Unwanted Objects and Situations: Experiencing Disgust in Consumption Contexts

A. Selin Atalay, HEC Paris, France
Melea Press, University of Wyoming, USA

Current research explores how consumers experience disgust. Three elicitors of disgust emerge: core, socio-moral and inconvenience. Core and socio-moral disgust elicitors have been previously identified in the literature while the inconvenience disgust elicitor is discovered in this study. In four studies, the consumers’ perception of and responses to disgust is discussed. Study 1 is an exploratory study to understand what induces disgust. Study 2 looks at the other emotions correlated with disgust. Study 3 focuses on the action tendencies of disgust, and study 4 replicates the findings with a different population and focuses on disgust in a consumption context.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/15192/volumes/v37/NA-37

[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/.
McDonald’s along with the NFCC scale. Participants in the imagine condition expressed more negative attitudes toward McDonald’s, which indicates that the imagine technique is an effective persuasion tool because it caused greater adherence to the advertisement message. In addition, high NFCC participants formed more positive attitudes (thus going against the advertisement’s negative message) in the no imagine condition relative to the imagine condition. However, low NFCC participants in the no imagine and imagine condition expressed similar negative attitudes toward McDonald’s. Thus it appears that the imagine technique is particularly effective for high NFCC individuals but not for low NFCC individuals.

Study 2 investigated whether construal level influenced whether imagine instructions affect attitudes about a positive message about Subway (i.e., Subway can improve your health). Construal level was manipulated via a prime adapted from McCrea et al. (2008) where participants were asked to view a painting by Seurat that drew their attention either to the overall effect of the painting (abstract condition) or to the technique of pointillism (concrete condition). Participants then viewed a positive message and completed an attitude assessment. Participants in the abstract/imagine condition formed more favorable attitudes than participants in the concrete/imagine condition, which indicates that abstract processing facilitates imaginative thinking and increases persuasion.

In the third study, participants viewed an advertisement with a positive message about Special K (i.e., Special K is healthy), with promotion focus measured as a potential moderator of the effectiveness of imagine instructions. Because high promotion focused individuals tend to have strong positive dispositions (Higgins et al. 1994), they might spontaneously imagine additional information to support a positive message; conversely, low promotion focused individuals might generate supporting positive information only when specifically instructed to do so. The results support this proposition; participants in the low promotion focus and no imagine condition rated Special K more negatively than all other groups (thus not supporting the advertisement’s message). Thus, presumably because low promotion focused individuals are predisposed to be less positive, the imagine technique is useful in encouraging attitudes that support a positive message. Consequently, the imagine technique appears to significantly increase adherence to a positive message for low promotion focus individuals but not for high promotion focus individuals.

The present studies expand on previous research examining the effectiveness of the imagine technique by identifying conditions under which imagine instructions are more or less effective. Future studies will continue to examine characteristics of the message, the recipient, and the advertising context that moderate the effectiveness of the imagine technique.

References


Unwanted Objects and Situations: Experiencing Disgust in Consumption Contexts
A. Selin Atalay, HEC Paris, France
Melea Press, University of Wyoming, USA

The goal of this paper is to understand how consumers respond to feelings of disgust. Disgust is experienced in response to unwanted stimuli (Olatunji and Sawchuck 2005). There are two categories of disgust: core and socio-moral disgust. Core disgust refers to physical repulsion (Haidt, Rozin, McCauley and Imada 1997). It is protective of one’s body. Socio-moral disgust is elicited by contact with objects that are evil (i.e., a shirt worn by an evil person). It is protective of social order.

In this paper a new elicitor of disgust, inconvenience, is discovered. Individuals’ responses to disgust in consumption settings are explored.

Study 1

Study 1 was conducted with 107 undergraduates to explore disgust elicitors. Participants were asked to reflect on the last time they felt disgusted, and rate their disgusting experiences.

Results. From 107 participants we collected 101 disgusting experiences. Core and socio-moral elicitors of disgust were prevalent (21% and 41% respectively). Further, the elicitors of disgust have broadened to include a new elicitor; inconvenience. Inconvenience refers
to products, situations or experiences that did not work out as planned, hoped, desired, or imagined and caused discomfort to the person.

Thirty-one percent of our respondents stated that they experienced disgust elicited by inconvenience.

Participants rated their experiences on a 0-10 scale where 0 indicated not at all disgusting and 10 indicated extremely disgusting. The elicitors were equally disgusting (F(2,92)= 1.179, p>.3, M= 7.57 (core), M= 8.40 (socio-moral), M= 7.97 (inconvenience)).

Study 2

Study 2 was conducted with 88 undergraduates, to verify the inconvenience disgust elicitor. Three scenarios that evoke core, socio-moral, or inconvenience disgust were constructed based on the disgusting incidents reported in study 1. Participants were asked to complete a survey indicating how they expected to feel in response to each scenario. They rated 34 positive and negative emotions on a 0-10 scale.

Results. Participants reported that all three scenarios made them feel equally disgusted F(2, 260)=.683, p>.5; M=7.03 (core), M=7.07 (socio-moral); M=6.56 (inconvenience).

Feelings of being upset, angry, frustrated, annoyed and irritable are associated with disgust (Holbrook and Batra 1987, Nabi 2002).

We factor analyzed the emotions that the participants rated and created a composite score. The composite score is a weighted average based on the factor analysis. The elicitors made participants feel different levels of the emotions associated with disgust. F(2,262)=3.657, p<.05: M=5.44 (core), M=5.86 (socio-moral), M=6.22 (inconvenience). The core disgust elicitor did not elicit as much of the disgust related emotions as the socio-moral and inconvenience elicitors did.

Discussion. Study 2 verified that inconvenience elicits disgust as well as the emotions associated with disgust.

Study 3

Study 3 was conducted with 41 undergraduates to explore the action tendencies associated with the inconvenience disgust elicitor.

Two scenarios demonstrating the inconvenience disgust elicitor were created. Participants were asked to indicate how they would feel and what they would do in response to each scenario. Participants also rated how disgusting each scenario is on a 0-10 scale where 0 indicated not at all disgusting and 10 indicated extremely disgusting.

Results. The first scenario involved a frustrating telephone conversation with tech-support. In response participants indicated that they would feel disgusted (M=6.20, t(40)=2.59, p<0.05 two-tailed, test value=5). The second scenario involved encounter with an unhelpful sales associate. In response participants indicated that they would feel disgusted (M=7.00, t(40)=4.88, p<0.0001 two-tailed, test value=5).

Action Tendencies. In response to Scenario 1, 95.1% participants indicated that they would talk about this experience. Sixty-one percent indicated they would leave the disgusting situation. Only 2.4% indicated that they would complain while 19.5% said in the future they would prefer a different company. In response to Scenario 2, 87.8% participants indicated that they would talk about this experience. Sixty-three percent indicated they would leave the disgusting situation. Only 14.6% indicated that they would complain while 39% said in the future they would prefer a different company.

Discussion. Participants indicated, in response to the inconvenience disgust elicitor, they will talk about their experience, but not complain. Talking about disgusting experiences has the potential to create negative word of mouth. Also when customers do not complain the company does not get a chance to rectify the situation.

Study 4

Study 4 explores how a different population responds when they experience disgust. Participants were 28 staff members at a northeastern university. Participants were asked to elaborate on two disgusting consumption experiences that they had. They were asked to explain each experience, and indicate how they responded.

Results. From the 28 participants we collected 45 scenarios. The 45 scenarios were composed of 36% core, 9% socio-moral and 53% inconveniene disgust situations. The socio-moral disgust elicitor was not prevalent in consumption contexts, as such these scenarios were not further analyzed.

Participants rated how disgusting each scenario is on a 0-10 scale. Disgust elicitors are equally disgusting. F(1, 37)=0.56, p>.4; M=6.44 (core), M=6.96 (inconvenience).

In response to the disgusting situations participants reported that they got rid of the product or terminated service (core: 50%; inconvenience: 12.5%); and complained (core: 25%; inconvenience: 54%). Participants also indicated that in the future they are equally likely to complain and talk about their disgusting experiences, measured on a 0-10 likelihood scale where 0 indicated not at all likely and 10 indicated extremely likely (p>.4, p>.9) (Complain: M=6.6 (core), M=7.5 (inconvenience); talk about it: M=7.9 (core), M=7.9 (inconvenience))

Discussion. We replicate the findings with a different population. In consumption contexts core and inconvenience disgust elicitors were mainly reported. This study further demonstrates the prevalence of inconvenience disgust elicitors in consumption contexts.

General Discussion

The definition of disgust is not static (Nabi 2002). It evolves as the society evolves. In the four studies presented here we provide evidence that inconvenience a new category of disgust emerges in the consumption context. We showed that individuals feel disgusted by core, socio-moral and inconvenience disgust elicitors, and the action tendencies evoked by the feeling of disgust namely creating word of mouth and not complaining are potentially damaging to businesses.

References


The Liberating Effect of Guilt-Sharing on Consumers’ Preference for Indulgence
Ozge Yucel Aybat, Baruch College, CUNY, USA
Thomas Kramer, Baruch College, CUNY, USA

In choices between indulgent and non-indulgent options, the latter are often preferred because indulgence tends to be associated with guilt. However, we propose that the amount of guilt experienced, and hence preference for indulgence, depends on whether consumers are in a lone versus shared consumption situation. Specifically, relative to choice of fruit salad, we found that respondents were more likely to choose two pieces of chocolate cake to be shared with another consumer than one piece of chocolate cake to be consumed alone. Further analyses support the hypothesis that reductions in feelings of guilt appear to be driving this effect.

Understanding the Situational Appeal of Local Brands in Emerging Economies: The Case of Turkey
Nilufer Z. Aydinoglu, Koc University, Turkey
Rajeev Batra, University of Michigan, USA
Aysegul Ozsomer, Koc University, Turkey

Many multinational companies today are altering their brand portfolios in favor of global brands, out of a belief not only that this will yield various economies of scale but also that consumers around the world prefer such global brands to otherwise equivalent local brands. Previous research has in fact shown that consumers do often prefer such global brands, because of inferred higher quality, perceived prestige, and because owning and consuming such brands offers the consumer a chance to vicariously become a part of global consumer culture (e.g., Batra et al. 2000).

Despite these findings, there is also evidence from other research that in many countries consumers are not rushing headlong into purchases and lifestyles that symbolize global consumer culture, but instead are seeking to blend aspects of local consumer culture with that of incoming global consumer culture. There is by now a significant literature on the phenomenon of consumers “hybridizing” or “creolizing” their lifestyles and consumption patterns, including brand choices (e.g., Sandikci and Ger 2002). This suggests that consumers are pulled in two directions, not only by global cultural flows but also by local cultures.

While the power and influence of these global cultural forces is understood quite well, that of local cultures is not understood as well. There is indeed work that suggests that local consumers might prefer local to foreign/global brands because of a “home country bias” (Papadopoulos, Heslop and Bemossy 1990) or because of an “ethnocentric” desire to boost local economies (Shimp and Sharma 1987). However, it is less well understood is the ways in which consumers balance and integrate these two forces, such as the situational contingencies that make them weight one over the other, and the reasons why these situational contingencies might occur. Hence, our first objective in this paper is to address this issue by simultaneously exploring the reasons behind local and global brand preference.

The definition of the global brand itself is a controversial issue. Different scholars have provided different definitions and operationalizations as to the degree of globalness a brand holds. However there is no consensus on the degree of standardization required (if any at all) for a brand to qualify as global and also about the extent of availability across different nations. This causes ambiguity in interpreting and comparing the findings of different studies, whose definitions of globalness may be different to start with. In line with this debate, our second objective in this paper is to clarify the distinction between local and global brands. We believe that the degree of brand globalness lies in the perceptions of consumers.

In addressing these objectives, we use two waves of data collection. The first wave consists of focus groups and in-depth interviews to provide insight into consumer perceptions and preferences. We utilize this insight from the qualitative wave to identify the dimensions of (1) consumer perceptions of degree of localness/globalness, (2) perceived benefits of local/global brands and corresponding preferences, and (3) the situational variables affecting consumer preference between local and global brands. This first wave is conducted in two different cities of Turkey, an emerging economy. The second wave, then, tests our proposed model (based on the dimensions we identify) using survey data from Turkey with multivariate analysis.

Based on the insight from our first wave of qualitative data (four focus groups and fifteen in-depth interviews), we identify three dimensions which affect the degree of localness/globalness for a brand as perceived by consumers. The first dimension relates to "product