Consumer Hope Scale: Development and Validation of Dispositional and Situational Measures

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Abstract

This research details the development and validation of measures to assess consumer hope. We develop both dispositional and situational measures to capture the three dimensions of hope: “to hope”, “to have hope”, and “to be hopeful.” Results supported the scale’s reliability and its discriminant and nomological validity. Our domain-specific dispositional consumer hope measure predicted consumer outcomes, such as subjective knowledge, better than domain-general alternatives. Furthermore, our context-specific situational consumer hope measure in the context of healthy food choice, predicted food-related outcomes such as impulsive eating, involvement toward food choices, and anticipated regret from making poor food choices, beyond alternatives.

Introduction

Recent work by MacInnis and colleagues (MacInnis and de Mello 2005; de Mello, MacInnis and Stewart 2007) has established the importance of hope in consumer research. Despite these contributions, an appropriate hope scale has yet to be developed and psychometrically assessed that can effectively distinguish hopeful from less hopeful consumers, and the important marketing outcomes that might result. Furthermore, researchers continue to pose questions for future research, such as, what is the role of hope in exchange relationships and how do consumers use hope to make decisions (de Mello, MacInnis and Stewart 2007). These questions have remained largely unanswered. Without the ability to recognize the hope of customers, and in turn, understand the ramifications of hopeful versus hopeless consumers, there remains a significant aspect of consumer behavior that is not only neglected and not well understood, but one that could provide meaningful prediction of important consumer outcomes.

In this research, we develop and validate two measures that assess related yet distinct aspects of consumer hope--dispositional and situational—that will allow researchers to extend our knowledge of consumer hope and further realize the important role hope plays in consumers achieving various outcomes such as purchase decisions, satisfaction, and subjective knowledge. With this knowledge of consumer hope, we may be better able to distinguish consumers who make the highest (and lowest) quality consumer decisions. In the next sections, we provide an overview of consumer hope, discuss dispositional and situational influences of hope, provide a three-dimension structure underlying consumer hope, and offer a rationale for how the consumer domain and the context of healthy eating provides specificity by which dispositional and situational hope measurement is needed.

Conceptualization

MacInnis and de Mello (2005) define hope as a positively valenced emotion evoked in response to an uncertain but possible goal-congruent outcome. Further, de Mello and MacInnis (2005) provide a three facet conceptualization of the hope construct including “to hope”, “to have hope”, and “to be hopeful”. The “to hope” facet is defined as “a positive emotion that varies as a function of the degree of yearning for a possible, goal-congruent, future outcome”. The second facet, “to have hope”, is viewed as “a positive emotion that arises when a goal-congruent future outcome is judged to be possible” while the final facet, “to be hopeful”, is “a positive emotion that arises as a function of expectations regarding the likelihood of a possible future goal-congruent outcome".