Crossing Into the New Year Through the Chinese New Year Reunion Dinner: the Case of the Chinese Ethnic Consumers in Malaysia

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A stream of consumer research has investigated consumption symbolism in the context of festivities such as Thanksgiving, Halloween and Christmas. However, very little is known about the social meanings associated with festivities in a non-Western context. This working paper is based on an extensive ethnography of the Chinese New Year reunion dinner and associated consumption activities among Chinese ethnic consumers in Malaysia. It explores the symbolic meanings, motives and practices predominantly characterised the reunion dinner consumption. The analysis sought to identify conceptual categories and themes which similarities and differences between the different age groups of respondents are explored.

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Coping with Brand Break-Ups: How Attachment Style Predicts Consumer Vengeance
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Abstract
Attachment styles influence a variety of interpersonal relationship behaviors. Recently, marketers have begun to examine the role of attachment styles in consumer-company interactions. We contribute to this budding research area by studying whether attachment style affects reactions to negative outcomes in consumer-company relationships, such as service failure. Evidence suggests that attachment style does predict behaviors such as complaining and that attachment style may be a useful way of understanding and predicting such consumer behavior.

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Abstract
Geopolitical disputes often trigger consumer anomisity, turning a foreign brand's otherwise positive country-of-origin perception into a serious impediment to its success. Building on psycholinguistic research, we propose a theoretical framework elucidating how consumers react to different types of brand naming strategies. We demonstrate that brand names localized via certain strategies not only benefit from the positive aspects of their country-of-origins but also are immune to anomisity. We also show that consumer anomisity is not necessarily a generalized, chronically stable construct as extant research suggests; rather, consumers disapprove of foreign brands only when the exporting nation's misdeeds are made salient.

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An Exploratory Study of UK Teenage Behaviour in online Social Network Environments
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Extended Abstract
Use of online social networks (OSNs) has grown significantly in recent years (69% penetration of the UK Internet population in 2008 c.p. 59% on 2007; Nielson, 2009 p2) and has generated significant changes in communication patterns and identity development. Facilitators such as Facebook, My Space and Bebo enable users to build social networks and converse online with friends, relatives and other like-minded individuals. OSNs are used by all age groups but are most popular with the young (55% of US teens use OSN; Pew, 2007 p11) Thus, as the heaviest OSN users and an important emerging consumer market in their own right, teenage behaviour is deserving of specific attention.

This paper discusses the exploratory stage of a substantive project investigating UK teenagers’ use of online social networks (OSNs) to construct and present their self-identity over time. Specifically, it aims to understand teenage habits and motivations in the OSN environment and the effect on the development of their self-identity and social network formation.

Conceptual Framework
The conceptual framework was drawn from literature on: the self; the extended self; social identity; group and social networks. Additionally, recent teenage literature is used to apply theories to a modern teenage context.

Teenage Consumption Culture
Teenage years are a critical development period in establishing self-identity. Teenagers are subject to immense change in body and mind, struggling to assert independence from their parents whilst simultaneously “fit in” with their peers. Unsure of their own roles, insecure and uncertain how to behave, teens are desperately trying to ascertain “who they really are” and thereby gain a sense of their own self-identity (Piacentini and Mailer, 2004; Tsu Wee, 1999).

Whilst teens today share same goals as previous generations, this cohort differ as they have grown up with computers and the Internet (61% use the Internet daily; Pew, 2007). Thus their relationship with digital technology is more intuitive; they interact faster and can manage huge quantities of information simultaneously (Powell, 2007). They use digital media, mobile phones, the Internet, instant messaging and OSNs to structure their world and manage their lifestyles (Spero and Stone, 2004).

Self-Identity and the Extended Self
Self identity is defined as the beliefs a person holds about his/her attributes and how they evaluate these qualities (Solomon et al, 2006). It encompasses role identities, personal attributes, relationships, fantasies, possessions and other symbols (Schouten, 1991). Belk (1988) conceptualised that individuals perceive an actual and ideal self and use consumption to close the gap; termed symbolic self-completion.

Products with symbolic values are used to aid this self-completion and communicate it to others. Similarly, individuals receive and decode symbols used by others and interpret their identity accordingly (Belk et al 1982). In the context of OSNs, digital stimuli may be used to extend the self in a similar way to products independent of ownership (Schau, H.J. and Gilly, M.C., 2005).

Social Identity, Group and Social Network Theories
Social identity derives from group theory and represents the public as opposed to private self. It purports that people evaluate themselves in terms of their social groups, moulding multiple identities for different situations, roles and company (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Social identity evolves via a process of social categorisation, identification and comparison and between individuals and their referent groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). Feedback from other group members is used to guide their behaviour and integrate group norms into their own social identity. (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Self-definition develops over time as a result of experimentation, experience, interaction and feedback from others (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987).

Teenagers are highly susceptible to peer pressure, so constant immersion in social groups is essential to enable them to develop and discover their true self. This generation tends to be more protected than previous generations, and teenagers are subject to tighter restrictions on their public freedom. OSNs may therefore serve as a surrogate for face-to-face contact with friends.

Traditional social network theory asserts that groups exhibit strong ties within and weak ties between other groups. Relationships with active contacts such as friends and family are thus strong ties, whilst relationships with passive contacts such as acquaintances and ex-colleagues are weak ties. Individuals with strong ties living in close proximity are more likely to share information and ideas. Thus information is assumed to travel quickly within communities but slowly across them (Sun et al, 2006; Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). As OSNs allow users to interact with a wider range of individuals and groups they may alter the process by which teenagers develop their social networks and groups.