Transumers: Motivations of Non-Ownership Consumption

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Imagine having access to the latest luxury handbags or golf clubs whenever you desired or using a car share service and never having to worry about the costs of automobile ownership. This is reality for a growing consumer segment participating in fractional ownership consumption experiences. These individuals, known as Transumers, are defined as, “consumers driven by experience instead of the fixed, by entertainment, by discovery, by fighting boredom, who increasingly live a transient lifestyle, freeing themselves from the hassles of permanent ownership and possessions” (Trendwatching.com 2006). The term Transumer was coined in 2003 by, global design and business consultancy firm, Fitch and originated from the marriage of the words transient and consumer (Trendwatching.com 2006). While the popular press is replete with research related to transumption behaviors, Transumers have not been specifically studied in the consumer behavior literature. Transumers are thought to be motivated by experiences instead of possessions, by entertainment, by discovery, and environmental consciousness. The primary purpose of this research is to understand the motivations and individual difference variables influencing transumption behavior.

The dynamic and unique changes currently taking place in the global marketplace related to economic, social, and cultural forces have created an environment ripe for fractional ownership. According to Zukin and Maguire (2004), consumption is an economic, social, and cultural process of selecting goods reflecting the opportunity and limitations of modern life. As interest in sustainability and green marketing increases, these consumers are of particular interest to businesses seeking to capitalize on the growing interest in protecting the environment by offering alternative consumption experiences. Previous studies have forecasted the increasingly rapid pace of technology change will result in a shift toward shared ownership. By engaging in fractional ownership, consumers have access to the latest and greatest and increased social status with less cost. Nissanoff (2006) believes we will evolve into a society where we view the ownership of most things as temporary–like the perception of leased vehicles. The concept of fractional ownership is not new. For example, car leasing introduced consumers to the idea of temporary ownership of vehicles that were above their ownership threshold (Nissanoff 2006). However, the key characteristic that differentiates Transumers from simply leasing a car or owning a timeshare is their pursuit of experiences across consumption categories (Levenson 2007). Consumers do not permanently acquire products, but rather an experience. Bag, Borrow, or Steal; ZipCar; and NetFlix are examples of firms that allow consumers to “own” a product for a flexible amount of time for a usage fee.

A two-part study was conducted to first illuminate common themes among individuals and then to investigate how these individual difference variables influence attitudes and behavioral intentions toward fractional ownership. First, an exploratory qualitative study consisting of semi-structured interviews was conducted with individuals engaging in non-ownership consumption. Coding of interviews revealed five themes which illuminate motivations to participate in non-ownership consumption. Although not exhaustive these themes provide insight into the reasons consumers seek non-ownership consumption opportunities.

Based on the emerging themes and the popular description of Transumers, a survey instrument was developed and tested using PLS. Data were collected with the use of 161 self-report questionnaires from adults in the southeastern United States. The hypothesized model describes the individual difference variables including possessiveness, materialism, variety seeking, status consciousness, frugality, and environmental consciousness and their relationships with attitude toward fractional ownership and behavioral intentions to participate in fractional ownership. The hypothesized model was supported by the data. The findings reveal the strongest motivators of positive attitudes and intentions towards fractional ownership were environmental consciousness and status consciousness.

The primary contribution of this research is the conceptual understanding of a unique and growing consumer segment previously absent from the marketing literature. The purpose of this study was to develop the concept of a consumer that engages in fractional ownership across product categories in an effort to collect new experiences while freeing themselves from the responsibilities of permanent ownership. Findings suggest Transumers are both status seeking and environmentally consciousness which at first appears counterintuitive. However, research suggests that while consumers use luxury goods to symbolize success, their definition of success is changing. Many consumers want the brands they buy to reflect their concern for the environment and social issues. At least 1 in 4 American adults hold environmentalism, global issues, and spiritual searching as personal values (Bendell and Kleanthous 2007).

Further, past research on duration of use and acquisition mode suggests consumers expecting to use a product for a short amount of time, all other variables being equal, would rather rent than own (Moore and Taylor 2008). This counterintuitive finding lends a clue as
to why consumers are motivated to participate in a leasing lifestyle. Specifically, the fashion industry is naturally aligned with the trend towards transumption due to the seasonality and temporary nature of style. If consumers are aware that trends change with the seasons, they may expect to use product for a shorter duration resulting in a greater motivation to rent rather than purchase. Luxury consumption has been impacted by a weakening economy; however, several luxury fractional ownership firms have recently experienced an increase in transactions. Michele Krause, the founder of Bling Yourself, an online fractional ownership accessory retailer, says that the economic downturn has not impacted their number of new customers or rentals (Roane 2008). Is fractional ownership not only a way to reduce environmental impact but also the answer to a sustainable economy?

In conclusion, the availability of fractional ownership options means less commitment, enabling consumers to enjoy a product temporarily before moving on to the next experience (Winsper 2007). Future research seeks to create a typology of transuming consumers by conducting interviews across industries and clustering based on theme. Investigating this new consumption trend provides marketers with insight into the motivations of these consumers and further seeks to illuminate the question set forth by Belk (2007), “Why share rather than own?”

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Is a Gift Always a Gift? An Ethnographic Inquiry into the Diversity of Giving Experiences
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In January 2005, after the Asian tsunami, the French Croix-Rouge collected more money in one week than usually collected in an entire year of fundraising (41 millions Euros). Médecins Sans Frontières was approached by 411 volunteers ready to fly to Indonesia, a number usually taking five months to reach. The total amount of giving actually reached far beyond the needs of these associations to face up to this disaster. Why did people give to meet the tsunami disaster? Maybe because of the situation (Christmas period, death saliency, social influence of children and grand-children…) generating affective reactions (surprise, anxiety, fear…) and resulting in taking giving behaviors in action.

We assume that situations may have a great impact on giving behaviors just as it does on consumption behaviors in general. Situations are defined by Belk (1975) as “momentary encounters with those elements of the total environment which are available to the individual at a particular time”. Situational characteristics are physical and social surroundings, temporal perspective, task definition features and antecedent states.

The aim of the present research is to answer the following questions:

Do situations influence giving behaviors?

If they do, how does the situation have an impact on giving?

By focusing on the physical and social surroundings, on the affective and experiential aspects of giving behaviors, we lie within the scope of consumer culture theory (CCT, Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Although givers do not actually consume physical goods or

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6This research is a part of a larger one, financed by the ANR (the French National Research Agency), aiming at tackling problems encountered by associations by a better understanding of giving behaviors. The research is limited to individual giving behaviors, excluding firms or foundations donations.
services, we believe that they do indeed undergo a consumption experience with persons or associations who benefit from their giving behaviors.

As we cannot assume that the different types of giving behaviors (gifting, donation, volunteering…) are not related, we will study how people imagine and experience giving:

- of money, of time, of gift, but also of blood, of organs,
- to other persons, known (members of the family, friends) or unknown (beggar),
- or to associations (local or international, public or civil, whereas aiming at social tasks, health promotion and risk prevention, education and research, culture, sports and leisure…).

A lot of research in an anthropological (Malinowski, 1922 ; Mauss, 1923-1924 ; Weiner, 1992 ; Godelier, 2002), sociological (Levi-Strauss, 1971 ; Godbout and Caillé, 2001), philosophical (Derrida, 1991) or economical (Cheal, 1988) perspectives pays attention to giving behaviors.

In consumer research, an important research stream has focused on giving since the seminal works of Belk (1979 ; 1993) and Sherry (1983). Most of them have dealt with gift giving (Otnes, Lowrey and Kim, 1993 ; Sherry, McGrath and Levy, 1993 ; McGrath, 1995 ; Otnes, 1996 ; Ruth, Otnes and Brunel, 1999).

When raising the issue of fundraising by associations, the research has concentrated on the influence of socio-demographic and psychological features of givers and volunteers on their behaviors (Guy and Patton, 1988 ; Burnett and Lunsford, 1994 ; Wymer, 1997 ; Wooten, 2000 ; Bennett, 2003 ; Sargeant and Woodliffe, 2007), or less often, on the influence of appeal techniques on giving behaviors (Rothschild, 1979 ; Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996 ; Desmet and Feinberg, 2003 ; Venable et alii, 2005 ; Goatman and Lewis, 2007).

Few studies have addressed the question of situational characteristics on giving behaviors, some focusing on social surroundings (Fisher and Ackerman, 1998 ; Bryant and Test, 1967 ; Gillath et alii, 2005), on temporal perspective (Fisher, Vandenbosch and Antia, 2008) or on task definition features (Bryant, Slaughter, Kang and Tax, 2003).

To our knowledge, some situational influences, as physical surroundings or antecedent states have not been studied, and, moreover, no comprehensive and integrative study of situational influences on giving behaviors has been conducted, what could be of great interest for associations’ marketing.

So, we have designed an ethnographic study aiming at studying behaviors in social and cultural context (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994 ; Sherry, 1995 ; Sunderland and Denny, 2007). As a first stage, we have conducted depth interviews with 15 persons from January to February 2009. We employed snowball sampling, recruiting informants from among family and acquaintance networks. We have interviewed 8 women and 7 men, from 26 to 65 years-old, living in Paris or west regions of France. They are either workers, retired or housewife, single, married or widow, with or without children in care, with diverse levels of education, of income, practising or not diverse religions (Christianity, Judaism, Muslim religion). We followed Bertaux and Kohli’s (2001) and Bertaux (2009) recommendations on life stories questions to elicit holistic descriptions of our informants’ representations and experiences of giving. Interviews ranged from 55 to 85 minutes, were audiotaped, transcribed, and yielded to more than 300 pages single-spaced pages of text.

We are in the process of interpreting the text using dialectical tacking (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), immersing ourselves in the interdisciplinary literature on giving behaviors, to seek out consistencies and/or inconsistencies with our text.

Some preliminary results emerge about the situations:

- the existence of different types of experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982 ; Caru and Cova, 2003) of giving: ordinary as giving a coin to a beggar in the street or old clothes to an association versus extraordinary as TV shows or sports events aiming at fundraising, definitions of ordinary and extraordinary experiences being diverse among participants ;
- the physical surroundings, often described as “disappointing”, especially in small charity organizations;
- the influence of emotions: for example, the death saliency seems to be important in acting the giving behavior in extraordinary experience, the mood seems to influence more ordinary experiences ; disappointment is also salient in discourse;
- the social aspects of giving: it may be an individual versus a social experience.

Life stories also have shed light on the importance of the life path, especially childhood, in framing giving representations and learning to give.

From these preliminary results, we conclude that associations should evolve from a person-association/cause relationship to a person-association-cause-situation relationship as giving decisions are also contingent on situational variables.

Further depth interviews and diaries will be collected and analyzed until the end of 2009. Observations will also be organized.

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The Effect of Emotion on Color Preferences
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Can mood change our color preferences? Would people be attracted to different colors depending on their mood? Even though emotional influence on judgment and decision making has been well established (Schwarz and Clore 1983), little is known how a perceivers emotion affects his or her aesthetic judgments including color preferences. On the other hand, it is well established that people feel various emotions from colors (Crozier 1996; Guilford and Smith 1959; Ou et al. 2004; Valdez and Mehrabian 1994). For example, people feel calmness or low arousal from short-wavelength colors, such as blue and green. People feel excitement, happiness, or high arousal from long-wavelength colors, such as red and yellow. People feel relaxation and softness from light or pastel tone colors, while tension and hardness from dark colors. Given the strong associations of colors and emotions, we examine if an individuals color preferences are contingent on his emotion.

Specifically, we contrast three potential hypotheses from emotion literature: affective evaluation (Andrade 2005; Schwarz and Clore 1983; Isen et al. 1978), affect regulation (Andrade 2005; Gross 1998), and affective fit. These three hypotheses predict a perceivers emotional influence on color preference differently.

We used within-subject design to measure color preferences, since individual differences in color preference are rather significant (Schloss and Palmer 2007). Thus, the changes between two color preferences were used as the main dependent variables of the study. We used emotionally laden movies to induce happiness, sadness, and neutral emotion. The movies were edited into black and white films to eliminate color exposure confounding during video watching. We asked participants to evaluate the colors before and after watching emotionally laden movies. As a cover story, participants were told to take part in two unrelated studies, color preference study and video evaluation study. They heard that to avoid their eyes from being tired from evaluating subtly different colors, color preference study would be split into part I and part II and videos study would take part in between the two parts.

Colors were chosen based on Hue-Saturation-Light (HSL) color scheme, which is widely accepted by color theorists as describing three independent properties of colors (Valdez and Mehrabian 1994). To identify which aspect of colors is influenced by emotions, hue (red, blue, yellow, and green), saturation (saturated vs., muted), and lightness (light, middle, dark) dimensions of colors were fully
factorized. Therefore, we used a mixed ANOVA design: 3 emotion (happy, sad, and neutral: between-subjects) x 4 hue x 2 saturation x 3 lightness ANOVA.

One hundred fifty nine undergraduate students from a large western university participated in a study. Emotions were induced successfully as intended. The three hypotheses predicted emotional effect on color preferences in different direction. To test these hypotheses, we conducted a mixed ANOVA examining the effects of a perceiver’s emotion (happy, sad, and neutral: between-subjects) on preferences for colors’ dimensions (hue x saturation x light). A full factorial ANOVA did not reveal significant effects. However, after grouping hues by wavelength we found a significant interaction among wavelength, lightness, and emotion. In the light and middle lightness levels, the happy group’s preferences for long wavelength colors significantly increased. However, the happy group’s preferences for dark colors were not different from other groups.

In summary, a perceiver’s emotion affects his color preferences. More specifically, when people are happy (vs. neutral), happiness associated colors, that is, highly arousing colors such as light red and yellow, are more preferred.

References

Social Attributions of Obesity and Attitudes toward Food Marketing: Implications on Framing Strategy
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Using attribution theory, the study investigates the relationships between social attributions of obesity and consumers’ attitudes toward food-marketing policy. Findings from a survey of 316 college students indicate that differences in social attributions, causes of and responsibilities to obesity, are significantly related to consumers’ attitudes toward food-marketing policy. Attitudes toward food advertising and beliefs on the importance of obesity are also important in predicting consumers’ attitudes toward food-marketing policies, both directly and indirectly through social attributions about obesity. A synergistic framing, instead of a competitive framing, between personal and social attributions is recommended as a message framing strategy to build consumers’ support for policies on food marketing.

Antecedents of Attitudes towards Counterfeits of Luxury Brands: A Consumer Misbehavior Model Perspective
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Conceptualization: Counterfeiting is a global phenomenon with a growth rate of 1700% over the past decade (U.S. Department of State, 2006). Estimates of global sales for counterfeit products are about $600 billion per year, accounting for 9% of world trade (Cordeiro 2007). Much research can be found in the literature that deals with anti-counterfeit strategies from the supply side to protect counterfeiting (e.g., Chaudhry et al 2005; Shultz and Nill 2002). However, the counterfeiting problem is not related only to the manufacturers of counterfeit products, but also the demand for these counterfeit products. For better understanding consumer behavior about counterfeit products, the consumer misbehavior model was used for this study. Consumer misbehavior is defined as ‘behavioral acts by consumers which violate the generally accepted norms of conduct in consumption situations’ (Fullerton & Punj 1997, p.336). This consumer misbehavior has been accepted as a component of consumer experience. More than thirty-five types of consumer misbehavior such as shoplifting, financial fraud, and purchase of counterfeit products have been explained. Based on the literature review, this research involves three elements: 1) product variables such as price and quality, 2) individual variables such as materialism and consumer ethics, and 3) social variables such as subjective norms.

Purpose of this study: Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the determinants that influence consumers to purchase counterfeit products, and to propose and test a model that deals with the main antecedents of consumer attitudes toward counterfeits of luxury brands. Six hypotheses were developed. H1: The perceived price-advantage of counterfeits has a positive effect on the attitude toward counterfeit products. H2: The perceived quality of counterfeits has a positive effect on the attitude toward counterfeit products. H3: Materialism has a positive effect on the attitude toward counterfeit products. H4: Consumer ethics has a negative effect on the attitude...
toward counterfeit products. H5: Subjective norm has a positive effect on the attitude toward counterfeit products. H6: Attitude toward counterfeit products has a positive effect on purchase intention of counterfeits.

Method: Three hundred and sixty-nine undergraduate female students (M=21.4) at a large university in Seoul, Korea took part in this study. Korea is one of the top five biggest manufacturers in counterfeit production worldwide along with China, Taiwan, India and Hong Kong (Casabona 2009). Approximately 70% of the respondents were marketing and fashion majors. Their monthly personal disposable income ranged from $70 to $900 (M=$318). The questionnaire included demographic items and questions as to whether or not participants had purchased counterfeit products. The purchasers of counterfeit ‘knowingly’ purchased a counterfeit as non-deceptive counterfeits.

For measurement, perceived price-advantage, quality of counterfeits, and subjective norms items were adopted from Tom et al (1998)’s scale. Richins and Dawson (1992)’s materialism scale and Muncy and Vitel (1992)’s consumer ethics scale were also used for this study. Each item was accompanied by a 7-point scale (7=strongly agree; 1=strongly disagree). Descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling using AMOS program were conducted for data analyses.

Major Findings: Approximately 67% of respondents had purchased counterfeit fashion products such as clothing, handbags, accessories and shoes. To ensure data validity and reliability in this study, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminate validity were examined. As the results, strong evidence demonstrated satisfactory data validity and reliability. As the next step, the subsequent process of identifying the structural model that best fits the data was conducted. The findings indicated the structural model presented in this study showed adequate overall goodness-of-fit with observed data (Chi-square =15.85, d.f. =5, p=.05; GFI=.99; AGFI=.98; CFI=.99; RMSEA=.001, RMR=.028). The results of hypothesis testing showed four hypotheses out of six supported at the significant level of lower than 0.05. That is, the perceived price-advantage of counterfeits (H1: Estimate=.126, p<.05), and perceived quality of counterfeits (H2: Estimate=.373, p<.0001) had a positive effect on the attitude toward counterfeit products. Also materialism (H4: Estimate= -.175, p<.0001) had a negative effect on the attitude toward counterfeit products. Finally, attitude toward counterfeit products (H6: Estimate= .446, p<.0001) had a positive effect on purchase intention of counterfeits. However, H2 and H4 were not supported.

Managerial Implications: Based on these results, consumer’s attitudes toward counterfeits is an important predictor of counterfeits of luxury brands. Purchasing counterfeit products is illegal globally and is considered consumer misbehavior. This study will provide practical and useful information for educators, global marketers and policy makers that will be beneficial in the protection of counterfeit misbehavior. Results of this study are only partially conclusive, and further research is necessary to better understand this phenomena.

References

The Effects of Values-Affirmation on Charity Support Behavior: The Mediating Role of Positive Other-Directed Feelings

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Despite charitable organizations’ enormous social and economic impacts in our society (Bendapud et al. 1996), charitable giving has stagnated in the U.S over the last 30 years, and philanthropic institutions have found it increasingly difficult to raise needed funds from givers (Merchant and Ford 2008). Given today’s daunting situations charities are faced with, in this article, we suggest that affirming important personal values motivate charity support behavior.

This argument follows from self-affirmation theory. Self-affirmation refers to behavioral or cognitive events that bolster the ‘perceived integrity of the self’ (Steel 1988, p.291). Social psychologists have documented that self-affirmation encourages people to see themselves objectively (Harris and Napper 2005), and helps them buffer against self-threatening information (Armitage et al. 2008; Harris et al. 2007; Koole et al. 1999) and decrease biased information processing of a persuasive message (Cohen et al. 2000; Harris and Napper 2005; Reed et al. 1998). It has also been linked with less motivational processing of dissonance provoking situations (Steele and Liu 1983), increased open-mindedness (Correll et al. 2004; Sherman and Cohen 2006), and decreased closed-mindedness and inflexibility in negotiation (Cohen et al. 2007). Taken these together, we argue that the process of values-affirmation may increase the persuasiveness of a message about charity support.
**H1**: Participants in values-affirmation conditions are more likely to support charity than those in control conditions.

Recent studies (Koole et al. 1999; Steele and Liu 1983; Tesser 2000) have argued that values-affirmation increases positive feelings. Along the same line with this argument, Crocker et al. (2008) demonstrated that affirming important personal values induced greater positive other-directed emotions, by enabling people to diminish concern for themselves (Correll et al. 2004) and transcend the self (Crocker et al. 2008). As for the linkage between positive mood and enhanced helping behavior, Weyant (1978) found that when people were on positive mood, they volunteered more than those on neutral mood. This leads us to theorize that values-affirmation increases positive other-directed feelings, and thereby enhance helping behavior.

**H2**: The enhanced charity support behavior through the process of values-affirmation is mediated by positive other-directed feelings.

In three studies, we investigate whether this is the case. We begin by demonstrating the effects of values-affirmation on donation intent to the Red Cross (Study 1), willingness to help people in crisis (Study 2), and willingness to help patients coping with end-stage diseases (Study 3). We then demonstrate that participants in values-affirmation conditions are more likely to help charity on the greater positive other-directed feelings than those in control conditions (Study 2). Finally, we demonstrate that the effect of values-affirmation on willingness to help others is mediated by positive other-directed feelings (Study 3).

**Study 1**

**Method**

Participants were asked to rank six values (i.e., business, art-music-theater, social life-relationships, science-pursuit of knowledge, religion-mortality, government-politics) in order of their personal importance (Sherman et al. 2000). Participants were then assigned to either the values-affirmation versus the control condition. In the values affirmation condition, participants were instructed to think about their most important value and write a short essay about why the value was important and meaningful to them. In the control condition, participants were asked to write about their least important value and why it might be important and meaningful to other people (Schmeichel and Vohs 2009). Then participants were presented with the message from the Red Cross and asked whether they would like to make monthly donation to the Red Cross Champions Program (0= do not want to make monthly donation, 1= want to make monthly donation).

**Results**

**Monthly Donation Intention.** We measured monthly donation intention as dichotomous and analyzed the data by using Chi-Square test. The results showed that participants (59.4%) in the values-affirmation conditions were more likely to make monthly donation to charity than those (40.6%) in the control conditions ($\chi^2(1)=3.574, p=.06$).

**Study 2**

**Method**

Participants were asked to rank twelve values (i.e., relations with family and friends, social skills, romantic values, athletics, sense of humor, creativity, managerial skills, spontaneity, neatness or tidiness, aesthetic appreciation, physical attractiveness, and music ability or appreciation) in order of their personal importance (Harris and Napper 2005). As Study 1, participants were then assigned to either the values-affirmation versus the control condition. And we measured their positive other-directed feelings (loving, connected, and grateful; Crocker et al. 2008) using a three-item five-point scale (1= not at all, 5= extremely). Then participants were presented with the message of the Red Cross Champions Program and asked to leave their email addresses, if they were willing to help people in crisis, so that the program coordinator could contact them.

**Results**

**Willingness to help people in crisis.** We coded the data of willingness to help as binary (0= did not leave email address, 1=left email address) and analyzed them using Chi-Square test. The results showed that participants (60.4%) in the values-affirmation conditions were more likely to help others in crisis than those (39.6%) in the control conditions ($\chi^2(1)=3.333, p=.06$).

**Positive Other-directed feelings.** The results of a 2 (values-affirmation vs. control) × 2 (email left: yes vs. no) between-subjects ANOVA revealed a significant interaction ($F(1,74)=4.926, p=.03$). Participants in the values-affirmation conditions were more likely to help people in crisis on the greater positive other-directed feelings ($\alpha=.79$) than those in the control conditions ($M_{values}=2.86, M_{control}=2.17, t(46)=3.347, p=.002$). Furthermore, in the values-affirmation conditions, participants who wanted to help people in crisis showed greater positive other-directed feelings than those who did not want to help ($M_{yes}=2.86, M_{no}=2.17, t(37)=-1.81, p=.07$). However participants in the control conditions did not differ on positive other-directed feelings regardless of participants’ willingness to help ($M_{no}=2.35, M_{yes}=1.93, t(37)=1.29, p>.20$).

**Study 3**

**Method**

As previous studies, participants were asked to work on ranking and writing tasks. Then participants’ positive other-directed feelings (loving, connected, and grateful) and positive self-directed feelings (powerful, strong, and admirable) were measured using a six-item five-point scale (1= not at all, 5= extremely; Crocker et al. 2008). Then they were told that a charity organization needed volunteers to help patients coping with end-stage diseases and asked to indicate their willingness to help (1= not at all, 5= very much). They were also asked to leave their email addresses, if they want to help patients, so that the program director could contact them.

**Results**

**Email Left.** The results demonstrated that participants (62.3%) in the values-affirmation conditions were more likely to help patients than those (37.7%) in the control conditions ($\chi^2(1)=3.689, p=.05$).
Willingness to help. The results of an one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect for values-affirmation ($F(1, 86)=5.475, p = .02$). Participants in the values-affirmation conditions were more likely to help patients than those in the control conditions ($M_{values}= 2.9, M_{control}= 2.13$).

Mediation analyses. The positive other-directed feelings ($\alpha = .82$) explained the relationship between values-affirmation and willingness to help charity. Values-affirmation significantly enhanced positive other-directed feelings ($\beta = -.703, p < .01$; most=0, least=1), which in turn predicted an increase in willingness to help ($\beta = .384, p < .05$). When the positive other-directed feelings was included in the regression analysis predicting willingness to help, however, the effect of values-affirmation on willingness to help ($\beta = -.768, p < .05$) was no longer significant ($\beta = -.504, p > .10$, NS), and only the effect of positive other-directed feelings was observed ($\beta = .353, p < .05$; Sobel $z=1.66, p < .10$). The positive self-directed feelings ($\alpha = .86$), however, didn’t mediate the effect of values-affirmation on charity support behavior.

Across three studies, we demonstrated that affirming important personal values increased charity support behavior and the effect of values-affirmation on charity support behavior was mediated by positive other-directed feelings. This research suggests that when people are encouraged to affirm important values, they experience greater positive other-directed feelings, and thereby transcend concerns about the self and overcome motivational conflicts between prosocial and selfish impulses.

References

Effects of Advertising Exposure on Materialism and Self-Esteem: Advertised Luxuries as a Feel-Good Strategy?
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Advertisements communicate that any aspiration can be fulfilled if one possesses the right products and brands (Kasser 2002; Pollay 1986). However, little experimental research has shown this presumed effect of advertising exposure on materialism (e.g., Brand and Greenberg 1994; Han and Shavitt 2005; Zhang and Shavitt 2003). Even less research attempted to disentangle the role of self-esteem in
this effect. Given that materialists derive a sense of worth and happiness from the acquisition of possessions (Richins and Dawson 1992), feeling unable to afford advertised products might be problematic for the self-esteem of consumers who repeatedly fail to meet their culturally imposed, materialistic standards (Kasser et al. 2007). In contrast, the pleasant experience of feeling able to afford advertised products may motivate consumers to strive even more for wealth (cf. Vohs and Baumeister 2008). However, this might be less problematic for their self-esteem as these consumers probably feel confident that they will achieve their (material) aspirations (cf. Nickerson et al. 2003). The aim of this research is to investigate these relations between advertising exposure, self-esteem and materialism. We predict that consumers’ perceived ability to afford advertised products moderates the effect of advertising exposure on self-esteem and materialism.

In a first experiment, 189 participants were divided over two conditions. Participants in the advertising condition were exposed to five ads for luxurious products. For each ad they indicated to what extent they felt able to afford the product. Participants in the control condition saw no ads. Next, levels of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), chronic materialism (Richins and Dawson, 1992) and momentary importance attached to materialism related goals, e.g., financial success or social status (Aspiration Index, extrinsic subscales; Kasser and Ryan 1993, 1996), were measured. A significant momentary increase in materialism is found in the advertising condition relative to the control condition. Additionally, advertising exposure significantly enhances the self-esteem of consumers who believe they can afford the promoted luxuries, compared to consumers who cannot afford them. However, it is possible that perceived affordability is a consequence rather than an antecedent of self-esteem. Consumers with high self-esteem may be more optimistic about their ability to buy advertised items. In that case, self-esteem measured prior to advertising exposure should predict perceived affordability. To test this hypothesis, participants in the control condition judged the same ads at the end of the study. Their self-esteem scores do not predict affordability, which rules out this alternative interpretation.

Study two aims to replicate these findings and tests whether the effect of affordability concerns is altered if participants are encouraged to imagine themselves owning the advertised products. Forty-seven participants were exposed to six ads for luxury products. After the exposure, 23 participants recalled one ad/product and imagined how they would feel if they would own the product. The other half of the participants did not engage in this mental simulation task. Seventeen participants did not see any ads (control condition). Next, self-esteem (Rosenberg 1965) and temporal materialism (Aspiration Index; Kasser and Ryan 1993, 1996) were measured. Affordability was measured after a number of unrelated tasks to assess whether these concerns affect self-esteem without being actively cued during the advertising exposure (as in study 1). No effect of advertising condition (ad vs. no ads) on materialism is found, yet a significant interaction effect of simulation condition (no imagination vs. imagination) and perceived affordability is found on temporal materialism. In the no imagination condition, the regression slope is significant, suggesting that the more one feels able to afford the products, the higher the increase in materialism after the exposure (in comparison to mean materialism in the control condition). In the imagination condition, the regression slope is not significant. Also for self-esteem a significant interaction effect of simulation condition and affordability is found. In the no imagination condition, the slope is significant, suggesting that the more one feels able to afford the products, the higher the increase in self-esteem after the exposure and vice versa. In the imagination condition, the regression slope is not significant.

Both experiments provide preliminary evidence that advertising exposure might induce materialism, most likely in consumers who feel able to afford the advertised products. For consumers who claim being able to buy luxuries, increased levels of materialism after the exposure seem to be less problematic than is usually expected, as they tend to express higher levels of self-esteem. Interestingly, the effects of ad exposure disappear when consumers imagine themselves owning the products. Such outcome-focused thoughts, as opposed to process-focus thoughts, may draw consumers’ attention away from actions needed to be taken in order to obtain the product (Escalas and Luce 2004), e.g., being able to buy it. Spending cognitive effort on this imagination process might thus reduce the impact of prior affordability concerns. Interesting would be to assess whether these findings are restricted to luxury advertising or apply to a broader advertising context.

Finally, these results do not necessarily imply that ad exposure is constructive for consumers’ self-esteem. Even though the expected inverse relation between materialism and self-esteem (Chaplin and John 2007) was not found, a self-esteem boost resulting from feeling able to afford luxuries seems contingent on social approval. And such extrinsically oriented feelings of self-worth are unlikely to ensure a healthy psychological life in the long run (Kasser, Koestner, and Lekes 2002; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

References


The Effect of Physical Enclosing on Negative Emotion Regulation

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In three studies, we had shown that people attained certain closure over negative events by putting materials relating to the event into the envelope. In study 1, we showed that people felt less bad about a decision that they regretted a lot in study 1A (a strong desire that they could not satisfy in study 1B) if they put the recalled event (desire) into an envelope. Experiment 2 found that people felt less negative after reading a sad story print on a paper after putting the paper into the envelope. However enclosing an unrelated task did not soothe emotional reaction.

Despite wishes to feel happy and positive, negative emotions—often triggered by the memory of past experiences—come back to haunt us. How can we stop our mind from being distracted by intrusive memories of negative experiences and get closure?

Memory researchers have discussed the concept of cognitive inhibition and found that an explicit instruction to inhibit an unwanted thought may actually increase the accessibility (and hence recall) of the concept (Wegner et al., 1987). Similarly, literature on emotion regulation has suggested that suppression of negative emotional reactions can backfire (Gross, 1998; Wegner, Erber & Zanakos, 1993). However, other than deliberatively trying hard to forget, lay people do seek remedies by physically locking things up. For instance, a self-help website on how to deal with a broken relationship advises readers to “put everything that reminds you of your ex in a box and seal it...” (Pant, 2007). Do these behavioral strategies to put physical closure on objects work? The premise that physically enclosing and sealing emotion-related items will help people attain psychological closure over emotional experience stems from recent research on embodied cognition and metaphors. We report the results of three experiments which showed that sealing an emotional laden object into an envelope could relieve the related negative emotions people experienced as a result.

In study 1A, eighty students were randomly assigned to the two conditions. In both conditions, participants were first asked to recall a recent decision that they felt greatly regretful. In one condition, after participants recalled the event, they were instructed to put the questionnaire into an envelope before they handed back the questionnaires; in the other condition, participants were simply asked to hand back the questionnaires. In the second task, participants reported how they felt about the event along four negative emotion scales: regretful, guilty, sad, and worried, all anchored from 1, not at all, to 5 extremely. The four negative emotions were averaged to indicate how negative participants felt about the event at the moment the measurement was taken (cronbach alpha=.79). A simple t test of the treatment factor revealed that participants who put the recalled event into the envelop felt less negatively (M=2.00) about the event than those who just handed back the recall task without an envelope (M=2.52, t (1, 78)=2.42).

Study 1B was different from 1A along the two aspects. Rather than recalling a regrettable experience, participants were instead asked to report something they wanted to do very badly but could not do it. Second, the study was conducted in the dorms on campus. On specific emotional reactions towards the strong desires, people who were given an envelop to put their questionnaire into felt much less negative on almost all single items that were measured (Sad, disappointed, unsatisfied, anxious ts(1, 37)>2.33, p<.05). In addition, in terms of mental disturbance they felt over the their strong desire, those people who experienced the physical closure did felt less distracted or unsettled towards it (t (1, 37) >2.25, p<.05).

Study 2 tested whether the difference was driven by the action of putting things into envelope (in the similar fashion as how catharsis works for some negative emotions) or due to the fact that the specific emotion laden material was put to a symbolic closure. The main test had three conditions, and all conditions needed to complete three tasks in the same sequence and at the same pace. In the first task participants were asked to read a recent news report on the death of a baby. The second task, which was totally irrelevant to the news, measured how college students made a few daily hypothetical decisions. In the last task participants were asked to report how they felt at the moment.

In the first condition, every completed questionnaire was collected back by the experimenter before the next questionnaire was handed out (i.e., control condition). In the second condition, after participants completed the first task, they were given a small envelope and instructed to put the task completed into the envelope. After experimenter collected all envelopes, the second questionnaire would be handed out, followed by the third task (i.e., the condition where physical closure was specified at the emotional event). In the third condition, participants they were given a small envelope to put the second task in and handed it back before they were given the last questionnaire (i.e., the condition where physical closure was acted on unrelated task).
The three negative emotions measured have a relatively high correlation (Cronbach’s alpha=.90), and were averaged to indicate how negative the sad story made participants felt. Helmert contrasts were conducted first and showed that after participants put the emotional laden materials into the envelope (M=2.90), the negative emotions they felt were significantly less than the rest two conditions (F(1, 77)=3.89, p<.05). However, the difference between the control condition and the experimental condition where participants were asked to put an unrelated task to the envelope did not differ on the reported emotional states (M_{control}=4.28; M_{unrelated}=4.12, F(1, 77)=.32, p>.80).

It is known that the body is closely tied to the processing of emotional information (Niedenthal et al., 2009). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that bodily experience may also be pivotal in the regulation of emotions. While supporting theories on embodied cognition and embodied emotion, our results took one step further to show that people’s emotion regulation process can indeed be facilitated by taking a physical action on the emotional laden materials. The experiments demonstrated that the abstract mental state such as psychological closure over an event appeared to rely on the sensory-motor experiences brought by the simple act of enclosing.

Influence of Self-Relevant Base-Rate Information on Risk Perception of Getting Depression
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The aim of this current research is to examine the influence of base-rate information on risk perception in the context of depression. The issue of depression has gained the attention of social marketers and researchers all over the world (e.g., Fontaine & Jones, 1997; Nelson & Craighead, 1977; Tennen & Herzberger, 1987), and has a high incidence in the population studied. The question is whether or not providing this population with the base-rate information on the incidence of depression will be effective to get them to seek help. Therefore, this question is the focus of this paper.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the impersonal impact hypothesis, which proposes that people’s general risk perception may be heightened by the relative information provided, but their personal risk judgments are not (Weinstein, 1989; Tyler & Cook, 1984). Therefore, the purpose of study 1 is to demonstrate that offering social level information such as base-rate information doesn’t influence an individual’s risk perception, but the personal level information such as the level of depression can indeed influence the risk perception of getting depression and decrease the level of self-positivity bias. Study 2 will examine the individual’s perception of the relevance of the base-rate information to see if different levels of self-relevant perception affect their estimations of own risk and other risk of getting depression. While study 2 examines the perception of the relevance to the base-rate information, Study 3 directly manipulates the level of base-rate relevance to see if more self-relevant base-rate information draws the attention of participants to their risk of getting depression and so decrease the difference between their own risk and other’s risk of getting depression.

Method

Study 1 examined the effect of social level risk information and personal level risk information on self-risk perception, the updating of self-risk estimates and on the level of self-positivity bias for getting depression. We predict that base-rate information serves as social level risk information and will not change self-risk perception of getting depression, and will remain at the same level of self-positivity bias. However, the result of self-diagnosis inventory serves as a personal level risk judgment and will increase an individual’s risk perceptions, and will help to reduce the level of self-positivity bias. At the same time, Study 1 also examines the effect of social level risk information and personal level risk information on an individual’s willingness to update his/her self-risk estimates. A 3 (estimate: self initial / other/ self updated) x 2 (social level risk information—base-rate: present vs. absent) x 2 (personal level risk information—level of depression from self-diagnosis inventory: low vs. high) mixed design was used in this study. Seventy-eight undergraduate students participated in this study.

Study 2 proposes that self-relevant perception of the base-rate information will affect people’s risk perception and the updating of their self-risk as well as the level of self-positivity bias. We predict that if people think that base-rate information is not relevant to them, they will continue to hold their self-positivity bias, and they will not update their self-risk estimation after they know the BR information for depression. On the other hand, if they think that the base-rate is related to them, then they will pay more attention to this information and will be prepared to update their self-risk estimation and their self-positivity bias will decrease as well. Study 1 showed that the level of depression plays an important role in risk perception and self-positivity bias. Therefore, study 2 will examine the effect of self-relevant perception of the base-rate information on the risk estimations between depressed and non-depressed groups. A 3 (estimate: self initial / other/ self updated) x 2 (self-relevant perception: low vs. high) x 2 (level of depression: high vs. low) mixed design was used in study 2, with the estimating factor manipulated within-subjects, and the remaining factors measured between subjects. One hundred and seventeen undergraduate university students participated in study 2.

Study 3 examines the robustness of these results by directly manipulating the level of base-rate relevance. A 3 (estimate: self initial / other/ self updated) x 2 (self-relevance to base-rate information: low / high) x 2 (level of depression: high / low) mixed design was used in this study, with the estimating factor manipulated within-subjects, base-rate relevant manipulated and level of depression measured between subjects. One hundred and seven undergraduate students participated study 3.

Conclusion

The present study examined the effect of base-rate information on risk judgments about depression. In practice, social marketers provide different risk information to influence the risk perception of their target audiences. However, recent studies on information processing show a different view of the effects of base-rate information on self-positivity bias (e.g., Lin et al., 2003; Lin & Raghubir, 2005). The present research echoes the findings of previous researches. Study 1 showed that since base-rate information serves as a social level risk information, providing this base-rate information does not change self-risk perception of getting depression, nor the level of self-