The Convincing Chameleon: the Impact of Mimicry on Persuasion

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This paper investigates the effects of mimicry on persuasion in the context of consumer product appraisal. We propose that the prosociality induced by mimicry will lead to enhanced persuasiveness, and thus increased product preference, in sales-like interactions. Three experiments were conducted to explore these ideas. Results indicate that mimicry can positively influence preferences for products presented by one individual to another during, or directly after, a dyadic interaction. Of particular interest from a sales perspective, our results also suggest that this effect may actually be enhanced when the mimicker is transparently invested in the mimicked individual’s appraisal of the product.

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Interpersonal Behaviors during Service Encounter and Their Impact on Service Outcome: An Application of the Interpersonal Circumplex Model

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction
Consumers and marketing researchers have recently paid an increased attention to the interface between clients and service firms. However, despite its critical importance, the interpersonal aspect of service encounters and its impact on service outcome remain relatively unexplored.

Research into the interpersonal aspect of service encounters typically rely on static measurement tools such as retrospective self-reports to assess the impact of personal exchanges on service outcome. Past studies suggest that a process approach could facilitate the exploration of personal interaction and provide additional insights into its impact on service outcome. Previous research also suffers from limitations in scope of inquiry. First, past research typically focuses on the impact of the providers’ behaviours on service outcome (i.e., the expression effect from the client’s perspective), whereas few studies explored the impact of clients’ own behaviours (the expression effect) and the interrelationship between provider and client behaviours. Second, past research typically focus on behaviours along the power/control dimension to the exclusion of behaviours on other major dimensions such as affiliation.

The primary objective of the present research is to contribute to our theoretical understanding of interpersonal exchanges that naturally unfold during service encounters and of their impact on service outcomes. We build upon the interpersonal circumplex model (ICM) to examine client-provider interactions in a healthcare context.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses
The ICM holds that interpersonal behaviours can be characterized as a set of traits organized in a circle defined by two major dimensions, agency and communion. The agency dimension reflects an individual’s strivings for mastery and power that enhance and protect the differentiation of the individual. This dimension is anchored by assured-dominant and unassured-submissive traits. The communal dimension, which is anchored by warm-agreeable and cold-quarrelsome traits, reflects strivings for union, intimacy and the participation in the collective.

Evidence suggests that during dyadic interaction, expression of, as well as exposure to certain type of interpersonal behaviours has significant impact on interactants’ subjective well-being and satisfaction. Regarding expression effects, studies show that expression of agreeableness and dominance typically lead to better psychological wellbeing and adjustment outcome than expression of quarrelsomeness and submissiveness. Regarding exposure effects, studies show that exposure to agreeableness and submissiveness is generally associated with better positive interaction outcomes than exposure to quarrelsomeness and dominance. We therefore propose that during service encounters, clients’ expression of agreeableness and dominance will have more positive impact on service outcome than client’s expression of quarrelsomeness and submissiveness, whereas clients’ exposure to provider agreeableness and submissiveness will have more positive impact than exposure to provider quarrelsomeness and dominance.

An important prediction form the ICM is the principle of complementarity, which refers to the extent to which behaviours of interacting partners fit with each other in prescribed ways. Complementarity is specified by similarity on the communal dimension (i.e., agreeableness invites agreeableness and quarrelsomeness begets quarrelsomeness) and reciprocity on the agentic dimension (dominance elicits submissiveness and submissiveness elicits dominance). Past research suggests that complementarity is central to maintaining relationship harmony and that complementary vs. acomplementary behaviours typically lead to better interaction outcomes. We therefore propose that during service encounters client-provider interpersonal behaviours will generally show a complementary pattern, and that complementary interactions will have more positive impact on service outcome than acomplementary interactions.

Method
Research design We adopted a longitudinal, naturalistic design and a process approach, collecting data on a series of service encounters in a natural setting, the dining room of a mid-term geriatric health care facility in Eastern Canada. On-line observation was made of clients’ and providers’ interpersonal behaviours and client’s consumption behaviours over repeated meal episodes.

Participants 32 elderly clients (78.8 ± 12.7 years, 20 females, 10 males; all Caucasians) were recruited as participants. Clients who have insufficient cognitive ability (measured with Mini-Mental Status Examination) and who were in a state of clinical depression were excluded from the study.

Coding of interpersonal behaviours Provider-client interpersonal behaviours were coded using a validated inventory of behavioral descriptors (Moskowitz, 1994) designed to sample the four behavioral characteristics on the ICM. During each meal, coders simply endorsed the behaviours in a given coding list if that behaviour had been observed. Coders had been trained for 30 hours, using videotaped interpersonal exchanges. Inter-coder reliability was maintained at 80% or more over the course of the study.

Consumption behavior The major dependent variable is the amount of food consumed during a meal, which is also the primary service outcome from the perspective of the service providers. Consumption was derived from the estimation of plate leftovers using the Comstock scale. The estimated intake portions were translated into energy and protein intake using a standardized nutrient analysis program.

Results
As expected, correlation analysis of client-provider behaviors yielded a complementary pattern on both dimensions, and the pattern is stronger on the communal dimension than on the agentic dimension. The impact of interpersonal behaviors on service outcome was examined using random coefficient models. Quarrelsomeness was excluded form the model due to its extremely low frequency. Type of meals (breakfast, lunch or supper) and pre-meal hunger (assessed via subjective rating) were treated as covariates. Consistent with expectation, the results show that clients’ expression of dominance and agreeableness made significant contribution to food consumption, whereas the expression of submissiveness had...
Discussion

This study shows that clients’ own interpersonal behaviors, as well as provider behaviors, could significantly impact service outcomes. This study also complements existing literature on service marketing by demonstrating significant impact on service outcome of interpersonal behaviors on both agentic and communal dimensions, suggesting that focusing on one dimension to the exclusion of another could result in incomplete understanding of the interpersonal dynamics and their impact on service outcomes. Finally, this study recommends the ICM as a useful theoretic framework for examining the interpersonal exchanges in service encounters.

REFERENCES


The Waiting Game: The Role of Predicted Value, Wait Disconfirmation, and Providers’ Actions in Consumers’ Service Evaluations
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ABSTRACT

Management of consumer waiting experiences is critical for practitioners in that unpleasant waiting experiences may result in negative service evaluations. This paper develops a conceptual framework in which predicted value of service, wait expectation (conceptualized as “consumer zone of wait tolerance” derived from the service literatures), wait disconfirmation (consumers’ comparisons between wait expectations and perceptions), and affective response to waiting are proposed to directly or indirectly affect service experience evaluation. In addition, this paper proposes that actions of the service provider moderate the relationship between affective response to waiting and service experience evaluation. Conclusions and contributions are discussed.

INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

From a practitioner’s perspective, waiting lines can be damaging to businesses and have become an important marketing issue. Even though a growing number of companies have attempted to manage consumer waiting experiences through various strategies (e.g., increase of front-line employees, video displays with news updates as waiting time filler, or providing waiting time guarantees to their customers) (Kumar, Kalwani, and Dada 1997), consumer waits remain an unresolved issue. Consequently, more efforts need to be made to understand the waiting process and to reduce the potential negative impact of waits on consumers’ evaluations (Kostecki 1996).

From an academician’s viewpoint, various theories have been utilized to explain waiting phenomena and how waiting affects consumers’ evaluations and satisfaction, including social justice (e.g., Larson 1987), attribution (Chebat, Filiatrault, Gelinas-Chebat, and Vaninsky 1995; Taylor 1994), field theory (Dube-Rioux, Schmitt, and Leclerc 1989; Hui, Thakor, and Gill 1998; Houston, Bettencourt, and Wenger 1998), and social comparison theories (e.g., Zhou and Soman 2003). Among these studies, consumers’ affective responses to waiting and service evaluations have been frequently examined (e.g., Dube-Rioux et al. 1989; Houston et al. 1998; Hui and Tse 1996; Taylor 1994; Katz, Larson, and Larson 1991; Pruyn and Smidts 1998). However, the role of personal wait expectations has not been well documented and needs more exploration (Durrande-Moreau 1999) as well as other gaps.

First, the “expectation” concept in waiting has been linked with the concept of wait tolerance (Durrande-Moreau 1999) without a solid theoretical explanation. It has been portrayed as “probable duration,” “reasonable duration,” “acceptance of waiting time,” “acceptability of the wait,” and “acceptable waiting time” (Antonides, Verhoef, and van Aalst 2002; Chebat and Filiatrault 1993; Chebat and Gelinas-Chebat 1995; Houston et al. 1998; Hui and Tse 1996; Pruyn and Smidts 1998). The terms, definitions, and operationalizations appear to be somewhat inconsistent. Service expectations literature, which views expectations as a range of two levels of service expectations (i.e., the zone of tolerance), may help to further understand and refine this construct.

Second, existing wait research fails to explain the phenomenon as to why consumers sometimes stay and wait in long lines (e.g., Disney Land) and how their tolerances for waiting may differ. The value concept that emphasizes what is received (i.e., service) and what is given (i.e., monetary and non-monetary costs) (Zeithaml 1988) may provide an explanation. Nonetheless, little research addresses how different types of values may influence consumers’ tolerance for waiting.

Third, past research suggests that consumers’ service evaluations are positively influenced by their affective responses to waiting (Hui and Tse 1996; Pruyn and Smidts 1998; Taylor 1994). However, preliminary evidence indicates this relationship may not hold in all instances. Service providers’ recovery strategies may help alleviate the negative effect of waits (e.g., Sarel and Marmorstein 1998).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this paper is to conceptualize a framework for waiting by incorporating predicted value, wait disconfirmation, affective response to waiting, and service evaluation. More specifically, there are three objectives. First, this research attempts to clarify the roles of consumers’ wait expectations and wait disconfirmation in waiting. Second, it attempts to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between various types of predicted value and consumers’ tolerance for waiting. Third, this paper expands the affect-service evaluation relationship and proposes that actions of the service provider play a moderating role in that relationship.

Through an integration of three sets of waiting models examined by Taylor (1994), Hui and Tse (1996), and Pruyn and Smidts (1998), this paper provides a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) that centers on the wait expectation-affect-service evaluation relationship. In addition, one antecedent of wait expectation (i.e., predicted value of service) and one moderator (i.e., actions of the service provider) of the relationship between affect and service evaluation are incorporated into the proposed framework.

The following sections are dedicated to discussing the literatures for the constructs in the conceptual framework, including predicted value of service, zone of wait tolerance, wait disconfirmation, perceived wait duration, affective response to waiting, actions of the service provider, and service experience evaluation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Taylor (1994), waiting for service is “the time from which a customer is ready to receive the service until the time the service commences” (p. 56). Waiting time is often regarded as a waste of time (Leclerc, Schmitt, and Dube 1995) and has been described by researchers as boring, frustrating, and irritating (Hui and Tse 1996; Katz et al. 1991). Nonetheless, research has suggested that overall value of service may help alleviate the negative emotions of waiting (Katz et al. 1991; Maister 1985).

Predicted Value of Service

The concept of perceived value has drawn considerable attention from consumer behavior researchers (e.g., Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994; Bolton and Drew 1991; Sheth, Newman, and Gross 1991a, 1991b; Sweeney and Soutar 2001; Woodruff 1997; Zeithaml 1988). Zeithaml (1988) defined perceived value as “the consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions.