Explaining the Negative Spillover Effect in Target Marketing: Automatic Social Comparisons That Threaten Collective Self-Esteem

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The present research proposes that previously inconsistent findings on the NSE in consumer behavior work can be explained by accounting for the unconscious impact of activated negative stereotypes among non-targeted consumers. More importantly, it appears that (for those consumers highly identified with a particular group membership) this activation occurs even when prompted by cues that are largely irrelevant to the particular stereotype in question. While this finding is troubling, a particular way to mitigate the risk of NSE by advertisers refers to their use of specific regulatory focus manipulations, such as execution variables that put consumers in a state of promotion (strategic eagerness).

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Effective Counter Persuasion: Creating Lasting Resistance to a Stronger Opponent

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Two studies investigated a counterpersuasive strategy that can be effective for a communicator facing a rival who can deliver his or her message many more times than the communicator. This strategy incorporated: 1) strong counterarguments against the claims of the target message and 2) a mnemonic link between the target message and these counterarguments. Results demonstrated that the combination of counterarguments and mnemonic links not only produced greater resistance to the target ad than a counterad that lacked mnemonic links, but it also undermined the target ad more strongly as the number of exposures to the target ad increased.

The Role of Mindfulness in Consumer Behavior

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Since its initial publication by Langer and her colleagues (Langer 1977; Langer, Blank and Chanowitz 1978), the psychological construct of mindfulness has gained increased influence in the field of social psychology (e.g., Martin 1997; Brown and Ryan 2003). In this research, we provide (1) a general review and description of the mindfulness construct, (2) a discussion of how mindfulness can be used in consumer research, (3) results from an advertising persuasion study where mindfulness is shown to moderate persuasion routes, and (4) an overall discussion of our on-going research program as well as further research areas for this construct.

Mindfulness refers to “a state of conscious awareness characterized by active distinction drawing that leaves the individual open to novelty and sensitive to both context and perspective” (Langer 1992). There are four main features to mindfulness: greater sensitivity to one’s context or environment, more openness to new information, greater aptitude at cognitive categorization, and enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving (Langer 1989). As such, mindfulness is distinct from other important psychological constructs which tend to solely apply to issues that are central or salient to an individual. In contrast, mindfulness speaks more about one’s general aptitude to notice and deal with what is new. Studies between mindfulness and other cognition, personality and social psychology constructs have shown that mindfulness should be seen more as a cognitive style than just a specific cognitive ability or a personality trait (Sternberg, 2000), and therefore it should seen as existing at the boundary of personality and cognition, and can used both as a state or trait variable.

This very brief description should be enough to outline the potential relevance of the mindfulness construct in a vast array of consumer behavior issues, such as consumer decision making, marketing communication, persuasion, and so on. However, a review of articles published in the leading consumer research journals reveals that this construct has been largely overlooked by consumer research scholars.