Katona’s notion that consumer expenditures do not only depend on consumers’ ability but also on their willingness to buy has stimulated the development of many consumer confidence indexes. However, it has been argued that the undercurrents and dynamics of existing indexes need to be understood further. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to (1) develop a lifestyle consumer confidence index, (2) apply this new index to demonstrate the importance to conduct cross-section analyses to understand the current composition of consumer confidence, and (3) reveal the significance to conduct longitudinal analyses to detect the dynamics of consumer confidence over time.

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It is important to note that the five-minute video used in this research did not give audience members much time to adapt to the speaker. Longer exposure to the accents might facilitate comprehension. Advertising legend David Ogilvy used this strategy, noting, “I am particularly nervous about the impact of my English accent... I therefore open with axioms which nobody can question. By the time the audience grows accustomed to my accent, I launch into more controversial judgments” (Ogilvy 1964).

Researchers can investigate factors affecting the “ease of understanding” variable influential in this study. Aside from the ability to comprehend heavily accented words, there are a number of framing issues that influence listeners. Work on “fluency” suggests that messages that are subjectively difficult to decipher produce compromised choices (Novemsky, Dhar, Schwarz, and Simonson 2007). Even if an individual’s speech is understandable, the presence of an accent may prime listeners to anticipate comprehension difficulty, which subsequently could lower their evaluations (Rubin and Smith 1990). In addition, prior associations with accents might affect fluency, as might the ability to watch the narrators’ expressions and body language.

The program topic may shape viewers’ responses. If individuals presenting material related to their home countries appear biased (Ryu, Park and Feick 2006), it might decrease listeners’ attention. Also, while cultural content may make a narrator appear more ethnic, it is possible that programming prompting expectations for a mainstream voice reduce or eliminate perceptions of foreign accents (Rubin and Smith 1990). Research can further investigate how message content frames audience members’ evaluations.

Media technology continues to expose audiences to speakers around the world. It is hoped that this research sheds insights into the perceptions of accents when segments and shows have informational content.

References

The Lifestyle Consumer Confidence Index: Detecting the Undercurrents and Dynamics of Consumer Confidence
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Businesses, private investors, and public policy makers have long noticed that anticipating future consumer spending and saving behavior is key in today’s marketplace (Georgoff and Murdick 1986; Kotler 1994; Lawson, Todd, and Boshoff 2001; Lilien and Kotler 1983). For example, anticipating consumers’ future expenditures can help managers assess the general mood of the market and plan their marketing activities accordingly. Furthermore, private investors can benefit from such information to assess the right moment to make great investments. More importantly, such information can give public policy makers early warnings about whether the economy is moving towards recovery and growth or recession.

While early predictions of consumer consumption behavior solely focused on objective, economic variables—such as income, interest rate, and inflation rate—Katona (1951, 1960) suggested that consumer expenditures do not only depend on consumers’ ability to buy but also on their willingness to buy, and thus on more subjective, psychological factors. This notion has become known as the theory of psychological or behavioral economics (Curtin 1982; Katona 1974). It has stimulated the development of many indexes, which have in common the goal to measure consumer confidence, or sentiment, as an indication of the future course of the national economy (Curtin 1982; Linden 1982; Roper 1982).

Prior research has focused on comparing the predictive value of different consumer confidence indexes (Batchelor and Dua 1998; Eppright, Arguea, Huth 1998; Huth, Eppright, and Taube 1994) and on explaining variance in such measurements (Garner 1981; Vuchelen 2004). A similar research stream has developed in marketing (Barksdale and Darden 1972; Barksdale, Darden, and Perreault 1976; Barksdale and Perreault 1980; Gaski and Etzel 1986) and assessed consumer confidence towards marketing in the international marketplace (Chan, Yau, and Chan 1990; Wee and Chan 1989).

While these prior research streams have led to interesting and helpful findings, several limitations (such as measurement items, methodology, and applicability) of existing consumer confidence/sentiment indexes are yet to be addressed (Didow, Perreault, and Williamson 1983; Weiss 2003). In particular, it has been argued that psychographic or lifestyle variables are needed to help explain the undercurrents, that is, the variation in consumer confidence across the population (Lawson, Todd, and Boshoff 2001) and that the dynamics of consumer confidence—and thus the movement in optimistic and pessimistic directions over time—need to be understood further (De Boef and Kellstedt 2004; Garner 1981).

The purpose of this article is to develop an index that facilitates our understanding of the consumer confidence construct and that helps capture its undercurrents and dynamics. Specifically, we aim at (1) developing a lifestyle consumer confidence index (LSCCI), (2) applying this new index to demonstrate the importance for public policy makers to conduct cross-sectional analyses to understand the undercurrents,