Does Ingredient Branding Improve Choice of Host and Ingredient Brands? a Test of Brand Equity-Choice Behavior Consistency

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We extend prior research in ingredient branding in two important ways. First, we use real data about consumer’s choice vs. judgment measures employed by prior research to find out if ingredient branding improves choice (and not just brand attitudes) of host and ingredient brands. Second, with attitudinal survey data, we attempt to find out to what extent consumers’ equity perceptions about the ingredient product and the ingredient and host brands explain their choice behaviors towards these products. This investigation of the consistency between consumers’ brand equity perceptions and their choice behaviors is rare and thus adds to the brand equity literature. Our analytical approach involves running a Random Coefficient Logit Model of consumers’ actual choices of four ingredient products from a rich scanner data set.

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preferences was reversed as regards the advertisement for a sun lotion with a claim related to enjoyment. Thus, our results are congruent to those of Chernev (2004) who showed that the regulatory focus of consumers may have a direct effect on product preferences.

In Experiment 2 (N=110), we tested the question whether the manipulation of the regulatory focus of consumers also changes the association between a brand and a product category. In the first part of this experiment, participants saw advertising claims for various products and for the target sun lotion. In one condition, a promotion-focused claim and, in the other condition, a prevention-focused claim was used for the target brand. To guarantee that participants elaborated the claims, they were also asked to recall the presented claims.

In the second part of the experiment, we applied a procedure of Pham and Avnet (2004) to induce either a promotion or a prevention focus. In the promotion focus condition, participants were asked to list present and past hopes and ideals. In the prevention focus condition, they were asked to list present and past responsibilities and duties. Then, we measured the brand category associations with a procedure of Fazio, Herr, and Powell (1992). On a computer screen, we presented the name of a brand category (e.g., electronics) followed by the name of a brand. We presented a total of 60 category-brand pairs. The target brand was presented five times in the correct category-brand pair. The task of participants was to decide as fast as possible whether the presented brand belonged to the preceding product category. The response latency of the trials in which the correct pair was presented was used as a measure of category-brand associations. The results provided support for our hypotheses. Participants showed stronger category-brand associations for the target brand when the claim of the target brand was related to the primed regulatory focus of participants.

Since preferences and category-brand associations are important determinants of product choice, our findings suggest that advertising strategies are more effective when they consider the regulatory focus of the consumer at the point of purchase which may differ within the specific context of choice (e.g., buying a sun lotion in a pharmacy or in a shop for beach equipment).

References

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Effects of Mortality Salience on Ethnocentric Consumer Behavior at a Regional Level

How do we react as consumers to information that reminds us of the inevitability of our own death (e.g., news of terrorist attacks, natural disasters, wars, murders, accidents)? Terror management theory suggests that one possible reaction to mortality salience is consumer ethnocentrism. But what are the cultural boundaries that define in- and out-groups in such comparisons? And are these ethnocentrism effects only responsible for consumer attitude change or do they also have an influence on less cognitive concepts, e.g., gustatory preferences for a local drink?

Consumer Ethnocentrism is an individual’s tendency to view the in-group’s objects of consumption as superior to those of the out-group. As Shimp and Sharma (1987) stated, this tendency increases when people experience an economic threat from foreign competition. Economic threat may be an important source of out-group derogation but another existential threat that also seems to influence ethnocentric tendencies can be derived from terror management theory (for an overview see Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski 1997). According to this theory, affiliation to an in-group and belief in its worldviews serve as a mechanism to buffer our death-related anxieties. The bolstering of a shared cultural worldview against views of the out-group could lead people to ethnocentrism (e.g. Nelson et al. 1997).

Consequently, priming thoughts of people’s own mortality (mortality salience) should also lead to stronger ethnocentric consumer preferences. Indeed, an ethnocentric bias related to mortality salience is not only an in-group–out-group phenomenon, but it can also be found towards objects of consumption (consumer ethnocentrism): e.g., preferences for national cultural items (cars, food, sports, etc.) under mortality salient conditions (Jonas, Fritsche, and Greenberg 2005). As information that REMINIS our own demise is frequently presented in the media, the influence of our existential concerns on ethnocentric consumption behavior should be investigated thoroughly.

Since many consumer brands and products (e.g., foods and beverages) are mainly or exclusively marketed and consumed within a local region, we were interested in whether ethnocentrism effects only occur on a national level or if they can be found among regions as well. In accordance with social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), worldviews in a regional context should have at least the same strong influence on individuals’ cognitive structure as national views because regions are less inclusive than nations and so they should provide the individual with an even more homogeneous worldview.

We analyzed the local beer preferences of the inhabitants of two German cities under mortality salient versus control conditions. We chose the cities of Cologne and Düsseldorf because they are situated close to each other and, objectively, have an almost identical cultural background. Nevertheless, from the inhabitants’ perspective, a cultural competition can be observed that is manifest in different traditions, lifestyles, and consumption patterns. Hence, the residents of each city were assumed to perceive at least an unconscious threat to their regional worldviews if asked to evaluate a cultural symbol (we chose beer sorts) from the other city.

We were also interested in whether the predicted ethnocentrism effects would take place if a less cognitively controlled concept like taste was the dependent measure. Thus, gustatory preferences between two German beers that either came from either the participants’ own or the competing region (within the same nation) were examined.

H 1: A regional ethnocentrism effect—i.e., a main effect of beer sort—will occur across all experimental conditions: the beer sort of participants’ own city will taste better than that of the other city.

H 2: This main effect will be qualified by an interaction effect between priming and beer sort. Mortality salience will additionally increase this ethnocentrism effect.

In our experiment, we used a 2 (city) x 2 (mortality salience vs. control condition) x 2 (own beer vs. foreign beer) between-subject design with condition and beer sort randomly manipulated and two fixed city samples (Düsseldorf and Cologne). The dependent measure was evaluation of beer’s taste compared to an idealized one. 192 people (72 females and 120 males)–96 from each city—agreed to participate in our study (participants were between 19 and 88 years old; M=43.8).

Results show that both hypotheses could be confirmed. Participants in both cities and both conditions rated their own beer as tasting significantly better than the beer of the other city ($F[1, 184]=25.46, p<.001$). This main effect was qualified by a significant interaction effect between sort and priming: the taste difference was greater in the mortality salience condition than in the control condition ($F[1, 184]=7.85, p<.01$) mainly due to a devaluation of the foreign region’s beer sort.

To summarize, we would argue that our research adds to the emerging line of research that relates terror management to consumer behavior. Our research showed that individuals that have previously thought about their own death have a tendency towards regional consumer ethnocentrism. According to terror management and social identity theories, we found that regional identity serves as an anxiety buffer when mortality is salient, and consumption objects that challenge our regional worldviews—like a foreign region’s beer sort—are devaluated more strongly under that condition.

References
