This research addresses the contextual effect of extremeness aversion. Using fast food and soft drinks as the case study, it demonstrates how consumers have increased their caloric intake even though their intrinsic preference for the different drink sizes has remained the same. With this understanding, we evaluate how firms could reduce caloric consumption associated with soft drinks without major restriction of product choice or increases in the average price paid by the consumers and still maintain profits. We find our approach is superior to, the much discussed and implemented in six states, soft drink tax.

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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 restaurant 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.
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 their 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 service 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-Canli & 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 distortions 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.
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 impulsivity (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 underestimates 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 mindset, 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 difference 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 involved present values. 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.

“Impatience is In the Mindset: Carryover Effects of Processing Abstractness in Sequential Tasks”
Selin Malkoc, University of Minnesota
Gal Zauberman, University of Pennsylvania
James Bettman, Duke University

Extant research on intertemporal choice has demonstrated that people are not only highly impulsive, but also display present bias by using higher discounting for shorter delays (e.g., Thaler 1981). Although there is ample evidence documenting present bias, relatively little is known about its underlying mechanism. Explanations offered include both affective (Loewenstein 1996; Rachlin and Raineri 1992) and cognitive processes (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., deprivational) 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Time until SS</th>
<th>Shift ratio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt; 24 hours</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&lt; 24 hours</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&lt; 1 hour</td>
<td>1.88</td>
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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


**SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY**

**Changing Colors of My Thinking Hat: Influence of Situational and Task-Related Factors on Thinking Styles**

Monica Wadhwa, Stanford University, USA

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**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.

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**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 process.
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 experiential 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 1989; 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 Sherrell and Ridgway 1986; Bloch, Ridgway and Sherrell 1989), choice among specific alternatives vs. navigational choice (Hoffman and Novak 1996; Deci and Ryan 1985), and planned purchases vs. impulse buys (Rook 1987).

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.

References


“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., cookbooks, 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. not 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 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 versus a narrow scope of internal attention is likely to bolster creativity (Mednick 1962). Thus, drawing upon the two streams of research, creativity and visual perception, we hypothesize 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

Sekar Raju, University at Buffalo, USA
H. Rao Unnava, Ohio State University, USA

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 differentially 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
Eun-Ju Lee, Chung-Ang University, Korea

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 tactics may be viewed as more acceptable than a female agent’s use of the same sales tactic. An overly 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 expensive and said “I am sure that this is a superior choice than your earlier choice of camera.” In a less aggressive condition, the agent quoted a price that was 10% less expensive for the same camera and said “I think you might like this camera better than your earlier choice of camera.” In both conditions, the cameras recommended by the agent were identical except for the price.

Making a recommendation that can invalidate a subject’s own choice is a dominating behavior in itself and can trigger reactance to the invasive recommendation (Fitzsimmons and Lehmann 2004). When the sales recommendation involves a price upgrade, it can be considered a display of confidence, independence, dominance, and even self-interest, all of which are strong male stereotypes (Bem 1974). Therefore, I hypothesize that when a female agent makes a price upgrade recommendation, she will suffer from significant loss of consumer trust in terms of deterioration of perceived competence, benevolence, and trusting intention—due to the mismatch of her dominating/aggressive behavior with the submissive and compliant female stereotype. However, a male agent’s identical behavior will less likely result in the loss of his trustworthiness as a result of the male stereotypes of self-assurance and dominance. Accordingly, my research hypothesis addresses these sensitivity differentials based on agent gender on all three dimensions of consumer trust, when the agent makes an aggressive price upgrade recommendation.

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 measures 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).

Trust 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 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 alpha=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=0.000; 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 compared to the female agent recommending a lower-priced camera, which was opposite to what was observed with the male agent, because her attempt at up-selling did weaken subjects’ perception about the female agent’s competence. For the male agent, the difference in perception of the agent’s competence by the higher recommendation price (M=15.70) 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. Carlil (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 masculine leadership 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 product gender-typing can interact with communicator gender identity in achieving high social influence. For example, if a female product (i.e., 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

Joost W.M. Verhoeven, University of Twente, The Netherlands
Thomas J.L. Van Rompay, University of Twente, The Netherlands
Ad Th.H. Pruyn, University of Twente, The Netherlands

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 welcomedness 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-

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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 Gremler 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

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

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

Professional vs. Personally expressive Objects
Cognitive Appraisal of the Environment:
- Hard attributes
- Soft attributes

Service Provider's Competence
Service Provider's Agreeableness
Affect
Perceived Service Quality

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high scores on competence received low scores on agreeableness and vice versa: a physician displaying a professional object was judged as more competent (M=16.38, p<.001) and less agreeable (M=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) (M=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; α=.82) and Attractive (e.g. pleasant, attractive, comfortable; α=.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 (α=.93). An adjusted SERVQUAL questionnaire (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988) was used to determine the evaluation of the service (α=.93).

**RESULTS**

Analysis of variance showed that participants in the professional condition rated the office as more professional (Mprofessional=5.18) in comparison to participants in the personally expressive condition (Mpersonally expressive=4.67, F(1, 79)=4.09, p<.05, η²=.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 (Mprofessional=2.76) than the office containing personally expressive objects (Mpersonally expressive=4.67, F(1, 79)=7.41, p<.01, η²=.086). Consistent with the latter finding, participants in the professional condition reported to have less positive emotions (F(1, 79)=5.97, p<.04, η²=.070), and a lower perceived service quality (F(1, 79)=7.26, p<.01; η²=.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 (χ²(10)=14.45, p=.15, CMIN/df=1.45, GFI=.96, TLI=.96, CFI=.98, RMSEA=.075). All relationships are significant at p<.05.

Not surprisingly, a positive relationship (β=.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 (β=.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 (β=.45). Office professionalism in turn strongly affects the degree to which the physician is perceived as competent (β=.64), whereas office attractiveness strongly affects the perceived agreeableness of the physician (β=.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 (β=.25).

The emotional experience is greatly affected by both the perceived attractiveness of the office (β=.70) and to a much lesser degree by the perceived agreeableness of the physician (β=.25).
These two variables account for 73% of the variance in emotion. The significant relationship between perceived physician’s competence and perceived service quality ($\beta=.33$) 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 ($\beta=.28$). As expected, experienced emotion is a significant predictor of service quality ($\beta=.28$).

**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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Let Your Workspace Speak for Itself


A Two-Step Model of Service Dissatisfaction: Theory and Evidence
Lisa C. Wan, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Haksin Chan, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

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 non-social 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 mitigating effect of BIF 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 complain to management.

H6: Given the same level of dissatisfaction, consumers who are higher (vs. lower) in CFF will be more likely to engage in negative WOM.
H7: Given the same level of dissatisfaction, consumers who are higher (vs. lower) in CFF will be less likely to engage in negative WOM.
H8: Given the same level of dissatisfaction, consumers who are higher (vs. lower) in CFF 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
Ayalla Ruvio, University of Haifa, Israel
Aviv Shoham, University of Haifa, Israel
Shlomo Hareli, University of Haifa, Israel

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 belief 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 Shutter 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 CSII, 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 CSII, 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.

REFERENCES


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

Daniele Dalli, Università di Pisa, Italy
Silvia Grappi, Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia, Italy
Simona Romani, Università di Sassari, Italy
Giacomo Gistri, Università di Pisa, Italy

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 metaphoric, 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: “manipulation and deceit”, “carelessness toward the environment” and “outdated communication”; five additional items relate to the user level broken down into two different factors: “poor distinction capability” and “excess of distinction” and, finally, one item relate to the product level and, specifically, to “poor product performance”.

Finally, to test the relevance of the dislike factors, the previously validated brand dislike scale has been applied to actual brands. This application provides some interesting results. Five factors come out from the analysis. Eight items out of fifteen 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

Steven Michael Burgess, University of Cape Town, South Africa

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 socio-cultural 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 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 regions adjacent 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 (χ²(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

Wim Janssens, University of Antwerp, Belgium
Patrick De Pelsmacker, University of Antwerp, Belgium
Maggie Geuens, Ghent University, Belgium

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 into the effect of context after an ad as well as the effect of being simultaneously exposed to web ad and web page. Therefore, a second study was done. It was shown that when the web page appeared after the ad (‘pop before’) a contrast effect was found, in a condition of continuous simultaneous exposure of web ad and web page (banner-like condition), no effect was found, and in a condition of a web page, followed by a web page with ad, followed by web page, a congruency effect was found (which can be called a ‘backward priming the prime’ effect) for both attitude towards the ad and click intention. Eye-tracking information showed that in the third condition, respondents only switched a minimal number of times between web site and web ad (i.e., twice: from web page to ad and back to web page). This condition does not differ much from the second condition in study 1 (web page only, followed by web ad and web page). The differences between these two conditions were the extra web page after the web ad and web page, and the fact that in the ‘web page-web page with web ad’ condition almost half of the respondents switched more than two times between web site and web ad. In the third study it was indeed shown that the number of switches is a moderating factor. In this study, respondents were only exposed to the ‘continuous simultaneous exposure to web ad and web page’ condition. Our results indicated that when the number of switches was low, congruency effects were found, while as the number of switches increased, this congruency effect diminished and even reversed into a contrast effect. A possible explanation for this finding is that the number of switches between ad and medium context can be seen as a reverse indicator of attentive processing. Hence, the way people look at the medium context and the ad (even when simultaneously exposed) may impact the type of ‘medium context-ad’ effect that will occur.

These findings are relevant because the type of medium context effect may depend on the way people watch medium context and ad. For example, our results suggest that banner ads may not be the most appropriate advertising strategy as it depends on the number of switches between medium context and ad (which is difficult to know a priori), whether a congruent or a contrasting medium context is recommended. A thematically congruent context is recommended in case of a pop-under or a pop-up (which people look at and subsequently close).

With respect to the discussion on the viewing behaviour influencing 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

Jing Wang, University of Iowa, USA
Bobby Calder, Northwestern University, USA

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.
Convergence of Interests–Cultivating Consumer Trust Through Corporate Social Initiatives
Shuili Du, Boston University, USA
C.B. Bhattacharya, Boston University, USA
Sankar Sen, Baruch College, USA

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 Healthy 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
Myungwoo Nam, INSEAD, Singapore
Brian Sternthal, Northwestern University, USA

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 this 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 gamblers 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 make 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; Kusyszyn 1984; Montgomer and Kreitzer 1968; Moody 1992; Skinner 1953; Walker 1992), and the interdisciplinary study of play and leisure (Brenner and Brenner 1990; Cailleux 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 very 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 gamblers (slots vs. table gamers vs. internet gamers). They suggest that regular casino gamblers 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 movie-going). 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
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Researchers who work in the area of consumer motivation and goals, (3) researchers interesting 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 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 gaming 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 that 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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Relatively-derived perceptual maps of mental models of slot clubs and casinos and their underlying constructs. Our findings enrich our understanding of the loyalty construct and reveal personal meanings associated with slot clubs and casino mega-resorts.

Traditional research methods are unable to fully evaluate the efficacy of loyalty programs. For example, when faced with a questionnaire, consumers may indicate that some benefits are important simply because they are widely offered within an industry, even if they do not necessarily impact the purchase decision. A methodology that explores emotions and unconscious motives will provide a better picture of the underlying dimensions of loyalty towards a casino brand and a loyalty program. Therefore, we used a qualitative methodology, namely the ZMET technique. By using images, metaphor elicitation, and laddering probes, this research focuses on the deep and multi-faceted meanings of a slot club from a consumer standpoint.

We will present data on Las Vegas slot customers, including local (Las Vegas residents) and non-local customers of a casino resort. High-rollers usually receive highly personalized treatment, while gamblers with low levels of play do not receive significant benefits. For this reason, this research focuses mainly on mid-range customers. Using Backman and Crompton’s (1991) categorization to classify customers according to their level of loyalty, only truly loyal customers (displaying attitudinal and behavioral loyalty) are included in the sample.

The study of the deep emotional meanings of loyalty in casinos is particularly interesting because intuitively the purchase motives in gaming are highly emotional and perhaps even irrational. At the same time, casino customers may be highly value-driven, taking full advantage of the benefits provided in the clubs. In addition, each Las Vegas mega-resort is unique in terms of theme, location on the strip, and target market. In this sense, the casino product is not a commodity, and every property has potentially a different appeal to each customer. Furthermore, casinos track highly detailed information on customers. Particularly on slot machines, even penny transactions are recorded as long as customers use their loyalty cards. Having this information allows casinos to customize offers and benefits to players according to the amount wagered and behavioral data (preferences, frequency of visit, etc.). However, the club loyalty benefits are generally quite similar among different establishments, resulting in the loyalty club becoming simply a form of discounting. For all the reasons above, the Las Vegas slot clubs are a good terrain to explore the deeper meanings of loyalty and reward programs more generally. Thus, this study should help casinos—and perhaps other industries—to foster commitment to a brand or product, and perhaps avoid costly efforts that do not translate in attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

“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, interviewers 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.
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 Hoeffer 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. Hoeffer 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 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., after 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 attenuate 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 intensiveness 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, intensiveness 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 before returning to make the decision. Similarly, a consumer may be considering a purchase, but may sit on the decision for some time before returning to make the decision. Therefore, 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. The 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 experimental participation in a cultural context. 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.

In the case of bookselling, consumers have the option to read or ‘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, down-loaders, who are access-oriented, and music producers, who are ownership-oriented, are drawn into dramatic presentation efforts to legitimate their own cultural standpoint. 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 domains.
important ways. First, we profile media access and ownership as two fundamentally different perspectives in the marketplace. Second, we develop how these fundamental but abstract perspectives serve as a springboard for the construction of divergent dramatic narratives, roles, and behaviors. Finally, we show how marketplace stakeholders seek to manipulate the relationship between access and ownership to guide media consumption in particular directions. In summary, the two cases allow us to examine the multiple ways in which the tension between access and ownership can be negotiated, with more or less conflict between producers and consumers.

“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 the 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 (Goey 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 views 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 suggests 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.