Product-Or-Store-Induced Mood and Its Influence on Product Evaluations and Identification With the Product. the Case of Clothing

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Product-or-Store-Induced Mood and its Influence on Product Evaluations and Identification with the Product: The Case of Clothing

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ABSTRACT

Although much research has been conducted on mood in relation to purchase behavior, relatively little has focused on the role of product-or-store-induced mood over time. This study examines the effects of product-or-store-induced mood on expected and experienced product value in the context of clothing. Results indicate that the product-or-store-induced mood has a moderate correlation with expected and experienced hedonic value. Hence, product-or-store-induced mood seems to influence both expected and experienced hedonic value, whereas the functional value seems to be perceived in a similar way, regardless of mood.

INTRODUCTION

Consumers’ mood at initial product evaluations has been shown to influence the nature of these evaluations. Generally, a positive mood has the most benevolent effects. It is thus important for the marketer to create a positive mood in consumers. If the product or brand does not create a positive mood, in the sense of positive feelings and hedonic value, strong relationships cannot be founded.

Previous operationalizations of consumer mood have in general been based on an artificial induction of positive or negative mood, so called context-induced mood, by letting respondents in a laboratory setting think about, or expose them to descriptions of, positive or negative events. After this initial manipulation they are asked to evaluate or choose between products.

This context-induced mood is not related to the actual purchase and is thus outside the marketer’s control in a real world purchase situation. On the other hand, it is quite possible for the marketer, both through the product or brand, and through the retail setting, to stimulate a positive, product-/brand-related mood at the point of purchase. More knowledge about such product-or-store-induced mood can give valuable insights for clothes producers and retailers, or indeed for any business selling a product that is rich in meaning.

Moreover, it is critical for marketers to know how a product-or-store-induced mood may affect consumer behavior over time (Aylesworth and MacKenzie 1998; Singh and Hitchon 1989). The big question is whether the consumer, in his/her subsequent re-evaluation of the product while being in a different kind of mood, is still affected by the initial impression. Greater understanding of the importance of how moods influence different parts of the consumer purchase process could lead to more accurate and less expensive advertising strategies, better insights in whether various changes in the product itself and in the retail setting in order to create a positive mood are worthwhile, among other things.

Most previous studies have been relatively short-sighted in scope. Here, on the other hand, consumers are studied across a period of six months.

In this study, we examine the effects of product-/brand-induced mood on the evaluation of expected and experienced product value in the context of clothing. It is argued that clothes primarily provide the consumer with functional and/or hedonic value, and that hedonic value is a specifically important contributor to the customer’s identification with the product, something we believe is vital for continuous use of the particular garment, as well as repurchase of the clothes brand in question.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON CONSUMER MOOD

Moods have been defined as mild, pervasive, and generalized affective states (Isen 1984) that are subjectively perceived by individuals (Gardner 1985). Gardner (1985) regards moods as a subcategory of feelings, differentiated from emotions by their transient nature and the fact that they are less intense, less attention-getting and less clearly tied to a specific behavior or cause. While different from emotions in these respects, mood as a feeling shares fundamental properties with emotions. Moods and emotions thus are similar constructs.

Two competing theories may explain the effect of mood on product evaluations: the congruence theory and the consistency theory. The congruence theory predicts that the consumer’s feelings cause certain environmental cues to become more salient and stand out, to stimulate his/her choice of brand (Bower and Cohen 1982). The consistency theory, on the other hand, predicts that a positive state of mind has more pronounced effects on purchase than a negative state of mind. Forgas and Bower (1987) found that joyful subjects made more purchases than did sad subjects. The congruence and consistency theories are by no means mutually exclusive.

However, empirical studies show contradictory results of mood on the consumer’s product evaluation. According to Batra and Stayman (1990), a positive mood is associated with less cognitive elaboration, more heuristic processing, and reduces the extent to which message evaluation affects brand identity. On the contrary, Moscardo and Pearce’s (1986) results reveal that enjoyment of visitors in entertaining centers is moderately but significantly positively correlated with visitors’ mindfulness. That is, visitors in a positive mood are more attentive and aware of what they are doing.

As found by Kamings, Marks, and Skinner (1991), a joyful commercial viewed in the context of a joyful program was evaluated more favourably than in the context of sad program, and conversely. In the same vein, Hornik (1992) found that positive and negative moods resulted in underestimation versus overestimation of the duration between the consumer’s temporal purchases.

Even more convincingly, Isen et al. (1978) confirmed the effects of positive mood on the cognitive processes of consumers: if the state of mind is positive (happy) in the purchase situation, this enhanced good mood improves consumer’s evaluations of the performance of product brands.

MOOD CONGRUENCY THEORY

According to the mood congruency theory, our present mood predisposes us to be more attentive of information that is congruent with this mood (Clark and Isen 1982). Specifically, people in a positive mood may attend more to favourable aspects of information, whereas people in a negative mood may attend more to unfavourable aspects (Adaval 1996).

In the context of marketing, studies have found support for the mood congruency theory. Consumers processing information in a positive mood are likely to have more positive feelings towards the product or brand. According to Batra and Stayman (1990), positive mood states have also been linked to higher levels of influence, mostly with regard to advertising claims. In another study, Goldberg and Gorn (1987) reported that viewers who watched pleasant TV-
programs or looked at nice pictures were more likely to provide positive cognitive responses and perceive the program or picture as more convincing than those who watched more depressing programs or pictures. This approach is perhaps realistic while watching commercials or newspaper ads, but not in a real consumption situation.

The congruence effects of positive moods have thus been substantiated in the literature, but the influence of consumer mood on product evaluation has been less examined. Attention to mood states and consumer behavior has reinforced the notion that the product evaluations and the processing of product-related information are considerably affected by the consumers’ mood state. In many articles, mood congruency theory accurately predicts the impact of positive and negative mood states upon salient consumer behavior variables. On the other hand, earlier research has focused on the impact of context-induced mood states on product choice, but has not cared for situations that contain repeat evaluations.

Surrall (1987) showed congruent mood state effects on evaluations taken 48 hours after the product information was presented. In this study, subjects were initially asked to form an evaluation of the product while in a mood state. On the contrary, initial evaluations by consumers first instructed to simply assess the product information failed to exhibit a mood-congruent pattern, even though the consumers also experienced different mood states at indoctrination. The author investigated the impact of mood states on later evaluations when moods were inducted at the time product evaluations were measured. The results may suggest that the mood states affect the consumers’ evaluations provided they are present when evaluations actually take place.

PREVIOUS MANIPULATIONS OF CONSUMER MOOD

As we have seen, it has previously been found that moods can influence how we evaluate people, objects, or issues, regardless of whether our mood is related to any of these phenomena (Petty et al. 1983). This is because our present mood predisposes us to be more attentive of information that is congruent with this mood (Clark and Isen 1982). Specifically, people in a positive mood may attend more to favourable aspects of information, whereas people in a negative mood may attend more to unfavourable aspects (Adaval 1996).

Perhaps it is therefore that research on consumer mood in general has examined the effects of an existing, or rather induced, mood on for example product evaluations or choice. Even though mood, according to the above definition, is supposed to be a pervasive state of mind, the mood manipulations generally used are relatively short-sighted. A few recent examples are Walther and Grigoriadis (2004) who examined the effect of affective learning (trough combining pairs of shoes with liked or disliked faces) on consumers who were already happy or sad; Cohen and Andrade (2004) induced a happy or sad affective state by letting people watch five minutes of the comedy Happy Gilmore contra the drama Life as a House, and then having them describe a real-life event which produced similar feelings (in order to study how respondents thereupon deliberately regulated their moods to handle different tasks); and Yeung and Wyer (2004) similarly induced mood by letting college students describe a happy or sad event in their lives (and then have them evaluate sports shoes or a salad dressing based on product attributes before or after they were exposed to pictures of the products).

In sum, considerable research has examined the effect of such context-induced moods on consumers’ information processing (e.g., Aylesworth and MacKenzie 1998; Batra and Stayman 1990; Batra and Stephens 1994; Goldberg and Gorn 1987).

In their research, these authors have systematically manipulated consumer’s moods and stressed the need to empirically investigate how the induced mood states influence product evaluation (Hadjimarcou and Barnes 1996). Hadjimarcou and Barnes (1996) found that an artificially induced mood had effects on initial, but not on repeated product evaluations. In fact, Singh and Hitchon (1989) cite research suggesting that prior effects thought to be due to manipulating, may in fact be partially changed when consumers use the product or brand. Perhaps this is one factor that could partially explain results of prior research. Some studies have found that positive moods (versus negative or neutral moods) stimulate purchase and may moreover be transferred to the post-purchase process (Aylesworth and MacKenzie 1998; Goldberg and Gorn 1987; Knowles et al. 1993; Mathur and Chattopadhyay 1991). Others have found that positive moods are associated with less information processing (Batra and Stephens, 1994; Batra and Stayman, 1990). Effects have then been found on initial, but not on subsequent global product evaluations. These subsequent product evaluations took place 48 hours after the initial ones and did not involve any product usage meanwhile. It is thus not clear what effects an initial positive mood at the point of purchase may have later on in the post-purchase process, when this is characterized by continuous product usage. Even still, Hadjimarcou and Barnes (1996) point out that the research on moods’ impact on judgement has till now mostly been focused on the effects of mood states on initial product judgements, while the moods’ influence on repeat judgement has been ignored. The consumers make their evaluation of a product depending of which mood they are in when getting the product presented for the first time. If the first time is through a TV commercial, the mood can be influenced by e.g. by putting the commercial into a happy or sad program.

Even though real-world consumers for various reasons find themselves in different moods before a purchase, a more neutral mood than that directly induced by instructions in a laboratory setting is probably quite common. This neutral or mildly positive mood is likely to be the normal state of mind also when using the product.

Moreover, the context-induced, but “product-independent” mood of the consumer is very hard for the marketer to manipulate, whereas there are possibilities to manipulate product-or-store-induced mood both at the point of purchase and during product usage (e.g., by means of product attributes or continuous advertising).

PRODUCT-OR-STORE-INDUCED MOOD

It is well-known that the purchase of certain products is associated with joy and happiness for many consumers. One such product is clothing. If you are looking forward to the purchase of a new garment, you are likely to be in a positive mood at the point of purchase. On the other hand, if the garment is a bare necessity, something you have to buy, but are not looking forward to, your mood is more likely to be neutral or even negative. Still, the product or retail setting may have effects on your current mood.

The effects from this type of product-or-store-induced mood may be different from the artificially induced mood mainly studied in previous research.

However, in stating our hypotheses, we depart from the assumption that the two mood types have similar effects on product evaluations.

As previously noted, Hadjimarcou and Barnes (1996) found that an artificially induced mood had effects on initial, but not on subsequent, repeated product evaluations. They examined cases where consumers in a positive or a negative mood received infor-
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Mood and Customer-Product Identification

In the context of clothes, some products or brands can indeed influence the consumers’ mood, and may lead them to attribute various human, mood-related traits to the product/brand in question. These mood-related traits can then be translated into hedonic value and thereby relate to the consumer identity process. That is, a consumer who feels happy when purchasing a garment may transfer this feeling of happiness to the garment and perceive that his/her happy self is represented by the garment. The consumer thus identifies with the garment.

Even though consumer product-related mood has (or does not have) effects on initial and subsequent estimations of product values, we argue that in the case of clothes, this is not enough to ensure continuous usage and possible repurchase. There should also be a link between product-or-store-induced mood and consumer-product identification.

Here, we depart from the assumption that most people want to be in a positive mood and view themselves as positive people. That is, they perceive their own identities as positive. The use of certain products, especially those publicly and visibly consumed, for example clothes, has the potential to make people feel positive about themselves. Therefore, we argue that the consumer’s mood at the point-of-purchase partly through the influence on perceived, and perhaps also experienced functional and hedonic value of the garment in question, can have an effect on the consumer’s identification with this garment or clothes brand. That the customer and product identities coincide is in turn important for the future usage and of the product and repurchase of the brand.

Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

\[ H_5: \text{Product-or-store-induced mood is related to the identification between consumer and product.} \]

THE OVERALL MODEL

To sum this up, we propose the conceptual model shown in Figure 1.

STUDY AND MEASURES

The study in brief

Because of the lack of information in this area, we used a survey to get more knowledge about how the consumer’s product-or-store-induced moods and subsequent evaluations of expected and experienced product values influence the identity congruence between consumer and product. A convenience sampling method was used. Consumers in three major clothes stores in central Stockholm were approached immediately after having completed a purchase and asked if they were willing to participate in a study of clothes brands. Six months later, they received a postal survey, asking similar questions, in order to study changes in these constructs over a prolonged period of ownership and usage. Five hundred and eighty-nine consumers participated in both surveys.

The empirical data thus comes from consumers who had purchased one specific garment just prior to the first collection of data and then were again asked similar questions about the same garment six months later. The consumers were asked about their mood in the purchase situation as well as while using the garment, expected functional and hedonic value of the garment at the point of purchase and experienced values during usage, and after six months they also responded to questions about their identification with the garment. Before the consumers answered the questionnaire

Figure 1.

Conceptual model of the relations between product-or-store-induced mood, expected and experienced product value, and customer-product identification (dashed relations are not examined)

![Conceptual model of the relations between product-or-store-induced mood, expected and experienced product value, and customer-product identification](image-url)
items there they instructed to think about the specific garment brand they had purchased.

Measures

The measures included in the model are described below.

Product-or-store-induced mood. The consumer’s state of mind at the point of purchase was assessed with the question, “When you think about the garment you have just purchased, how do you feel?” followed by a semantic differential seven-point scale with the subsequent adjective pairs: happy—unhappy, pleased—annoyed, satisfied—unsatisfied, hopeful—despairing, relaxed—tense, calm—excited, stimulated—relaxed, calm—excited, jittery—dull, wide awake—sleepy. The pairs were adapted from Mehrabian and Russell’s Emotions: Dimensions of Emotions: PAD (1974), and represent the major parts of their pleasure and arousal dimensions. Even though this scale has previously been used in order to operationalize emotions, we here choose the word “mood”, to emphasize that as it is explicitly related to the product or store in question, and not to something unrelated (as in much previous research), it is of a less transient nature, and perhaps also less intense, than an emotion.

For sake of simplicity, they were all combined into an overall mood measure with a Cronbach’s alpha of .82. In order to be able to study the effects of a positive, neutral, or negative product-or-store-induced mood on subsequent product evaluations and customer-product identification, this measure was next parted in three thirds.

Initial/Expected hedonic value at the point of purchase. Expected hedonic value during usage was measured by the following three items: “I become in a good mood when thinking about using the garment”; “I feel comfortable when I think about using the garment”; and “I feel good when thinking about using the garment.” The data was collected at the point of purchase and measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale. An index of all three items had alpha .89.

Initial/Expected functional value at the point of purchase. Expected functional value at the point of purchase was measured by the respondent’s expectation of the garment’s usefulness, practicality, durability, functionality, and capability during usage. The data was collected in the same way as for expected hedonic value. Alpha was .86.

Subsequent/Experienced hedonic value during usage. Experienced hedonic value during usage was measured by the following three items: “I became in a good mood when using the garment”; “I felt comfortable using the garment”; and “I felt good when using the garment.” The data was collected six months after purchase. The alpha of the combined items was .95.

Subsequent/Experienced functional value during usage. Experienced functional value during usage was measured by the respondent’s assessment of the garment’s usefulness, practicality, durability, functionality, and capability during usage. As for experienced hedonic value, the data was collected six months after purchase. Alpha for the combined measure was .88.

Customer-product identification. Customer-product identification, that is, how well the garment signalled the customer’s own identity, was measured with the following items: “The garment expressed who I am”; “The garment explained who I am”; and “The garment was me”. This data was collected six months after purchase. Alpha for these three items was .89.

RESULTS

To get an overview, we begin with a correlation table of the studied measures (Table 1).

We see that product-or-store-induced mood has a moderately high correlation with expected and experienced hedonic value. The correlations with the other measures are not very substantial, but nevertheless significant. It can thus be established that there is some kind of relation between the constructs, measured in this way.

Because mood was measured before evaluations of both expected (later in the questionnaire) and experienced (six months later) product values, we will also test whether there could be some kind of causal relation, by means of regression analysis.

Hypothesis 1 stated that product-or-store-induced mood would give a significant contribution to the expected hedonic value of the garment at the point of purchase. Regression analysis supports this ($β=.62, R^2=.24, p<.001$).

Hypothesis 2 stated that product-or-store-induced mood would give a significant contribution to the expected functional value of the garment at the point of purchase. Regulation analysis weakly supports this ($β=.13, R^2=.01, p<.01$).

Next, hypothesis 3 stated that product-or-store-induced mood would not give a significant contribution to the experienced hedonic value of the garment during usage. On the contrary, there seems to be a small contribution of product-or-store-induced mood on experienced hedonic values ($β=.47, R^2=.10, p<.001$).

Hypothesis 4 then stated that product-or-store-induced mood would not give a significant contribution to the experienced functional value of the garment during usage. Hypothesis 4 is supported, as the regression is not significant.

Finally, hypothesis 5 stated that product-or-store-induced mood would significantly contribute to customer-product identification. This is supported ($β=.33, R^2=.04, p<.001$).

If we were to test these hypotheses through a mean comparison between groups with a negative, neutral, and positive product-or-store-induced mood, we would get the results shown in Table 2.

According to this means comparisons analysis, hypotheses 1, 3, and 5 gain the strongest support, though there is perhaps not a linear relation with regards to hypothesis 5.

Product-or-store-induced mood seems to have significant effects on both expected and experienced hedonic value, whereas the functional value seems to be perceived in a similar way, regardless of mood. It is in this context also interesting to note that the experienced hedonic value is much lower than the expected value ($Δ−1.02$), while the experienced functional value is almost as high as the expected value ($Δ−1.18$).

DISCUSSION

It has previously been shown that artificially induced consumer mood, for example by letting experimental respondents think about happy or sad life events, or watch comedy or drama, had effects on product evaluations. The initial evaluations were affected by this external mood, but not the subsequent.

A problem with these common operationalizations of consumer mood is that they are not very realistic and moreover difficult to manipulate in a real-world purchase situation. In this paper, we focus instead of product-or-store-induced mood, that is, the ability of the product and its purchase situation to put consumers in a positive mood. In contrast to context-induced mood, product-or-store-induced mood is possible to manipulate by the marketer.

It seems like this kind of mood has partly different effects. It seems to influence the evaluation of both expected (initial) and experienced (subsequent) hedonic product value, but not the evaluation of functional value at either point in time. The relation between product-or-store-induced mood and hedonic value is important, because they both contribute to the identification between customer and product, at least in the clothing category. And in the
clothing category, we believe that customer-product identification is particularly important for continued usage and potential repurchase. The functional value is on the other hand not strongly related to this identification.

The expected and experienced functional value is moreover more or less the same, while the expected emotional value is much higher than that later experienced. This can be interpreted as a natural development and an effect of the news value of the recently purchased garment, but it can also point to the importance of stimulating a positive mood at the point of purchase, because a positive mood is associated with expected emotional value, and because these two constructs are in turn both associated with customer-product identification.

Customer-product identification is important as long as it leads to a customer-brand identification. Due to changing fashion trends, a particular garment may become out of style, but if the customer identifies with its brand, further purchases of this brand become more likely. In further research, the relation between customer-product identification and customer-brand identification should thus be examined. In a consumer culture, identities and identifications are said to be temporary and changing. Is it then possible to create relations between brands and consumers that are stable and lasting over time?

It is a key challenge for marketers to enhance the consumer’s product or brand evaluation in an actual purchase environment, and also in repeated product re-evaluations. Product-or-store-induced mood plays an important role in shaping consumers’ total evaluations of products or brands as well as being a focal point for the meaning of actual product value in the context of clothes. To create strong relationships between consumers and products or brands marketers must look at consumers’ product-or-store-induced moods in the retail environment, because that influences their hedonic product evaluation and also the customer’s identification with the product or brand.

We need to be in a position to understand the impact of product-or-store-induced mood and its effects on consumers’ product evaluations. Because the product can influence the consumers’ mood state in their evaluation of product brands in the store, manufacturers and retailers have to stimulate a positive product-or-store-induced mood at the point of purchase to tie the consumers closer to a specific product or brand on the market.

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