First Jointly, Then Separately: a New Approach to Address Complexity in Product Evaluations

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Abstract
Product complexity has been described as a major challenge in preference measurement. This paper discusses various ways to deal with large numbers of attributes and levels. Usually, attribute importance is initially appraised by self-explicated questions which has little similarity to a real purchase decision. Therefore, we suggest the use of information display boards to identify the attributes being relevant in product evaluations on the individual level. This information is then used to adapt the pairwise comparison-based preference measurement (PCPM) approach to elicit consumer preferences subsequently. The promising results of an empirical study on mobile phones are outlined.

“What I Really Detest as a Polish Immigrant is Other Poles”: Class and Consumption Among Eastern European Immigrants in London

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Extended Abstract
Polish immigrants have made their presence highly visible on the British market as both consumers and producers during the last six years. Their influence on the new consumption tastes and habits emerging within the mainstream British culture has been notified by researchers, journalists and politicians. Regardless of that diverse research and continuous media hype, however, Eastern European immigrants are still regarded as a heterogeneous group of consumers. Being the most sensitive indicators of ethnic stereotypes, the latest advertising campaigns in the UK show that all Poles eat and celebrate in the same way around the same religious festivities, despite their social and cultural differences. The way in which Polish immigrants differ in their preferences and tastes for consumption and spending should be observed not only in a local context of the host culture, but also in the historical context of the Polish past, including a pre-commercial past of the communist era.

In this paper, in order to understand how class divisions affect consumption and consumer identity of Polish immigrants, I will debate the historical underpinnings of ‘classless’, communist society from the pre-1989 Polish past (Bauman 1982; Domasński 2002; Blazyca and Rapacki 2001; Mayer 2002; Ekiert and Hanson 2003) and compare it to the current debates on class in the UK (Crompton 1993; Savage 2000; Skegg 2004). In the historical part of my argument, the major theories of class from the communist and capitalist society will be summarised and subsequently related to the empirical data collected through my ethnographic research conducted in London in the years 2007-2009 among Polish immigrants who moved to the UK after the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004. Remarkably, in diaspora studies there has not been much interest in internal class distinction when it comes to the characteristics of social conditions of Eastern European migrants (Lamont 2000). In consumer studies, diasporic communities are investigated according to the ethnic markers, whilst class is regarded as one of many social factors which consumers bring from ‘home’ and apply within the conditions of the host culture. This perception of diasporic homogeneity contrasted with local diversity has reinforced the motivation of marketers to create ethnic shops and places of consumption for the particular “others”, where mixing with other ethnicities is still very rare and the demarcation line of distinction, however symbolic, can be discouraging even for the immigrants themselves. Although the political advantage can be more than meaningful for consumers who decide to mobilise their ethnic identity through ethnically orientated consumption, class mobilisation is not recognised in that way.

The main methodology applied to this research is socio-psychological analysis of class identity of immigrant consumers (Argyle 1994; Huddy 2001; Hogg 2006). Empirical data have been produced through deep interviews, narrative survey and participant observation. The survey served as a platform for both: retrieving descriptive data on subjective class awareness and positioning of objective class distinction according to the classical Weber’s theory of stratification. This combined methodology allows for the inclusion of subjective experience of living and interacting with class structures, while it also overcomes the limitations of the traditional class location theory.