emotional commitment to a casino resort, or simply generate a feeling of entitlement to discounts and benefits. Casino slot clubs are the entities in the casinos that operationalize the collection of customer data and the delivery of loyalty program benefits. Seeking to better understand the impact of slot clubs on casino loyalty, these researchers investigate the deep meanings and emotions associated with such clubs. Their work is at the intersection of marketer-intended meanings, and the understood and enacted meaning of the consumer (Cotte and Ligas 1998). Within a theoretical framework of loyalty behavior, their work could help casinos—and perhaps other industries—to foster commitment to a brand or product, and perhaps avoid costly efforts that do not translate into attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

Finally, Braun-LaTour and Cotte present ZMET-style data on regular, local, casino gamblers in Las Vegas, Nevada. They examine three types of gamers (slots vs. table gamers vs. internet gamers). They suggest that regular casino gamers are a unique consumption subculture. With the increasing access and prevalence of casino gambling, both on-line and live, a better understanding of this subculture is important. Consumer research can benefit from a focus in this area because the nature of the marketer/casino and consumer exchange relationship is adversarial. Consumers know that casinos seek to gain their money, and consumers seek to beat the marketer; they consume to win. Consumption here is not as straightforward as exchanging money for experience (as in moviegoing). The actual co-creation of the experience involves an explicit recognition that each party seeks to gain at the expense of the other. So studying the creation of consumer identity in this consumption domain can unearth unusual insights not possible in other sites.

The session also includes a discussion leader (David Sprott) with expertise in public policy and gambling. His comments concerning the potential societal implications of casino gambling should add a provocative conclusion to an engaging discussion. The proposed session should be quite attractive to at least four groups of ACR researchers: (1) those interested in transformative consumer research, particularly concerning “dark-side” behaviors, (2) those...
researchers who work in the area of consumer motivation and goals, (3) researchers interested in aspects of service provider loyalty, and (4) CCT researchers interested in a multi-method, multi-perspective approach to this unique consumption practice. We anticipate a very fruitful interchange of ideas among the various authors who will be presenting the three papers, the discussion leader, and with the audience members as well.

**EXTENDED ABSTRACTS**

"The Effect of Visual Stimuli in Casinos on Emotional Responses and Problem Gambling Behavior"

Karen Finlay, University of Guelph
Vinay Kanetkar, University of Guelph
Jane Londerville, University of Guelph
Harvey H. C. Marmurek, University of Guelph

We present the results of an experiment examining whether manipulations of environmental variables within gaming venues elicit emotions that influence problem gambling behaviour. We introduced the manipulations within two contrasting macro casino designs. The Kranes (1995) “playground” design is intended to be inviting and energizing, properties induced by thematic combinations of sunlight, warm colors, accessible green space and moving water. The Friedman (2000) “gaming” design places the gambling machines as the dominant decorative feature in a casino, relegating décor to highlight and enhance the equipment layout.

Within each macro casino design, it is possible to vary specific environmental elements that impact on emotional reactions to the gambling setting. In this study, we varied lighting (flashing versus static) and color scheme (bright versus monotone) that were expected to impact perceived levels of arousal. The index of gambling behavior was the stated intention to gamble beyond planned levels of time and money. It was hypothesized that flashing lights and the use of bright colors would increase arousal and the propensity to gamble irresponsibly in both the playground and gaming designs.

We ran two studies. In the lighting study, each participant viewed two videos of a gambling casino. One video represented a playground design and the other a gaming design (order was counterbalanced across participants). For half of the participants, both videos had static lighting; for the others, both videos had flashing lights. In the color study, each participant also viewed two videos of a gambling casino (playground; gaming). For half of the participants, both videos had bright coloring; for the others, both videos had monotone coloring. Thus, for each study, the design was a 2 x 2 mixed factorial where the between-subjects factor was the treatment (lighting or coloring) and the within-subjects factor was the design (playground and gaming).

Eight videos of a variety of casino settings were edited to 3-minute scenarios representing the following conditions: playground flashing; playground static; gaming flashing; gaming static; playground bright; playground monotone; gaming bright; gaming monotone. The participants were 188 gamblers who received $30. Testing took place in small groups (3-10) in a mini theatre-style setting. Participants were asked to imagine how they would feel in the casino setting they were about to see.

Following each of two videos they viewed, participants completed 7-point scales measuring arousal and intention to gamble irresponsibly. Intention to gamble irresponsibly was gauged using a five-item, 7-point scale anchored by “totally disagree” and “totally agree.” Statements included, “I would have trouble quitting without placing one more bet at this place,” and “I would gamble/play more money than I intended at this place.” Arousal was measured with a 6-item scale (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Respondents were asked to mark the spot on a -3 to +3 scale closer to the adjective anchor that better described their feelings about the casino simulation they had just viewed. Adjective descriptors for arousal included “calm” versus “excited” and “unaroused” versus “aroused.”

The intention to gamble excessively was stronger for the playground design \( (M=3.88) \) than for the gaming design \( (M=3.28) \), \( F (1,90)=14.13, p=.00 \). Gambling intention was marginally higher for flashing lights \( (M=3.61) \) than for static lighting \( (M=3.28) \), \( F (1,90)=2.87, p=.09 \). The interaction between design and lighting treatment was not significant. Arousal was significantly higher for playground than for gaming designs, \( F (1,94)=17.05, p=.00 \), and for flashing lights than for static lighting, \( F (1,94)=6.75, p=.01 \). The interaction of design and lighting approached significance, \( F (1,94)=3.62, p=.06 \). Flashing lights led to a greater increase in arousal for the gaming design (flashing \( M=4.90 \); static \( M=4.16 \)) than for the playground design (flashing \( M=5.19 \); static \( M=4.93 \)).

The interaction of macro design and color significantly affected excessive gambling intent, \( F (1,89)=7.08, p=.01 \). Whereas coloring had no effect on gambling intentions in the playground design (monotone \( M=3.60 \); bright \( M=3.75 \), the intention to gamble excessively was significantly higher for monotone \( M=3.49 \) than for bright \( M=2.82 \) colors in the gaming design.

Our research indicates that the incremental information afforded by flashing lights and bright colors impact emotions and gambling behavior. In both the playground and gaming designs, heightened arousal induced by flashing lights appears to exaggerate poor decisions made by gamblers who may be chasing losses by betting more than planned, spending more money than planned or by engaging in unplanned additional games.

Although coloring did not affect arousal, bright colors reduced negative gambling intentions in a gambling casino. This unexpected outcome may be related to the typical coloring within a casino. For the playground design, a variety of color formats may be typical. For the gaming design, bright coloring may be more common. Monotone coloring in the gaming casino may be incongruent leading to distraction and loss of control. Further research is required to test this hypothesis. At the conference, we will discuss the implications of these effects for public policy.

"An Assessment of the Value of Slot Clubs as Drivers of Casino Loyalty"

Flavia Hendler, University of Nevada–Las Vegas
Kathryn A. Braun-LaTour, University of Nevada–Las Vegas

Previous research has indicated that loyalty programs may not generate attitudinal loyalty or repeat purchases. In fact, some loyalty programs offer financial benefits and complimentary offers that basically translate into price discounts. Within particular markets, firms may be obliged to match benefits offered by its competitors in a form of price war, turning those programs into costly liabilities that do not necessarily strengthen their relationship with customers. A question that arises is whether loyalty programs, as they are currently structured, create emotional commitment to a brand or simply generate a feeling of entitlement to discounts and benefits. Another important question is what, in fact, creates loyalty.

The goal of our research is to better understand the impact of slot clubs on casino loyalty, where loyalty is defined as “a level of commitment to an organization or product that exclude competitors from the consideration set.” Casino slot clubs are the entities in the casinos that operationalize the collection of customer data and the delivery of loyalty program benefits. We investigate the deep meanings and emotions associated with such clubs using qualita-
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Not Leaving Las Vegas: Identity Projects of Local Vegas Gamblers

Kathryn A. Braun-LaTour, University of Nevada–Las Vegas
June Cotte, University of Western Ontario

Traditionally the gambling literature has treated slot machine and table gamers similarly, and on-line gambling has not been investigated at present. Observation shows that these three types of gamblers exert very different behaviors; the slot player tends to be more introspective, focusing on their machine and winnings, whereas the table gamer has to be more social, interacting with the dealer as well as other players. On-line gamblers need not leave their homes, although they enter a simulated casino environment.

But how does one get into the mind of a gambler? Observation does not reveal gamblers’ inner motivations. Focus groups and surveys, while they may try to understand the gambler’s behavior, are subject to all sorts of biases which are likely to skew the results. For instance, a gambler may not consciously know or be able to articulate why they gamble or, in many cases, they may not want to admit why they gamble. For these reasons we allow participants to express themselves through images, the language of the brain, which helps reveal their underlying emotions and motivations.

Using as a template the methodology developed by Gerald Zaltman (ZMET), we ask participants about their thoughts and feelings about gambling, using participant-supplied pictures as visual cues. Using techniques adapted from psychotherapy, cognitive neuroscience, psychology, and sociology, interviews take participants through a series of exercises designed to reveal the fundamental feelings and beliefs that drive their actions.

We completed thirty one-on-one interviews that, on average, lasted about 75 minutes. We asked ten regular slot machine gamblers, ten on-line gamers, and ten table gamers to bring in pictures of what gambling meant to them. The resulting interviews were driven by the pictures, as well as by some structured (primarily projective and sensory-related) questions we developed beforehand. The resulting data was about 900 pages of transcribed interview text and 150 scanned images. We coded the data, both verbal and visual, for important ideas and themes, and constructed maps connecting these ideas to form a comprehensive understanding of gambling and its role in gamblers’ self-identity.

We uncover some intriguing findings about gamblers’ interpretive strategies as they confront the marketplace culture of casino gambling, both live and on-line. In particular, we answer Arnould and Thompson’s (2005) call for more examination of the use of localized cultural capital (gambling expertise) in defining self, and in-group/out-group status. Our results are organized as juxtaposed themes, including: social vs. anti-social; “brain-flushing” escape vs. active mental engagement; things that matter vs. things that don’t; genuine vs. contrived environments; chasing highs vs. avoiding lows; tourists vs. “real” gamblers; winners vs. losers. Our presentation will use the images as well as the text to communicate the nuances and implications of our research.

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SESSION OVERVIEW

By now it is accepted in consumer research that preferences are not innate, but instead are constructed in specific contexts (Bettman, Luce and Payne 1998). This view is amply evidenced in research demonstrating the instantaneous processes of preference construction, such as how people use information contained in a decision context to make choices. What is less understood, however, are preference construction processes that take place over time. That is, instead of making instant choices, people often develop preferences over time. How are preferences developed over time, and what are the characteristics of such processes? This session presents four papers that consider the dynamic course of preferences. Two of the papers—Amir and Levav, and Hoeffler et al.—focus on preference learning and change during the process of making multiple, successive choices and evaluations. The other two papers—Dijksterhuis, and Liu—discuss preference development during extended decision-making occasions.

Amir and Levav study how people develop preferences from making choices. They distinguish between learning of tradeoffs between conflicting attributes and learning a preference within a given context. They find that when people are forced to tradeoff attributes, they are more likely to develop preferences that are stable across contexts. In contrast, when people choose within contexts that avoid tradeoffs, they form a preference for that context only and show less preference stability across different contexts. The latter point suggests that sometimes repeated choices of the same option do not mean that a subjective attribute value has been learned, but that the decision-maker has simply learned that he or she prefers an option within a certain context. Hoeffler et al. investigate the impact of experience with options on preference learning by juxtaposing intensiveness (number of repetitions) and extensiveness (variety of options) in experience with options, and show that extensiveness leads to greater learning and better developed preferences for the products.

The next two projects turn to preference development in extended decision-making episodes. Liu examines the changes in preferences that occur when the consideration of the options is interrupted. Specifically, an interrupting interval causes changes in the processing of the options such that greater attention is given to the desirability rather than feasibility of the options, resulting in preferences drifting towards attractive but less feasible options such as high-risk high-return, and high-quality high-price options. Dijksterhuis on the other hand notes that over time, people may have the opportunity to process options offline, i.e., through non-conscious processes. The author contrasts conscious contemplation and non-conscious processing, and demonstrate periods of non-conscious processing can result in preferences for objectively superior options, and greater satisfaction over time.

The four projects together seek to present new perspectives on consumer preferences by focusing on the dynamic dimension of preference formation and change.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Choice Construction versus Preference Construction: The Instability of Preferences Learned in Context”
On Amir, University of California San Diego
Jonathan Levav, Columbia University

A relatively common interpretation of preference stability is that it reflects a condition in which the decision-maker has learned the value he or she places on each attribute. A consumer with stable preferences is, by this view, less likely to fall “prey” to the influence of contextual variables on choice. In this paper we argue that preference stability does not necessarily reflect a process of learning tradeoffs or some understanding of one’s subjective value for attributes. Instead, we suggest that when preferences are learned in context, e.g., when repeated choices are made from a set that includes an asymmetrically dominated (decoy) option, people simply learn their preference for generic properties of a choice set, rather than their preferences about the attributes themselves. We call this choice construction. In contrast, if a person is asked to make repeated choices between two options, he or she will be forced to make a tradeoff between one attribute and the other. This process will induce preference construction, and should yield preferences that are stable across contexts.

Our experiments included two phases for all participants. In the first phase, the “tradeoff learning task,” participants made six successive choices between equally priced options that varied only on two attributes; every choice required a tradeoff between these attributes. Each successive set of options became increasingly stronger along one attribute rather than the other, thus requiring increasingly difficult tradeoffs.

Experiment 1’s tradeoff learning task was structured in one of three ways. In the control (Binary Choice) condition participants made repeated choices between two options. In the Attraction condition participants made repeated choices between the same two options plus a third, asymmetrically dominated decoy option. In the Compromise condition the third option included an attribute level combination that placed it exactly between the attribute level combinations of the binary set. The objective of the Attraction and Compromise conditions was to create a choice situation in which participants would be more likely to use contextual cues to make their decision, rather than having to learn their subjective attribute importance weights.

The learning task was followed by a filler task and then a “target choice phase.” The target choice in all experiments presented participants with three options in an attraction effect setup. The choice set included options representing a trade-off more extreme than the last decision of the learning phase. In order to test for preference stability, the decoy was set to be asymmetrically dominated by the option at the opposite extreme from the participant’s last selection in the learning phase (i.e., their sixth decision). We assumed that this last selection reflected a strong preference for one attribute over the other. Our key dependent variable was whether participants were “tempted” by the decoy, and thus “switched” away from their previously preferred attribute combination. We expected that participants in the Attraction and Compromise conditions would switch more than their control condition counterparts.
because the trinary choice sets would enable them to develop a preference for contextual cues rather than engage in the difficult act of trading-off one attribute for another. We also asked participants to indicate how strongly they preferred their chosen (target) option on a one to nine scale. We expected strength of preference to be greater for participants in the control condition because their preferences should be relatively more stable than experimental condition participants.

Our predicted data pattern emerged as expected. The proportion of participants who were “lured” by the decoy in the final, target choice was significantly lower in the control condition (31.2% switched) than either the Attraction (47.3%) or Compromise (59.3%) conditions. Additionally, mean preference strength was greater for non-switchers than switchers. This pattern becomes more extreme when we differentiate those participants who fell prey to the context from those who did not.

In our second experiment we confirm our interpretation that participants in our binary conditions learned trade-off values but that trinary condition participants did not. In this experiment we replicate the Binary Choice and Attraction condition procedures from Experiment 1, but also add a pair of similar conditions where we manipulate the difficult of learning trade-offs in the experiment’s learning phase by presenting participants ranges of attribute values, rather than a precise number (e.g., “restaurant food quality: 3-3.5 stars”). We find that in both range conditions—Binary and Attraction—participants are more likely to be tempted by the decoy in the target choice. That is, when attributes are described in ranges, the Binary condition participants behave like those in the trinary condition. We argue that this is because the range manipulation made attribute trade-off learning more difficult, which ultimately led to less stable preferences.

In our third experiment we demonstrate that when participants are prodded to pay special attention to the tradeoffs inherent in their choices, they produce more stable preferences even when the choices are made in (a trinary choice) context. We replicate our procedure and basic result from the Binary and Attraction conditions of experiments 1 and 2, but find relatively high and equal preference stability irrespective of the presence of a contextual cue in the choice set when we give the simple instruction to pay special attention to the tradeoffs among the attributes. Thus, in study 1 we present the finding that preferences are less stable when learning in context. In study 2 we are able to exacerbate this difference, and in study 3 we are able to attenuate the difference. Throughout we replicate the basic difference between choice and preference construction that we find initially in study 1.

In summary, we present evidence distinguishing preference construction from choice construction. This perspective offers a new approach to understanding the persistence of context effects. Finally, we propose a more nuanced way to think about what choices imply about underlying preferences.

“Preference Exploration and Learning: The Role of Intensiveness and Extensiveness of Experience”
Steve Hoeffler, University of North Carolina
Dan Ariely, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Pat West, Ohio State University
Rod Duclos, University of North Carolina

“Not alone age matures one, but breadth of experience and depth of reflection.” —Ross (1948, p. 214)

People’s preferences change dramatically over time. In most cases, the changes are too slow to draw attention, but when people look back at their past preferences, they sometimes find it shocking to realize how much they have changed. These changes occur in most consumption domains. In addition, they include aspects for which people both increased and decreased their liking over time. A few examples of such changes are realizing that grilled cheese sandwiches are no longer the culinary ideal, developing a taste for beer, and looking forward to visiting a modern art museum. Yet knowing that preferences change is different from understanding how and why they change.

Prior research has focused on two broad classes of factors that exert influence on preference learning. One class of factors (e.g., biology and exposure) has a direct influence, whereby preferences respond to lower-order forces such as biological adaptation and sensory feedback. The second class of factors (e.g., informational goals and social learning) has an indirect influence, whereby preferences are subject to higher-order forces such as cognitive representations of (un)desirable end states. Both classes are important because they relate to the way a person learns about and constructs preferences. Despite the wide range of literature covered, however, we found a dearth of research on the role of breadth of experience in the preference formation process. Thus, we attempt to remedy this shortcoming by refining/partitioning the “experience” construct by introducing two new subconstructs: intensiveness and extensiveness of experience.

We succinctly define intensiveness of experience as the amount or frequency with which a person has been exposed to a product category. Alternatively, we define extensiveness of experience as the breadth or the variety of exposure a person has accumulated in a product environment throughout his or her consumption history. Intensiveness and extensiveness of experience are likely to be positively correlated in the real world, yet they need not accrue simultaneously. As suggested previously, it is possible to develop one aspect of experience (e.g., intensiveness) without necessarily enriching the other (e.g., extensiveness).

In light of this argument, we contend that a person’s preference formation will be influenced by the nature of prior experience. More specifically, the primary goal of this research (studies 1-2) is to examine whether preference learning (as indicated by the ability to identify, predict, and appreciate higher-quality products) is afforded more readily by intensiveness or extensiveness of experience. Our secondary goal is to identify some of the factors and mechanisms impacting extensiveness of experience and preference exploration (studies 3-5).

In study 1, to examine the relationship between experience and preference learning, we surveyed the intensiveness (e.g., number of years drinking beer, and number of beers consumed in a typical week) and extensiveness (e.g., number of brands regularly consumed, number of beer types experienced, and number of brands experienced) of experience of our research participants. Following this initial questionnaire, we tested participants’ knowledge of the category in a series of semantic tasks. From the performance exhibited on these tasks, we inferred the amount of preference learning accrued over time. We find that, while intensiveness of experience could not predict preference learning, extensiveness of experience did. Participants with higher breadth were better able to discriminate quality, knew a greater number of countries legitimately famous for producing high-quality beer, and were better able to estimate the alcohol content of beers.

In study 2, we used similar questions to estimate intensiveness and extensiveness of experience, but adopted a new set of dependent variables. In addition to the semantic measures of preference learning, we used sensory measures (e.g., blind test tastes). Again, we find that high-extensiveness participants were better able to identify and appreciate high-quality products and accurately predict their preferences than low-extensiveness participants. Inten-
siveness of experience, on the other hand, did not confer any benefit. To the extent that preferences are the product of both sensory and semantic knowledge, we infer that extensiveness of experience enhances both understanding of the product category and preference learning.

After identifying the advantages associated with extensiveness of experience, we next examine three mechanisms impacting the decision to experiment with novel alternatives in the real world. We use the term “preference exploration” to describe the very selection of novel options and the corresponding increase in people’s extensiveness of experience. So what are the factors that affect preference exploration?

The first factor we identify is the availability of a quality signal favoring novel options. In study 3, participants who were led to believe that novel juices (e.g., tamarind, guanabana, maracuja, and guava) were more popular in a foreign country were more likely to select those juices for trial. The second factor is the similarity of an advocate of a novel option. In study 4, when a similar model (i.e., a person of same age and gender) promoted the selection of a novel option, participants were more likely to demonstrate a willingness to try the item. The third factor is the favorability of a novel experience. In study 5, participants who had a negative initial experience with a novel juice were more likely to stay with familiar options in subsequent trials.

Far from constraining extensiveness and extensiveness of experience as ends of one continuum, we present these constructs as two correlated, but potentially separable, dimensions along which individual experiences vary. Furthermore, we believe that both constructs can sometimes interact to influence the preference formation process. Finally, inspired by recent research in neuroscience (Munakata and O’Reilly 2003), we conjecture that, to the extent that preferences are the product of both semantic and sensory knowledge, extensiveness can play a preference-solidifying role by strengthening the linkages between the knowledge acquired through sensory exploration and that acquired through semantic exploration.

“The Effect of Decision Interruption and Suspension on Preferences”
Wendy Liu, University of California Los Angeles

Previous research in judgment and decision making has mainly focused on decisions made in one continuous manner—the person is presented with a choice, thinks through it, and selects the course of action. However, in real life, decisions are often interrupted or suspended. For example, a multitasking manager may be juggling several issues on the same work day. Thus when he/she faces a decision problem, he/she may need to attend to other businesses before returning to make the decision. Similarly, a consumer may be considering a purchase, but may sit on the decision for some time while pursuing other things in life.

Do interruptions and suspensions in decision making change people’s preferences? In this research, I focus on the change in information processing due to an interruption or suspension. Specifically, I propose two modes of attribute processing, namely, compulsory processing versus voluntary processing, and argue that when a decision is considered for the first time, the attributes of options are processed under compulsory mode such that they receive attention proportional to their perceived relevance to the decision. However, an interruption stops this processing, and when the decision resumes, the processing of the problem switches from compulsory mode to voluntary mode. Suppose a “visit” to the problem, people (unintentionally) become more focused on aspects of the problem they are more naturally drawn to. In particular, I propose that compared to compulsory processing in which an option’s desirability (benefits, rewards) and feasibility (costs, constraints) are equally relevant, people voluntarily give greater attention to the desirability of options, and less attention to the feasibility of options, resulting in systematic shifts in preferences. I examine this possibility in two decision contexts, namely, risky choice, and price-quality tradeoffs, and show that an interruption or suspension makes people more risk-seeking, and more likely to choose high-price high-quality options.

Study 1 examines the effect of decision suspension on risky choice. Participants were given 6 decisions involving one option with a larger but less probable gain and another with a smaller but more probable (sometimes sure) gain. Consistent with prior research, winning is desirable, while the probability of winning indicates its feasibility (Sagristano, Trope and Liberman 2002). For each decision, half the participants were told that they should first learn about the choice, but not make a decision; instead they would turn to a different task. The interrupting filler task asked the participants to count backwards (e.g., “count backwards by 4 from 92 to 8”), typing down each step to make sure they followed instructions. Upon completion of the filler task, they were shown the risky choice again and asked to make a decision. The other half completed the filler task prior to the risky choice (thus equating any potential “priming” effect of fillers), and then made the choice at once without suspending it. In all 6 decisions, those who suspended their decisions were more likely to choose the risky option; the increases range from 7% to 14%, pooled average=10%, p<.005. Further analysis shows that the total amount of time spent on the decisions did not differ between conditions, and did not account for the effect.

Study 2 extends the result of study 1 on risky choice to unexpected interruptions. Specifically, this computerized study controls the process of reading about the options and deciding, by introducing information about the options gradually. After the last option’s information was presented, the no-interruption subjects spent an average of 8 seconds to come up with a decision. The interruption subjects were interrupted unexpectedly 3 seconds after the last information was presented (and hence have not made up their mind) and were asked to perform a filler task. Again, when they resumed, they were more likely to choose the riskier option (increase=23%, p<.005).

Study 3 conceptually extends the effect of interruption to another domain, namely, price-quality tradeoff. Because high quality is desirable while price serves as a feasibility constraint, interruption shifted preferences towards the high-quality high-price option over the low-quality low-price option (increase=8%, p<.05). Further analysis suggests consistent with the underlying mechanism of voluntary attention to desirability, the effect is stronger for hedonic products (11% increase) than for utilitarian products (4% increase), the later being instrumental to other goals but lack desirability in and of themselves.

In summary, this research examines the effect of decision interruption and suspension on preferences, and demonstrates a shift towards desirable but less feasible options due to a switch from compulsory to voluntary mode of information processing. This research has significant implications for marketers and consumers.

“New Insights on the Benefits of Unconscious Thought”
Ap Dijksterhuis, University of Amsterdam

Common knowledge dictates that conscious deliberation is the best strategy for making choices. Thorough contemplation, it is usually argued, leads to choices that are objectively better. We show that choosers can also engage in unconscious thought: After people have gathered information about various choice alternatives, they leave the development of a preference for one of the alternatives to the unconscious. In lay terms, people can “sleep on it”. We present
research showing that unconscious thought is often superior to conscious thought. In addition, we present research that sheds more light on how unconscious thought works, and we present some preliminary evidence about the moderating role of expertise in the fruitfulness of unconscious thought.

We base our recent research on the recently posited Unconscious Thought Theory (UTT; Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, in press). This theory postulates various characteristics about conscious thought and about unconscious thought. We argued that conscious thought is essentially very precise, but also suffers from low capacity. Unconscious thought, on the other hand, is less precise but also has no (or at least less) capacity issues. This led us to formulate and test the “deliberation-without-attention” hypothesis about the relation between mode of thought (conscious versus unconscious thought), complexity of choice and quality of choice. We hypothesize that simple decisions are made better after conscious thought, whereas complex decisions are made better after unconscious thought. We indeed found evidence for this, both in the laboratory as well as among actual shoppers (Dijksterhuis, Bos, Nordgren, & van Baaren, 2006).

In our laboratory studies, we presented our participants with information about four choice alternatives (e.g., four different cars) differing in overall attractiveness. These cars were either described by few aspects (4) or by a lot of aspects (12). After participants had read the information, they were either given time to consciously think about the four cars, or they were distracted so they could only engage in unconscious thought. We repeatedly showed that conscious thinkers more often chose the best car than unconscious thinkers when the choice context was simple (i.e., 4 aspects per car), but that unconscious thinkers made a better choice than conscious thinkers under conditions of complex decisions (12 aspects per car). We also have evidence that unconscious thought leads to more post-choice satisfaction among actual shoppers who bought complex products (e.g., furniture) but that conscious thought leads to more satisfaction for simple products (e.g., small appliances).

Recent research also shows that unconscious thought is goal-directed. We only engage in it when we are motivated to do so. In various experiments, we gave people a information about various alternatives, before dividing people into two conditions. In one condition, we distracted people for a few minutes but told them beforehand that they later had to choose between the alternatives. In another condition, we merely distracted people and told them they could forget about the choice alternatives. Only in the first condition we found effects of unconscious thought. That is, only people who knew they would have to make a choice later on made good decisions.

In all experiments that we had done until recently, participants were given all information relevant for making a choice. But what if people do not have this information? Is unconscious thought still helpful? In order to examine this, we looked at the role of expertise. In an 8-week period, participants were asked to predict scores in the Dutch soccer league every week (games are played each weekend). Participants either predicted without hardly any thought at all, or after conscious thought, or after unconscious thought. Participants were furthermore divided into two groups on the basis of their knowledge of soccer: Experts and non-experts. Again, unconscious thinkers made the most accurate predictions, but this was only true for experts. They could recruit relevant knowledge during unconscious thought to arrive at sound predictions. However, as the non-experts showed, unconscious thought is not helpful without having relevant information.

REFERENCES


SESSION OVERVIEW

This session sought to explore the distinction between access and ownership in consumption practices. We brought together three presentations that examined a paradigm shift from ownership to access organized consumer discourses, practices and theory. Within a paradigm of ownership, consumption objects are clearly defined, and the role of the consumer is circumscribed as simultaneous owner and user. Within a paradigm of access, however, property boundaries become blurred, and consumers play a more ambiguous role in constituting the consumption object by using objects that are not owned. As marketing paradigms evolve from a product-based orientation to a service-based orientation, these tensions between ownership and access have become more prominent in the marketplace (Vargo and Lusch 2005). Examining the relationships between access and ownership allows us to (1) explore the relationship between material and immaterial dimensions of consumption, (2) add to our understanding of how cultural values and interpretations are formulated and shared, and (3) document how consumers and producers collectively negotiate social and legal norms of access and ownership.

The applicability of this theoretical distinction was explored in three papers. Markus Giesler and Ashlee Humphreys examined the two conflicting paradigms in two consumption contexts: retail bookselling and music downloading. These two cases allow us the opportunity to theorize the dynamics between ownership and access, and its results at two levels of consumer-producer conflict, one cooperative and the other agonistic.

Clinton Lanier, Hope Schau, and Albert Muniz discussed the distinction’s place in the consumer co-creation process in the case of three fan fictions (Harry Potter, Xena: Warrior Princess, and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers). Although producers legally maintain the rights to the material aspects of mass culture, consumers create and disseminate the immaterial meanings and interpretations of popular culture. Who owns the “meaning” of these co-created texts is hotly contested between fans and producers. Traditional notions of ownership break down as we move from considering value as residing in the product to residing in the experience surrounding the product. The only way for producers to maintain ownership of the experience of the product is to restrict access to the product itself.

Eric Arnould, Carolyn Curasi, and Linda Price explored the interplay between access and ownership in a context in which access is historically privileged over ownership, and likewise takes precedence over ownership in several meaningful ways. In the context of Nebraska Century farms and ranches, access precedes ownership and flows uncontested into ownership. However, ownership must be earned via demonstration of guardianship skills. Ownership is a responsibility that entails considerable lifestyle trade-offs. A priority for agents occupying the guardianship role is securing access to the farm for existing and future generations of potential owners. Loss of the farm, which curtails future access, is a great ill, all guardians seek to avoid. Century farm families employ a variety of strategies to pass their farms forward into the future. A variety of economic and policy factors threaten the access/guardianship model of the Century farm.

Russell Belk then tied together the presented empirical work and drew conclusions using a framework of sharing and owning and contrasted them to previous work on material possessions. All three presentations use the access/ownership distinction to theorize social relations between consumers and producers and between consumers themselves. By convening this session we tried to advance the understanding of these two modes of consumption and their interrelation in the marketplace.

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

“Tensions between Access and Ownership in the Media Marketplace”
Markus Giesler, York University
Ashlee Humphreys, Northwestern University

When and why will a social actor use a framework of access over one of ownership? To answer this question, we examine ownership/access dynamics in the context of media consumption and production. Media products present us with a valuable opportunity to study the conflict between access, a viewpoint generally taken by the consumers of media that entails the sharing of goods and services, and ownership, the viewpoint more commonly taken by producers of media that entails placing restrictions on the circulation of goods and services. This paper seeks to organize and explain the tensions that arise between media producers and consumers based on divergent perspectives of the marketplace in two consumption domains, books and music.

Two ethnographic field studies of book and music consumption were undertaken including depth interviews, archival data, and extended experiential participation in a cultural context (Pettingrew 1990; Arnould and Wallendorf 1994; Stewart 1998). In the case of the bookselling industry, the transition from ownership to access, while on-going, has been relatively smooth and takes place through a process of continual gifting between company and consumer. In the case of the music industry, the transition from ownership has been contentious, heavily debated in popular and industry circles, and has taken the form of a social drama (Turner 1969).

In the case of bookselling, consumers have the option to read ‘access’ titles in the store rather than to buy them outright. They view this access as a free service offered by the bookstore and use the service to read things they would not otherwise buy. Book producers, on the other hand, are structurally oriented toward selling media in material form. While they may offer free access to materials, they do so in order to entice consumers to buy and ‘own’ the book. The tension between access and ownership plays out as consumers try to maximize ‘access’ while producers try to place barriers on access in order to promote ownership.

In the case of music, downloaders, who are access-oriented, and music producers, who are ownership-oriented, are drawn into dramatic presentation efforts to legitimate their own cultural standpoint (Goffman 1959; Turner 1969). Members of each dramatic stakeholder group exert a moral demand upon their rivals and cultural bystanders to accept the cultural standpoint encoded in their dramatic performances as the most desirable, proper, or appropriate. Through their dramatic performances, consumers and producers invest themselves and others into a particular music marketplace ideology, legitimate their divergent cultural standpoint on music access and ownership, and reinforce their own sources of cultural identity and power.

In summary, this presentation contributes to our understanding of the access/ownership distinction in marketing in three
“Write and Wrong: Ownership, Access and Value In Consumer Co-Created Online Fan Fiction”

Clinton D. Lanier, Jr., University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Hope Jensen Schau, The University of Arizona
Albert M. Muñiz, Jr., DePaul University

This presentation specifically addresses issues of ownership and access in relation to fan community appropriation and alteration of media-based products through the writing of fan fiction (Bond and Michelson 2003; Caudill 2003). As marketing continues to evolve from a goods-centric to a service- and experience-centric dominant logic (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004, Vargo and Lusch 2004), the role of consumer involvement in the value and meaning creation process takes on greater importance. This active participation by the consumer exposes many of the limitations of our traditional understanding of property rights in marketing. It also raises many questions and concerns about the nature of products, consumer engagement, and the boundaries of consumer participation as they relate to access and ownership.

Copyrights protect intellectual property and lead to a legally legitimate and authenticated genealogy, but what happens when the protected property is subject to “textual poaching,” or the process in which people write around and through the “meta-text” of the protected property to meet their unique desires (Jenkins 1992)? The most common form of textual poaching by consumers is the writing of fan fiction. Because fans write stories that are based both on the primary text and the consumers’ imagination, we consider the writing of fan fiction as a form of active co-creation analogous to Vargo and Lusch’s (2004) new paradigm of marketing where consumers create both value and meaning, and are considered inextricable from the firm’s offering. Combining aspects of both the producers and consumers, the writing of fan fiction is considered a co-creation phenomenon in which consumers use the focal texts of mass culture as “cultural resources” to co-create the cultural meanings of popular culture (Fiske 1989). We interrogate the implicit assumption in this consumer orientation towards mass and popular culture, asserting that popular culture cannot be unilaterally produced or owned. We posit that media producers manufacture mass commodities (e.g., television programs, movies, music, fiction) and consumers turn them into popular culture through a co-creative process of access, interpretation, and identity negotiation (individual and collective).

In order to explore issues of ownership and access associated with the phenomenon of fan co-creation of media-based products, we examine three organically formed fan communities (Harry Potter, Xena: Warrior Princess, and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers) and their interaction with three different types of media “texts” (i.e., novels, television shows, and music). We monitor ten online forums that contain fan fiction in a manner analogous to naturalistic observation: four devoted to Harry Potter fan fiction, four centered on Xena: Warrior Princess, and two related (directly and indirectly) to Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. We analyze the content of the fan fiction on each site, the manner in which it is disseminated, and discussions surrounding its interpretation and meanings to the fan communities and their various factions.

Through examination of these three fan communities, we find that fans engage in co-creation of meaning and value through the writing of fan fiction that involves the focal texts of the community. We find that this access-oriented form of co-creation is a transformative process that converts the commodities of mass culture into meta-texts of popular culture. That is, although producers legally maintain the rights to the “material” aspects of mass culture, consumers co-create and disseminate the “immaterial” meanings and interpretations of popular culture. Who owns the “meaning” of these co-created texts is hotly contested between fans and producers. We also find that the success of fan co-creation is based on the richness of the focal text, what is left unwritten in the focal text, and the degree to which the focal text can be appropriated and reconstructed by the consumer. Harry Potter, Xena and Tom Petty fan fiction writers all adore the focal texts, are intrigued by what is not contained in these texts, and engage in poaching and refashioning these texts to create broader meanings that meet their individual needs and the needs of the fan community. We also find that the writing of fan fiction allows consumers to mitigate the cultural tensions between mass culture and popular culture. Although the products of mass culture are often described as the primary hegemonic tool of capitalist society to oppress and pacify the masses (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979), this co-creative process allows consumers to alleviate their feelings of being exploited and alienated by actively engaging these “texts” to produce the meanings of popular culture. Interestingly, although consumers are able to carve out a separate cultural space (i.e., popular culture) in which to create their own symbolic meanings and build their own communities, they replace one form of tension (mass culture vs. popular culture) for another (the tensions that exist between equally adoring fans with disparate reads of the focal storyline). In a sense, after transcending the issue of ownership, consumers wage their own internal battles concerning access and the degree of transformation of the focal text. We posit that the latter tension is preferable to consumers because it is a byproduct of the co-creation process and part of the tensions that consumers actively employ between individual and collective identities (Arnould and Price 2000; Schau and Muniz 2002).

In addition, these communities also face anxieties as some producers try to wrest control of the focal text away from highly involved fan consumers. Some producers of mediated-texts (e.g., Anne Rice) attempt to strictly control both the material and immaterial aspects of the focal text. This typically does not stop the fan community from co-creating their own texts and meanings, but usually forces them underground. Other producers attempt to put boundaries on how far the characters, meanings, etc. of their texts can be extended (e.g., many producers forbid the creation of sexually explicit stories based on their characters). A few producers actually invite consumers to suggest ways to extend the meaning of the focal text in upcoming productions. Since there are obvious advantages to producers from encouraging consumers to co-create with their products (e.g., the transformation of products from mass to popular culture), the issue of how much access and control to provide to consumers will need to be carefully considered.

We contribute to the existing literature by arguing that traditional notions of ownership break down as we move from considering value as residing in the product to residing in the experience and meaning surrounding the product. The only way for producers to maintain ownership of the “immaterial” aspects of the product is to restrict access to the product itself. Obviously, this defeats the purpose of any market offering and is almost impossible to control.
Likewise, although Holt (2004) asserts that it is the cohesive myth that binds people to a community, we find that it is precisely what is left unwritten in the focal text that inspires fans to actively engage in co-creation and form fan communities. Lastly, although the co-creation literature views this process as between producers and consumers (or consumption communities), it does not really address how co-creation goes on between consumers. Members of these fan communities not only engage the focal text (i.e., meaning creation and interpretation), but also co-create texts with other consumers (i.e., meaning development). This process generates the “meta-text,” which in turn provides consumers with more “cultural resources” to continue their creative endeavors.

“Guardianship and Access on Nebraska Century Farms”

Eric Arnould, University of Arizona
Carolyn Curasi, Georgia State University
Linda Price, University of Arizona

Nebraska “Century Farm” families have owned a farm or ranch for at least one hundred years. Perhaps paradoxically, our research with these families extends our understanding of a paradigm of object relationships highlighting access, where property is in some sense shared, and the agents involved have complex roles in constituting consumption objects imbued with relational symbolism within kinship groups (Curasi, Price and Arnould 2004; McGraw, Tetlock and Kristel 2003). Our research exposes cultural tensions agents experience between guardianship of something inalienable and loss through alienation, as well as the way these tensions shape their “curatorial” consumption (McCracken 1988). Access to and transfer of Century farms illustrate the interplay between alienability and inalienability across generations of farm families. Our paper exposes a variety of tactics for establishing and maintaining guardianship of the farm as site of production and consumption.

The Aksarben Foundation recognizes over 5000 Century Farms in Nebraska. Given the history of settlement, this often means a single family has held title to these farms since the original homesteading in the 1870s and 1880s, which was itself an access gaining process. In other words, Century farms have been transferred between four and six generations of farm family members. We conducted long interviews with over 30 families and participant observation with two of them to investigate contemporary management practices, curatorial consumption and family farm culture.

For individual agents, access to the farm precedes ownership and typically is mediated by kinship, that is, nuclear or extended family membership. It is enacted over time through expressions of interest that senior guardians recognize in more junior kinsfolk, and through their investment of productive labor in farming operations. Access may lead to increasing levels of agent’s engagement or desire for ownership/guardianship. Engagement is effortful. It is expressed through obtaining educational qualifications. It is further expressed through farmers’ commitment to what they term stewardship, care of the land and steps taken to improve it, such as sustainable management practices with a view to preserving access for future generations. In some cases, rescuing a failing family member’s farm operation may entitle one to greater say in the eventual disposition of the heritage farm removed from risk. Heirs are not simply designated, but become heirs through long-term demonstration of effort, worth, and ability.

Guardianship entails lifestyle commitments involving trade-offs between investments in the farm and additional land (rent and purchase) and consumption attractions available to city dwellers such as vacations, nice clothing, and the like (Machum 2005). Those who enjoy current guardianship/ownership make choices to have access to the farm and the way of life it entails instead of something else (due to time, money, etc). A jack of all trades’ ethos with regard to production, and an attitude disparaging of farmers who engage in conspicuous consumption of new agricultural equipment or materialistic lifestyles was common among Century farms owners/guardians.

In this context, access has preeminence over ownership. As a necessary precursor to guardianship/ownership, access flows naturally into guardianship. Absentee owners, i.e., those without day-to-day access, even cash renters are suspect, even resented. This may be because absenteeism and alienated relationships to the land threaten the access-guardianship pathway. Access to the farm induces positive identity claims and symbolism that are shared with younger family members. Through the length of time they’re on their land, many Century farm families feel they have earned a type of distinction that resonates with the concept of ‘patina’ associated with inherited family possessions before the industrial revolution. Many informants seem to feel that Century Farm families have earned a level of distinction (good character, dependability, strong work ethic, faith, etc.) due in part to the longevity of their guardianship, and that these distinctions are lost when access is lost, but may be regained if access is renewed.

Guardians go to some lengths to preserve access for themselves and future generations (Coyne 2005). Developing niche markets and blending farm and off-farm income sources are tactics some employ (Edgcomb and Thetford 2004). A legacy of cautious innovation is common among these families. Nevertheless, market pressures lead some families to expand the scale of farmland and farm operations at the expense of other harder-pressed farm families. Guardians that are unable to actively farm the land due to financial reversals or advancing age may rent their farm to others family members preferentially but not necessarily, but resist the temptation to sell it out of the family. In these cases, they trade off their own access to the land against the responsibility to act as guardians for future generations. They express the hope that some family member will be able and willing to take over access and guardianship of the farm. Guardians also gift access of the farm to family members who have migrated to town or to other states, and encourage members of the migrants’ families to return for the agricultural summer season or important family holidays. In this way, ownership is symbolically shared and future guardians are sometimes even recruited. Those who see an off-farm future ahead express regret and misgivings.

Century farm families engage in creative strategies to retain family farms within the family and across generations. Farm transfer practices are quite complex from family to family. Engagement is expressed in an array of everyday practices such as ongoing labor commitments in the absence of ownership guarantees. This behavior is characteristic of younger family members who may hope to assume guardianship of the farm at some future point. Living trusts, intergenerational gifting, intergenerational installment purchase, investments of labor and even capital investments by younger family members in the farm to which they do not have title, are among the tactics employed to transfer guardianship between generations of farm families. Older guardians may signal progressive transfers and their change in status by moving from the main house to a secondary home either built on the property or at its margin, or in some cases in nearby small towns. Overall, progressive intergenerational transfer of limited rights characterizes these practices.

We found many cases where the burden of guardianship (Curasi, Price and Arnould 2004) had become great; farming is just “no fun” anymore, and selling out appears to be the only option.
Still, many informants indicate that an important goal is to pass the farm forward into the future, and they desire at all costs to avoid being the one who “lost the farm.” These behaviors resonate with those of the guardians of inalienable wealth in other contexts (Curasi, Price and Arnould 2004). In other words, curatorial behavior is a key factor distinguishing the behavioral models of family and corporate farming in the minds of our informants.

Today, working century farm families operate within a complex and highly competitive market economy that imposes a host of threats to the guardianship/ownership model (Hassebrook 1999; Salamon and Toratore 1994). But family farms persist, and Nebraska Century farmers recognize significant distinctions between the logic of family farm operations and those of corporate farms.

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SESSION OVERVIEW

Objective. Despite a booming multi-billion dollar global market for counterfeit goods, academic research on the consumption of such goods remains sparse. Who are the consumers of counterfeit goods? Why do they engage in such illegal consumption behaviors, even when they can afford the genuine goods? And how do others view those who engage in such questionable but, at the same time, often de rigueur actions? These are the questions that motivate this session, the objective of which is to further our understanding of this increasingly important but largely overlooked domain of consumption behavior.

Content. This session comprises four papers that together shed light on the individual and product-specific determinants, the motivational underpinnings, and the social and product-specific consequences of counterfeit good consumption. The papers are in advanced stages of completion, each containing empirical findings from one or more studies. The session’s scope is both broad and deep: the papers draw on a diversity of theoretical and empirical perspectives to contribute towards an incipient but persuasive, coherent understanding of how the social environment interacts with individual motivations to influence the consumption of counterfeit goods.

The first two papers examine the nature and extent of social sanction for counterfeit consumption behavior. The Geiger-Oneto paper draws on social identity theory to implicate the counterfeit buyer’s social distance as a determinant of others’ reactions of such a person. While counterfeit buyers are in general evaluated less favorably than buyers of genuine brands, the former are evaluated more favorably when they are members of an in-group than of an out-group. The Chang, Keinan and Lehman paper examines the moderating role of product type on such social perceptions by undertaking a product-specific (i.e., hedonic versus utilitarian) investigation of people’s opinions of counterfeit good buyers on dimensions of morality, likeability and attractiveness as a social other (e.g., friend, fellow shopper, etc.). Interestingly, while buyers of counterfeit utilitarian goods (e.g., software) are viewed as less moral, fair and considerate compared to buyers of the genuine versions, buyers of counterfeit hedonic goods (e.g., fashion) are viewed as more moral, fair and considerate compared to buyers of the real goods.

The final two papers complement the first set by investigating the socially-driven motivations guiding consumers’ pre- and post-counterfeit good purchase psychologies. The McCabe & Rosenbaum paper draws on sociological research on delinquent behavior to examine how consumers rationalize this illegal consumption behavior. Their findings suggest that consumers of counterfeit luxury branded goods not only employ multiple rationalizations to justify their purchases but also do not, paradoxically, desire the real brands any less. The Wilcox, Kim and Sen paper draws on theories of self-monitoring and accompanying attitude functions (social-adjustive vs. value-expressive) to demonstrate a consumer by product interaction in the motivations underlying purchases of counterfeit luxury brands: the purchase decision of low versus high self-monitors is differentially influenced by the extent to which the counterfeit product is identifiable as a desired luxury brand.

Structure. Each presentation will be 20 minutes long. As with most fruitful sessions on emerging topics, this session is likely to generate more questions than answers and the final 10 minutes of the session will be devoted to a discussion of worthy research directions in this domain of consumer behavior.

Audience. The potential audience for this session is quite broad. It will appeal to researchers interested in illegal/aberrant consumption behaviors as well as, more broadly, to those interested in consumer decision making, motivation, and social norms and influences. Equally importantly, the session will be of interest to practitioners and regulators seeking to formulate effective anti-counterfeiting or piracy policies/strategies grounded in consumer insights.

Contributions. The contributions of this session are four-fold. First, it enhances our substantive understanding of the motivational and social underpinnings of an increasingly important domain of consumption behavior. Second, it draws on relevant theories of motivation, perception, preference and groups to advance our theoretical understanding of counterfeit good consumption. Third, this session combines the internal control of experimental work with the external validity of field surveys and ethnography to yield a methodologically robust set of insights into the consumption of counterfeit goods. Finally, this session brings together a diverse set of researchers whose research efforts in the area of counterfeit good consumption complement each other in the articulation of a fruitful research agenda on this important but under-examined consumer behavior topic.

SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY

“Fakin’ It”: Why Do Consumers Buy Counterfeit Goods?

Sankar Sen, Baruch College/CUNY, USA
Cueing Common Ecological Behaviors to Increase Environmental Attitudes and Behavior

Gert Cornelissen, Catholic University Leuven, Belgium
Mario Pandelaere, Catholic University Leuven, Belgium
Luk Warlop, Catholic University Leuven, Belgium
Siegfried, Dewitte, University Leuven, Belgium

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The appeal for social marketing research to serve consumers’ and society’s long term well-being and address sustainable consumption issues has been put forward since the early 70’s (Andreasen 1995; Kotler and Zaltman 1971). The promotion of sustainable consumption behavior has shown to be an arduous task for governments and organization acting as behavioral managers, despite an increased interest of the general public in sustainable development. An often cited reason for this phenomenon is that people associate sustainable behavior with behavioral costs like money, time, effort and inconvenience (Pieters et al. 1998; Thogersen 1994). In the present paper we focus on ecological behavior in specific and propose a technique, which aims to improve consumers’ attitude towards specific environmental acts, and to increase their adoption of environmental behaviors.

Bem’s self-perception theory (1972) proposed that attitudes may be inferred from previous behavior, especially when attitudes are to be constructed on the spot, or when existing attitudes are ambiguous or weak (Holland, Verplanken, and Van Knippenberg 2002). When deriving one’s attitude towards pro-environmental behaviors, an individual can base his or her judgment on the availability of instances of previously performed environmental behaviors in memory (e.g., Tversky & Kahneman’s availability heuristic (1973)). Increasing this perceived availability may thus render people’s attitudes more favorable.

We propose that cueing people with commonly performed environmental behaviors may therefore render their attitude towards ecological behavior more positive. First, showing that they actually do perform environmental acts quite frequently in their daily lives increases the perceived availability of these behaviors. Second, cueing may render behaviors more relevant as a source of information to infer one’s attitudes from. As a matter of fact, people may not perceive certain environmental acts as being informative when deriving their attitudes. This is the case when the behavior is seen as a social norm or when they attribute it to other motives than their green ethics, like financial reasons. This conjecture was supported by a first pre-study (N=32). From a ‘logic of conversation’-perspective, cueing these behaviors as environmental acts will render them relevant as information to derive attitudes from (Grice 1975; Schwarz 1994).

A second pre-study (N=42) confirmed the assumption that the perceived ease with which participants could generate instances of previous environmental acts is correlated with their attitude towards environmental acts. In Study 1 (N=160) we examined the effect of cueing commonly performed environmental behaviors on attitudes. We constructed three sets of behaviors. One set contained environmental behaviors which people usually perform. These were the eight most often mentioned behaviors of this type, by participants in the second pre-study. Similarly, the second set was constructed to contain eight environmental behaviors which people usually do not perform. A control set contained eight behaviors, unrelated to ecology. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups, each of which received one of the three sets of behaviors. They were asked to indicate how frequently they engage in each of them. This way we created an ecologically cued group, a non-ecologically cued group and a control group. The results indicated that the ecologically cued group indeed showed more favorable attitudes towards environmental behavior, perceived themselves more as ecological consumers and indicated a higher feeling or moral obligation to protect the environment than participants in either of the other two groups. Between the non-ecologically cued group and control group, no significant effects were obtained on any of the measures.

In Study 2 (N=66) we verified whether this increase in favorability of people’s attitudes also renders their consumption decisions more ecologically sound. The manipulation used was identical to the one of Study 1. After the cueing manipulation, participants had to make several ecology-related decisions. First, they were asked to imagine being in a shopping environment and had to make purchase decisions. They were presented with ten product pairs: five filler pairs and five critical pairs. In each critical pair, one product was a more environmentally friendly but more expensive alternative of the other. We counted the number of environmentally friendly choices, which was higher for the ecologically cued group. A second task measured environmental conduct in a more subtle way. Participants were asked making notes for a task supposedly investigating the type of information consumers deem most important when reading product claims. We actually measured the efficiency with which participants used scratch paper. Again the ecologically cued group showed to behave in a more environmentally friendly way by using the available scratch paper more efficiently, and writing smaller than both other groups. Finally, to measure behavior in a more involving task, we offered participants to take a notepad home. They had to choose between a notepad containing the less appealing brownish recycled paper and a notepad with normal white paper. A higher percentage of participants in the ecologically cued group (81 %) and a smaller percentage of participants in the non-ecologically cued group (23 %), chose the recycled paper, compared to the control condition (52 %). On both other behavioral measures, these last two groups did not differ.

Our data suggest that drawing attention to the ecological acts people already engage in, improves people’s attitudes towards ecological behaviors, with an analog effect on their behavior.

These results allow us to propose some guidelines for designing effective social marketing efforts for other sustainable behaviors as well.

Traditional campaigns are known to elicit aversive feelings towards the request, by creating guilt and using a paternalistic approach. Our technique approaches people in a more positive way, which is more likely to be accepted by the public. Second, traditional campaigns usually provide an external motivation for behavioral change, asking people to make a personal sacrifice for the benefit of society in general. However, external motivation usually results in reduced performance and reduced persistence of a behavior (Ryan and Deci 2000). To the extent that our cueing approach causes a greener perception of self, this might lead to internally motivated behavior, resulting in better performance and persistence of the promoted behavior.

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Progressing a Taxonomy of Possible Reflexivities: Guidelines for Reflexive Practice in Consumer Research

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Helen Woodruffe-Burton, University of Lancaster and University College of St. Martins, UK

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Reflexivity has been identified in consumer research (Wallendorf and Brucks, 1993, Hirschman 1993, Thompson 2002) and in the wider social sciences (e.g. Wasserfall, 1993, Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, 2003) as a way to address power and control in the research encounter, to attend to the researcher/researched dynamic and to give insightful commentaries into the research process itself. The ‘reflexive turn’ (Weick 1999) has emerged in the social sciences largely as a response to the notion that data collection and analysis is a neutral activity, a technology of knowledge making in which the researcher can take a disinterested, objective position in relation to their research. Reflexivity instead is used to highlight the personal, interpersonal, emotional, institutional, disciplinary and pragmatic influences on the research, as well as the methodological, epistemological and ontological assumptions built in to specific approaches (Mauthner and Doucet 2003). As such, reflexivity has been seen a route to more accountable and responsible research, and as a stimulus to better accounts of the social and cultural world.

Researcher reflexivity has been conceptualised in consumer research discourse as a sub type of introspection. It is argued that there is much to recommend reflexivity as a practice in consumer research as it will ‘improve our understanding of the actual research process’ and act as such to develop consumer research theory (Wallendorf and Brucks 1993:355). Additionally it has been seen as a way to address the power issues in consumer research and specifically the instrumentality of the researcher/respondent relationship. For example, Hirschman (1993:551) advocates a more reflexive approach to research, and argues against the use of detached and ‘objective’ methods in consumer research. She exhorts consumer researchers to ‘choose to abandon any method or practice that is premised on power inequalities between researcher and subject’ she argues that research should be designed which recognises respondents as ‘equal sentient beings’.

Although it is clear that consumer researchers have found the idea of reflexivity attractive and recognised its potentials, there is a need to develop the discourses already apparent in consumer research and formalise the conceptualisation and operation of this research approach. Currently, despite significant discourse around the issue in the wider social sciences there seems to be a lack of discourse around reflexivity in consumer behaviour research and although reflexive practice is evident in some work, the research processes around reflexive research are not articulated clearly, and a plethora of different approaches are evident. The aim of this paper is to stimulate essential new discourse around the practice of reflexivity. In order to do this it is necessary to formalise and structure reflexive practices as a foundation and basis for discussion. This work examines the many different reflexivities which might be enacted within consumer research and their concomitant implications and foundations. To accomplish this it provides a taxonomy of ‘possible reflexivities’ to structure the debate around this element of consumer research and to guide the potentially reflexive consumer researcher. The possible reflexivities which emerge from this study are envisaged as ‘Objectivist Reflexivity’, ‘Experiential Reflexivity’, ‘Perspectival Reflexivity’ and ‘Multiplex Reflexivity’. The possibilities we have identified are distinguished by the dimensions of ontology and power in the research encounter; this position, we believe, reflects closely key issues in contemporary consumer research. In terms of ontology, we reflected upon reflexivity as it has been seen as a route to better knowledge and enhanced theory building through reflection on the process of research. This to us suggested questions and challenges arising pertaining to the ‘reality’ of the research process, not just in terms of what ‘really’ happened, but the models of reality implied in different reflexive approaches. Different types of reflexivity, like different research approaches, carry their own ontological assumptions about the nature of subjects (researcher and researched) and what knowledge is and how it is constructed. These assumptions are clearly crucial to the conceptualisation of multiple reflexivities and render attempts to achieve closure around the notion of reflexivity as a singular concept highly problematic. Attending to ontology as one of the axes in our taxonomy allowed us to structure our theorising to account for this multiplicity of reflexivities and the constitutive and generated realities they imply. In terms of power, this pertains to reflexivity as a route to addressing the power imbalances and issues inherent in any research encounter, whether that be conceptualised in terms of an overt remit for an emancipatory research politics, or as a way to direct the researcher encounter towards one with less of a dominating and instrumental dynamic. For us, reflexivity is inherently political; our exposure to it initially emerged from our own engagement with feminist theory and our identification as feminist researchers. Reflexivity has been seen by feminist researchers (and other critical researchers) as a political tool for critically engaging with power issues in research (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). Underpinning the different types of reflexivity in our taxonomy are assumptions relating to the nature of power in the researcher/respondent relationship and these different reflexivities also generate different (and sometimes ambivalent) power relations in the research encounter. In terms of this constitutive and generative relation to power we found that the taxonomy of reflexivities was a useful tool to reflect in a more structured manner upon the shifts in the researcher/respondent power dynamic which occurred at different parts of our own research. As Wolf (1996) has argued, power differentials are an inevitable part of research, and the necessity is to critically reflect upon these inevitable differentials and the way that these shift and transform as the research progresses. Attending to power as one axis of our taxonomy allowed us to structure our thinking about reflexivity in terms of these shifting power relations.

This paper progresses the authors’ recent work on researcher reflexivity which has been developed and augmented with practical guidelines for the different approaches to reflexivity. Guidelines for practical action and points for reflection are given which relate to each of the possible reflexivities outlined in the taxonomy.
Auspiciousness: Coping with Kratophany
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The sacred, described as “more significant, powerful and extraordinary than the self” (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989, p.13) is distinguished from the merely special by the key characteristic of efficacy. Belk et al. (1989) also note that the sacred should be approached with care, because the sacred has kratophanous power. Kratophany—the simultaneous devotion to, and fear of, the sacred (Pimentel and Reynolds 2004)—is experienced by consumers because the efficacious power of the sacred is unpredictably multi-valenced: it can be manifest in a benevolent and/or malevolent way (Belk and Wallendorf 1990). Accordingly, when consumers seek the benevolence of the good-sacred, they likely also expose themselves to the malevolence of the bad-sacred (Belk and Wallendorf 1990). Consequently, consumers can simultaneously experience strong positive feelings (e.g. devotion) and strong negative feelings (e.g. fear) towards the sacred (Belk et al. 1989; Pimentel and Reynolds 2004).

Belk et al. (1989, p.8) suggest that ritual prepares profane persons to approach the sacred, and surrounds the contact of these profane persons with the sacred to forestall the unleashing of the evil powers of the sacred. We believe this implies that consumers require ways to cope, when faced with the kratophanous power of the sacred. Consumer researchers have not yet devoted much attention to discovering these coping mechanisms. Consequently, we begin to fill this gap in the consumer research literature by examining how Hindu Indians use auspiciousness to cope when faced with the tension inherent in their kratophanous reactions to the sacred.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Meaning of Kratophany
The term kratophany was introduced into the English language by Mircea Eliade, as a technical term meaning “an appearance of the sacred in which the experience of power dominates” (Miller 2005). Belk et al. (1989) introduced kratophany to the consumer literature as one of the twelve properties of the sacred, and explained kratophany as the ability of the sacred to elicit both strong approach and strong avoidance tendencies. More recently, Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) defined kratophany as the simultaneous devotion to, and fear of, the sacred. This later definition, which focuses on consumers’ reactions to the sacred, is consistent with the way the term has been used in more recent consumer research (e.g. Curasi, Price and Arnould 2004). Our reading of the relevant extant literature suggests that consumer researchers’ progress in understanding of kratophany may have been impeded because kratophany has been used to describe both the sacred, and consumers reactions to the sacred. We adopt Pimentel and Reynolds’ (2004) definition of kratophany, and carefully distinguish between “the kratophanous power of the sacred” (a property of the sacred) and kratophany (consumers’ strong, mixed reactions when faced with the sacred’s kratophanous power), throughout this paper.

Coping with Kratophany
Although Belk et al. (1989) give different examples of sacred entities associated with the benevolent good-sacred (e.g. gods) and malevolent bad-sacred (e.g. corpses) powers respectively, they then note that consumers fear malevolence, at the same time as they seek benevolence. Although some entities may be largely seen as benevolent, and some may be largely seen as malevolent, all sacred entities have the potential to be both benevolent and malevolent, provoking mixed feelings of awe and terror (Belk et al. 1989). We surmise from this that kratophany exists because the power of the sacred does not operate on a simple continuum. Instead, sacred power can be manifest along two orthogonal dimensions—a dimension of good-sacredness and a dimension of bad-sacredness. It is the two-dimensional nature of sacred power, coupled with its unpredictability, which generates the tension inherent in kratophany. Furthermore, even when particular sacred entities are usually perceived of as wholly benevolent, these entities tend to be approached with care, because the power of the sacred, irrespective of its valence, is understood to be dangerous to ordinary beings. It seems logical that consumers would employ coping mechanisms to deal the kratophanous power of the sacred. Accordingly, we ask what these forms these coping mechanisms might take.

Belk and Wallendorf (1990) examine one such kratophanous sacred entity—money—in depth, and suggest that money can be perceived as kratophanous by consumers because it is viewed as having both malevolent and benevolent powers. We surmise from their work that if sacred power is NOT understood or perceived as multi-valenced (for example a child’s faith in a wholly benevolent God), then kratophany may be considerably lessened. Hence it is possible that consumers could cope with kratophany by choosing to view the sacred entity is purely benevolent (leading to a pure approach orientation) or by viewing the sacred entity as purely malevolent (leading to a pure avoidance orientation). To be precise, in these situations, choosing to perceive the sacred entity as wholly positive or wholly negative collapses the good-sacred bad-sacred dialectic to a simple continuum anchored on either end by the benevolent good-sacred and the malevolent bad-sacred respectively. However, a consumer with an approach orientation to the sacred would still need to undertake further preparatory rituals such as self-cleansing, because of the danger inherent in any contact with sacred power.

Two other consumer research studies have briefly discussed kratophany using the illustration of consumers’ relationships with inherited family heirlooms (Curasi, Price and Arnould 2004) and their college football teams (Pimentel and Reynolds 2004) respectively. In both cases, consumers highly value something (the heirloom or the team’s victory) while simultaneously fearing the loss of that thing. These two examples attest to the tension caused by the simultaneous antithetical reactions to the sacred, suggesting that when consumers do perceive sacred power as valenced, it is this uncertainty as to the outcome in a particular instance that causes the tension associated kratophany. For example, a confident custodian of family heirlooms or a devoted fan who is aware that loss can occur but who is sure that loss will not occur, will likely not experience kratophany. This suggests to us that a more sophisticated coping mechanism might involve attempts to reduce uncertainty. We believe that the Hindu Indian (“Hindu”) concern with auspiciousness may shed light on how consumers cope with kratophany by reducing uncertainty.

Auspiciousness
Auspiciousness is a favorable state that bodes well for the future (Inden 1985). According to Inden, the Roman Empire practice of augury—interpreting signs from nature in order to
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determine the will of the gods—gave us the word auspicious, which
comes from the Latin noun avis (bird) and the Latin verb spicere (to
look at). Although we shall use the Hindu notion of auspiciousness
to illustrate our discussion, we note for the record that auspicious-
ness is also an important conceptual category in other Asian
cultures. Furthermore, we note that in contrast to Western consum-
ers’ idiosyncratic use of rituals designed to generate favorable
outcomes (such as personalized pre-game rituals undertaken by
some professional sportspeople), auspiciousness systematically
pervades Hindu Indians’ daily lives. Hindu Indians’ shared under-
standing of auspiciousness also suggests that such rituals are more
likely to be publicly employed in India, as compared to the West.
Almost every thing, creature, person, act, or event can be described
in Hindu discourse as either auspicious or inauspicious. Anything
that predisposes the gods to favor a human undertaking is auspi-
cious. People, events, objects, words, numbers and points in time
can be more or less auspicious.

Table 1 draws on the work of Indian sociologists to present
examples of auspicious and inauspicious elements in Hindu
discourse. As indicated in the table, Das (1982) points out that
among Hindus, marriage and other rituals pertaining to life are
regarded as auspicious while cremation and other rituals pertaining
to death are viewed as inauspicious. Consequently in her view,
auspiciousness is defined as pertaining to life and inauspiciousness
as pertaining to death. In a similar vein, Marglin (1985) suggests
that auspiciousness is reflected in festivities and inauspiciousness
in mourning. Narayanan’s (1985) more nuanced example of the
auspicious death of an elderly man pre-deceased by his wife and
survived by his progeny suggests that inauspiciousness is anything
that prevents the extended family from carrying out its dharma or
destiny of biological immortality (Channa 2000).

Every married Hindu woman, during her husband’s lifetime,
is perceived to be the concrete embodiment of temporal auspicious-
ness, as shown in her colorful attire, jewelry and the red dot on her
forehead (Carman 1985). But, as soon as she becomes a widow, she
is viewed as inauspicious, and generally avoided (Srinivas 1952).
Yagi explains the difference in auspiciousness between the two as
a function of their ability to bear “fruit” (1999 p.275). Hence Yagi
(1999) views auspiciousness as conduciveness to future prosperity,
much like the concept of “lucky” numbers found elsewhere. In a
similar vein, Inden and Nicholas (1977) define the Hindu term
mangala to mean luck or well-being. Srinivas, on the other hand,
writes that “mangala [an emic term referring to the marriage
ceremony which involves the tying of a sacred thread or mangala
sutra around the bride’s neck] is an auspicious or good-sacred
ceremony” (1952, p.74), and later implies that inauspiciousness
relates to bad-sacredness. Thus, we seek to clarify the relationship
of auspiciousness to the Western concept of “luck” and its
relationship(s) to the benevolent and the malevolent sacred.

**METHOD**

We utilize data from depth interviews conducted with twelve
Hindu Indian informants. Two of our informants were resident in
India, two were resident in Australia, and eight were resident in
New Zealand. The ten non-resident Hindu Indians we interviewed
had spent the majority of their adult lives in India, had married
Hindu Indian spouses in India, and continued to maintain strong ties
with India after immigrating to Australasia. Our informants, eight
of whom were female, ranged in age from 24 to 77. In keeping with
interpretive research norms, we utilize the use of pseudonyms to
preserve our informants’ anonymity. We employed the constant
comparative method of analysis, engaging in open ended and axial
coding of interview transcripts and fieldnotes and developing
interpretations after each wave of data collection. Our emergent
insights then informed and directed the next phase of data collec-
tion. Our interpretations in each phase were informed by the
relevant literature.

**FINDINGS**

Hindus utilize as many auspicious elements and signs as possible, and avoid anything remotely inauspicious. Auspicious
times, places, persons, colors, and objects seem to be valued by
Hindus because they attract the benevolence of cosmic powers.

**Auspiciousness is a control mechanism**

Our informants found it easy to list objects, times or places that
are auspicious and those which are inauspicious. We spoke to
Sudha (IF 77) and her daughter-in-law Shaila (IF 39) about the
meaning of auspiciousness.
Sudha: auspicious events mean something good…
Shaila: good
Sudha: …inauspicious events are the opposite of that.”
Shaila: “if we want to do something, we note it from the calendar—in India we get calendars that show certain dates that are auspicious…lucky days! It’s something to do with lucky and unlucky.
Int: lucky and unlucky?
Sudha: we may see from the calendar which days are good.
Shaila: we do the same with numbers too. Some are lucky and some are unlucky. Nine is a lucky number…
Sudha: seven also.

According to these comments, auspicious bears some relationship to “lucky” and “good”. However, another informant was careful to distinguish the concept of auspiciousness from that of luck. To Geeta (IF 44) an auspicious object is more than a lucky object, as luck implied (to her) something that cannot be controlled. Instead, auspiciousness was explained as something that helped a person increase the chances of a favorable outcome by increasing the probability the gods would approve of their undertaking. This seems to imply that Hindus attempt to exert control over their lives by using auspicious elements and signs. According to Geeta,

“a Hindu believes that there are definitely some things that are better than others and some times that are far better than other times, they are the auspicious times. There are definitely times that are bad or things that are bad that as a Hindu we must avoid. These are the things that have not met with God’s approval. Who are we to decide for ourselves what we want to do? Inauspicious times are the worst times or things possible—yes there are ‘neutral’ times or things but they are avoided for the big decisions as they can be seen as just as bad as the inauspicious times. If we have three choices, have God on our side; have him against us or have him not care, I would like God on our side all the time. If he does not care about our decision either way then it is not auspicious, he is not against us so it is not inauspicious or dirty, but he is not in approval—therefore for the big decisions we cannot go forward.”

Geeta’s observation—that small tasks can be undertaken in neutral times, but important tasks cannot—implies to us that while it may be acceptable to risk failure with regard to trivial tasks, important tasks need every assistance possible, so as to ensure success. As Dinesh (IM 55) put it, auspicious objects are like “….runway lights for a plane—the better the light, the more chance there is that Ganesh [a Hindu god] will visit us and give us success.” We surmise from Dinesh’s observation that auspiciousness can serve to beckon the benevolence of the sacred.

Later Vijay (IM 25) elaborated, “…the gods are often called upon for daily as well as life altering events. However, the big decisions require far more effort and planning—the women are the ‘prayer warriors’ for the family and are seen as responsible for the [its husband’s] health.” As we shall show, this is because auspiciousness can be transferred from one entity to another, and hence allowing the task of generating auspiciousness to be sub-contracted to another.

**Auspiciousness can protect**

In traditional Hindu belief, the bride and groom ascend to a temporary elevated state, and are believed to be the embodiment of deities (in the case of Brahmins) or royalty (in the case of non-Brahmins) during the marriage ceremony (Dumont 1972). Situating a ritual performance in an auspicious space and time while employing the use of auspicious artifacts facilitates this movement between liminal and bounded states (Das 1982). Accordingly, several of our informants described preparations for a typical wedding. First, a priest is consulted to select the most auspicious date and time for the wedding, with respect to the birthdates of the bride and groom. Prior to the wedding, the bride, groom, and any ritual objects to be used in the ceremony are purified while the selected venue is physically and ritually cleansed and decorated. Often a dais is erected in a hall or under an awning outside the home. The location in physical space that houses the birth, marriage or death acts as what Eliade (1959) terms an imago mundi (a representation of the cosmos on the earth). For example, during the ceremony, the bride and groom often sit on a mandap, a raised platform, under a canopy with four pillars. The material directly over the place where the bride and groom sit is often an auspicious red color. The Hindu bride is most often dressed in a new, auspiciously red sari, and adorned with auspicious jewelry. Other ritual attempts to generate auspiciousness are made. Vijay, recollected his own wedding day in India:

“The havan [sacred fire altar] was prepared in the center of the largest room in my ancestral home. As the wedding began, Anita [the bride] and I were seated in front of the havan …and we added ghee [clarified butter] to it when instructed by the pandit [priest]. He would sing mantras [invocations] and after each one we’d add some ghee and the guests would add sawdust [sweet smelling wood grains].”

Just as the central mall in Heritage Village was designed to allow its visitors to experience a time and space separate from the profane world without (O’Guinn and Belk 1989), the transcendence of spatio-temporal boundaries is also experienced at the focal point of the Hindu wedding ceremony, the havan. The perfumed smoke of the fire, the burning of incense and the chanting of mantras all serve to transport the participants to the liminal zone of the axis mundi, where they may commune with the sacred. The havan is sacralized by the addition of ghee [clarified butter] which is considered the most distilled essence of the cow which is revered as sacred by Hindus (Korom 2000).

Sudha explained to us that the date for a marriage is fixed after checking that it is an auspicious date for both groom and bride (as determined from their respective birthdates). However, she elaborated “Fate picks the date of death but within that you can pick your timings [for the cremation]. But if possible they do the cremation on the day of death. But they can pick mornings or evenings depending on which is more auspicious.” We learnt from Sudha that since the date of births and deaths cannot usually be chosen, special care must be taken to remove auspiciousness e.g. by engaging a religious leader to engage in special prayers in order to “stop bad things from happening”.

We surmise from Sudha’s comments that during dangerous times of transition such as birth, marriage and death, auspicious symbols do more than just attract the benevolent attentions of the good-sacred—they also serve to repel the malevolent attentions of the bad-sacred and/or protect from the danger inherent in sacred power.

**Auspiciousness can be sub-contracted**

Many Hindu marriages involve the tying of a sacred necklace made of gold and black beads, called a Mangal Sutra—literally “auspicious thread”—(in North India) or a tali (in South India) around the bride’s neck. Maya (IF 44), a medical professional now residing in Australasia, was asked about her Mangal Sutra. Maya told the interviewer that she was planning to buy a bigger and more expensive one when she made her next trip to India. This more
elaborate Mangal Sutra was to be purchased to serve as evidence of her now improved financial status. When asked how she would dispose of the old one, she reacted in surprise, “Oh you can NEVER [emphasis present] sell it, you have to melt the old one and use the gold to help make the new one. If not the new one will not be genuine…it will not be auspicious”. It appears that the sacred powers contained in the Mangal Sutra reside in the gold and black beads it is made of, and can be transported by incorporating said gold and beads into another Mangal Sutra.

This ability to transfer auspiciousness from one element to another, coupled with Vijay’s remark that “women were the prayer warriors of the family” led us to ask whether auspiciousness be transferred between individuals as well. Can auspiciousness be generated by one party, while its benefits are enjoyed by another? Further probing elicited that Hindu women’s responsibilities extend well beyond the modern Western notion of women ensuring their husband’s good health by managing their nutrition and medical care. Hindu women are also expected to pray, fast and wear auspicious symbols in order to ensure their husbands’ longevity.

This “sub-contracting” of auspiciousness—generation to the women of the family begins at marriage. One informant, Tara (IF 42) explained that once married, a bride’s new focus was expected to be the well-being of her husband. According to Tara,

“These glass bangles …are rings of glass with a bit of silver. They are a symbol for maternity…after marriage, in India, glass bangles are a must for every married woman. And you must be very careful that you don’t break them…glass bangles give long life to your husband…The toe rings as such, that is also part of married…uh…uniform that you have to wear…this Mangal Sutra [pointing to the gold necklace she was wearing] is another thing that every Indian woman wears, these black beads are what we call a symbol of marriage. Every married woman wears these…This …is also for the longevity of your husband….everything for the husband, so we…we’re happy.”

The tinkling sounds made by jewelry such as bangles and anklets are believed to be pleasant to the gods. According to Shukla (2000), a bride not wearing the marriage jewelry of toe rings, anklets, and most importantly, bangles, can become a bad omen for the husband. Wearing the jewelry does not just generate positive outcomes for the husband, it avoids the negative outcomes generated by not wearing the jewelry. We surmise from this that auspiciousness simultaneously functions to approach the good-sacred and repel the bad-sacred.

The relationship between auspiciousness and sacredness can be further unpacked by looking at the kratophanous power gold jewelry such as the Mangal Sutra. These strong, ambivalent reactions inherent in kratophany, are evident when we consider the reversal of the rituals involved in marriage when a woman becomes a widow. During the marriage, the adorning of the bride with auspicious gold jewelry prepares the bride to join the groom in a temporary elevated state, as they are believed to be the embodiment of a god/goddess (in the case of Brahmans) or royalty (in the case of non-Brahmans) during the ceremony (Demont 1972). While the couple is in this common state of elevation, the bride is incorporated into her husband by virtue of the marriage rites which usually include the groom or the officiating priest tying a golden thread bearing the Mangal Sutra pendant around her neck. Since Hindus view the wife as incorporated into her husband’s body, his death means that she is permanently associated with death and bad-sacredness. Thus the voluntary removal (Srinivas 1952) or forcible stripping (Firth 2001) of auspicious wedding jewelry from a widow, is an obvious reversal of the adorning of the bride, to prevent attracting the attention of bad-sacred powers.

The new bride is adorned by the groom’s family with auspicious jewelry to anchor her to her new identity. Once the bride is absorbed into the groom’s self, she is does not need to transcend the boundaries of the groom’s extended family but enters it as part of the groom. Consequently, the extended family’s boundaries are maintained intact throughout the process—the groom ascends to a higher cosmic plane temporarily and returns to the extended family augmented with the bride as his “half-body.” When the new wife utilizes auspicious symbols to attract the benevolence of the gods for the benefit of her husband and his extended family, she is also helping to ensure her own favorable destiny since she is now as one with them. Thus selection of auspicious dates, times, and spaces, and the use of auspicious symbols are motivated by the desire to attract the benevolent attentions of the good-sacred while repelling the malevolent attentions of the bad-sacred.

**DISCUSSION**

Hindus believe in karma—that one’s present social status is prescribed by one’s actions in a previous incarnation (Channa 2000). Thus Hindus are commonly thought of as fatalists and perceived to be very different from North American societies where the majority of individuals are believed to seek to control their own destiny. Yet, Hindus’ concern with generating auspiciousness is second only to their concern with attaining and maintaining purity. When we recognize that purity is viewed as the absence of pollution, which in turn is viewed as “essentially that which cannot be controlled” (Hershman 1974, p.290), we begin to understand that the Hindu attempt to be pure and auspicious is an attempt to control one’s condition by avoiding or removing that which cannot be controlled.

Hindus are concerned with using auspicious symbols to attract the benevolence of the gods and avoiding inauspicious symbols to avoid attracting the attention of malevolent beings. We note that this concern with auspiciousness is heightened at times of birth, marriage and death—all dangerous transitions where we are forced to face the kratophanous power of the sacred. We view this concern with auspiciousness as an attempt to indirectly control (via the superior powers of the gods) what one cannot control directly. Thus, Hindus are, after all, concerned with control. The need to exert control over one’s destiny is universal and it will find expression in some way, despite the constraints of society and religion. Consequently, even those in the West who seek to exert personal control over their lives, may seek to indirectly control those aspects of their lives cannot be directly controlled. For example, the popular media abounds with stories of people fighting a terminal disease who seek to dominate the uncontrollable by using science, litigation, religion or even, magic. Like purity and pollution, science and litigation operate on a social plane. Like the sacred gods, religion and magic operate on a cosmic plane. Our Western equivalents of auspicious symbols, such as lucky numbers, prayerbooks, magic crystals, and inalienable jewelry, are used to attract benevolent cosmic powers to control what we cannot control, on our behalf. Thus marketers are increasingly faced with consumers who seek to control every aspect of the consumption experience but then may be dissatisfied when the product, service, or experience consumed is not exactly what they had anticipated. For example, while awaiting the discovery of a magical weight-loss pill or elixir of life, some consumers seek to transform their bodies or regain their youth with the aid of a surgeon’s scalpel (Schouten 1991) in an attempt to control their appearance, and perhaps, their destinies.
How does the Hindu conceptualization of auspiciousness inform consumer research on luck, chance, and negotiation? Our realization that consumers employ auspiciousness in attempt to indirectly control their destiny offers insight into the krataphonous power of the sacred. Krataphony may explain the revulsion and vindictiveness consumers experience when omnipotent surgeons and revered ballplayers fail to provide them with the favorable outcomes they seek. We call for research that looks at, if, and how, science, religion and magic inter-relate in the lives of postmodern consumers actively seeking to participate in production and consumption processes (Firat and Venkatesh 1995).

Thus our explication of auspiciousness sheds light on the distinction between the good-sacred and the bad-sacred. Sacred powers, whether benevolent or malevolent, cannot be controlled by mere humans. Hence the use of auspiciousness represents a way of manifesting attempts to attract benevolent powers and the removal of inauspiciousness is an attempt to forestall malevolent powers while also protecting oneself from the danger inherent in sacred power. What other coping mechanisms do consumers employ, when faced with the krataphony of the sacred? Research into these coping mechanisms may shed further light on the nature of the krataphonous power of the sacred, and the impact krataphony on consumers.

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One or Many?: Examining Consumption Experiences from the Lens of Multiple Selves
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
This paper explores multiplicity in consumers’ self-concepts and their relationship with consumption experiences. It builds upon recent streams of consumer research that recognize multiplicity in self concepts and examine multiple selves in different consumption contexts. It addresses the question, what is the meaning of consumption experiences from the perspective of multiple selves? More specifically, does a consumption experience entail one set of attitudes and feelings that are consistent across selves or does it involve many sets of attitudes and feelings that vary across selves?

This research draws from dialogical self theory, which views multiple selves as narrative voices that occupy multiple self-positions (Hermans and Kempen 1993; Raggatt 2000, 2002). This theoretical perspective relies on people’s life stories centered on important attachments to people, historic events, beliefs, and consumption activities as the basis for their self-positions. This theory assumes a natural state of multiplicity and allows multiple selves to enter into dialogical relationships. By grounding our study in this theory we are able to gain a broader understanding of the consumer selves, which then can be applied to better understand consumption experiences from the perspective of the different selves.

In this paper, the term multiple selves is used to mean multiple voices that speak from different positions, which is very different from schizophrenia or multiple personality disorder. Moreover, we choose to use the word “multiple selves” instead of “self positions,” “multiple voices” or “dialogical self” as it is a more generic term that is consistent with current marketing literature on self-concept.

The dialogical self differs from other more commonly used perspectives in consumer behavior. It is different from the situational self (Schenk and Holman 1980) in that the focus is on the position from which the person is narrating an experience, which is not necessarily tied to a particular situation. Dialogical self is more of an internal perspective based on affective attachments as opposed to a self image that is desirable in a particular situation. It also varies from identity theory, and social identity theory. The dialogical self is a broader construct that subsumes roles and social memberships. While social identities gain salience through positive affirmations, dialogical self emerges from positive and negative attachments. Dialogical self also differs from other conceptualizations as it allows for dialogical relationships. Consequently, the consumption choices would be different from what they would be in the absence of dialogical relationships.

This study employed a mixed-method approach in order to understand consumers within a larger context over and above current explanations of multiple selves as role identities, social identities, and narrators of consumption stories. Raggatt’s (2002) personality web protocol, comprising narratives and multi-dimensional scaling, was adapted and used in combination with metaphors in order to discern multiple selves. Metaphor analysis was used to get a further understanding of the feelings attached to the selves discerned and to understand informants’ consumption experiences at the overall and self levels.

There were 12 hours of data collection for each of the study’s six informants. In this paper we report data from two individuals.

The findings illustrate that the same consumption object or experience can evoke different sets of feelings for different selves. This has significant implications on how we study consumer behavior and also for market researchers in their endeavors to understand consumers’ attitudes and opinions. Further, by examining positive and negative consumption experiences from the lens of multiple selves, this research contributes to current literature in post purchase evaluation.

Current research suggests that products that evoke primarily positive emotions during the consumption experience are positively evaluated (Oliver 1993; Stokmans 1998; Westbrook and Oliver 1991), which was also found in our study. However, when understood from perspective of certain selves, even positive experiences could involve primarily negative emotions. More interestingly, some products and experiences that were considered negative and evoked overall negative feelings were described as very positive experiences when understood from perspective of certain selves. These findings suggest that researchers would benefit from examining consumption attitudes and feelings from perspective of the consuming selves in order to understand complex consumer processes such as post purchase emotions and evaluations.

The findings in this study, consistent with dialogical theory, suggest that decisions are not based on overall feelings or attitude towards a product, but based on feelings of the self that is dominant at the time. The idea of dominant self is similar to that of identity salience (Arnett et al 2003; Dimofte, Forehand, and Deshpande 2003; Forehand, Deshpande and Reed 2002; Kleine et al 1993; Laverie et al 2002). Yet, an importance difference is that the sphere of influence for the dominant self extends beyond that of salient identities, which are primarily concerned with identity-related consumption behaviors. Further, we found that the dialogical self perspective allowed us to study products that are not clearly related to any identity and may be outside the purview of identity studies.

We also found that overall metaphorical feelings were different from feelings expressed by the different selves. This reveals limitations of research methods that do not take into account feelings and attitudes of the different selves. By looking through the lens of multiple selves as a dialog between multiple self positions, we can gain a richer understanding of consumption patterns in consumers. Instead of relying on compensatory reasoning as is done in multi-attribute models, we see that consumption is often based on dominant feelings of one self which may not be congruent with other self perspectives.

The findings in this paper reiterate the importance of studying consumer behavior from the perspective of multiple selves. Other research programs can adapt the methodology used in this study to examine multiple selves in other consumption contexts such as brand loyalty. Further, this study demonstrates the use of dialogical self theory, which can also be used to understand other consumer topics such as ambivalence, conflict resolution, addictions, and self-control.

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Lines in the Sand: Using Category Widths to Define and Pursue Self-Control Goals
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Much of the recent media attention on issues such as obesity in children and adults (Brownell and Yach 2005), rising bankruptcies caused by overextension of credit (Fetterman 2005), and the lack of savings by Americans (Colvin 2005), focuses on individuals’ inability to regulate their own behavior. That is, many people seem to repeatedly give in to temptations in an impulsive manner (Baumeister 2002). While this lack of control may well account for many societal ills, lack of control alone does not tell the full story. Rather, failure to properly categorize alternatives is likely a contributing factor to the problems associated with such issues as obesity and consumer debt. In fact, the road to addressing many of the dark issues associated with today’s society begins with individual consumers setting goals and creating plans to achieve those goals. One of the first steps in creating such plans is to define the category of goal-consistent options and behaviors. For example, a consumer embarking on a dieting plan needs to determine if buying a McDonald’s hamburger should be categorized as a goal-consistent alternative or not. Similarly, a consumer creating a plan to reduce personal debt will need to determine if “buying groceries” using credit should be categorized as an appropriate expenditure that constitutes an acceptable or unacceptable behavior. Ill-defined plans in this early categorization phase can contribute to self-control failure in a variety of consumption domains.

Categorization theory provides insight into the ways that individuals define and group stimuli in their environment. However, despite the realization that self-control goals are contingent upon delineation of target behaviors and outcomes (Gollwitzer 2003), little research has focused on the goal-consistent and goal-inconsistent option categorization process as it relates to goal pursuit. Specifically, category width has long been viewed as an individual difference factor (Huang 1981; Pettigrew 1958), such that individuals are chronically either broad or narrow categorizers of various stimuli in their environments. In this tradition, neither goals nor beliefs about one’s own self-control ability should normatively impact the way in which a given set of options is categorized. More recent research has demonstrated that category width can be altered by situational factors (Ülkümen, Gulden, Vicki Morwitz and Amitav Chakravarti 2006).

In the present research, we are primarily interested in exploring the relationship between self-control goals, individuals’ perceptions of their ability to meet self-control goals, and the widths of their categories of goal-consistent and goal-inconsistent alternatives. Importantly, we are interested in the ways that categories of goal-consistent and goal-inconsistent options are subjectively defined by individuals. Options included in the goal-consistent category are, conceptually, those alternatives the individual feels will facilitate the accomplishment of her/his goal(s). On the contrary, goal-inconsistent options are potential choices that hamper efforts toward goal achievement, based on the individual’s interpretation. Our research illuminates issues involving category construction and self-control by showing that variation in the construction of goal-consistent and goal-inconsistent option categories can be explained by examining individuals’ trait level self-control as well as their particular consumption goals. Furthermore, we demonstrate that the construction of these categories can differentially impact subsequent choice behavior.

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Stress and Eating: Disentangling the Effects of Psychological, Autonomic and Endocrine Components of Stress Response

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ABSTRACT

Using a psychophysiological approach to stress, this study examines the joint effects of psychological, autonomic and endocrine reactivity on consumer food preference under stress through a randomized controlled study. Stress was manipulated using guided mental imagery technique. Consumer showed increased preference for high energy-density snack foods in the stress vs. control condition. The changes in food preference were jointly predicted by psychological, autonomic and endocrine responses. A model comparison approach shows that the inclusion of autonomic and endocrine responses contributed incrementally to the prediction of food preference. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

One of the vexing conundrums in everyday life is our inability to say "no" to actions that we would ideally like to say "no" to. It is common for people to profess 'healthy eating' goals and yet repeatedly succumb to temptations in the form of foods high in calories, fat, sugar etc. Such instances of goal-behavior inconsistency represent failures of self-regulation (Heatherton and Baumeister, 1996).

Research in consumer behavior has long been interested in strategies aimed at reducing self-regulation failures (Hoch and Loewenstein, 1991). In this research, we examine whether having mental accounts (Thaler, 1980, Thaler and Johnson, 1985; Tversky and Kahneman, 1981), defined as self-specified allowances for action, will lead to improved self-regulation. Why should mental account influence self-regulation? According to Baumeister (2002), effective self-regulation depends on three principal factors which are (a) clear standards for the behaviors to be regulated, (b) ability to monitor one’s status with regard to the standards, and (c) capacity, i.e., resources to alter one’s own behavior should it be warranted.

Mental accounts appear to satisfy all the three criteria outlined by Baumeister (2002) that are necessary for self-regulation. First, mental accounts are set around active goals (Breindl, Markman, and Higgins, 1998), so they inherently provide the necessary standards/goals for behavior. Second, mental accounts enable a person to evaluate current choice in terms of previous choices (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984); therefore, mental accounts enable one to monitor one’s own behavior. Finally, mental accounts have been thought of as instances of categorization (Henderson and Peterson, 1992), which results in resource-efficient decision-making. Thus, having a mental account leaves the decision-maker with more resources to exert self-control. Although the connection between mental accounts and categorization has been made, its connection to the amount of resources needed for decision-making has neither been demonstrated nor been made before in the literature. Since the capacity to change behavior, i.e., having enough resources to change, is a critical element without which having standards or monitoring is less likely to be useful (Baumeister, 2002), we believe it is important to assess whether having a mental account renders decision-making more efficient. Based on the notion that speed of decision is an index of the efficiency, we hypothesize that people with a mental account will make quicker decisions regarding actions relating to the mental account than people without a mental account.

Does this mean that whenever people have mental accounts, they will be able to achieve improved self-regulation? We argue that mental accounts are likely to facilitate self-control only when the task frame adopted by the decision-maker, choose versus reject (Shafir, 1993), is compatible with the goal. Specifically, if the goal is to limit behavior, we argue that a reject task is more compatible with the goal, allowing the mental account to exert its influence. A choose task, on the other hand, orients the person to look for reasons to adopt the behavior, and therefore is less compatible with the goal of limiting the behavior. Based on this reasoning, we suggest that there is reason to expect that the effect of mental accounts in limiting indulgent behaviors will be more pronounced in a reject task rather than in a choose task.

Two studies were conducted as part of a program of research focused on the self-regulatory effectiveness of mental accounts. The first study manipulated presence of mental accounts and task frame, and found that decision time was considerably faster when the decision-maker had a mental account. However, this study found only directionally consistent effects on self-regulation on account of limited variability in the dependent variable. The second study involved the same manipulations and found that mental accounts are successful in facilitating self-regulation only when the task was compatible with the goal of the mental account. Thus, having a mental account significantly reduced the likelihood of engaging in indulgent behaviors, but only when the participant was in a reject task, not in a choose task.

The contribution of this research is threefold. First, we investigate this phenomenon in a non-monetary context, in contrast with the vast majority of the research on mental accounting which focuses on monetary decision contexts. Second, we let the participants estimate the size of their mental account. Majority of the research in mental accounting examines this phenomenon by presenting participants with scenarios that involve pre-set mental accounts (both in terms of size and context). Third, and most important, the connection with self-regulation situates mental accounting as a factor that shapes the cognitive process underlying decision-making rather than as an evaluation frame that affects economic outcomes.

In summary, mental accounts offer an ecologically relevant way of exerting self-control when faced with tempting choices. However, they do so only when the task adopted by the decision-maker is compatible with the goal of the account. We believe that one of the salient features of this research is that it bridges the knowledge from three well researched genres, mental accounting, self-regulation and task framing, to indicate conditions under which people can bring their behavior in line with their own goals.

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Making Prudent vs. Impulsive Choices: The Role of Anticipated Shame and Guilt on Consumer Self-Control
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ABSTRACT
We examine the differential effects of anticipating shame vs. guilt on choice likelihood of a hedonic product. The results demonstrate that when offered a hedonic snack (chocolate cake) consumers who anticipate shame are significantly less likely to choose to consume it compared to those who anticipate guilt. Anticipating guilt also has a more circumscribed effect, impacting choice likelihood for those consumers who are not attitudinally inclined toward the hedonic product. The results also show that anticipating guilt versus shame has different effects on anticipated happiness after lapses in self-control.

INTRODUCTION
Maria was dismayed at how much weight she had gained. It seemed that no matter how hard she tried, she just couldn’t resist indulging in high calorie desserts. Vowing to remember how bad her overeating made her feel, she put a note on the box of left-over cake from her daughter’s birthday party that reads “if you eat this, you will feel bad.”

Two powerful negative emotions of self-condemnation are shame and guilt. While commonsensical knowledge reminds us that these emotions are reactions to self-control failures, little is known about whether anticipating these emotions as a consequence of consumption will impact self-control. Hence, one objective of this paper is to examine whether anticipating shame and guilt from lapses in self-control influences actual self-control. Although a limited body of literature has examined the impact of guilt on self-control, knowledge of the impact of anticipated shame is lacking. Thus, a second objective of this research is to assess whether shame and guilt exert differential effects on consumer self-control. Finally, while many consumers are beset by problems of self-regulation as evidenced by overeating, overspending, compulsive shopping, gambling, smoking and drug use, not all consumers experience problems with self-control equally. Thus, the third and final objective of this research is to examine whether shame and guilt have a differential impact on consumers whose personality or preferences make them differentially vulnerable to self-control lapses.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES
Anticipated Affect and Self-Control
Recent work in psychology and marketing has begun to examine anticipated or forecasted emotions and their impact on choice. Anticipated emotions (also called affective forecasts) refer to the prediction of the emotional consequences of decision outcomes (Gilbert et al. 1998; MacInnis et al. 2005), in this case, to the affective consequences of giving in or not giving in to an impulse.

Though research on anticipated affect and self-control is limited, the little that exists is intriguing. Bagozzi et al. (1998) found that anticipating positive emotions (including pride, joy and satisfaction) from self-regulatory success and negative emotions (including guilt, regret and sadness) from self-regulatory failure predicted dietary intentions, plans, and dieting-related actions. Other studies have addressed the relative impact of anticipated positive emotions associated with achieving a goal (e.g., delighted, happy, proud) versus negative emotions from not achieving a goal (e.g., guilty, regretful, sad) on impulse control (Bagozzi et al. 2003; Perugini and Bagozzi 2001; Giner-Sorolla 2001).

An interesting and relevant extension to this literature concerns the impact of anticipated emotions of the same valence on self-control. As Lerner and Keltner (2001) point out, little work has been done to differentiate emotions of the same valence—and this is particularly true in the context of affective forecasting. Relevant here are negative anticipated emotions presumed to arise from the failure to control impulses and consume a hedonic product. Although Bagozzi et al. (1998, 2001) found that anticipating negative emotions like shame and guilt can facilitate impulse control, they did not assess whether each emotion can itself impact self-control. Because both are negative emotions induced from moral transgressions, one might expect that either shame or guilt can impact self-control compared to not anticipating any emotions.

H1: Compared to consumers who do not anticipate the emotions presumed to arise from a hedonic choice, those who anticipate the (a) shame or (b) guilt from hedonic consumption will be more likely to exert self-control (and less likely to choose the hedonic product).

The Differential Impact of Shame vs. Guilt on Self-Control
Lack of understanding of the potentially differential impact of shame vs. guilt on self-control is perhaps understandable because the two emotions are sometimes used interchangeably (Tangney and Dearing 2002). This lack of distinction is likely due to the fact that both are negative self-conscious emotions of self-condemnation that result in response to a moral transgression.

Notably though, cumulative empirical studies reveal that these two emotions are distinct. Shame is evoked from a perceived transgression of the ‘self’ (e.g., I am a horrible person), whereas guilt is evoked from a perceived transgression of one’s ‘behavior’ (e.g., I did that horrible thing) (Lewis 1971). Shame evokes counterfactuals of the self (‘If only I weren’t’), whereas guilt evokes counterfactuals for actions (‘If only I hadn’t for guilt’) (Niedenthal et al. 1994). Finally, shame induces a behavioral motivation to hide, escape, sink or disappear from others and the situation (Lewis 1971). Guilt, on the other hand, induces a behavioral motivation to restore or make amends or atone for transgressions (Wicker et al. 1983; Tangney et al. 1996).

Notably these differences between shame and guilt are with regard to an experienced emotion. We theorize that these differences between shame and guilt manifest themselves even in anticipation, differentially influencing self-control. Past research finds that shame is a more powerful and intense emotional experience than guilt (e.g., Tangney et al. 1996; Roseman et al. 1994). Shame is often associated with a stronger physiological response and is more powerful by its implication of the self as the reason for the transgression. Guilt on the other hand involves a less potent physiological response and is a result of an appraisal that implicates one’s behavior in the transgression. Furthermore, while guilt evokes the possibility of atonement for one’s wrongdoing, shame evokes no such potential, and indeed further implicates the self for one’s weakness. Hence, we predict that anticipating the accusation of the
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self is more likely to keep people from transgressing than anticipating the blame of a specific behavior. Shame may also induce more self-control by virtue of the fact that it is viewed as a more public emotion, whereas guilt has been viewed as a more private affair (i.e., reaction of one’s internalized conscience to a breach of one’s personal standards) (e.g., Ausubel 1955; Benedict 1946; Gehm and Scherer 1988). By virtue of its power, lack of atonement potential, and public element, we hypothesize that:

**H2:** Consumers who anticipate shame from consuming a hedonic product will be more likely to engage in self-control (e.g., choose to forego the consumption of a hedonic product) than will consumers who anticipate guilt from consuming the hedonic product.

**Attitude toward Consuming the Hedonic Stimulus**

Notably, exerting self-control may be more or less important depending on consumers’ apriori predisposition to engage in hedonic choice. The same hedonic choice (e.g., eating chocolate cake) may be extremely appealing to some consumers and less appealing to others given apriori attitudes toward the hedonic product. Hence, an interesting extension to H1 and H2 concerns whether shame and guilt exert an equivalent impact on self-control for consumers with positive vs. neutral attitudes toward the hedonic product.

We predict that for consumers for whom have neutral attitudes toward the hedonic product anticipating either shame or guilt will impact self-control. Because the consumption item induces limited attraction, anticipating either negative emotion should induce greater self-control than not anticipating these negative emotions.

**H3:** For consumers with neutral attitudes toward consuming the hedonic product, anticipating either shame or guilt from consumption will have a greater impact on self-control than will not anticipating either emotion.

However, for consumers who are most vulnerable to self-control lapses—those with a positive attitude toward consuming the hedonic product—shame may exert a greater impact on self-control than will guilt. Because attitudes are more positive, the allure of the product is greater, requiring a strong emotion like shame to induce self control. We thus hypothesize that:

**H4:** For consumers who have a positive attitude toward consuming a hedonic product, anticipating shame from consumption will have a greater impact on self-control than will anticipating guilt.

**Anticipated Happiness from Self-Control or Lack Thereof**

Self-control in the context of hedonic choice involves a trade-off between short-term vs. long-term happiness. This notion is consistent with the idea that preferences can be time inconsistent (Hoch and Lowenstein 1991; Metcalf and Mischel 1999; Giner-Sorolla 2001). Lapses in self-control brings about short-term happiness as impulses are indulged—though longer-term consequences like shame and guilt may be subsequently experienced. On the other hand, engaging in self-control often sacrifices short-term pleasures for longer-term happiness. Delaying gratification in the present can induce a larger and bigger reward—which presumably will induce greater happiness than would succumbing to short-term gratifications.

An interesting question regarding anticipated shame and guilt is whether they evoke similar effects on anticipated happiness in the short term as a consequence of giving in to impulses and engaging in hedonic consumption. Once consumers decide to commit themselves to indulge even after anticipating guilt associated with consumption, it is more likely that they justify their decision to consume with inflated anticipatory happiness. The fact that guilt implicates the transgression of the specific behavior also implies the motivational readiness to discount their transgression as a one-time, transient incident. As the term, guilty pleasure (Giner-Sorolla 2001), signifies, anticipating guilt, once committed to indulge, may inflate anticipated happiness about consuming the impulse-laden product as a (consequence of) post-decision justification.

On the other hand, since shame is a more intense emotion that arises from the appraisal of the transgression of the self (Lewis 1971), it is likely that one’s decision to indulge cannot be easily justified. Moreover, the transgression is less easily discounted as a one-time, fleeting misbehavior since it implicates the self, tarnishing one’s self-image. Therefore, we predict that consumers who anticipated shame, but still consume the hedonic product, are likely to anticipate less happiness from consumption than are consumers who anticipate guilt.

**H5:** Consumers who anticipate guilt from consuming a hedonic product will be more likely to anticipate happiness following hedonic consumption compared to consumers who anticipate shame.

**Individual Differences in Impulsivity**

Self-control is more difficult for consumers with chronic tendencies toward impulsive behavior. Consumer impulsivity has been widely regarded as an important individual difference variable in self-control (Puri 1996). The impact of shame and guilt on the effects noted above would be noteworthy if they remained robust even after controlling for individual differences in impulsivity.

**EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION**

**Method**

H1-H5 were examined in a 3 (anticipated emotion: shame, guilt, no emotion control) X 2 (attitude toward the hedonic product: positive vs. neutral) experiment. Ninety-one participants were randomly assigned to one of the three anticipated emotion conditions. Attitude toward the hedonic product served as a measured variable.

Respondents were shown a delicious-looking chocolate cake at the start of a computer-based questionnaire and were asked to imagine that it was placed in front of them. To manipulate anticipated emotion, respondents were then told that although they wanted to reach out and take a bite of the cake, they stopped for a moment to anticipate how guilty (vs. ashamed) eating the cake would make them feel. The control condition was not given any instructions to anticipate emotions.

Respondents then completed a set of questions designed to measure how likely they were to eat the cake (1=not at all likely; 9=very likely), their anticipated happiness from eating the cake (1=not at all; 9=very much) and manipulation checks for anticipated shame and guilt (1=not at all; 9=very much). Individual differences in attitudes toward eating chocolate cake were also measured using a 3-item 9-point scale (favorable, positive, good; Cronbach’s α=.92). The three items were averaged to yield a scale of attitude toward eating cake. A median split divided participants into positive vs. neutral attitude conditions (Median=6.33; M=7.99 for positive and M=4.38 for neutral). To control for individual differences in consumer impulsivity, a scale adapted from Puri (1996) was used as a covariate in the results presented below.
Results

Manipulation Check. The results confirmed that participants in the experimental conditions anticipated the emotions they were instructed to anticipate (M's=4.58 and 4.61 for anticipated guilt and shame respectively) in the context of eating the cake.

Choice Likelihood. A 3 (anticipated emotion) X 2 (attitude) ANCOVA on the choice likelihood as the dependent variable and consumer impulsivity as a covariate revealed a significant main effect for anticipated emotion (F(2, 84)=4.77, p<.05) and a significant main effect for prior attitudes toward cake (F(1, 84)=18.50, p<.001). As expected, the main effect of attitudes showed that consumers who had positive attitudes toward eating cake were more likely to choose it (and forego impulse control; M=6.93) compared to consumers who had a neutral attitude toward consuming the hedonic product (M=4.65). The main effect for anticipated emotion showed that anticipating shame (M=4.66) resulted in greater self-control than anticipating either guilt (M=6.04) or the control condition (M=6.68). These results support H1a and H2.

However, we observed no support for H1b. Consumers who anticipated guilt did not show greater self-control (M=6.04) than consumers in the no emotion control condition (M=6.68).

Post-hoc contrasts showed that for consumers with neutral attitudes toward the hedonic product showed reduced choice likelihood when they anticipated guilt (M=4.55) or shame (M=3.62) compared to consumers in the no emotion control condition (M=5.78). These results support H3.

The results also support H4. For consumers with positive attitudes toward consuming the hedonic product, anticipating shame had a greater impact on self-control (M=5.7) than did anticipating guilt (M=7.53) or not anticipating emotion (M=7.57).

Collectively, these results suggest that while anticipating shame has a consistently positive effect on self-control, the anticipation of guilt impacts self-control only for consumers who have a neutral attitude toward the hedonic product and are thus less predisposed to making an impulsive choice.

Predicted Happiness. Respondents who experienced a lapse in self-control and decided to choose the cake were asked to predict how happy they would be after eating the cake. A 3 (anticipated emotion) X 2 (attitude toward eating chocolate cake) ANCOVA with consumer impulsivity as a covariate revealed a significant main effect for anticipated emotions (F(2, 48)=4.29, p<.05) and a significant main effect for prior attitudes toward cake (F(1, 84)=7.55, p<.01). The results were replicated in a regression analysis which used a continuous measure of attitudes (vs. a median split).

The main effect of anticipated emotions showed that consumers who anticipated guilt anticipated feelings significantly happier (M=7.34) after consuming the cake than consumers who anticipated shame (M=5.86) or control consumers (M=6.36). These effects support H5. The main effect of prior attitudes toward cake showed that consumers who held a positive attitude toward cake (M=7.13) anticipated feeling happier following hedonic consumption than consumers who held a neutral attitude toward cake (M=5.91).

Post-hoc contrasts shown in Figure 2 revealed several interesting effects. First, consumers who anticipated guilt from consumption also anticipated greater happiness from consumption than did consumers who anticipated shame—regardless of their prior attitudes toward cake. Second, for consumers with neutral attitudes toward cake anticipating guilt led to higher anticipated happiness from consumption than did not anticipating any emotion. Third, and most interestingly, even consumers who were not favorably disposed toward the hedonic product but who anticipated guilt showed just as much anticipated happiness from consumption as those who were favorably disposed toward the product. The fact that both consumers with favorable and neutral attitudes toward cake anticipated equivalent levels of post-consumption happiness from hedonic consumption suggests a potential association between guilt and pleasure (Giner-Sorolla 2001). The results are also consistent with the recent finding that showed the association between the concepts of “unhealthy” and “tasty” operates on an implicit level (Raghunathan et al. 2006).
DISCUSSION

Although prior research suggests that anticipating the emotions that might result from consumption impacts choice of hedonic products, our results extend this research by suggesting that two negative emotions of the same valence (shame vs. guilt) have different effects on both self-control and anticipated happiness from self-control failures.

We find that compared to conditions where consumers do not anticipate emotions from choice, those who anticipate shame are significantly less likely to make a hedonic choice (and hence are significantly more likely to engage in self-control). The impact of anticipated guilt on self-control, however, appears to depend on whether consumers have positive or neutral attitudes toward the hedonic product. Anticipating guilt seems to facilitate self-control, but only for those consumers who need it least—those who have neutral attitudes toward the hedonic product. For those who are pro-attitudinally inclined toward the hedonic product, anticipating guilt has no effect on self-control.

From the standpoint of happiness from consumption, we find that for consumers who chose to engage in hedonic consumption anticipated happiness with this decision varied as a function of both anticipated shame/guilt and attitudes. Consumers felt least happy with their decision to engage in hedonic consumption when they had a neutral attitude toward the hedonic product and anticipated feeling shame. Consumers who anticipated feeling guilty anticipated they would feel just as happy as consumers who did not anticipate any negative emotions when their attitudes were neutral. Therefore, anticipating guilt does not appear to deter anticipated happiness from choice for those who chose to engage in consumption.

The results provide an opportunity to revisit the conceptual distinction between experienced and anticipated emotions. We should note that affective forecasting is distinct from experienced affect. Anticipated emotions are cognitions about how one is likely to feel in the future. A rather constructive consequence of experienced guilt (e.g., motivation to undo the error) may exert less influence when anticipated. In the same way, shame can exert a more powerful influence when anticipated than when experienced in the context of self-control. Anticipating negative consequences of shame such as passivity and desire to escape and hide can serve as a more powerful means to regulate impulses. We weigh the emotional consequences of the events and direct our motivation and behavior in line with our affective prediction.

Interestingly, while shame is a far more intense negative emotion than guilt, anticipating future feelings of shame could potentially decrease the likelihood of experiencing future negative feelings by increasing self-control. Notably though, one wonders about the effects of anticipating shame on outcomes like depression or self-hatred when hedonic choice is rendered despite anticipated shame. In this sense, anticipating shame from consumption may make consumers more vulnerable to negative feelings and self-hatred.

Another limitation concerns the fact that we did not assess how much guilt or shame consumers in the control condition anticipated. It is possible that consumers in this condition naturally anticipated guilt (or shame). This might explain lack of difference in results between the control and the anticipated guilt conditions.

The results of our study provide several opportunities for extension. Anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1946) classifies cultures according to whether they use shame or guilt to regulate the social activities of their members. She posits that some Asian cultures are considered shame cultures whereas European and modern American cultures are considered to be guilt cultures. Future research might investigate cross-cultural differences anticipating shame vs. guilt has on self-control.

The results of our study, while intriguing, are limited by virtue of the fact that self-control was assessed in terms of self-reports of choice likelihood. A stronger test would examine whether the effects we observe here are observed in the context of actual choice. On the other hand, these results were obtained even though a
relatively non-powerful inducement—a photo of a chocolate cake (as opposed to an actual real-life temptation) was used as the stimulus (see Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999). Future research might examine the impact of anticipated shame and guilt in the context of real stimuli and actual choices. By comparing respondents’ behavioral responses of the current study with those using actual stimuli, we can tell how far off people can predict the behavior as a result of anticipated shame vs. guilt. Another interesting extension concerns the long-term impact of anticipated shame vs. guilt on self-control. Prior studies showed that self-regulatory strength can in fact be “worn out” like a muscle when mental efforts are prolonged (e.g., Muraven and Baumeister 2000; Schmeichel and Baumeister 2004). Considering that shame is a more powerful and intense emotion than guilt, anticipating shame over time may wear consumer’s self-regulatory resources out more easily than anticipating guilt. One wonders whether a greater self-control ability induced by anticipating shame in the short-term can be extended to the long-term. Anticipating shame may make one more vulnerable to relapse over the long term due to its intense mental efforts. The future research should examine the long-term impact of anticipated shame and guilt.

REFERENCES
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impacts of relational bonds on customer loyalty in various service encounters. Data were obtained from a sample of 621 Taiwanese customers in the securities industry. The findings are threefold. First, financial bonds have little impact on customer loyalty, social bonds create an intermediate impact on customer loyalty, and structural bonds have the greatest impact on customer loyalty. Second, social bonds influence customer loyalty more in person-to-person encounters than in interactive voice response systems or Internet encounters. Third, structural bonds affect customer loyalty more on the Internet than in person-to-person or interactive voice response system situations.

INTRODUCTION

Relationship marketing has emerged as a critical tool in the current marketing climate, where managers must seek new ways to create sustainable competitive advantage (Dibb and Meadows 2001). By emphasizing a focus on the ways that companies can build, develop, and maintain successful relational exchanges, relationship marketing represents an important means to build customer loyalty to an organization (Morris et al. 1999). Recently, a body of research surfaced that attempts to discern the types of bonds that enhance relationship marketing (e.g., Berry 1995; Peltier and Westfall 2000; Williams et al. 1998). These bonds have been categorized as financial (e.g., price incentives), social (e.g., interpersonal relationships), and structural (e.g., services that are designed into the system). However, despite the increasing importance of relationship marketing, the effects of these three relational bonds on customer loyalty have not been sufficiently studied empirically.

Service encounters, defined as the moment of interaction between a customer and a firm, are increasingly critical in all industries and may take place in an actual service setting, over the telephone, through the mail, or over the Internet (Bitner et al. 2000). Prior studies have recognized the importance of service encounters in creating and maintaining good relationships between service firms and their customers (e.g., Haring and Mattsson 1999). As customers and businesses interact over time, the opportunity rises for this aggregation of encounters to transform into an exchange relationship (Morgan and Chadha 1993).

Although it is increasingly evident that technological advances will continue to be critical components of customer–firm interactions, little is known about how interactions with such technological options affect customer evaluations and behavior (Meuter et al. 2000). In different service encounters, the ways that customers interact with a business may also differ. For example, customers must personally visit some service facilities and engage in interactions with employees for person-to-person encounters. Therefore, developing buyer–seller relationships through interpersonal interactions or friendships between customers and employees may be more useful for these customers. However, for Internet encounters, customers can easily access high-quality information from the Web site (Detlor 2003). Using a service-delivery system, rather than relying on the relationship-building skills of individual service providers, allows firms to customize their offerings and may also give customers greater satisfaction. Accordingly, to produce results that can be interpreted at a theoretical level, investigations must encompass a range of interfaces and consider the effectiveness of customer relationships in different encounters. In this study, we attempt to determine whether the impacts of relational bonds on customer loyalty differ for customers in person-to-person, interactive voice response system, and Internet encounters.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

Customer Loyalty

In Oliver’s (1999, p. 34) study, loyalty is defined as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future.” Customer loyalty is considered one of the several means by which a firm can build a sustainable competitive advantage. Loyalty plays an important role in influencing consumers’ repeat purchases (Jacoby and Kyner 1973) and creating substantial income for companies (Jones and Farquhar 2003). From a business perspective, structuring consumer retention mechanisms to enhance profits has become more important than ever.

Relational Bonds

Previous literature has indicated that a customer retention strategy can focus on three types of bonds: financial, social, and structural (Berry 1995). Subsequent studies, including Berry (1995), Peltier and Westfall (2000), and Williams et al. (1998), have adopted this typology to discuss the effects of such bonds.

Researchers have argued that one motivation for customers to engage in relational exchanges is money savings (e.g., Berry 1995; Gwinner et al. 1998). However, although financial bonds seem useful in securing customer loyalty, some researchers have suggested that these bonds belong at the lowest level of the relationship hierarchy because price is the most easily imitated element (e.g., Peltier and Westfall 2000; Zeithaml and Bitner 2003).

Social bonds are defined as personal ties pertaining to service dimensions that include interpersonal interaction, relationship building (Wilson 1995), and identifications (Turner 1970). From the customer perspective, a social bonding strategy benefits them significantly through strong service relationships (Gwinner et al. 1998). These social bonds positively influence customers’ emotions or feelings associated with the service experience and contribute to the formation of the affective component of attitude, all of which are salient aspects of intimate, high-quality relationships (Thorbjørnsen et al. 2002). Therefore, though social bonds alone may not bind a customer permanently to a company, they will ultimately prove more difficult for competitors to imitate (Zeithaml and Bitner 2003). Some researchers (e.g., Berry 1995; Peltier and Westfall 2000) in turn suggest that social bonds sit at the intermediate level in the relationship hierarchy and help companies protect against competitive pricing pressures.

Finally, Berry (1995, p. 241) suggests that marketers practice relationship marketing, which depends on structural bonds when “the solution to the customer’s problem is designed into the service-delivery system.” The structural bonds “offer target customers value-adding benefits that are difficult or expensive for customers to provide and that are not readily available elsewhere” (Berry
1995, p. 240). From the industrial marketing perspective, Turnbull and Wilson (1989, p. 233) argue that effective structural bonds “create value to the customer and either require investment by the buyer that cannot be salvaged if the relationship ends or may be expensive if the buyer must supply this service themselves if they change sources.” Accordingly, structural bonds refer to the value-adding services that are contained in the service-delivery system, including knowledge and information about the industry and product customization; that are not readily available elsewhere; and that are expensive for customers to supply if they terminate the relationship.

In addition, because customers regard the provision of information, knowledge, and goods/services by the business and their participation in this provision as a mutual relationship investment and adaptation, these valuable services forge customer loyalty by creating a psychological barrier to terminating the relationship (Wilson 1995). In turn, some studies suggest that structural bonds belong in the highest level of the hierarchy of relational bonds (Peltier and Westfall 2000). Accordingly, we propose that:

\[ H1_a: \text{ The positive impact of social bonds on customer loyalty will be greater than that of financial bonds.} \]

\[ H1_b: \text{ The positive impact of structural bonds on customer loyalty will be greater than that of social bonds.} \]

**The Role of the Type of Service Encounter**

Prior studies have demonstrated the importance of service encounters to businesses. For example, encounters affect critical outcomes such as customers’ intention to repurchase, relationship quality, and loyalty (Bitner et al. 2000). A service encounter, defined as a period of time during which customers interact directly with a service (Loveland 2001), may take place in an actual service setting, over the telephone, through the mail, or even over the Internet (Bitner et al. 2000).

Prior research about service encounters focused on person-to-person encounters or interpersonal interactions (Morgan and Chada 1993). However, to reduce costs and improve customers’ convenience, many companies have redesigned their customer flows. Instead of encouraging situations where customers deal with the company representative in a person-to-person setting, these companies encourage lower contact levels where customers have remote contact with company representatives (Loveland 2001). Accordingly, recent research has investigated person-to-machine encounters (e.g., Bitner et al. 2000; Meuter et al. 2000).

In all of these settings, the same three types of bonds may apply to the company’s attempts to retain its long-term customer relationships. Because financial bonds are easily imitated and do not offer any differences with competitors in the long run (Peltier and Westfall 2000), we omit any discussion of their effects on customer loyalty across service encounters.

Social bonds, however, may affect customers in these types of encounters (i.e., person-to-person, interactive voice response system, and Internet) differently. In person-to-machine encounters, customers obtain services primarily through self-service technologies, which, according to Sauer and Burton (1999), are hard-to-reproduce social elements. In Donthu and Garcia’s (1999) study, they reveal that Internet shoppers’ socioeconomic, motivational, and attitudinal characteristics differ from those of non-Internet shoppers; furthermore, decreased pressure from salespeople contributes to why consumers make online purchases (GUV 1997). In this context, interactive voice response systems are easily accessible and provide timely information, but they seldom offer interpersonal interaction or friendship elements to customers. Similarly, in a virtual environment, though the interactivity of the Internet can initiate a two-way conversation, online shoppers are hampered by the lack of personal contact inherent in remote transactions (Croft 1998). In summary, though e-retailers may build social bonds with individual customers through personalized e-mails or customer-to-customer interactions and friendships (Zeithaml and Bitner 2003), many consumers may still prefer the social component of a service encounter.

Because repeated interactions between customers and service suppliers help customers assess the service firm’s credibility and benevolence (Donney and Cannon 1997), more interactions may lead to an emotional attachment through the customer’s developing a sense of mutual trustworthiness. Therefore, social bonds that stress interpersonal interactions may be more useful for customers in person-to-person encounters than in person-to-machine encounters. In turn, we posit that

\[ H2: \text{ The effect of social bonds on customer loyalty is moderated by the types of customers in the service encounter, such that the effect is greater for customers of person-to-person encounters than for those of Internet and interactive voice response encounters.} \]

Finally, structural bonds also may affect customers of the three types of encounters differently. The development of electronic technologies has dramatically reduced the time and cost of information exchange, effectively linked processes, and enabled close integration of different parties in the value chain (Tang et al. 2001). Through the Internet, customers may receive personalized services (Wilson 1995). By building fast, well-structured hyperlinks with Web sites of strategic partners, businesses can also provide more integrated services to their customers, which may lead to improved customer loyalty.

In addition, online customers generally want to access product specifications, usage instructions, warranty information, and lists of products on sale (Burke 2002). They also want to be able to receive an e-mail message confirming that the order was received and shipped, and then track their shipment on the Web.

Compared to an Internet encounter, salespersons offer some similar benefits as they visit customers regularly to provide product information and resolve customer concerns, particularly in industries like financial services. From the customer’s perspective, however, structural bonds developed through salespeople are probably less timely and less convenient than Internet encounters. Similarly, though interactive voice response systems are easily accessible and provide timely information, they are not customized for each customer and are therefore likely to offer a weaker structural bond. Accordingly, we propose that the impact of structural bonds on customer loyalty is lower for customers in person-to-person encounters and interactive voice response systems than for those in Internet encounters. In turn, we posit that

\[ H3: \text{ The effect of structural bonds on customer loyalty is moderated by the type of customers in service encounter, such that the effect is greater for customers of the Internet encounter than those of person-to-person and interactive voice response encounters.} \]

**METHODODOLOGY**

**Sample**

To examine H1–H3, we conducted a field study in the securities industry in Taiwan. Questionnaires were distributed to one
thousand securities customers who experienced person-to-person, interactive voice response systems, and Internet encounters. To recruit respondents we used customer lists obtained from sponsor securities companies and employees of high-tech or service industries with experience in stock exchanges. A total of 621 responses were gathered, which represents a response rate of 62.1%. T-test results reveal there are no significant differences across these demographics between the two samples.

Each respondent was asked to select one of the three encounters he or she confronted most frequently. Then the respondent selected one securities company in the context of this type of encounter that he or she had patronized previously to purchase the good/service. Finally, the respondent indicated his or her perceptions of the company.

According to the received questionnaires, the sample of respondents consists of approximately the same percentage of women and men (50.1% and 49.9%, respectively), who range in age from 15 to 60 years. The sample sizes for the three types of encounters were as follows: 387 person-to-person encounters, 116 interactive voice response system encounters, and 118 Internet encounters.

**Measures**

We conducted three separate in-depth interviews with two entry-level managers in the securities industry to determine how they implemented their relationship strategies. From these investigations, we identified 20 measurement items that we categorized as financial (4 items such as “The company provides cumulative points programs” and “The company offers more rebates if I trade beyond a certain amount.”), social (7 items such as “The company is concerned with my needs,” “Service providers help resolve my problem even if it is not related to the business,” and “The company sends me greeting cards or gifts on special days.”), or structural (9 items such as “The company suggests suitable investment options according to my records and assets,” “The company integrates services from other sources to solve my problem,” and “The company provides professional knowledge in the financial area.”). Each item was scored on a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree).

We refined the instrument through a pilot test. We applied an item-to-total correlation analysis to find any items that needed to be dropped at this stage, but because we could not improve any alpha coefficients in the financial, social, or structural dimensions by deleting any items, we did not remove any.

The loyalty construct often is gauged by the relative attitude that a consumer has toward a company and his or her intention to purchase again from the same company (e.g., Jones and Farquhar 2003; Peltier and Westfall 2000). To measure the dependent variable of customer loyalty, we adopted three indicators in accordance with the literature: “I am willing to repurchase” (Peltier and Westfall 2000), “I am willing to purchase other products or services from this firm” (Sirohi et al. 1998), and “I am willing to recommend this firm to others” (Peltier and Westfall 2000). Again, respondents used a seven-point scale to respond to these items.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

**Reliability and Construct Validity**

To investigate the reliability of the scale, we computed the Cronbach’s alphas for the financial, social, and structural bonds as .85, .93, and .94, respectively. For the dependent variable of customer loyalty, the coefficient alpha was .83. These values suggest reasonable internal consistency.

To test the construct validity of the three relational bonds, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL 8.54. Although the $\chi^2$ values of the CFA models of the three relational bonds were 408 (d.f.=167, $p<.05$), the $\chi^2$/d.f., CFI, GFI, SRMR, and RMSEA were 2.48, .87, .86, .05, and .06, respectively. These latter values suggest an adequate fit of the model to the data.

Furthermore, convergent and discriminant validity should be examined for construct validity, which is supported when the average variance extracted (AVE) between the constructs and their measures is greater than .50 (Fornell and Larcker 1981) and the loading on the hypothesized construct is significant. Here, the AVEs for the financial, social, and structural factors were .59, .64, and .68, respectively, and the factor loadings were all significant at $p<.05$. Thus, convergent validity is supported. The AVE value also can be used to assess discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981); discriminant validity is supported if the AVE for each factor and its measures is greater than the square of the estimated correlation between factors. Discrimination was evident in this study because the largest shared variance among the three factors (.46) was less than the lowest AVE value for each factor and its measures (.59).

**Relationship between Relational Bonds and Customer Loyalty**

To investigate the impacts of the three relational bonds on customer loyalty, we calculated composite scores for each bond by summing its measurement items. These composite (or simple factor) scores often are highly correlated with factor scores obtained by the more complex least squares and regression methods (Johnson and Wichern 1992). In addition, the variance inflation factors (VIF) values were much below the threshold of 10. Therefore, the effects of multicollinearity can be ignored in this study. We then conducted a regression using customer loyalty as a dependent variable and the three relational bonds as predictors. The results indicate that the structural bond and the social bond significantly influence customer loyalty ($\beta$=.50 and .18, $p<.05$), whereas the financial bond has an insignificant impact on customer loyalty ($\beta$=.05, $p>.05$). Therefore, H$_1$ is supported.

To further investigate whether the unstandardized regression coefficients of structural bonds and social bonds (which were significantly greater than 0) can be treated as equal, we conducted a t-test. The results indicate that the coefficient of the structural bonds is significantly larger than that of the social bonds ($t=3.81$, $p<.05$), in support of H$_1$b. As we have already discussed, the insignificant financial bond effect may reflect the ease with which competitors can imitate a financial bond strategy (Berry 1995).

Virtually every securities company provides financial bonds to its customers, which decreases their effectiveness. In addition, we find that structural bonds are the most effective in enhancing customer loyalty, in line with Berry’s (1995) suggestion that structural bonds create strong foundations for customer relationships.

Furthermore, to examine the moderating effects of the service encounters, we tested H$_2$–H$_3$ through hierarchical regression analyses, with customer loyalty as the dependent variable and a specific relational bond as the predictor. We employed hierarchical regression analyses in which we mean centered all the variables to reduce the risk of multicollinearity. If there is a significant change in $R^2$ when the interaction between a relational bond and the encounter is added, moderation is supported (Arnold 1982). In this study, because our service encounter variable has three levels (i.e., person-to-person, interactive voice response system, and Internet), we code two dummy variables that provide qualitative information.

In table 1, we report a series of hierarchical models for H$_2$–H$_3$. Moderation is supported for social ($\Delta R^2=.012$, $p<.05$) and structural ($\Delta R^2=.01$, $p<.05$) bonds; moderation is not supported for financial bonds ($\Delta R^2=.002$, $p>.05$).

To further investigate whether a specific relational bond has a differential impact on loyalty for a specific encounter, we tested
three separate regression models with customer loyalty as the dependent variable and each type of relational bond as the predictor for three different encounters. To avoid the issues related to high levels of multicollinearity among independent variables, which make it difficult to draw inferences about regression estimates, we determined whether the data fit the condition of multicollinearity prior to the regression. The variance inflation factors values ranged from 1.52 to 2.29 and thus are below the suggested threshold of 10. Therefore, the effects of multicollinearity can be ignored in this study.

Table 2 also indicates the relationships between the three relational bonds and customer loyalty during different encounters. The social bond has a significantly positive impact on customer loyalty in Internet encounters (β=.26, p<.05), in support of H2. The structural bond has the greatest impact on customer loyalty in Internet encounters (β=.63, p<.05). To investigate the significance of H3, we also compare the unstandardized regression coefficients between structural bonds and customer loyalty across service encounters (Arnold 1982). The results indicate that the impact of structural bonds on loyalty is significantly higher in Internet than in person-to-person (p<.05) or interactive voice response systems (p<.05) encounters in one-tailed tests. H3 is therefore supported. Because the Internet provides an inexpensive means to search, organize, and disseminate complete, relevant, timely, up-to-date, and accessible information, it may be more effective for companies to deliver structural bonds to customers through Internet encounters.

DISCUSSION

Service encounters constitute critical moments of truth where a firm leaves an indelible impression on the customer (Bitner et al. 2000). Recently, because growing numbers of customers are interacting with self-service technologies rather than employees to create service outcomes, Meuter et al. (2000) suggested that research should compare the underlying differences in how customers respond to telephone- versus Internet-based self-service technologies. We responded to this suggestion by investigating the impacts of the three relational bonds on loyalty for customers in different types of encounters.

The empirical results indicate that financial bonds have no significant impact on loyalty for customers in any type of encounter. Social bonds, however, have a significantly positive impact on customer loyalty, but only in person-to-person encounters. Finally, structural bonds are effective in gaining customer loyalty in every type of encounter, though they are more useful in Internet situations than in other types of encounters. This finding suggests that e-tailers should leverage structural bonds to strengthen their customers’ loyalty.

Managerial Implications

Loyal customers buy more, are willing to spend more, are easier to reach, and act as enthusiastic advocates for firms (Harris and Goode 2004). The results of this study therefore provide some key strategic implications for managers, especially those in the securities industry, who seek to build customer loyalty.

Identify the nature of the bonds between consumers and businesses. When there is effectively none or little difference between suppliers, customer switching is very possible because one service or supplier is essentially equivalent to another (Turnbull and Wilson 1989). If, as recent research argued, the main purpose of managing customers is to improve long-term profitability, businesses must identify their most profitable customers and strengthen those relationships through relational bonds. Therefore, understanding the key factors that bond customers to firms is important for

### TABLE 1
RESULTS OF HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Total R²</th>
<th>ΔR²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Financial bond and service encounters</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.109*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>With financial bond x service encounters</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social bond and service encounters</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>.287*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>With social bond x service encounters</td>
<td>.299</td>
<td>.012*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Structural bond and service encounters</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>.380*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>With structural bond x service encounters</td>
<td>.390</td>
<td>.010*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05.

### TABLE 2
RESULTS OF STANDARDIZED REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Encounters Variables</th>
<th>Overall Sample</th>
<th>Person-to-Person Encounter</th>
<th>Interactive Voice Response System</th>
<th>Internet Encounter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial bonds</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>- .02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social bonds</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural bonds</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.63**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F value</td>
<td>82.34**</td>
<td>61.65**</td>
<td>7.01**</td>
<td>19.42**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<.05.
customer loyalty efforts and, in turn, for businesses’ profit. Managers and employees must be aware of the three types of relationship strategies to enhance customer loyalty. According to the results of this study, structural bonds are the most effective and financial bonds are the least effective ways to enhance customer loyalty overall.

Differentiate relational bonds in service encounters. Traditionally, research about service encounters has focused on person-to-person encounters. However, to reduce costs and achieve greater customer convenience, many companies have turned to person-to-machine encounters. The results of our study indicate that customers in person-to-person encounters find both social and structural bonds useful; however, the structural bond is the most effective for those in the Internet encounters. According to Garvin (1987), managers tend to employ only a few strategies in their drive to compete with other companies, so these findings should help companies identify attributes that they should prioritize in their encounters with their customers.

Develop marketing investment and training programs that lead to customer loyalty in different encounters. The careful development of a relationship investment strategy makes a company more venerable to attack from competitors (Turnbull and Wilson 1989), but careful allocation of the marketing budget can be planned according to the results of this study. For example, a business might use the measurement items developed in this research to benchmark its relationship activities with those of competitors and identify comparative strengths and weaknesses from a customer standpoint. The company then could develop a bonding strategy based on the customers that appear in each type of encounter. For example, customers in person-to-person encounters place a great deal of importance on personal ties, so the company should invest more to develop personal ties with this group. However, for customers in an Internet situation, value-added services should constitute the primary investments the company uses to manage its customer relationships. The business might focus on building technologies that record customer preferences and then provide detailed information and customized services to them.

Future Research Directions

Additional research might take some of the following directions. First, further research might study the problems of cross-channels in different buying stages. To enhance customer loyalty, firms likely use a combination of relational bonds at different customer decision stages. For example, customers may use the Internet to search for information but eventually make the purchase from local brick-and-mortar stores. Alternatively, a salesperson might send an e-mail to a customer to provide relevant information before his or her visit to the store, or Web sites might offer contact information for service/sales personnel, which interested customers can use. Therefore, research should investigate the effects of a combination of relational bonds and service encounters at different buying stages.

Second, some studies have suggested that organizations should analyze the position of their customers according to a continuum of transactional to collaborative exchanges and then apply transactional or relational marketing to those customers on the basis of their orientation (e.g., Garbarino and Johnson 1999). Therefore, further research might examine the relationship between the three relational bonds and customer loyalty for low versus high relational customers. For example, might social bonds be more effective in developing customer loyalty than using structural bonds for newer customers?

Third and finally, Hofstede (1980) proposes four dimensions of culture: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, and masculinity/femininity. The primary characteristic of Chinese culture appears to be a more collectivistic orientation, whereas North American culture is typically characterized as individualistic (Hofstede, 1980; Williams et al. 1998). According to Williams et al. (1998), structural bonds have a greater influence on customer commitment in individualistic countries than in collectivistic countries, whereas social bonds are more significant for collectivistic countries than for individualistic countries. Although this article sheds light on how different types of relational bonds affect customer loyalty in the Taiwan securities industry, additional research should also examine the generalizability of our results to other countries—possibly those considered more individualistic—and compare the results with this study.

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ABSTRACT

Oliver (1997) suggests a four-stage loyalty model proposing that loyalty consists of belief, affect, intentions, and action. Although this model has recently been subject to empirical examination, the issue of moderator variables has been largely neglected. This article fills that void by analyzing the moderating effects of switching barriers, using a sample of 589 customers of a large do-it-yourself (DIY) retailer. The results suggest that these moderators exert an influence on the development of the different stages of the loyalty sequence. Specifically, switching costs, social benefits, and the attractiveness of alternatives are found to be important moderators of the links in the four-stage loyalty model.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Until the 1970’s, loyalty was understood as repeat purchase behavior, primarily considering repeat purchase cycles (Bass 1974). Following that, a behavioral approach toward explaining purchase patterns emerged. Among the first proponents of such a behavioral approach was Jacoby (1973, 1978). Loyalty was defined as a biased (nonrandom) repeat purchase of a specific brand (from a set of alternatives) over time by a consumer, using a deliberate evaluation process (Jacoby and Kyner 1973). Later, Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) note that the belief, affect, and intention structure of a consumer must be examined in order to analyze loyalty.

Despite these seminal works, there is still no universal agreement on the definition of loyalty (Dick and Basu 1994; Jacoby and Chestnut 1978; Oliver 1999; Uncles, Dowling, and Hammond 2003). According to Uncles et al. (2003), three popular conceptualizations of loyalty exist: loyalty as an attitude that leads to a relationship with the brand; loyalty expressed mainly in terms of perceived performance as the ultimate goal may be more important than achieving customer satisfaction (Agustin and Singh 2005). Obviously, the link between customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and financial outcome is not as straightforward as it may seem (Carroll 1991; Carroll and Rose 1993; Reinartz and Kumar 2000). Yet researchers and managers acknowledge that small changes in loyalty and retention can yield disproportionately large changes in profitability (Reichheld 1993; Reichheld, Markey, and Hopton 2000; Reichheld and Teal 1996).

Despite this obvious managerial relevance, earlier research primarily analyzed the link between satisfaction ratings and repurchase intention. Few studies have examined the link between satisfaction ratings and repurchase behavior (Mittal and Kamaka 2001; Zeithaml 2000). Adding to that stream of research, Seiders et al. (2005) summarize and extend the literature by proposing that the relationship between satisfaction and repurchase behavior is moderated by customer, relational, and marketplace characteristics. Only recently, has Oliver’s (1997) four-stage loyalty model been subject to more extensive empirical testing (Evanschitzky and Hirt 2005). Our study adds to that stream of research by (1) discussing the links between the four loyalty stages and (2) identifying switching barriers as potential moderators of these links.

In the following article, we briefly discuss earlier conceptualizations of the loyalty construct. Oliver’s (1997, 1999) framework of the four-stages of loyalty is then introduced. The focus of analysis is on switching barriers as moderator variables which affect the links between the adjacent loyalty stages. A set of hypotheses is derived and subsequently tested, using a sample of 589 customers of a large DIY retailer. In the final section of the article, we discuss implications of our findings, with a focus on generating a deeper understanding of loyalty.
tive loyalty (Bitner 1990). Oliver (1997) defines satisfaction as “the consumer’s fulfillment response, the degree to which the level of fulfillment is pleasant or unpleasant.” Affective loyalty is also subject to deterioration, caused primarily by an increased attractiveness of competitive offerings (Sambandam and Lord 1995) and an enhanced liking for competitive brands. This can be, for instance, conveyed through imagery and association used in competitive communications (Oliver 1999).

Conative Loyalty

Conative loyalty implies that attitudinal loyalty must be accompanied by a desire to intend an action, for example repurchase a particular brand. It is stronger than affective loyalty, but has vulnerabilities as well. Repeated delivery failures are a particularly strong factor in diminishing conative loyalty. Consumers are more likely to try alternative offerings if they experience frequent service failures. Even though the consumer is conatively loyal, he has not developed the resolve to avoid considering alternative offerings (Oliver 1999).

Action Loyalty

Action control studies imply that not all intentions are transformed into action (Kuhl and Beckmann 1985). The three previous loyalty states may result in a readiness to act (in this case, to buy). This readiness is accompanied by the consumer’s willingness to search for the favorite offering despite considerable effort necessary to do so. Competitive offerings are not considered as alternatives.

Despite the many attempts to consider selected links between different loyalty phases, relatively little empirical research has been conducted on testing the total four-stage loyalty model. Our study tries to fill that void by empirically testing Oliver’s (1997) loyalty model and possible moderators affecting the links between the loyalty phases in a retail setting.

SWITCHING BARRIERS AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY

In the last decade, a substantial body of research has been conducted to investigate moderating variables influencing the formation of customer loyalty (Bloemer and Kasper 1995; Homburg and Giering 2001; Homburg, Giering, and Menon 2003). In this context, some studies focus explicitly on the moderating effects of switching barriers (Bell, Auh, and Smalley 2005; Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty 2000; Lam et al. 2004). Switching barriers are defined as ‘any factor, which makes it more difficult or costly for consumers to change providers’ (Jones et al. 2000). In line with the literature (Caruana 2003; Jones et al. 2000), we examine the following switching barriers: social benefits, attractiveness of alternatives, and perceived switching costs.

Social Benefits

Customers build interpersonal relationships with service personnel. These bonds between the customers and the firm result in the former receiving social benefits (Berry and Parasuraman 1991). The same interactions can lead consumers to develop strong personal relationships with the company (Grönroos 1990; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1985) and bind customers (Bateson and Hoffman 1999). As interactions between provider employees and customers are repeated over time, the motivation for the development of a social aspect to the relationship necessarily increases (Czepiel, Solomon, and Suprenant 1985). In addition, the more customers rely on the personnel, and the more trust the customers develop, the less risky customers perceive variations in quality. Therefore the customers will not seek alternatives to their current provider, even if quality varies. Hence, consumers with higher social bonds rely more on past experiences with a particular retailer as a key information cue. Since it is riskier to switch a provider and to try something new, customers with lower social bonds should be less likely to remain affectively loyal if their satisfaction levels change. Empirical evidence in the context of loyalty shows that social benefits moderate the relationship between various aspects of satisfaction and selected measures of loyalty. For instance, Jones et al. (2000) found that the relationship between satisfaction and repurchase behavior is moderated by social benefits. Similarly, Crosby, Evans, and Cowles (1990) offer some support for such a moderating effect. They were able to demonstrate that the quality of the relationship between salesperson and the customer determines the probability of continued interchange. Holloway (2003) discusses social bonds as switching barriers, which especially influence the relationship between the perception of service quality and satisfaction. Based on these findings, a moderating effect of social benefits on the four-stage loyalty model can be assumed.

H1: As perceived social benefits increase, the link between cognitive and affective loyalty will become stronger.

Attractiveness of Alternatives

Depending on the quality of competing alternatives, the customer perceives a benefit in changing the provider (Oliver 1997). The more attractive the alternatives are, the higher the perceived benefits when switching (Jones et al. 2000). Therefore, consumers are likely to switch once they perceive alternative offerings as being superior with respect to the cost-benefit ratio (Kalyanaram and Little 1994; Sivakumar and Raj 1997). There is also empirical evidence from Rusult, Zembrodt, and Gunn (1982), reporting that the quality of alternatives is associated positively with exiting and negatively with loyalty. In addition to possible direct effects of attractiveness of alternatives on loyalty, moderating effects can be anticipated: In line with Oliver (1997), it can be expected that the link between cognitive and affective loyalty will be stronger under the condition of unattractive alternatives. Hence:

H2a: As the attractiveness of competing alternatives decreases, the link between cognitive and affective loyalty will become stronger.

Furthermore, the deterioration of loyalty at the conative stage of Oliver’s (1997) model is caused primarily by an increased attractiveness of competitive offerings (Sambandam and Lord 1995). Conversely, the less attractive the alternatives, the more favorably consumers perceive the offers of its current provider (Jacoby, Speller, and Kohn 1974). Consumers who generally prefer shopping at a certain retailer might therefore differ in their intention to repurchase, depending on the perception of the attractiveness of alternatives. In line with Oliver (1997), we conclude:

H2b: As the attractiveness of competing alternatives decreases, the link between affective and conative loyalty will become stronger.

Perceived Switching Costs

In many instances, customers are loyal to a provider, because of the difficulty of changing to a different firm. In accordance with Jones et al. (2000), switching is likely to involve various behavioral and psychological aspects, given that switching costs include the time, money and effort the customer perceives, when changing...
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from one provider to another, more specifically, they entail search
and learning costs (Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty 2002). The
consumers already know the routines of their current provider,
acting as a kind of specific investment, whereas these investments
were lost when changing to another provider. Switching costs can
affect loyalty, such as with increasing perceived costs of an activity,
the probability of a consumer acting that way diminishes.

The impact of switching costs on loyalty has received rela-
tively little attention in the literature (Burnham, Frels, and Mahajan
that the analysis of switching costs can provide a basis for brand
loyalty. There is empirical evidence that higher switching costs
positively influence customer loyalty (Burnham et al. 2003). Fur-
thermore, switching costs are believed to moderate the link between
satisfaction and repurchase intention (Jones et al. 2002). Therefore,
in addition to the possible direct effects, we believe that switching
costs moderate the link between conative loyalty and action loyalty.
Comparing two consumers who intend to purchase at a certain
retailer, with one perceiving high switching costs while the other
does not, the “locked-in” customer is much more likely to purchase
at that retailer, since the consumer is faced with additional time
and effort associated with a change. Switching costs explicitly foster
transfering intentions into action–as suggested by the theory of
planned behavior–instead of influencing earlier stages of the four-
stage loyalty model (Bansal and Taylor 2002). Hence, the link
between conative and action loyalty is stronger for customers
perceiving higher switching costs. This reasoning is again consis-
tent with that of Oliver (1997), who noted that key sustainers of
action loyalty are, in fact, sunk costs, and actual purchase will be
more likely for consumers faced with sunk costs, as opposed to
those with no sunk costs which are associated with switching. In this
respect, switching costs might serve as an aid to transform intention
into action. Therefore, we expect:

H3: As perceived switching costs increase, the link between
conative and action loyalty will become stronger.

Figure 1 summarizes the conceptual model of our study and
the hypotheses we derived.

METHOD

Data Collection Procedure and Sample

We drew our sample for a retailer in the German DIY market
in the summer of 2005. This retail market is highly competitive,
with the top ten retailers accounting for roughly 80% of total sales.
The retailer in our study is quite representative for this market in
terms of size and success. We randomly selected 2,500 customers
of that retailer and mailed them questionnaires with pre-paid return
envelops. To avoid any bias, the return envelops were addressed to
the researchers’ university. A total of 589 respondents send back
usable questionnaires, resulting in a satisfactory response rate of
23.6%. Comparing early and late responses, as suggested by
Armstrong and Overton (1981), no signs of non-response bias were
found.

Since the data for dependent and independent variables were
obtained from the same respondents, there is a possibility of
common method bias (CMB). We applied the methods suggested
by Podsakoff et al. (2003) to test for CMB, particularly the “single-
method-factor approach.” We estimated the model with a single-
method first-order factor added to the indicators of the constructs.
The results reveal that even with common-method variance con-
trolled, fit-indices and the proportion of variance explained were almost unchanged in both models, and all path coefficients remain significant. Therefore, we conclude that CMB is not a significant issue in our study.

Analysis

We use multi-group structural equation modeling to test our hypotheses. Median-splits based on the values of the moderator variables were used to create the groups. Testing for moderation, we first looked at a non-restricted model and then restricted three paths in the four stage loyalty model so that they are equal across subgroups. Chi-square differences with three degrees of freedom (critical chi-square value (df=3; p=.05): 7.81) were assessed. After confirming a general moderating effect, we compared two models that only differ in one effect of one loyalty stage to the next, as suggested by our hypotheses. One model restricts the parameter so as to be equal across groups, while the second model allows variation in one of these parameters across groups. The restricted model has one more degree of freedom than the general model. A moderating effect would be present when the improvement in chi-square, moving for the restricted to the non-restricted model is significant, meaning the chi-square difference between the two models (and one degree of freedom) is larger than 3.84 (p=.05).

Measures

A conceptualization and items for measuring the constructs were developed, drawing on prior research in the loyalty literature. Except for attractiveness of alternatives, multi-item seven-point Likert scales (anchored at 1=strongly agree, 7=strongly disagree) adapted from previous studies were used.

**Cognitive Loyalty.** Cognitive loyalty was defined and measured as evaluation of perceived value associated with the retail outlet. In accordance with the operationalization of Verhoef, Langerak, and Donkers (2004), Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol (2002) and Baker et al. (2002), the respondents were asked to rate the perceived value.

**Affective Loyalty.** Affective loyalty was defined as a person’s global affect evaluation or feeling state. As proposed by Oliver (1997), we used “Overall Satisfaction” and “Liking” to cover affective loyalty.

**Conative Loyalty.** Conative loyalty was defined as a customer’s behavioral intention to continue buying at a retail store in the future, accompanied by a deep commitment to that store. The scale was adapted from the behavioral intention battery developed by Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996), and included the items: willingness to recommend, and repurchase intention.

**Action Loyalty.** Action loyalty focuses on (purchase) behavior. Hence, we do not focus on attitudes such as an intention to purchase or intention to overcome an obstacle. In accordance with Harris and Goode’s (2004), we operationalize “action loyalty” as displayed choice preference, and not as “overcoming obstacle.” The most common assessments of behavioral loyalty are repurchasing patterns or behavioral frequency like word-of-mouth behavior, purchase frequency, and actual money spent per year, as used here.

**Attraction of Alternatives.** The attractiveness of alternatives was measured with one item, accounting for the evaluation of existing alternatives. Research in the field of neuron science has shown that the first choice is a good indicator for evaluating the attractiveness of alternative brands (Deppe et al. 2005).

**Social Benefit.** The social benefits measure was adapted from Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, and Gremler (2002), measuring the social benefits resulting from interpersonal relationships with the service personnel.

Switching Costs. Finally, the switching costs measure, adapted from Jones et al. (2000), captures costs across a variety of dimensions and focuses on the overall perceptions of time, money, and effort associated with changing providers.

Measurement reliability was examined through confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

It can be noted that the coefficient alpha exceeds .7, the threshold generally proposed in the literature (Nunnally 1978). Also, composite reliabilities exceed .6 for all constructs (Bagozzi and Yi 1988). The discriminant validity of the constructs was assessed using the criterion proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and this criterion was met. Therefore, reliability and validity of the constructs in this study are acceptable.

RESULTS

Firstly, it is evident that the links between the various stages of the loyalty model are all significant (p<.01) and the model displays a good overall fit ($\chi^2$/df=4.312; CFI=.941; TLI=.926; SRMR=.073; RMSEA=.078). Therefore, we can continue analyzing the moderating effects.

After confirming the influence of the main effects in the model, we tested for moderator effects. A chi-square difference test was conducted for the three possible moderator effects, comparing a restricted and a non-restricted model. As can be seen, “attractiveness of alternatives” (at .01-level) and “switching costs” (at .05-level) have a significant, general moderating effect on all links in the loyalty model, whereas “social benefits” displays only a week moderating effect at .1-level. Nevertheless, we continue analyzing the specific moderator effects suggested by our hypotheses.

As can be seen from table 4, each moderator only moderates one link in the loyalty model. “Attractiveness of alternatives” moderates the link between affective and conative loyalty, “social benefits” moderates the link between cognitive and affective loyalty, and “switching costs” moderates the link between conative and action loyalty.

Hence, three of four hypothesized moderating effects in the four-stage loyalty model were supported by these findings. It only seems that only “attractiveness of alternatives” fails to moderate the link between cognitive and affective loyalty as hypothesized in H2a. Furthermore, a smaller random sample of 250 respondents confirmed these results.1

DISCUSSION, LIMITATION, FURTHER RESEARCH

Gaining customer loyalty is less straightforward and more complex than several previous studies have suggested. Using Oliver’s (1997) model of loyalty, it is not until a customer shows high consistency through the four distinct stages that loyalty is achieved. In such case, customers possess not only a stable disposition but also a stable, routine purchase pattern, making them relatively resistant to competitive offers. Therefore, examining moderator variables of the links in the four-stage loyalty model leads to a clearer understanding of how to build loyalty.

The results of our empirical study suggest that there are in indeed moderator variables that display conditions under which a customer moves from one loyalty stage to the next. In particular, high perceived social benefits from a relationship with a retailer are likely to turn cognitively loyal customers into affectively loyal customers. If the attractiveness of alternatives is relatively low, a customers liking (affective loyalty) of a particular retailer can be

1We thank one anonymous reviewer for suggesting this test.
TABLE 1
DESCRIPTION OF ITEMS USED TO MEASURE THE CONSTRUCTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale/Item</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Composite Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Loyalty (Baker et al. 2002; Sirdeshmukh et al. 2002; Verhoef et al. 2004)*</td>
<td>.862</td>
<td>.869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. How would you rate your overall shopping experience at this store?  
2. The quality/price ratio with the dealer is good (merchandise).  
3. The quality/price ratio with dealer is good (service).  
4. For the time you spent in order to shop at this store, would you say shopping at this store is highly reasonably/highly unreasonable?  
5. For the effort involved in shopping at this store, would you say shopping at this store is not at all worthwhile/very worthwhile?  
6. The store is attractive.  
7. For the prices you pay for DIY-items at this store, would you say shopping at this store is a very poor deal/very good deal? | | | |
| Affective Loyalty (Bettencourt 1997; Oliver 1997)* | .883 | .885 | .720 |
| 1. Based on all my experience with this store, I am very satisfied.  
2. My shopping experiences at this store have always been pleasant.  
3. Compared to other stores, I am very satisfied with this store. | | | |
| Conative Loyalty (Zeithaml et al. 1996)* | .804 | .802 | .670 |
| 1. Repurchase intention  
2. Word-of-mouth intention | | | |
| Action Loyalty (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder, and Iacobucci 2001) | .850 | .858 | .673 |
| 1. How often do you buy DIY things in this store compared to other stores where you buy DIY things?*  
2. What percentage of your total expenditures for DIY do you spend in this store?**  
3. Of the 10 times you select a store to buy DIY at, how many times do you select this store?*** | | | |
| MODERATORS | | | |
| Switching Costs (Jones et al. 2000)* | .863 | .932 | .870 |
| 1. In general, it would be a hassle changing DIY-retailers.  
2. It takes me a great deal of time and effort to get used to a new company. | | | |
| Social Benefits (Henning-Thurau et al. 2002)* | .848 | .958 | .635 |
| 1. This store offers high-quality service.  
2. Customers could expect to be treated well in this shop.  
3. Employees of this store could be expected to give customers personal attention.  
4. This store’s employees would be willing to help customers.  
5. Employees of this store would not be too busy to respond to customers’ requests promptly. | | | |
| Attractiveness of Alternatives* | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1. This store will be my first choice for my DIY needs. | | | |

* Measured using seven-point Likert scales anchored by 1=strongly agree; 7=strongly disagree.  
** Measured in percentage of total expenditures.  
*** Measured in times of selection.
transformed into a strong intention to repurchase. If retailers are able to create switching costs, those customers intended to purchase, are very likely to do their actual purchase at that retailer. Our results did not, however, find a moderating effect of the attractiveness of alternatives on the link between cognitive and affective loyalty. A possible explanation could be that both satisfaction and liking are still just attitudes and consumers may not consider an actual purchase situation. However, we acknowledge that more research is needed to test this link in particular.

As with all empirical studies, our study suffers from limitations. First, our object of analysis was a particular retailer from one industry. Second, we analyzed data from one point in time only. By doing so, we assume there is no time-lag between a customer’s feeling of being satisfied and the attitudinal and behavioral consequences. Thirdly, we considered only linear relations between the four loyalty stages. However, as indicated in the literature (Anderson and Mittal 2000; Keiningham, Perkins-Munn, and Evans 2003), these relationships might in fact be curvilinear. Furthermore, some scholars are skeptical about the use of median split, due to the loss of information. Further research might consider alternative ways to split the sample in appropriate sub-samples. Moreover, we only use self-reported measures for the action loyalty. Furthermore, longitudinal data would further improve our understanding of the mechanisms influencing the link between satisfaction and loyalty in general, and the effect of certain moderators in particular.

**TABLE 2**
CORRELATION MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cognitive Loyalty</th>
<th>Affective Loyalty</th>
<th>Conative Loyalty</th>
<th>Action Loyalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Loyalty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.692</td>
<td>.622</td>
<td>.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Loyalty</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>.526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conative Loyalty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Loyalty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Variance Extracted</td>
<td>.571</td>
<td>.720</td>
<td>.670</td>
<td>.673</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3**
PATH COEFFICIENTS (“FOUR-STAGES OF LOYALTY”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four-Stages of Loyalty</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Affective Loyalty</td>
<td>.786*</td>
<td>.618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Conative Loyalty</td>
<td>.799*</td>
<td>.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conative Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Action Loyalty</td>
<td>.604*</td>
<td>.365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = .01-level.

**REFERENCES**
### TABLE 4
RESULTS OF MULTI-GROUP ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attractiveness of Alternatives</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta \chi^2$ (df=1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Affective Loyalty</td>
<td>.745</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>413.476</td>
<td>1.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Conative Loyalty</td>
<td>.808</td>
<td>.589</td>
<td>404.281</td>
<td>10.261***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conative Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Action Loyalty</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>413.489</td>
<td>1.053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\Delta \chi^2$ (df=3): 12.654***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Benefits</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta \chi^2$ (df=1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Affective Loyalty</td>
<td>.644</td>
<td>.798</td>
<td>707.977</td>
<td>5.085**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Conative Loyalty</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>711.271</td>
<td>1.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conative Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Action Loyalty</td>
<td>.563</td>
<td>.569</td>
<td>713.062</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\Delta \chi^2$ (df=3): 6.437*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Switching Costs</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta \chi^2$ (df=1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Affective Loyalty</td>
<td>.777</td>
<td>.702</td>
<td>445.766</td>
<td>.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Conative Loyalty</td>
<td>.829</td>
<td>.716</td>
<td>445.617</td>
<td>.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conative Loyalty $\rightarrow$ Action Loyalty</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td>.581</td>
<td>439.056</td>
<td>6.841***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\Delta \chi^2$ (df=3): 7.836**

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*=.1-level.

**=.05-level.

***=.01-level.


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INTRODUCTION

The relevance of customer loyalty for company success is widely acknowledged in the literature as well as in practice (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Dick and Basu 1994; Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner 1998; Oliver 1999; Reichheld and Sasser 1990). While relationship marketing approaches have emphasized the importance of building personal relationships with their customers, the affective foundations of customer loyalty has received less attention and is less understood than the cognitive or rational basis of customer loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Fullerton 2003). However, initial studies could show that for customer loyalty the relative strength of affective loyalty antecedents is more significant as compared to normative or “rational” ones (Fullerton 2003, Evanschitzky and Plassmann 2005). Given the homogeneity of most of today’s product and service markets and other characteristics that may constrict the customer’s use of “rational” criteria for product evaluation, brand-induced affect may represent a global evaluation measure more readily used by customers as empirical evidences from neighboring disciplines suggest (e.g. Bechara et al. 1997; Bechara and Damasio 2005 and also Slovic, Finucane, Peters and MacGregor 2002, 2004; Yeung and Wyer 2005).

In this paper, we attempt to expand our understanding of the basis of emotional bonds customers built with companies and brands. Past research could show that people sometimes use affective reactions to a stimulus as information about its reward value (Schwarz and Clore 1988, Yeung and Wyer 2004). As recent studies on consumer decision-making propose that most information processing and, in particular, the processing of emotions is subconscious (see for reviews Bargh, 2002; Fitzsimons et al., 2002; Woodside, 2004; Zaltman, 2003) we followed the approaches from Ambler et al., Deppe et al., McClure et al. and Yoon et al. and employed functional brain imaging techniques to investigate the neural correlates of customer loyalty (Ambler, Braeutigam, Slins, Rose, & Swithenby, 2004; Deppe, Schwidt, Kugel, Plassmann & Kenning, 2005; McClure et al., 2004; Yoon, Gutchess, Feinberg, & Polk, 2006).

The paper is organized as follows. First, we review concepts of customer loyalty and the role of emotions within these concepts. Then, we provide a review of neuropsychological literature on the neural foundations of emotion-based decision-making and offer hypotheses on their implications for customer loyalty. In the following, we describe our empirical study and present our results. We conclude with implications for managers and suggestions for future research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Loyalty Concept

Historically, loyalty was understood as observable repurchase behavior. It was defined as a biased (nonrandom) repeat purchase of a specific brand (from a set of alternatives) over time by a consumer using a deliberate evaluation process (Jacoby and Kyner 1973). Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) later asserted that also psychological states of a consumer had to be examined to analyze loyalty. In accordance with this reasoning, customer loyalty has been defined by Oliver (1999) as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future.” The repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing would occur among loyal customers, despite situational influences and marketing efforts that could potentially enable switching behavior. Accordingly, commitment, i.e. the extent to which the customer desires to maintain a continued relationship with the firm or brand, is understood as the underlying psychological mechanism of loyalty (Allen and Meyer 1990; Morgan and Hunt 1994). Recently, customer commitment was found to be composed of different dimensions (Bansal, Irving, and Taylor 2004; Fullerton 2003). On the one hand, these are more rational aspects such as a lack of alternatives and institutional or technical requirements to use a specific product (Bendapudi and Berry 1997). On the other hand, these are affective aspects understood as an emotional attachment customers built with companies and brands (Fournier 1997; Fullerton 2003; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005).

In contrast to traditional studies we attempted here to gain complementing insights by separating behavioral and psychological aspects through the use of two different data sources. Firstly, we extracted “real” purchasing behavior from a club card database of a department store including customers’ monthly spending and number of purchase days within a period of 6 months. Secondly, we investigated the underlying psychological states by means of functional brain imaging. In the neuropsychological literature a great body of studies is devoted to the impact of emotions on behavior and decision-making (for reviews, see for example O’Doherty 2004; Schultz 2006). In the following we attempt to give an introductory overview about these studies.

Neuropsychological Background

One initial common conclusion relating to the neuropsychological foundations of decision-making refers to the role of emotion in human decision-making (e.g. Bechara 2004; Bechara and Damasio 2005; Bechara, Damasio, and Damasio 2004; Paulus 2005). It is suggested that “rational” or advantageous decision-making depends on prior emotional processing related to the specific decision parameters (Bechara et al. 1997). This notion is based on neurobiological evidence that seeking rewards and avoiding punishments guides the behavior of both, humans and animals (for reviews, see for example O’Doherty 2004; Schultz 2006). In constantly changing environments, it is necessary to adapt decision-making strategies by updating changes of reward contingencies. Thus, central to the organization of such behavior is the ability to estimate the reward value of stimuli, predict when rewards will occur and integrate these predictions into decision-making strategies.

Two areas found to be involved in the representation of rewards and punishments are the orbitofrontal cortex (OFC) and the amygdala. Human (O’Doherty, Kringlebch, Rolls, Hornak, Andrews 2001) and animal (Rolls, Sienkiewicz, Yaxley 1989) studies have confirmed the role of OFC in coding for stimulus reward from a variety of sensory modalities, such as taste (Kringlebch, O’Doherty, Rolls, and Andrews 2003), olfaction (Gottfried, Deichmann, Winston, Dolan 2002), somatosensory (Rolls, O’Doherty, Kringlebch, Francis, Bowtell McGlone 2003), auditory (Blood, Zatorre, Bermudez, Evans 1999), and vision...
(Aharon, Etcoff, Ariely, Chabris, O’Connor, Breiter 2001) as well as for more abstract rewards such as money (Elliott, Newman, Longe, Deakin 2003) or sports cars (Erk, Spitzer, Wunderlich, Galley, Walter 2002). Furthermore, various studies have revealed that the amygdala is involved in the processing of aversive (Morris et al. 1996) and pleasant (Canli et al. 2002) stimuli.

In most consumption decision situations, however, rewards are not received immediately, but at a later point in time and can be understood as a consequence of the decision. Thus, the ability to predict future rewards is crucial for consumer decision-making. Neuroimaging studies have found brain regions such as the amygdala, OFC, and striatum to be correlated with reward predictions (Gottfried, O’Doherty, and Dolan 2003; Knutson and Cooper 2005; O’Doherty et al. 2004; Schultz, Dayan, and Montague, 1997).

Then, the learning of stimulus-reward-response associations is required to integrate anticipated and experienced values into the decision-making process. Neuroscientific studies in this context have revealed that the dorsal striatum might play a crucial role in processing contingencies between responses and rewards (O’Doherty 2004; Zink et al. 2005). Additionally, areas of emotional memory such as the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC) need to be involved in order to retrieve rewarding memories and relate them to the stimulus (Bechara and Damasio 2005; Paulus 2005). In the context of consumption decisions an initial study by Deppe at al. could show that an activation network linking the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, the striatum and anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) is involved in brand preference judgments (Deppe, Schwindt, Kugel, Plassmann, Kenning 2005). Deppe et al. (2005) described the network as an affective and self-referencing path during brand choice. Against this background our hypothesis was that the underlying neural activation patterns of reward attribution to stimuli customers feel emotionally attached to would be similar to Deppe et al.’s findings.

Thus, we hypothesize:

H: During brand choice, loyal customers as compared to disloyal customer will show a greater activity in the striatum, VMPFC and ACC.

In the following, we describe our empirical study to test this hypothesis.

EMPIRICAL STUDY

The empirical study was designed to investigate differences in brain activity of loyal customers as compared to disloyal customers of a department store.

Participants and Study Design

A total of 300 customers of a local department store were chosen randomly from a department store’s club card database of which 22 (9 females, 13 males, median age 46) were recruited, after several screening procedures, to participate in an fMRI study. Exclusion criteria were relating to fMRI safety (e.g., metal or implanted devices in the body, claustrophobia), factors known to affect brain organization, function, or blood flow (such as handedness, pharmaceutical / drug use, psychiatric, neuropsychological and medical disorders). Furthermore, participants were selected to proceed to the fMRI task only if they were either classified for the last six month as “A” customer (monthly spending of 250 EUR or more for clothing and 5 or more monthly shopping days) or “C” customers (monthly spending of 50 EUR or less for clothing and 1 or less monthly shopping days).

All participants were healthy, right-handed and, gave their written consent to participate in the study in accordance with the guidelines of the University Medical School Ethical Committee. The sample size is smaller than in typical in behavioral studies, however, it is representative of fMRI studies (see e.g. Desmond and Glover 2002; Murphy and Garavan 2004).

Experimental Procedure and Design

Participants were imaged during one functional run while making choices between two out of four department stores where they would buy different types of clothing. The experimental paradigm was designed to investigate systematic differences of neural processing during purchase decisions in the presence or absence of the specific target department store (T, the department store from which we extracted the subject pool), in contrast to three other department stores, which were classified as diverse (D1, D2, D3). Nine different pieces of clothing (P1, P2, . . . , P9) were chosen, that could be bought in all four department stores. They were neutral in the sense that no brand name or other criteria that allow an identification of a special brand were visible. The stimuli were presented as follows. In middle of each stimulation, a piece of clothing (P1, P2, . . . , P9) was shown. Slightly above that piece of clothing, on the left and on the right side, the logos of two department stores were presented. These were either the target store brand (T) and one of the diverse store brands (D1, D2, or D3), or two of the diverse store brands, resulting in sequences of TDPz and DDPz stimuli (or simplified TD and DD). The order of the stimuli was randomized referring to brands as well as to pieces of clothing. Each subject had to make a total of 120 decisions (60 TD and 60 DD).

We employed a one-factorial event related design (Bandettini & Cox, 2000; Buckner, 2003; Dale, 1999; Friston, Zarahn, Josephs, Henson, & Dale, 1999) with an inter-stimulus-interval (ISI) of 5 seconds each and a randomized stimulus presentation. In order to avoid response-related activations and movement artifacts we did not request for any feedback during scanning (Deppe et al. 2005).

The subjects were instructed to choose between two stores, according to where they would prefer to buy the piece of clothing shown on the screen. Thus, the store brand itself functions as the only selection criterion. After the fMRI scan, participants were asked to provide general personal information. Then, participants were compensated EUR 25 per hour, thanked and debriefed.

Data Acquisition

All fMRI data were acquired from a 3.0 Tesla whole body scanner (Intera T30, Philips, Best, NL). Prior to the functional data acquisition structural T1 weighted datasets were acquired for anatomical identification. The functional T2* images were acquired using single-shot gradient echo-planar imaging (EPI) sequence that covered nearly the whole brain. The data set consisted of 36 transversal slices of 3.6 mm thickness without gap. Images were acquired every three seconds (TR).

In combination with the fMRI measurement, data about the subjects’ monthly spending at the target store and the number of shopping days per month in the fashion segment, were extracted from the department’s store club card database.

Data Analysis

All acquired fMRI data were preprocessed using Statistical Parametric Mapping (SPM2; Wellcome Department of Cognitive Neurology, London, UK). For the statistical analysis, we specified regressors of a General Linear Model (GLM) according to our experimental design at the single-subject level. We then calculated contrast images for the events when T was present (TD) compared to when the T was not present (DD). These single-subject contrast images were used for a random effects analysis at the group level.
The sample was divided into two groups (A- and C-customers) based on a customer value index (monthly spending and number of monthly shopping days). A two-sample t-test was calculated on the group level to compare neural activations patterns of the two groups when T was present.

**Results**

The most pronounced increased activation in the presence of T in the group of A-customers compared to C-customers was found in the striatum (see Figure 1A). This area was revealed to be involved in the representation of reward prediction (Gottfried, O’Doherty, and Dolan 2003; Knutson and Cooper 2005; O’Doherty et al. 2004; Schultz, Dayan, and Montague, 1997). Zink, Pagnoni, Martin, Dhamala, & Berns (2003) found increased activity in the particular part of the striatum that we are reporting here, in response to the prediction of behaviorally relevant rewards, as compared to “only” unexpected rewards which are represented in other parts of the striatum.

Furthermore, other areas involved in the TD decision of A-customers as compared to C-customers, confirm to Deppe et al.’s First-Choice-Brand activation pattern (Deppe et al. 2005, see Figure 1 B).

The brain areas shown in Figure 1 are the activation network linking VMPFC, striatum, and ACC. Deppe et al. (2005) described the network as an emotion-based and self-referencing information processing mode during brand choice. This network was found to be involved in decisions when the subject’s first choice brand was present. Conversely, where only second or lower-ranked brands were available, the underlying neural network represents an analytical weighing of alternatives, mathematical calculation, strategic thinking and object recognition (Deppe et al., 2005). In particular in the present study, both the latter and areas involved in semantically processing such as reading and speaking were found to be activated increasingly.

**DISCUSSION**

In this paper, we attempt to expand our understanding of the basis of emotional bonds customers built with companies and brands. We conducted an fMRI study to assess differences in neural activations between loyal and disloyal customers of a department store. Based on prior findings in the literature, we assumed that for loyal customers the store brand would modulate the underlying information processing via an emotion-based decision path, as compared to disloyal of the respective store.

As a result, we were able to replicate Deppe et al.’s neural correlate of brand preference for the particular case of store brands (Deppe et al., 2005). In addition to Deppe et al.’s findings (Deppe et al., 2005), we linked the neural activation patterns to the actual buying behavior of the subjects. We showed that, for customers with a high monetary customer value (A-customers) the presence of the specific store brand acts as a rewarding signal during the choice task, whereas customers with a low monetary customer value (C-customers) do not reveal such a rewarding activation pattern.

**Implications for relationship management**

Our findings offer some important insights for management. It can be noted that for a company, it is not sufficient to concentrate on ‘bounding’ customers for instance with technical requirements (e.g. hard- and software which is only compatible with specific operating systems) or general price promotions, but encourage customers in creating affective bonds to the company or its brands. This could be achieved by for example personalizing the commu-
nication with the customer and provide the basis for emotional events the customers links to the company or brand.

Limitations and future research
The interpretation of our empirical findings are based on binary decision making tasks conducted in a controlled laboratory environment and thus, do not reflect the richness of brand choices in a real-world shopping situation. Hence, further refinement of the experimental design, such as integrating more mobile brain imaging methods, will be needed in the future.

Furthermore, we focused only on the link between one department store and their customers’ loyalty. Future studies should broaden our findings by investigating multi-brand-loyalty linkages.

In addition, we linked the neural activation patterns to past buying behavior. In following studies it might be useful to investigate whether the rewarding store brand effects can also predict future purchasing behavior. This could be implemented either by a panel data analysis over a longer period of time before and after the fMRI scanning or by including customers’ purchasing intentions (i.e. attitudinal loyalty).

In conclusion, we could deepen the understanding of the psychological states underlying customer loyalty by providing initial neurobiological evidences of “the tie that binds” customers to companies and brands.

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Optimizing Variety in Mass Customization: A Theoretical Perspective
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Markets today are fragmenting with individual needs and wants increasingly prone to shifts and changes (Hart 1995) necessitating products that are mass customized and customized (Simonson 2005; Wind and Rangaswamy 2001). Although considerable literature has examined mass customization from a production perspective (e.g., Papathanassiou 2004, Jiao, Ma, and Tseng 2003), it is only recently that marketing scholars have begun to examine this phenomenon (e.g., Murthi and Sarkar 2003; Simonson 2005; Wind and Rangaswamy 2001).

Typically, in mass customization, customers are provided varying options of a product’s attributes to select and thus “build” their product. A major managerial challenge in such cases is to determine the optimal variety of options to offer (Simonson 2005). Too many options would be expensive, and confusing to customers, while too few options may annoy the customers who may be unable to configure the product based on their true preferences (e.g., Huffman and Kahn 1998).

We build on the work of Sherman et al. (1984) on human qualities to classify product attributes as universally or variably evaluated. According to Sherman et al. (1984), for universally-evaluated qualities, there is consensus in a population about whether a particular level is good or bad, regardless of individuals’ preference for the level. For example, people would agree that being honest is good and being dishonest is bad whether they themselves are honest or not. In contrast, there is more variability and person-specificity in variably-evaluated qualities. For example, opponents of abortion may think of a pro-choice political candidate as undesirable (“low quality”) whereas pro-choice individuals may find that candidate very appealing. Thus, for universally-evaluated qualities there exists a widely accepted evaluation basis, whereas for variably-evaluated qualities, the evaluation schemes are more individual-specific.

Similarly, in a consumption context, universally-evaluated product attributes (universal attributes), such as battery life in cell phones, would have a common and widely accepted evaluation, whereas the evaluation schemes for variable attributes, such as exterior color of cell phones, would be more consumer-specific. In laptops, consumers would generally agree that 40 Giga Bytes (GB) of hard disk space (a universal attribute) is better than 20GB of hard disk space. In contrast, the color kit options in laptops (a variable attribute) are likely to be evaluated based on personal preferences—‘Charcoal Leather’ maybe evaluated positively by one while another consumer may prefer ‘Mediterranean Blue.’

We suggest that this difference in evaluation schemes would result in consumers using different strategies for evaluating the two types of attributes. Specifically, we suggest that, since consumers’ knowledge of the product category would influence how they search and utilize attribute information, consumer knowledge would affect the processing of information related to variable attributes. In particular, we examine the moderating effects of two constructs related to consumer knowledge, i.e., (1) objective knowledge, (Alba and Hutchinson 1987), and (2) knowledge function of attitudes, (Katz 1960, Grewal, Mehta, and Kardes 2004), for the influence of the levels of universal and variable attributes on consumer satisfaction with mass customization platforms. Objective knowledge refers to how knowledge with respect to the object (e.g. cell phones) may influence attribute processing. The knowledge function of attitudes pertains to the most basic function of attitudes that enables individuals to make better sense of their world (Shavitt 1989). While the former refers to the use of knowledge with respect to the object (e.g. cell phone), the latter refers to the use of the object (cell phone) as a means of knowledge. Thus these two knowledge related constructs represent two sides of a coin concerning consumer knowledge. We suggest that, since a variable attribute is more personal and more likely to serve as a peripheral cue than a universal attribute (Huffman and Houston 1993; Park and Lessig 1981), variable attributes would be more important for novices than for experts such that the positive effect of increasing variable attribute options on satisfaction with the customization platform would be stronger for novices than for experts. Further, we posit that if a product serves the knowledge function of attitudes (Katz 1960; Locander and Spivey 1978), consumers are likely to have a stronger personal relationship with the product, thereby increasing the importance of variable attributes such that the positive effect of increasing variable attribute options on satisfaction with the customization platform would be stronger when the product serves the product knowledge than when it does not.

We test these propositions with two experiments set in the context of customizing cell phones. In the first experiment, we examine the moderating role of objective knowledge and find that variable attributes are more important for novices as opposed to experts. In the second experiment, we study the moderating role of the knowledge function of attitudes towards cell phones and find that variable attributes are likely to generate higher satisfaction with the mass customization platform if cell phones perform the knowledge function of attitudes than if the cell phones do not perform the knowledge function of attitudes. The results of the two experiments also suggest, as hypothesized, that objective knowledge and knowledge function of attitudes do not influence the evaluation of universal attributes.

There are several important theoretical implications of this research. We distinguish between universal and variable attributes and show their differential effects on consumer evaluation of a mass customization platform. Future research might study the criticality of this categorization in other consumption contexts, such as evaluation of competing offerings of durable goods. It would be also worthwhile to examine how this attribute classification influences satisfaction with the product or service. Additionally, we have identified important moderators (objective knowledge and knowledge function of attitudes) in consumers’ assessment of universal and variable attributes. From a managerial standpoint, our
results should help marketers in deciding the number of attribute options that would provide the optimal variety in customization platforms. Also, the moderators we have identified, (namely, objective knowledge and knowledge function of attitudes), offer insights for segmenting the customers for design of mass customization platforms.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

While much attention has been given recently to studying temporal sequences of events, few have offered explanations to account for how people integrate these events into a holistic evaluation of the experience, and virtually no attention has been given to the underlying mechanism involved. A temporal sequence refers to an experience that consists of a series of outcomes spaced over time. The findings from the temporal sequence literature indicate that people form global retrospective ratings of an experience using salient characteristics of the experience, such as the peak intensity, the end intensity, and the trend (Ariely, Kahneman, and Loewenstein 2000). The current explanations that have been proposed to account for temporal sequence findings (e.g., Ariely and Carmon 2000; Baumgartner, Sujan, and Padgett 1997) tend to be ad hoc in nature and are limited to explaining reported findings rather than offering a comprehensive account of the findings in the literature. We propose that adopting a memory-based framework can provide a parsimonious explanation for the findings on retrospective evaluations of temporal sequence.

Retrospective evaluations inherently require that people recall aspects of the experience. Past research suggests that information that is easily accessible in memory will impact judgments the most (e.g., Hamilton and Gifford 1976; Tversky and Kahneman 1973). Accessibility of information has been studied in the memory literature using a free recall task in which people are presented with a list of words that they may recall in any order (Ashcraft 2002). Findings from this research show that respondents have higher recall performance on early items on a list (primacy) because these items receive sufficient rehearsals to transfer them to long-term memory and final items on a list (recency) because these items are temporarily available in short-term memory. Though a temporal sequence is affective in nature and a free recall task is cognitive in nature, we suggest that there are parallels between an affective experience and the experience of learning a list. Thus, memory findings on free recall are expected to explain current findings in the temporal sequence literature and predict findings that would otherwise not be predicted by the temporal sequence literature.

In studies 1 and 2, we test whether a memory-based framework, utilizing primacy and recency effects, can account for the impact of the beginning, end, and trend of an experience on retrospective evaluations of the experience (e.g., Ariely 1998; Redelmeier and Kahneman 1996). Specifically, we argue that assuming that a memory-based structure is responsible for temporal sequence findings, then introducing a delay between an affective experience and evaluations of the experience should diminish the impact of the end of an experience and enhance the impact of the beginning of an experience on retrospective evaluations, reversing consumer preferences for improving versus declining trends. Consistent with expectations, in study 1 we show that an improving vacation experience is evaluated more favorably immediately than after a delay. Consistent with primacy and recency effects, recall of the early instances was not affected by the delay; however, recall of the final incidents declined following a delay. Study 2 replicates the findings from study 1 using both an improving and declining vacation trend and demonstrates that the differential memory for events is based on their temporal location, not their valence. Consistent with a memory-based explanation, the final events in the vacation are heavily weighted when the experience is evaluated immediately, replicating the findings from Redelmeier and Kahneman (1996). However, the initial events are heavily weighted when the experience is evaluated following a delay, resulting in higher evaluations for the improving trend immediately but a preference for the declining trend following a delay, a finding which is predicted by proposed framework but contrary to previous findings in the temporal sequence literature (e.g., Ariely 1998; Redelmeier and Kahneman 1996).

Studies 3 and 4 further confirm the role of memory by manipulating the uniqueness of one event in a vacation experience to test whether a memory-based structure can account for the impact of the peak of an experience on retrospective evaluations of the experience (e.g., Kahneman et al. 1993). Uniqueness is examined because past research using diary studies suggests that intense emotional experiences are unique (Bower 1981), leading to the expectation that peak intensity incidents are more accessible than other incidents because they are uncommon, consistent with the von Restorff effect in memory (Wallace 1965). We argue that if a peak intensity event occurs in a temporal location of an experience that impedes memory, such as the center or end of an experience that is evaluated following a delay (Ashcraft 2002), then making that event unique will facilitate recall of the event and result in that event being heavily weighted in retrospective evaluations of the experience. Consistent with expectations, study 3 shows that making the peak intensity final event in an improving vacation experience atypical enhances the recall of this event following a delay relative to a common event with the same affective intensity, demonstrating a recovery of the recency effect previously shown to diminish after a delay. Additionally, study 3 shows that evaluations are based on the peak intensity final event when the event is unique, consistent with Kahneman et al. (1993), while evaluations are based on the initial events when the peak intensity final event is common, contrary to previous findings (e.g., Fredrickson and Kahneman 1993). Study 4 further confirms these findings by replicating the results with the peak incident in the center of an experience and by demonstrating the robustness of the effects for both positively and negatively-valenced peak incidents.

In sum, the findings from this research demonstrate that a conventional memory-based framework appears to provide a coherent structure to account for consumers’ use of specific aspects of a temporal sequence when forming retrospective evaluations of an experience. In addition to accounting for past findings such as a preference for improving over declining temporal sequences and the important role of peak (both high intensity and unique) experiences, our findings demonstrate that imposing a delay prior to retrospective evaluations can create a preference reversal due to the reduced accessibility of final or common instances.

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744 / Temporal Sequence Effects: A Memory Framework


Mood and Comparative Judgment
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown that consumers’ affective experience, regardless of whether it is a genuine integral affective response to a target, or a feeling arising incidentally from a transient mood state, can influence their evaluations of products (e.g., Adaval 2001; Pham 1998; Schwarz and Clore 1996). While we know mood can influence consumers’ absolute judgments of products, we are less clear about how it would influence consumers’ comparative judgments and choices among products. Consider a consumer who is choosing among a number of options. Suppose s/he happens to be experiencing a mood state when s/he receives information on each of these options one by one, would mood influence his/her evaluations of each of the options to a similar extent, and hence have no net effect on choice? Alternatively, would mood influence evaluations of only one of the options, and lead to changes of his/her choice? If so, which particular option would be influenced? Our research provides answers to this series of questions.

We suggest that mood can have a differential effect on comparative judgment because consumers are likely to incorporate their mood into the first evaluation being constructed during the comparison process. Moreover, once incorporated, mood will cease to influence evaluations of the latter options because its informational value for these options will be discounted. Note, however, consumers may form the first evaluation at different points in time during the comparison process. When the timing of the first evaluation varies, the influence of mood on comparison may vary accordingly. Suppose consumers evaluate the very first option from a set (e.g., the item shown on the first page of a catalog) right away when they encounter it, before they see the other options. Their mood is likely to be incorporated into the evaluation of this first option rather than into those of the subsequent ones. Alternatively, suppose consumers deliberately wait until they encounter the last option before beginning their evaluation and take a perspective focusing on the last encountered option. In this case, the evaluation into which mood is incorporated may “shift” to the last option. As such, we expect mood to influence the evaluation of the last option, rather than those of the preceding ones.

We further show that the timing of constructing the first evaluation may vary systematically as a function of choice set characteristics. For example, it may depend on whether the alternatives are differentiated by descriptive features or by their global appearance. When consumers choose among options that have similar descriptive features but differ in external appearance, they are likely to form an evaluation of the first option very quickly once they come across it, without waiting to see the comparison options. Consequently, their mood is likely to influence their evaluations of the first encountered option, and hence their choices of this option. In contrast, when consumers choose among options that are differentiated by descriptive features, they tend to wait until they have encountered all the options and to know about their features before making any comparison. Consequently, their mood is likely to influence their evaluations of the last encountered option, and hence their choices of this option.

Three experiments were conducted to test the above predictions regarding (a) how the influence of mood on comparison may vary as a function of the timing of the first evaluation and choice set characteristics and (b) the underlying mechanism through which the influence occurs.

Experiment 1. We examined the influence of mood on choices among options that 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 three mango-flavored desserts sequentially. After that, they indicated their choices and absolute evaluations of the options. As predicted, the choice share of the first option was higher when participants were happy than when they were unhappy. Absolute evaluation data confirmed that happy participants liked the first option more than the unhappy participants did.

Experiment 2. In experiment 2, the timing of the first evaluation was delayed to the last option due to changes in choice set characteristics. The procedure was essentially the same as experiment 1. However, participants chose among three desserts that differed in flavor (which is presumably an important descriptive feature for desserts). Consistent with our prediction, choice share of the last option was higher when participants were happy than when they were unhappy. Happy participants also liked the last option more than their unhappy counterparts.

Experiment 3. In experiments 1 and 2, we assumed the timing of the first evaluation would change as a function of choice set characteristics. While the literature provides theoretical supports for the assumptions, we validated these assumptions empirically in experiment 3 by manipulating the timing of the first evaluation through experimental instructions. This experiment had a 2 (induced mood: positive vs. negative) by 2 (flavor: same-flavor vs. different-flavor) by 3 (instruction on the timing of the first evaluation: no-instruction vs. immediate-judgment vs. deferred-judgment) factorial design. Participants either received no instruction or an instruction as to when to start making their evaluations before they saw pictures of two desserts. After seeing the two options one by one, they indicated their relative preferences. As predicted, happy participants in the immediate-judgment group of conditions (i.e., the “no-instruction, same-flavor” condition and the two “immediate-judgment” conditions) had a stronger preference for the first option, whereas their unhappy counterparts had a weaker preference for the first option. A reversed pattern was observed in the deferred-judgment group of conditions (i.e., the “no-instruction, different-flavor” condition and the two “deferred-judgment” conditions).

In combination, findings from experiments 1-3 support the notion that mood is likely to be incorporated into the first evaluation consumers make during a comparison process, and this evaluation could be the evaluation of the initial option or the final option of a choice set.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The consistency with which consumers make product choices has important consequences for organizations interacting with consumers. If consumer choices are not very consistent (i.e., if consumers do not make the same choices in otherwise identical choice situations), the impact of changes in marketing mix variables on choice will be lowered. This situation may be harmful to for example innovative producers that develop products that are superior to existing alternatives. The reason is that if consumers do not respond consistently to the new product’s strengths in their decisions, market share of the new product will be lower than it could otherwise have been. For consumers also it may be undesirable to make inconsistent choices, for example if it leads them to ignore beneficial product attributes in making product purchase decisions.

In this study we focus on choice set complexity as a potentially important driver of consumer choice consistency. Recent empirical work on the relationship between effort and consistency (Haaijer et al. 2000), and on the effects of choice set composition on the level of error in consumer choice models (Caussade et al. 2005, Swait and Adamowicz 2001) suggests that consumer choice consistency may vary with complexity. We add to this research an analysis of observed consistency in consumers’ repeated choices and how it is affected by task-based and context-based complexity.

Task-based complexity refers to the number of cognitive steps a consumer needs to choose an optimal product (Johnson and Payne, 1985). It is expressed as the combined effect of the number of attributes and the number of alternatives in the choice set. Context-based complexity refers to the difficulty of the trade-offs that consumers have to make. We express this effect using three variables based on Shugan (1980): the variability of the attribute utilities of the products in the choice set (VAR), the covariance between the attribute utilities of these products (COV), and the difference in total utility between these products (DIF).

The effects of choice set complexity on choice consistency are not straightforward. The simulation analysis of Johnson and Payne (1985) shows that with equal effort, consumer choice consistency is inversely related to choice complexity. The effect of complexity on consistency then depends on how consumers adapt their choice strategy and their effort level. In particular, if consumers respond to increased complexity by increasing their effort, the consistency of their decisions may be stable (or even improve) if complexity increases.

Results of Haaijer et al. (2000) suggest that in general consumers’ effort responses to increases in choice set complexity are not sufficient to maintain equal choice consistency. Fischer et al. (2000) analyze consumer preference judgments. They find that, if judgment tasks become more complex in terms of variance, responses take more effort and become less accurate. The latter finding suggests that increases in VAR in a choice context may also lead to less consistent choice behavior. Dellaert et al. (1999) find that logit model error increases when price based utility trade-offs increase. This effect also suggests that increases in VAR (i.e., higher price variance), and possibly decreases in COV (i.e., lower correlations between price and other attributes), lead to less accurate choices. An opposing effect of increases in VAR may be that the differences between the products become larger, increasing the incentives to perform well in the choice task. Hence, VAR could also increase choice consistency as more effort is exerted. With respect to task complexity, Caussade et al (2005) investigate the effects of the number of alternatives and the number of attributes, finding a positive effect of the number of alternatives and a negative effect on the number of attributes, implying a mixed result for the effect of task complexity (TASK). We are not aware of previous research on the effect of DIF, but greater differences in utility make the best alternative stand out from the rest, we expect it to facilitate consistency in choosing the best alternative from a set.

To investigate the proposed effects of complexity on consistency, data was collected through a stated choice experiment where each one of the 1114 respondents was randomly assigned to two of twelve possible choice complexity conditions. These twelve choice conditions were composed of different numbers of alternatives, different numbers of attributes, and different attribute levels, resulting in substantial variation in task and context complexity across conditions.

To quantify context-based complexity and its effects on choice consistency we first estimate a heteroskedastic mixed logit model. The variance of the error component in the mixed logit model is allowed to vary across choice sets, permitting the level of error in the choice model estimates to vary freely on choice set composition. In the next step, we obtain individual level preference parameters. These parameters are used to compute attribute utilities for each alternative for each respondent in each condition. Based on these utilities we calculate measures VAR, COV and DIF for each choice set. TASK is a function of the number of attributes and alternatives only, and varies only across choice sets.

In our main analysis, we empirically test the effects of choice set complexity on choice consistency using a Logit model. The dependent variable is whether the repeated choice task is performed consistently, i.e. the same alternative is chosen twice or not, and the independent variables are the complexity measures introduced above. The results show that TASK complexity decreases consistency and we conclude that increases in task complexity are not sufficiently compensated by increased effort to maintain the same level of accuracy. For context complexity, we find that differences in utility between the alternatives in the choice set increased choice consistency. Variance of the attribute utilities in the choice set also increased choice consistency, and the effect of covariance between the attribute utilities in the choice set alternatives was not significant. These results suggest that increased differences in utility between alternatives and greater variability in the attribute levels raise the stakes to the decision maker, resulting in more effort being exerted in the choice task and higher choice consistency.

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Complexity Effects on Consumer Choice Consistency


Recollections of Pleasure and Pain: When Losers are Motivated to Edit their Retrospective Evaluations
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
People have unrealistically positive views of self and are unrealistically optimistic about the future (Taylor and Brown 1988). For instance, they believe they will be more likely than their peers to like their first job, earn a good salary, and have a ‘gifted’ child (Weinstein 1980). On the other hand, people believe that they are much less likely than their peers to be a victim of crime (Perloff and Fetzer 1986) or contract the HIV virus (Raghubar and Menon 1998). All of these examples show that people are optimistic when they predict the outcome of future events. Will the same biases occur when people reflect back on events that have already occurred? Are people motivated to make the past seem better than it was? Autobiographical memory research shows that the intensity of negative affect associated with memories fades faster over time than positive affect (Walker, Vogl, and Thompson 1997). Additionally, hedonic editing suggests that people focus on the ‘silver lining’ in a loss frame (Thaler 1985) to maximize their happiness. However, to date there is no evidence that people in a loss frame edit their retrospective evaluations of an experience to be more positive.

We propose that gamblers in a loss frame are motivated to hedonically edit their evaluation of the experience such that the gambling experience will be remembered more positively. We show that losers use the peak win to improve the retrospective evaluation of a gambling session. In particular, gamblers that believe that winning at gambling is a skill they possess are motivated to edit their retrospective evaluation of a losing gambling episode. We also propose that gamblers are not motivated to hedonically edit their evaluation of a winning gambling episode. Instead, we show that the retrospective evaluation of the winners is determined by the amount of cash they won, regardless of their belief that gambling is a skill that they possess.

In study 1, participants were given 30 opportunities to bet on the future outcome of a coin toss. Once each outcome was revealed, the study administrator distributed winnings and collected losses based on the outcome of the coin toss. Participants were asked to report how the outcome of the bet made them feel by marking an ‘X’ on a 125 mm continuous scale anchored with a happy face and a sad face. A time series cross sectional regression analysis was run on moment-by-moment evaluations with the outcome for each bet as the independent variable as an additional test of whether the current outcome explained the current moment-by-moment evaluation. To check for the independence of moment-by-moment evaluations, a lagged outcome variable and a lagged evaluation variable were included to test whether current moment-by-moment evaluations were affected by the previous outcome or the evaluation associated with the previous outcome. The results indicate that the current outcome explained the moment-by-moment evaluation, that there were no remnants of the previous outcome, and that there were only slight remnants of previous evaluations. This is an important finding because study 2 is based on an assumption that the outcome of each gamble (amount won or lost) determines the moment-by-moment evaluations.

In Study 2, 102 gamblers bet on 20 coin toss games. After the gambling experience, gamblers were asked to report their evaluations of the experience and their intention to replay the game, and the illusion of control scale.

The retrospective evaluations of winners and losers were tested with separate regressions including the amount of money won on the peak win, the amount of money lost on the peak loss, the trend of outcomes (winning, losing), the final cash position, and their score on the illusion of control scale. The retrospective evaluation of the experience for winners was determined by the final cash position only, a larger win resulted in a more positive retrospective evaluation. The retrospective evaluation for losers was determined by the peak win. Losers appear to look for the silver lining (i.e. something positive) in an otherwise negative situation. The illusion of control score was also significant: the higher the illusion of control, the more positive the retrospective evaluation.

We also ran an ANOVA on the retrospective evaluation with final outcome (winner, loser) and the illusion of control score (high, low). The ANOVA revealed a significant interaction. It is the losers with a high score on the illusion of control scale that edit the retrospective evaluation to be more positive. The losers with a low illusion of control score were significantly less positive than the winners with a low illusion of control score. The losers with a high illusion of control were not significantly different in their evaluation of the experience.

Previous research has found that the peak moment and the final moments of an experience play an important role in the construction of retrospective evaluations of purely painful experiences. An opportunity to use an optimizing strategy in the construction of a retrospective evaluation is present when reflecting back on a mixed experience that is not available when remembering a purely painful experience. We found that when people are asked about a past gambling experience, the peak win is important in the memory of losers and the final cash outcome is important in the memory of winners: facilitating the construction of a most positive retrospective evaluation. Interestingly, we found that the illusion of control did not affect the retrospective evaluation of the winners, but it did affect the losers. It was the losers with a high illusion of control score that edited their retrospective evaluation.

REFERENCES