Culture, Social Comparison and Responses to Advertising

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It has been discovered that individuals from different cultures often think and emote in ways very different from one another. These differences, at all levels of analysis, have been captured in a number of different constructs by researchers hoping to quantify and measure these effects. The goal of this research is to incorporate the three variables of culture, structure and person into one theoretical model via the processes of social comparison. Specifically, it is the aim of this study to ascertain how differences in culture impact the manner in which individuals engage in processes of social comparison with advertisements.

[to cite]:

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Similarly, we can also safely assume that participants in the past experienced self-control problems in achieving their savings goals. Thus, they might be particularly anxious about their performance within the savings campaign.

Two frameworks are currently developed to explore whether an all-or-nothing reference point moderates the impact of implementation intentions on achieving a savings goal. First, we use an implementation intention manipulation to assess the interaction of these plans with savers’ income. We are examining whether implementation plans motivate higher income individuals to save more than those with lower incomes. The second framework adds savers’ goals and time horizon to assess monthly goal progress. Together, the dynamics of pursuing a savings goal suggests the following testable hypotheses: (1) Participants who form implementation intentions concerning when, how, how much, and from what source of income they will deposit money into their savings accounts will be more likely to save more the higher their income than participants who do not form such intentions. (2) Participants with shorter time horizons to reach their savings goal will be more likely to respond to implementation intentions than those with longer time horizons. (3) Participants who form implementation intentions will save in a manner consistent with their intentions.

Data were generated by a mail survey in fall 2006 distributed to the 599 America Saves campaign participants in a city in the U.S. Midwest. A total of 94 campaign participants completed questionnaires at all three time points: baseline questionnaire, first follow-up four weeks, and second follow-up eight weeks after the baseline questionnaire. Fifty participants happened to be in the treatment group who were asked to form implementation intentions and 44 participants were in the control group.

Following the procedure described in Orbell et al. (1997) and Sheeran and Orbell (1999), the baseline questionnaire assessed intention, attitude, normative belief, perceived behavioral control, and previous behavior. Following Gollwitzer (1993), participants in the treatment group were asked to make implementation intentions specifying when, how, how much, and from what source of income they will deposit money into their savings account during the following month. In the first and second follow-up, participants were asked to indicate whether they intended to deposit money during the past four weeks and whether they actually deposited money into their savings account in the past four weeks. The treatment-group participants were then asked the four open-ended implementation questions.

Preliminary analyses indicate satisfactory scale reliabilities, ranging from .767 to .920 for the Theory of Planned Behavior variables. An ANOVA showed no significant differences between treatment and control groups on preintervention measures of intention, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, or previous behavior. These findings indicate that prior to the intervention, the two groups held similar beliefs concerning regular savings. Similarly, there were equivalent proportions of men and women (F=1.966, NS), races (F=.018, NS), educational levels (F=.084, NS), marital status (F=1.155, NS), savings goals (F=1.816, NS), and postal ZIP codes (F=1.966, NS) in the control and treatment group. There was no significant difference of age (F=.769, NS), income (F=.004, NS), and length of participation in the savings campaign (F=.548, NS) between the groups. The correlations between past behavior and intention for the two groups showed that past behavior is significantly associated with intentions for the treatment (r=.733; p=.000) and the control group (r=.666; p=.000). Both groups had positive intentions, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Behavioral intentions were strong in both conditions, with mean scores of 15 on a 3-21 scale (mode=21).

We can conclude that both groups base their intentions to save regularly upon their previous savings behavior and that both groups are highly motivated to save regularly. Differences between the groups on the amount saved must, therefore, be attributed to volitional rather than motivational factors. Based on our current timeline, I fully expect that data analysis and discussion of the findings will be completed by the conference in October.

References

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With events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, formation of the European Economic Community and advent of the Internet, the movement of goods, services and people appears to have no bounds. However, in these increasingly global times, it is also evident that all persons have not been created equal. Rather, it has been discovered that individuals from different cultures often think and emote in ways very different from one another. These differences, at all levels of analysis, have been captured in a number of different constructs by researchers hoping to quantify and measure these effects. The goal of this research is to incorporate the three variables of culture, structure and person into one theoretical model via the processes of social comparison. Specifically, it is the aim of this study to ascertain how differences in culture impact the manner in which individuals engage in processes of social comparison with advertisements.

In order to accomplish the objective of this research, two separate, but related studies will be conducted. The first study will seek to ascertain how culture influences information processing (via the process of social comparison) when individuals are asked to compare