Self-Gifting Vs. Gifting to Others: an Examination of Psychological Orientation Differences in the Domain of Gift Giving

Suri Weisfeld-Spolter, Baruch
Stephen Gould, Baruch College
Maneesh Thakkar, Baruch College

Abstract
This paper investigates how gender orientation changes depending on the gift-giving scenario. We demonstrate that psychological gender orientation is triggered differently based on the gifting scenario (self-gift vs. interpersonal gift) and show that these orientation differences also exist between the two main contexts of self-gifts i.e. reward and therapy. Our predictions are strongly supported by a pretest and a main study. We show that overall, interpersonal gift giving evokes a stronger feminine orientation as compared to self-gifting, and within self-gifting, the reward context generates a stronger masculine orientation as compared to the therapeutic self-gift context which is more feminine.

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used by foreigners, e.g. in movies or stories about Russia, in order to describe something typical Russian”), and a personal CEP dimension (items such as: “as a Russian, I probably have other thoughts and feelings for this product than other people”). One or two items, though, tended to load on a third factor. These items referred to a public aspect of CEP (item: “If other Russian were to see me using this product, he or she would perceive me as a typical Russian”). This third factor was interesting from a theoretical viewpoint, because previous research has shown that the self-concept has a private and a public dimension (e.g. Richins 1994).

Hence, we developed three more items in order to cover a potential public aspect of CEP. In a new study of Russian consumers (N=238) involving the same five products (ketchup, soft drink, vodka, mors and pelmeni), the revised scale was tested for both a two-factor and three-factor structure via LISREL.

The results tended to support a three-dimensional structure for the CEP Scale. There was a better fit for the three-dimensional model, in particular for two product categories-vodka and mors. The fit indicators for the three-dimensional model were CMIN/df=2.445, NFI=.859, CFI=.910, RMSEA=.078 for vodka and CMIN/df=1.747, NFI=.876, CFI=.942, RMSEA=.092 for mors. Preliminary evidence of discriminant and nomological validity was found by correlating the three CEP dimensions with related constructs such as the CETSCALE (descriptive CEP: r=.044, p=.544; private CEP: r=.281, p<.01; public CEP: r=.246, p<.01) and age (descriptive CEP: r=.05, p=.488; private CEP: r=-.168, p<.022; public CEP: r=.106, p<.138).

Moreover, the three dimensions of the CEP-scale correlated differently with these other variables. This finding supports the validity of a multidimensional definition of the construct.

Implications

The CEP-scale may prove to be a very useful scale for cross-cultural consumer research. In addition to measuring the extent of cultural embeddedness of a given category, researchers may use the scale to identify the type of embeddedness involved: descriptive, personal or public. Future research should validate the scale on other samples in other countries and in other product categories. Most important, research is needed on the effects of the different CEP-dimensions on information search and processing, attitude formation and choice.

References


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Extended Abstract

In the past, gift giving theory and research had typically been dyadic or interpersonal in nature (e.g. Belk, 1979). Nonetheless, it was acknowledged that people may sometimes give gifts to themselves, and in 1990 the first empirical investigation on the topic of giving gifts to oneself was conducted and self-gifts were conceptualized as (1) personally symbolic self-communication through (2) special indulements that tend to be (3) premeditated and (4) highly context bound (Mick and DeMoss 1990b, p.328).

Since its inception into the marketing research domain, it has been suggested that the self-gift phenomenon may be widely occurring in American society (Mick and DeMoss 1990a, 1990b) and two predominant contexts of self-gift behavior have been identified: reward and therapy (Mick and DeMoss 1990a, 1990b, 1992). Other research has substantiated the notion that self-gifts are a fairly common and important phenomenon particularly in western consumer behavior. According to social researchers, Western individuals have become increasingly self-oriented in their purchases and consumption behavior (Mick et al. 1992). Similarly, McKeage et al. (1993) believe that people have been giving gifts to themselves since the early beginnings of self-indulgence. Mick et al. (1992) advise that if self-gifts are as prominent in American society as some past research has suggested, then it’s a phenomenon marketers cannot afford to ignore or misunderstand.

Specifically, McKeage et al. (1993) suggest that future research might examine affective responses to self-gifts versus gifts-to-others. Additionally, Mick and Faure (1998) suggest that therapeutic self-gifts may result from a different type of psychological process than reward self-gifts. Extending Gould and Weil’s (1991) study of gender differences in giving gifts for same sex friends versus opposite ones, (they found that males described themselves differently in terms of masculine and feminine traits when buying gifts for same sex friends...
as opposed to opposite-sex friends, while females tended to be more consistent across these two situations,) we predict that psychological gender orientation will be triggered differently based on the gifting scenario (self-gift vs. interpersonal gift) and such psychological differences will have affective and cognitive implications for consumer decision making in gift buying situations. Further, we hypothesize that these differences will exist between the two contexts of self-gifts as well (reward and therapy).

When measuring gender orientation, prior research has suggested that people who score high on the feminine dimension are said to be nurturing whereas people who score high on the masculinity dimension are said to be more instrumental. Similarly, we would like to add to the self-gifting literature by examining affective differences (nurturing vs. instrumental) that may exist between the two self-gifting contexts and interpersonal gift giving situations by measuring individual’s gender orientation in these different contexts. Psychological gender orientations have been shown to substantially mediate many of the gender differences in a range of behaviors in that the more women resemble men along gender dimensions, such as masculinity and femininity, the more similar their behavior (Helgeson, 1994).

Models of psychological androgyny have supplanted the prior bipolar models of gender, in the sense that both sexes are viewed as capable of having both masculine and feminine qualities (e.g. Bem, 1974)

Therefore, we hypothesize that when gifting to a friend, individuals will feel more nurturing and score higher on the feminine dimension, and when self-gifting, they will feel more instrumental and score higher on the male dimension. Additionally, between the two self-gifting scenarios we predict that the therapeutic (reward) situation will result in higher feminine (masculine) scores than in the reward (therapeutic) situation. To test our hypotheses that gender orientation changes depending on the gift-giving scenario, we conducted a pretest with 34 subjects and found strong support for our predictions. In the pretest we also observed that subjects seemed fatigued filling out the full BEM Scale (60 items) three times. Thus, we ran the ANOVA with a reduced 20 item BEM scale (Barak and Stern, 1986) and still found significant results. We then used this reduced BEM scale, confirmed by a Factor Analysis, in our main study with 85 new subjects. The method was similar to the one used by Gould and Weil (1991). A within subjects design was used where subjects randomly received counterbalanced questionnaires and were assigned to three gift giving scenarios: self-gift reward (SGR), self-gift therapy (SGT) and interpersonal gift (IG). Subjects were told to imagine a certain gift-giving scenario and then asked to fill out the BEM scale; they repeated this task for each of the three gift scenarios. Subjects were also asked a number of items designed to assess subjects’ feelings when comparing the different gift giving experiences.

A one-way ANOVA with scenario condition (SGR, SGT and IG) was run on the measure of gender-orientation based on the BEM scale inventory score. The analysis produced significant results ($M_{SGR}=8.88$ vs. $M_{SGT}=5.61$ vs. $M_{IG}=14.27$, F (2,230)=31.808, p<.001). The means support our predictions, as the gender orientation is significantly different in all three situations and more feminine in the self-gift therapy situations as compared to the self-gift reward situation (in which it is more masculine and not feminine at all). Further, we also ran a one-way ANOVA with scenario condition split at two levels (self gift (SG) and interpersonal gift (IG)), the results support our prediction that gender orientation of the individuals varies based on the gift context an individual faces ($M_{SG}=2.36$ vs. $M_{IG}=14.27$, F (1,230)=49.716, p<.001). Additionally, as predicted, in the interpersonal gift situation, individuals’ gender orientation is more feminine than in that of the self gift situation where it is more masculine.

Our study makes two important contributions. First, it adds to the self-gifting literature by proposing that psychological gender is one aspect that differentiates the two main contexts of self-gifting. Second, this is a pioneering study that directly compares self-gifting and interpersonal gift giving and shows how they differ with regards to individuals’ psychological states. Future studies should examine other affective and cognitive differences that may exist in this domain.

References


**Perceptions of Counterfeit Consumers**

Stephanie Oneto, University of Houston

Jill M. Sundie, University of Houston

Counterfeit products, such as fake Louis Vuitton handbags and Oakley sunglasses have become widely available in the marketplace to consumers worldwide. The international trade of counterfeit products has been estimated at over $100 billion per year, or 3-6% of sales overall. As a result, it is estimated that corporations have experienced a global loss of $200 billion both through lost sales and damage to brand equity (Review of Business 2001). Although the magnitude of this phenomenon is staggering, consumer research in this area has remained sparse. The current research aims to be filling this gap.

Consumers often purchase luxury or prestige products for their ability to communicate information regarding their social class, or to indicate their membership in a valued reference group. Previous research has shown that consumers who purchase expensive luxury items often place greater importance on the status or image associated with the product than with the product itself (Dubois and Duequesne 1993). Some consumers of counterfeit luxury products may be attempting to capitalize on the symbolic nature of a prestige brand without paying the premium price. If luxury products and prestige brands convey information about the owners’ social status to others, consumers of authentic looking counterfeit products are sending inaccurate information about their social status. Social Identity Theory (SIT) holds