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Labovitz School of Business & Economics, University of Minnesota Duluth, 11 E. Superior Street, Suite 210, Duluth, MN 55802

## **Mine Versus Ours: Does It Matter?**

Bernadette Kamleitner, Queen Mary, University of London, UK

Anna Rabinovich, University of Exeter, UK

Joint ownership is a fact for many consumer goods. Consumer research has mainly addressed the decision process leading to joint ownership but not the impact joint ownership has on consumer behavior. In Study 1 we find that lay intuition assumes that joint owners take less care of a car than individual owners. This finding relates to differences in perceived responsibility and perceived ownership. Study 2 shows that joint owners are in fact less likely to care for an object (here: computer) than individual owners. This effect relates to a lower degree in perceived ownership among joint owners.

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- H1: Consumers having high-quality experiences will eat less than those having low-quality experiences.  
 H2: Consumers having high quality experiences will feel more positive affect than those having low-quality experiences.  
 H3: Amount of food eaten will be positively correlated to positive affect for consumers having low-quality experiences, but will have no impact on positive affect for those having high-quality experiences.

Our first study was conducted with 34 participants recruited from introductory marketing classes at a large northeastern university. Students were offered extra course credit in exchange for their participation. Participants were first asked to work on a task in which they were given ten minutes to unscramble as many words as possible from a list of 75 scrambled five-letter words. A bag of 60 Skittles candies was placed on each participant's desk, and they were free to partake. At the conclusion of this task, participants were asked to stop working and to place their bag of Skittles underneath their chairs. The number of Skittles eaten served as our measure of food consumption. They then completed a questionnaire measuring positive and negative affect (PANAS; Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988); perceived skill and challenge of the word task (Novak 1997; to measure QOE); the last time they ate, and liking for Skittles. Finally, at dismissal participants were told the true purpose of the study and given the option to have their data discarded. No participants chose this option.

Low QOE denotes a person of low-to-moderate skills whose skills are mismatched with the perceived challenge of the experience. High QOE means skills are high and commensurate with the challenge of the experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Participants' responses to the perceived skill and perceived challenge scales were placed on a "map of everyday experience" (Csikszentmihalyi 2003), which is a Cartesian plane with axes defined for challenge and skill. The plane is divided into low-quality experiences (e.g., apathy) and high-quality experiences (e.g., arousal). The resulting classification matched the underlying construct. High QOE participants (N=14) saw themselves as skilled at the word task and perceived the task as offering a similarly high level of challenge ( $M_{skill}=4.71$  vs.  $M_{challenge}=5.11$ ,  $p=.32$ ). Low QOE participants (N=20) saw themselves as less skilled, and overmatched by the challenge ( $M_{skill}=2.70$  vs.  $M_{challenge}=3.77$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Across the QOE groups, participants did not differ in their liking for Skittles, the last time they ate, or the number of words they correctly solved ( $p's>.20$ ).

In keeping with hypothesis 1, high QOE participants ate fewer Skittles than did low QOE participants ( $M_{high}=7.79$  vs.  $M_{low}=17.65$ ,  $p<.03$ ). Further, consistent with hypothesis 2, high QOE participants felt more positive affect than low QOE participants ( $M_{high}=3.44$  vs.  $M_{low}=2.82$ ,  $p<.03$ ). However, as predicted in hypothesis 3, as low QOE participants ate more Skittles, they also felt more positive affect ( $r=.55$ ,  $p<.02$ ), but the same was not true for high QOE participants ( $r=-.025$ ,  $p=.93$ ).

Together, these results suggest that a deficiency in QOE can drive people to eat more (hypothesis 1), which improves one's affective state (hypothesis 3), but not to the extent of a high-quality experience (hypothesis 2). This study represents a first step in explaining the causes and consequences of eating to satisfy experiential but not sustenance needs. Follow-up studies will explore ways in which consumers and marketers can cure this maladaptive behavior.

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## Mine Versus Ours: Does It Matter?

Bernadette Kamleitner, Queen Mary, University of London, UK  
 Anna Rabinovich, University of Exeter, UK

In particular when it comes to high-involvement acquisitions consumers often jointly buy and own objects such as cars, computers, and houses. Whereas there is extensive literature on how these joint decisions come about (e.g., Davis 1976; Su et al. 2008), there is paucity in research on how joint ownership affects consumer behavior after an acquisition has been made. The question of whether joint ownership leads to differences in consumer behavior has yet to be addressed. Theoretically there are three possibilities. First, there may be no behavioral differences between joint and individual owners as both cases involve factual ownership. For the most part existing consumer literature on ownership effects does not address the issue of different ownership modes (e.g., Beggan 1992; Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1991); possibly because no differences are to be expected.

Second, joint ownership may have a positive impact on consumer behavior. It has been argued that ownership creates a sense of responsibility for an object (e.g., Furby 1978) which instigates behaviors towards protecting and enhancing the owned object (e.g., Van Dyne and Pierce 2004). Joint ownership signifies that at least two consumers are entitled to use an object and can hence be held responsible

to each other. As a consequence joint owners may feel even more responsible towards the owned object than individual owners and may hence take more care of the object.

Third, joint ownership may have a negative impact on consumer behavior. On the one hand joint ownership and the resulting joint responsibility may lead to a decrease in experienced responsibility (Latane 1981) and lead to less behavioral care for the object. On the other hand, there is evidence that effects of ownership are mainly due to the degree to which ownership is perceived as such (e.g., Reb and Connolly 2007). It seems plausible to assume that joint ownership decreases the sense of ownership experienced and hence reduces a consumer's willingness to care for an object.

In two studies we gather initial information on whether joint ownership leads consumers to behave differently towards an object than individual ownership.

Study 1 assessed whether consumers intuitively believe that the mere fact of joint ownership leads to differences in consumer behavior. Participants (53 students) read a scenario about two students who each got a car from their parents. The only difference between the two students is the actual ownership mode. One student is sole owner of the car, one student shares ownership with the mother. Actual usage by other people and expenses are kept constant. After reading the scenario participants indicated which student was more likely to engage in four different acts of caring for the car (e.g., checking it for scratches;  $\alpha=.76$ ), who felt more responsible for the car and who experienced a stronger sense of ownership.

Mean values of all items were compared to the scale midpoint (4=both equally likely). Results show that participants thought that joint ownership decreases the care taken for the car, decreases the responsibility felt for the car, and decreases perceived ownership of the car. In a regression, responsibility and perceived ownership significantly predict the likelihood of caring for the car.

Study 2 assessed whether lay intuitions observed in study 1 are in line with actual consumer behavior. Participants (61 students) were asked to answer questions about the computer or laptop they use most frequently. To assess actual ownership status participants were asked to report the number of regular users as well as the legal ownership situation. In addition, participants were asked to report on perceived ownership, perceived responsibility, and their behavior towards the computer (all alphas  $>.60$ ). The eight items assessing behavior loaded on two different factors: behavior that prevents the computer from being damaged (e.g., not drinking at the keyboard) and behavior that promotes the computer (e.g., buying add-ons).

In separate regressions, the number of users had no effect on perceived responsibility and prevention behaviors. However, the larger the number of regular users, the less participants engage in behaviors that promote the computer and the lower is their perceived sense of ownership. Perceived sense of ownership predicts promotion behavior. Results were replicated with regard to legal ownership status. Controlling for the time spent with the computer did not alter the results.

To conclude, it seems that compared to individual ownership joint ownership has a detrimental effect on behavior towards an owned object. This effect is reflected in consumers' lay intuition. However, whereas lay intuition seems to relate this finding to both decreased perceived responsibility and decreased perceived ownership, actual behavior was only affected by perceived ownership. In addition, whereas lay intuition seems to assume an effect of joint ownership on all forms of caring behavior, the actual effect was restricted to behaviors that promote the owned object.

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## **A Meta-Analytic Review of Racial Similarity Effects in Advertising**

Ioannis Kareklas, University of Connecticut, USA

Maxim Polonsky, University of Connecticut, USA

The ideological struggle of African Americans during the early 1960s and throughout the 1970s was instrumental in elevating concern for ethnic minorities in American society. Marketing academicians and practitioners alike took note of the social advances which emerged from the civil rights movement. Advertisers started targeting African American consumers more systematically, and begun to feature more African American models in their advertisements (DeVecchio and Goodstein 2004). Academic researchers responded by investigating how majority and minority consumers evaluate racially integrated advertisements.

Underlying this newly found interest in ethnic consumers has been the desire on the part of the advertising community to respond to the moral criticism, which was increasingly directed towards advertisers, summarized by Barban and Cundiff as "You must "integrate"