The Effects of Implicit Color Preference and Implicit Racial Preference on Implicit Attitude Towards the Ad

Ioannis Kareklas, University of Connecticut, USA
Robin Coulter, University of Connecticut, USA

This paper develops a theoretical framework which examines the impact of participants’ implicit color preference (ICP) for the color white versus the color black, and their implicit racial preference (IRP) for White versus Black racial stimuli, on reactions to advertisements featuring White (vs. Black) spokespersons. We hypothesize that participants, regardless of race, will exhibit an implicit preference for the color white, an implicit racial preference for White racial stimuli, and an implicit preference for advertisements featuring White spokespersons. We conjecture that implicit racial preference will partially mediate the effect of implicit color preference on implicit attitude towards the ad (IAad).

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/14507/volumes/v36/NA-36

[copyright notice]:
This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at http://www.copyright.com/.
Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 36) / 881

Consistent with a full mediation model, the relationship between CFC-I and credit card debt became non-significant (\(\beta=-.04, p=.74\)) when compulsive buying was entered into the model (Baron & Kenny 1986). A Sobel (1982) test further confirmed that the reduction in the relationship between CFC-I and credit card debt was significant (\(z=3.63, p<.001\)). In summary, findings offer support for H2-H3 and partial support for H1.

Study 2

The goal of Study 2 was to evaluate whether those concerned with the immediate consequences of their actions would be more attracted to credit card offers that promised immediate rewards but implied long-term losses (i.e., through an extremely high interest rate). In Study 2, 145 participants participated in a 2 (temporal frame) X 2 (CFC) between-subjects experiment. The temporal frame of the offer was manipulated by altering the terms of the credit card offer; future orientation was a measured variable. For the temporal frame manipulation, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Participants assigned to the "short term gain / long term loss" framing condition or a "short term loss / long term gain" condition. We held constant the monetary benefits of the two credit card offers. After reading the credit card offer, participants indicated how likely they would be to apply for the credit card.

The analysis using the CFC-Immediate scale revealed a marginally significant main effect of condition \(F(1, 142)=2.88, p=.09\), as well as a marginally significant interaction between CFC-Immediate and condition, \(F(1, 142)=2.77, p=.10\). Follow-up analyses were run within each level of CFC-Immediate and within each temporal framing condition. Among those low in CFC-I, there was a significant preference for the credit card with the lower interest rate (STLoss-LTGain), \(t(72)=2.56, p=.02\); in other words, they avoided the card with the short-term gain but a higher interest rate. However, among those high in CFC-I, there was no significant preference based on condition, \(t(72)<1\); they liked each card equally. Within the STGain-LTLoss condition, those high in CFC-I were significantly more likely to apply for the card than those low in CFC-I, \(t(70)=2.26, p=.03\). However, within the STLoss-LTGain condition, there was not a significant difference based on CFC-I, \(t(72)<1\).

Brief Discussion

Findings from two studies provide insight into how consumer differences (i.e., CFC, compulsive buying) and types of information provided within credit card advertisements (e.g., fees, interest rates, and rewards) can influence consumers’ financial decisions. Results across two studies were largely supportive that CFC can predict credit card debt (Study 1) and can impact evaluations of credit card offers (Study 2). Results are consistent with conceptualization of the CFC construct and prior CFC research in that some consumers tend to do a better job recognizing actions or behaviors that might jeopardize their long-term well-being. In addition to extending work on CFC, the present work also contributes to a better understanding of compulsive buying behavior.

The Effects of Implicit Color Preference and Implicit Racial Preference on Implicit Attitude towards the Ad

Ioannis Kareklas, University of Connecticut, USA
Robin Coulter, University of Connecticut, USA

Choosing an appropriate spokesperson is a critical decision for advertisers, given the mounting evidence in the persuasion literature which suggests different sources delivering the same message produce varied outcomes among recipients (Whittler and Spira 2002). Spokespersons who are perceived to be more credible, attractive, and similar to recipients are typically more persuasive (for a review, see Eagly and Chaiken 1993). In the context of ethnicity, extant research (using explicit measures) suggests that consumers respond more favorably (generate more positive advertisement and brand evaluations) to persuasive messages delivered by spokespersons of similar race (for a review, see Whittler 1991).

An important caveat regarding earlier work in this domain is that the bulk of this research has employed explicit (i.e., self-report) measures, which may suffer from response biases because the topic of race is socially sensitive, and explicit measures allow participants to consciously control their responses (Ashburn-Nardo, Knowles, and Monteith 2003; Brunel, Tietje, and Greenwald 2004). More recent work has employed implicit measures such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998) to circumvent such response biases. Findings suggest that both Black and White participants exhibit an automatic “pro-White” preference when asked to sort Black versus White racial stimuli (Banaji, Greenwald, and Rosier 1997; Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald 2002). Additionally, research on the neural basis of social group processing has found that indirect measures of race evaluation correlate with functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)-assessed activation of the amygdala (Phelps et al. 2000). Given that the amygdala is known to be involved in responding to threatening and to novel stimuli, and since research has shown that both Black and White participants demonstrate greater amygdala activity to unknown Black faces than to unknown White faces, Lieberman et al. (2005) posit that amygdala activity associated with race-related processing may be a manifestation of “culturally learned negative associations regarding African-American individuals.” This explanation is consistent with System Justification Theory (SJT; Jost and Banaji 1994), which has previously been used to explain why Black participants exhibit a lack of ingroup preference in implicit racial evaluations (e.g., Brunel et al. 2004).

SJT posits that people are motivated to believe in a just world, and that a history of discrimination can lead even minorities to internalize negative attitudes toward their own groups as a means of justifying the status quo (Rudman, Feinberg, and Fairchild 2002). Jost and Banaji (1994) emphasize that such attitudes and the motive to sustain them are likely to be nonconscious, which explains why this phenomenon may not be picked up by self-report measures, but can be unearthed by implicit measures (Rudman, Feinberg, and Fairchild 2002).
Within the advertising context, Brunel et al. (2004) using the IAT found that White participants exhibited a significant implicit preference for ads that featured a White (vs. Black) spokesperson, but no significant explicit preference, whereas Black participants exhibited a significant explicit preference for Black spokespersons but no significant implicit preference between Black and White spokespersons. These findings underscore the importance of utilizing implicit measures to assess the effectiveness of advertisements that feature spokespersons that are of a similar (vs. different) race than the target audience.

Research suggests that another variable that may impact consumers’ evaluations of African-American and White-American spokespersons is their implicit color preference for the color white as compared to the color black. Specifically, in the United States and many other countries, the cultural associations related to the color white are more positive, whereas the associations with the color black are more negative (Smith-McLallen et al. 2006). Williams, Tucker, and Dunham (1971) note that the color white has been used in religion, literature, and the mass media as a symbol of “goodness,” while the color black has been used as a symbol of “badness.” Similarly, Longshore (1979) observes that white is used to connote decency and purity, while black is used to connote evil and disgrace.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a theoretical model of the effects of implicit racial preference (IRP) and implicit color preference (ICP) on consumers’ implicit attitude towards the ad (IAad). The aforementioned literature suggests that consumers' advertising evaluations are likely to be impacted by their implicit racial preference and their implicit color preference. Thus, we posit the following:

H1: Regardless of race, participants will exhibit an implicit racial preference for stimuli illustrating White-American (vs. African-American) faces.
H2: Regardless of race, participants will exhibit an implicit preference for advertisements featuring White-American (vs. African-American) spokespersons.
H3: Implicit racial preference will have a direct and positive effect on participants’ implicit advertising evaluations, such that participants who implicitly prefer White-American (African-American) faces will also implicitly prefer ads that feature White-American (African-American) spokespersons.
H4: Regardless of race, participants will exhibit an implicit color preference for the color white as compared to the color black.
H5: Implicit color preference will have a direct and positive effect on participants’ implicit racial preference, such that participants who implicitly prefer the color white (black) will also explicitly prefer White-American (African-American) faces.
H6: Implicit color preference will have a direct and positive effect on participants’ implicit advertising evaluations, such that participants who implicitly prefer the color white (black) will also implicitly prefer ads that feature White-American (African-American) spokespersons.
H7: Implicit racial preference will partially mediate the effect of implicit color preference on participants’ implicit advertising evaluations, such that controlling for participants’ implicit racial preference will reduce the effect of their implicit color preference on their implicit advertising evaluations.

We propose testing our hypotheses using three IAT procedures: an implicit color preference IAT, an implicit racial preference IAT, and an implicit attitude toward the ad IAT. Equal samples of Black and White participants will be recruited. As a consequence of our research, we will be able to provide insights about the respective individual and joint effects of implicit color preference and implicit racial preference on attitudes toward advertisements featuring White or Black spokespersons, as well as provide guidance related to the development of ads that feature Black or White spokespersons targeting Black or White consumers.

References