Inoculations of Self-Control: Switching Vs. Reinforcement Effects of Recalling Past Behavior

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This research investigates how consumers respond to temptations contingent on having been faced with similar temptations in the recent past, and having either resisted the earlier temptation or succumbed to it. Results of three experiments suggest that given a sufficient delay between the episodes, chronically impulsive people are more likely to succumb to a present temptation if they recall having resisted on a previous occasion; on the other hand, non-impulsives are likely to behave consistently with their past behavior: resisting the current temptation if they recall having resisted in the past. These results support a content-of-recall based account of how consumers respond to sequences of similar temptations.

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retailers (Rosenbloom 1983). Store image is the complex of a consumer’s perceptions of the different attributes of the store, namely, general attribute, appearance and service (Manolis et al. 1994). Good store image may lead to store loyalty (Lessig 1973; Sirgy and Samli 1989).

People buy out of various incentives, thus paying attention to different aspects of the store image, which is universal in everyday life. Researches on consumption values suggest that the reason why consumers pay attention to different aspects of the product and make different choices is the seeking of different consumption values (Sheth et al. 1991). The five values identified by Sheth et al. (1991) are functional value, which derives from the perceived utility of the object in the choice situation; social value, attached to a product from its association with social groups; emotional value, which relates to the affective or emotional response to the product; epistemic value, related to the affective or emotional response to the product; and conditional value, ascribed to an object through circumstance of use.

818 eligible finished questionnaires were collected online by a professional research company. Demographic indicators of these respondents are consistent with former studies of online-shoppers in China (Dong 2005; Cui 2004).

According to Sheth et al. (1991), although the basic five-dimension framework of consumption values is given, the items for the values should be designed based on specific condition, and each dimension may consist of more than one factor. The multi-dimensional value structure is proved in previous research (c.f., Long and Schiffman 2000; Pope 1998).

Following the guidelines suggested by Churchill (1979), we developed scales of consumption values on online-shopping. Each consumption value scale was independently factor analyzed using SPSS. Seven factors for the consumption values were identified, the uni-dimensional social value, epistemic value, and conditional value, along with two-dimensional functional value (functional and costs advantages) and emotional value (gratification and safety). Tests indicate a good reliability of all the seven values (Cronbach α ≥0.80).

Hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward’s method with Squared Euclidean distance, based on the seven factors, grouped the respondents into three, comprising of 230, 297 and 291 people respectively.

The results of ANOVA indicate that the three groups differ significantly in their evaluation about the consumption values (p<0.001). The second group has the lowest evaluation about all the consumption values except functional advantage and safety. In contrast, the third group exhibits the highest evaluation of all the other values, with the epistemic value lower than the first group. The first group has most values ranked between that for Group 2 and Group 3, as well as the highest epistemic value and lowest functional advantage and safety.

A model was constructed to examine the difference of the impact on store loyalty from the three dimensions of online-store image—general attribute, service and appearance, and the mediation of satisfaction and commitment in these three groups. We examined the model using AMOS in three groups separately. Statistical results of the path coefficients of all the three models indicate that, the impact from the three aspects of online store image on loyalty differ from one group to another. The mediation of satisfaction and commitment, and the impact of the two mediators on loyalty are also different among the groups.

Group 1 demonstrates the highest level of store loyalty through satisfaction, but the lowest level of transition from satisfaction to commitment, and from commitment to loyalty. Besides, consumers in Group 1 pay more attention to short-term oriented consumption values, like conditional and epistemic value. Those two features lead to the fact that people in Group 1 turn out to be undecided consumers, apt to switch from store to store. General attribute is the most important store image for Group 1. Enhancement in general attribute image, like better overall sales performance, higher reputation, may help maintain the undecided consumers in Group 1.

Group 2 has the lowest level of transition from satisfaction to loyalty. And only general attribute image has direct positive influence on their commitment. According to the path coefficients, they are least possibly to become loyal. Along with the lowest evaluation about the consumption values, they are termed as non-frequent buyers. Enhancing general attribute is also important for encouraging more purchase from the non-frequent buyers.

For all the three groups, satisfaction and commitment towards online stores will lead to store loyalty, and satisfaction will be changed into commitment. However, path coefficients indicate that, consumers in Group 3 are the easiest to change from satisfaction into commitment. Also, they have the highest level of loyalty through commitment, and relatively high level of loyalty from satisfaction. This result, which is consistent with their high evaluation of the consumption values, indicates that Group 3 is composed of loyal customers. In general, consumers in Group 3 are the most valuable to an online-store. For this group, service is the factor which has the greatest influence on loyalty. Taking their evaluation of consumption values into account, service differentiation can further satisfy those consumers. Customized service can meet the high appeal of the social value from this group.

Additionally, in all the three groups, general attribute image exhibits the highest contribution to loyalty, while appearance image shows the lowest, if any.

Citations


## The Effects of Product Scandals on Parent Brands: Linguistic Signatures of a Protective Mechanism

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**Extended Abstract**

Brand architectures involving a parent brand can improve the perception of their associated brands and allow for a simple and cost saving introduction of new products (Smith, 1992). New or established product brands may benefit from associations with parent brands (Aaker & Keller, 1989; Sattler, Völckner, & Zatloukal, 2002). The opportunity of such positive transfer effects, however, comes at a price: The transfer is neither restricted to positive affect, nor is it unidirectional. There are also examples that negative evaluations of product brands can affect parent brands and other associated products. The empirical findings concerning such negative feedback, however, are not equivocal: while Sullivan (1990) found that technical problems with one model of Audi deteriorated the brand image and lowered sales of other Audi products, other researchers did not find negative feedback effects (Aaker, 1996, Loken & Roedder John, 1993, Keller & Aaker, 1992; Romeo, 1991). It seems that, under certain circumstances, parent brands are resistant to effects of negative evaluations of associated product brands. In the present study, we examined whether attribution processes that are specific to parent brands with a strong positive image may prevent strong parent brands from negative feedback effects.

Attribution research is concerned with the judgment of causes for a perceived event. For example, Heider (1958) examined whether the behavior of an individual and his or her individual dispositions are the primary cause of an outcome, or whether external, environmental influences are considered as a primary cause. While attribution research is predominant in research on person perception, there are also a few studies examining causal attribution in the domain of product failures and product-harm crises (e.g., Folkes, 1988; Siomkos & Kurzbard, 1994; Su & Tippins, 1998). Previous research focused on the effects of an incident’s severity (Su & Tippins, 1998) and the consumer’s personal vulnerability (Lauffer & Gillespie, 2004). However, research on expectancy biases in person perception also suggests that the categorization of an actor and the associated expectations influence how causes for negative incidents are construed. For example, Maass, Salvi, Arcuri, and Semin (1998) found that individuals communicate undesirable behavior more abstractly when it was performed by an out-group member than when it was performed by an in-group member. A high level of abstraction can be regarded as a specific form of attribution pertaining the disposition of the actor or the respective group. In contrast, a low level of abstraction can be considered as a more situational attribution in which the undesirable behavior is perceived as caused by external, environmental factors, and is not generalized to the actors’ dispositions. The underlying mechanism is that expected behavior is construed and communicated in more abstract terms and considered as more intentional, while unexpected behavior is construed and communicated more concretely and is considered as less intentional (Fiedler, Blümke, Friese, & Hofmann, 2003). Since the behavior expected for the in-group is mostly positive while for the out-group expectations are often negative, this is a good explanation for the findings of Maas et al.

We assume that a similar mechanism moderates the responses to a product scandal or failure related to strong or weak parent brand. As strong parent brands we consider parent brands that are well established in the market and to which consumers hold strong positive views. In contrast, a weak parent brand should be less established in the market and consumers should not have strong attitudes towards these brands. Since strong positive attitudes are directly linked to positive expectations, a product scandal or product failures are not congruent to the expectations towards a strong parent brand. Therefore, we hypothesized that a product scandal that concerns failures of a product associated with a strong parent brand is construed and communicated by consumers in more concrete terms, and does affect the view of the brand to a minor degree than if the same scandal pertains a product of a weak parent brand.

To test our assumptions, participants received information about a scandal associated with a new product of either a strong or weak parent brand. The product was a soft drink and the scandal was that the product did not contain what the consumers expected. The information about the scandal contained a pictograph and two short essays. The information was sparse and allowed for a variety of interpretations about the causation. The pictograph indicated discordance between what the manufacturer was bottling and what the consumer thought he was drinking, but did not provide any clues on how this had happened and whose fault it was. The essays looked like editorial content of some marketing periodical. They described how the respective company prepared the launch of a new brand in several countries. The product behind the new brand was described, the very competitive market was mentioned, and a vague schedule...
for the launch was provided. Also, participants were given the information that the planned launch of the new brand had failed and been aborted to avoid further damage. No exact reasons were explained, only a “flop” was mentioned. Participants were asked to carefully study the material. They evaluated both the product brand and the parent brand before, and after the presentation of the scandal. After studying the information of the scandal, we asked participants to retell the story with their own words as if they were telling it to a friend. The space was limited to one page. We analyzed the resulting texts using the Linguistic Category Model (Semin & Fiedler, 1988, 1991, 1992). Our Data is consistent with our expectations: the language participants used to retell the story was significantly less abstract, indicating a more situative attribution of the events that were described. In line with this, the strong parent brand took significantly less damage than the weak parent brand did.

This finding implies that the risk of imposing a parent brand may be smaller than thought by some marketing experts. The parent brand, if it is strong enough, can clear the path for a more favorable perception, even of negative behavior.

References

Choosing Between Service Sequences: The Joint Effect of Ego Depletion and Mood on Consumers’ Decision Strategy

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Extended Abstract

Previous research on preferences for sequences of outcomes shows that people prefer some sequences over others. For example, people prefer sequences where positive and negative outcomes are spread out over time (Loewenstein and Prelec, 1993). Although previous research presents us with valuable insights into the sequence evaluation process, the conditions under which these sequence preferences hold have not received much attention. Previous research has shown that mood and ego depletion have a profound influence on the level and quantity of information that is processed and as a result on the decision making process (Schwarz, 2001; Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, and Tice, 1998). Therefore, we believe that when looking at sequence preferences, these two mechanisms cannot be overlooked.

This research presents the results of an experiment designed to test a theoretical framework in which the combined effect of mood and ego depletion influences preferences for sequences of service experiences. We argue that ego depletion and mood play an important role in service encounters and that the initial mood state of the customer will influence which components of the service are considered important for the evaluation of the service. In addition, certain events within a service encounter require active self-control by the customer,