An Examination of Recall Measures of Sponsorship Awareness

Michael S. Humphreys, University of Queensland, Australia
T. Bettina Cornwell, University of Queensland, Australia
Clinton S. Weeks, University of Queensland, Australia
Anna R. McAlister, University of Queensland, Australia

In four experiments we consider various memory recall techniques in measuring sponsorship awareness effects. Specifically, we investigate event cued recall, brand category cued recall, brand cued recall, and free recall. We also consider the impact of competitor brand presence at the time of sponsorship exposure on sponsorship awareness. Results show that recall measures can differ depending on the cue utilized, and that non-sponsor competitor brands can elicit event recall even when not previously mentioned in association with the event. Further, while competitor presence was detrimental to cued recall, it appeared to facilitate free recall.

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Extended Abstract

With growth in sponsorship-linked marketing expenditure continuing to increase each year (IEG 2003), consumers are exposed to an ever larger number of brand names in association with various events. In many cases there may be a number of brands linked with a single event, and in some cases several of these brands may be from a single brand category. In addition, many brands may be linked with multiple events. What must be considered when seeking to measure sponsorship awareness in these situations is how the method of measurement may influence results, particularly with regard to the direction of cueing in cued recall.

Due to the nature of memory associations, the associative strength from a brand to an event may not always be the same as the associative strength from an event to a brand. To illustrate, consider a situation where a brand such as Gatorade sponsors an event like the International Relay Run. Asking which brand is the sponsor of the International Relay Run as opposed to which event did Gatorade sponsor, may not produce the same proportion of correct responses. This may particularly be the case when a similar competitor brand (e.g., Powerade) is also salient in the mind of the consumer, and when the event name is given as the recall cue. Not all awareness measures provide consistent access to memory, and deciding which measure to use may depend largely on the situation, and what information is sought by the researcher.

Tripodi et al. (2003) have suggested that variation in memory prompts can affect sponsorship awareness responses. Using a telephone survey they reported that the sequence in which memory prompts (event name, brand name, category label) are given to respondents can affect overall awareness measurements. Specifically, in their study respondents prompted with the event name had the highest level of initial recall, but the lowest overall recall after follow-up prompts (including a recognition-type prompt).

In four experiments we examined the nature of recall in measuring sponsorship awareness. We varied recall methods by cueing with the event name, the brand name, the brand category, and we also considered responses using a free recall method. Participants received exposure to sponsorship stimuli using Johar and Pham’s (1999) press release paradigm, where brands were real and events were fictitious. All press releases involved congruent sponsor-event relationships and all contained a statement articulating the sponsor’s reason for undertaking the sponsorship. Additionally, as a within subjects variable, half of the press release statements mentioned a competitor within the same brand category while half made no such mention. Participants in each experiment were presented with 12 press releases and completed a 10 minute distractor puzzle before beginning the memory task.

Results showed recall differences depending on the cue utilized. In the first experiment, when cueing with the event name, results showed that recall of the sponsoring brand was similar both when a competitor was mentioned in the press release and when no competitor was mentioned (Ms=.708 and .767 respectively). Overall recall here was 73.8%. In the second experiment however, when cueing with the brand category, recall of the sponsoring brand was adversely impacted by the presence of a competitor. Here there was a marginally significant difference between the competitor present and competitor absent conditions, F (1, 19)=4.061, p=.058 (Ms=.775 and .850 respectively), with overall brand recall at 81.25%.

In the third experiment which used brand cues, we provided participants with either the sponsor or competitor name and examined event recall responses. This was done for both competitor present and competitor absent conditions. Here, as might be expected, there was a main effect of cue, F (1, 39)=72.335, p<.001, such that sponsor cues (Ms=.538) were more effective in eliciting the event name than were the competitor cues (M=.146). There was no overall main effect of competitor presence, but there was a significant interaction between cue and competitor presence, F (1, 39)=5.906, p=.020. Marginal means indicated that event recall was lower in the competitor present condition than in the competitor absent condition for the sponsor cue (Ms=.483 and .591 respectively), but event recall was higher in the competitor present condition than the competitor absent condition for the competitor cue (Ms=.183 and .108 respectively). This indicates that interference occurred in the competitor present condition using the sponsor cue, and that cueing with a mentioned competitor can elicit event recall. Interestingly, this result also shows that even if no competitor is mentioned, cueing with a market rival of the sponsor can nonetheless elicit memory for the event.

In contrast to the cued recall experiments, in the fourth experiment where free recall was used, a greater number of events were recalled from the competitor present as opposed to the competitor absent condition, F (1, 19)=4.108, p=.057 (Ms=.700 and .567 respectively). Similarly, a marginally greater number of sponsors were recalled from the competitor present as opposed to the competitor absent condition, F (1, 19)=4.108, p=.057 (Ms=.700 and .567 respectively). There was no significant difference between the level of recall of events as opposed to the level of recall of sponsors (Ms=.579 and .633 respectively).

With sponsorship-linked marketing expenditure rising each year, it is becoming increasingly important to have a clear understanding of whether the techniques used to measure sponsorship effectiveness are appropriate. For those interested in measuring sponsorship awareness effects, what this study shows is that knowing a brand name can prompt memory for an event, and knowing that an event name can prompt memory for a brand, are not necessarily the same thing. In attempting to assess sponsorship awareness, researchers must first consider the nature of what they want to know in order to be able to ask the right question.

References


Developing a Deeper Understanding of Scarcity: Contextual and Individual Influences on Demand Scarcity

Morgan K. Ward, University of Texas, USA

Abstract
In this paper, we investigate mechanisms associated with scarcity resulting from public demand not met by supply: demand scarcity. We examine individual and contextual influences on demand scarcity. In four studies we find: 1) Consumers use visual scarcity cues to infer information about products; 2) Consumers’ dependence on demand scarcity as a heuristic is particularly effective in low-involvement choices; 3) “Need for uniqueness” independently influences subjects’ use of scarcity information and their choices about scarce products, and 4) The effect of uniqueness decreases as the ubiquity of demand scarce products is made salient.

Aristotle summarized the underpinnings of scarcity when he stated, “What is rare is a greater good than what is plentiful.” This phrase captures the fundamental elements of commodity theory (Brock 1968) and expresses the robust effect that scarcity has on human behavior. Marketers, having reached the same conclusion (albeit more recently), leverage consumers’ desire for scarce products by implying that access to them is limited. Implications of scarcity embedded in advertising language like “time’s running out,” “limited edition,” or “while supplies last” impel consumer action.

Though well-known and intuitive, scarcity is not a simple construct; research in consumer behavior has highlighted a variety of psychological mechanisms that give rise to scarcity effects (see Lynn 1992). A few examples include reactance, whereby people resist restrictions on their choice (Brehm 1966), social proof (coined “bandwagon reasoning”) in which consumers rely on others’ opinions as a cue for the value of a product or service (Worschel, 1975), and uniqueness, the innate human drive to attain social status by possessing a largely unavailable resource (Veblen 1904).

Though the literature effectively demonstrates types of scarcity and underlying mechanisms, to date there is no overall framework that discusses which mechanisms correlate to specific scarcity appeals. We are initiating the formulation of such a framework with such questions such as: What are the relative effects of reactance and uniqueness for time scarcity appeals (e.g., “time’s running out”)? And, to what extent, if any, does social proof influence supply-generated scarcity (e.g., “limited edition”)? In this paper, we focus our attention on mechanisms associated with scarcity resulting from public demand not met by supply: demand scarcity.

While it has been assumed that people typically use scarcity information as a heuristic cue for value, recent research challenges that assumption (Brannon and Brock 2001). We contend that consumers do use demand scarcity information as a heuristic. We further argue that a social-proof mechanism drives the effect of demand-scarce information, and test Worschel et al. (1975) “bandwagon reasoning” which predicts that scarcity resulting from public demand informs the value of the product. In other words, consumers use relative demand to assess a product’s worth by inferring that fellow consumers’ demand implies value.

We also examine how presumptions of uniqueness influence the effects of demand scarcity. Consumer need for uniqueness is defined as “an individual’s pursuit of ‘different-ness’ relative to others…achieved through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one’s personal and social identity” (Tian et al. 2001). Since demand-scarce products endow their possessor with uniqueness, we hypothesize that consumers who desire such personal uniqueness will be more likely to desire products that are highly desired by others (and thus scarce). However, the reality of scarcity is realistically moderated by how much of the product already has been sold in the marketplace. When a product already is owned by many others, those concerned with uniqueness should no longer desire it.

Our initial study establishes that people use visual scarcity cues to infer information about products. We presented participants with a hypothetical shopping scenario in which they were asked to choose between two clocks. One clock (the target) was pictured as either scarce or abundant. The comparison clock was always pictured as abundant. We crossed scarcity with the manner of display. In display conditions, clocks were arranged like a typical display of merchandise; in inventory, clocks were arranged like “backstock” (i.e., inventory a store holds of a product). We found that scarce clocks were preferred to abundant clocks, but only when clocks were shown as “inventory”. We surmised that participants were using inventory information coupled with scarcity as a cue for public demand.

Study 2 supports the idea that people use scarcity information as a heuristic. We used the “scarce inventory” condition from Study 1 and gave participants either information that the clock was selling quickly (demand manipulation) or no information (control). We crossed the manipulation of information with level of involvement, where participants were either highly involved in the choice (they could receive the clock as a prize) or less involved (the choice was hypothetical). We found participants who were highly involved in the choice use demand information significantly less than those who were less involved. In short, we show that consumers’ dependence on scarcity as a heuristic is particularly effective in low-involvement choices.

In Study 3 we test how a need for uniqueness influences preferences for scarce items. We primed participants with either uniqueness-related or conformity-related information. Then we showed participants the “scarce inventory” condition from Study 2, again mentioning that the clocks were selling quickly, and asked respondents which clock they preferred. We found the uniqueness prime increased preferences for a demand-scarce clock. The results indicate that consumers predisposed to maintain their sense of uniqueness were more susceptible to social proof cues.

Finally, in Study 4 we tested the prediction that the influence of uniqueness found in Study 3 could be attenuated with the ubiquity of product ownership. We replicated Study 3’s effect of uniqueness on the (demand) condition which stated that the clocks were selling quickly. We also added a condition that told participants that the clocks were selling quickly and many have already been sold (demand ubiquity condition). Our results indicated that the preference for the demand scarce clock was diminished when the clock had already been sold to many others. Similarly, participants primed with conformity showed an increase in their preference for the clock that was owned by many.

We present contextual and individual factors that contribute to consumers’ responses to demand scarcity cues. The results corroborate the notion that consumers use visual scarcity to infer product worth and by extension choose scarce products. Moreover, consumers...
motivated to maintain their uniqueness are more susceptible to social proof cues. Finally, the results confirm that demand scarcity is moderated (for participants who are motivated to maintain uniqueness) by whether subjects have information confirming that the product is scarce because many have units already been sold thus implying the ubiquity of the product.

How Consumers Are Affected by the Framing of Numerical Information

Jessica Y. Y. Kwong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR
Kin Fai Ellick Wong, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong SAR

Studies on consumer judgments have demonstrated that consumers may consider two options with different attribute levels (e.g., apartments that are 20 minutes versus 15 minutes away from campus) to be vastly different or vastly similar depending on contexts. In particular, research has thus far shown that contextual factors such as the range of the attribute levels (e.g., Gravetter & Lockhead, 1973; Janiszewski & Lichtenstein, 1999; Mellers & Cooke, 1994; Yeung & Soman, 2005), the frequency of the attribute levels (e.g., Niedrich, Sharma, & Wedell, 2001; Parducci, 1965), and their relative spacing (e.g., Cooke & Mellers, 1998; Mellers & Birnbaum, 1982; Wedell, 1994) can influence our perceptions. While these studies noted how the comparisons of two options are altered by changing their peripheral context—that is, what other options are presented in addition to the two target alternatives for comparison—few have attempted to address how our perceptions are shaped by the focal context—that is, the presentation of the two target alternatives themselves.

We proposed that for attribute dimensions that can be described in two equivalent frames (e.g., printing reliability vs. failure rate), the different attribute values associated with each frame (e.g., 97% reliability vs. 3% failure rate) can affect how we compare two options. Our hypothesis is that the presentation format of attribute information can affect the perceived difference between two options. That is, the perceived difference is amplified when the attribute is described in a large ratio frame than when it is described in a small ratio frame.

Two experiments were designed to test our hypothesis. In the experiments, the undergraduate students participated on a voluntary basis and were randomly assigned to one of the two presentation formats (small vs. large ratio). They were given a scenario that described two options differing on two attributes with a trade-off. The scenarios were essentially identical between the two conditions, except that the label and the numerical values of one of the attributes changed according to the presentation manipulations. After reviewing the information, the participants reported their evaluations of each option on each attribute dimension and their preferences for the two options.

In Experiment 1, we showed that when a pair of options are presented in a frame with attribute values in large ratio (e.g., printer A has a failure rate of 3% vs. printer B has a failure rate of 9%), consumers report greater differences in their attribute judgments than when the same pair of options are cast in a frame with attribute values in small ratio (e.g., printer A has printing reliability of 97% vs. printer B has printing reliability of 91%). Moreover, we also found that the preference between two options with trade-offs is altered by the ways the attribute information are presented. Generally speaking, we found that an option is more likely to be chosen when its superior attribute is presented in a large ratio format than when it is presented in a small ratio format.

In Experiment 2, we ruled out an alternative explanation of negativity bias. That is, the effects of presentation format on attribute perceptions are replicated even when positive attribute label is paired with large ratio frame and negative attribute label is paired with small ratio frame. Therefore, our findings cannot be explained by the valence of the attribute label.

In sum, we demonstrated that the same pair of options may appear similar or different depending on how their attribute information is presented. This contextual effect differs from others in that it does not require alternation in the options involved in the evaluation environment.

Contribution of the Concept of Identity to the Understanding of Responsible Consumer Behavior: Application to the Consumption of Fair Trade Products

Nile Ozcaglar-Toulouse, Universite de Lille 2-France

The responsible consumption is not easy to understand: it is a complex phenomenon and characterized by a large diversity of practices (Shaw, 2000; Newholm, 1999). Thus, I find it necessary to propose my own definition of responsible consumption as being ‘the set of voluntary acts, situated in the sphere of consumption, achieved from the awareness of consequences judged as negatives of consumption on the outside world to oneself, these consequences raising therefore not from the functionality of the purchases nor from immediate personal interest’ (Ozcaglar-Toulouse, 2005). The originality of responsible consumption as a research area, besides being various and sometimes surprising, is that it assigns to the consumption a significance that passes the only utilitarian aspects of the purchase. Yet, little research has been given in depth to understand the meaning consumers who declare themselves to be ‘responsible’ give to their consumption (Cherrier, 2005; Connolly and Prothero, 2003; Moisand and Pesonen, 2002).

Fair trade consumption can provide a rich analysis land. According to Foucauldian approach, fair trade products purchase associated with a political project (changing the current economic system) is a ‘politics of self’ (Foucault, 1978, 1980). It becomes therefore a way to affirm one’s own ideas and engagements but also a means to re-construct one’s identity. Instead of postulating a ‘fair trade purchase’ based on self-expression, the responsible consumption may be viewed as an existential choice. Focusing on the purchase of fair trade products as an illustration, this research studies how current social and environmental concerns about consumption are reviving the topic of meaning in consumption practices, through their contribution to identity construction processes among consumers who declare themselves to be responsible.

The notion of identity is considered in this research broader than the classic features used in traditional studies of segmentation—gender, age, social category, incomes…; it allows to touch the way the consumer interprets himself/herself and on the role that his/her