CONSUMER GENERATIVITY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Caroline Lacroix, University of Quebec in Montreal, Canada

Adults’ preoccupation for the well-being of future generations, a concern known as generativity in social psychology, is an increasingly important topic in business, marketing, and in society. In an effort to better understand its effects on consumer behaviors, we develop and test a dedicated measurement scale for consumer generativity.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1015111/volumes/v41/NA-41

[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/.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The concept of generativity, that is the adults’ preoccupation for the well-being of the next generations, has recently generated interest in the field of marketing (e.g., Uren and Kilbourne 2011), with research having mainly focused on philanthropy and pro-social behaviors related to ethics and the environment.

In the “real world,” however, generativity is nowadays used more and more as a positioning strategy for brands, products, and labels (e.g., Swiss luxury watchmaker Patek Philippe). In this regard, Lacroix and Ouellet (2008) found a positive relationship between an individual’s level of generativity and his/her Aad, Ap, and IB for products positioned as generative. Though, a main limitation of their exploratory work was the use of the Loyola Generativity Scale (McAdams and de St. Aubin 1992), which yielded poor reliability and applicability to a general consumer research context. Moreover, Van Hiel et al. (2006) considered that stagnation, an integral part of the Loyola Generativity Scale of McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992), should instead be treated as a distinct concept altogether.

In order to better measure and assess generativity in a wider consumption context, we propose to develop a scale specifically dedicated to consumer generativity. We believe this measurement scale would help academics, marketers, governments, and scores of additional stakeholders understand further the potential power of generativity whenever targeting messages toward generative consumers.

To develop the consumer generativity scale, we first generated some 81 original items, which we submitted to five expert judges. Out of this original list, 45 were eliminated for redundancy or low applicability, leaving 36 items. A first data collection was then organized in order to run an exploratory factor analysis. We asked respondents to evaluate themselves on all 36 items using a seven-point scale (totally agree/disagree). The survey was administered to American citizens through a web-based panel, and a total of 152 questionnaires were completed. After purification, results of the generalized chi-square factorial analysis with varimax rotation suggested a two-factor, 11-item scale ($\alpha_{\text{dimension1}} = .912; \alpha_{\text{dimension2}} = .867$).

The decision to retain two factors seemed coherent in light of the literature on generativity. Indeed, an examination of each dimension revealed a similar structure to that originally proposed by Kotre (1984) and McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) — that is, a first dimension consisting of agentic generativity, or a desire for symbolic immortality (e.g., “I buy useful products to help make sure I am remembered by those who survive me”), and a second dimension consisting of communal generativity, or the need to be needed (e.g., “I buy things next generations will eventually benefit from”).

To establish discriminant validity and reliability of the scale, we used various measures of neighboring concepts (e.g., socially responsible consumption). All scales were assessed using a seven-point scale (totally agree/disagree). We then conducted a new data collection through the same web platform using a different sample (American citizens). A total of 443 complete and valid questionnaires were obtained. We then performed a confirmatory factor analysis on our data, and after rejecting different model scenarios, we ended up with a reviewed model yielding good fit indices: $\chi^2 (8) = 23.633$ ($p < .005$), RMR =.055, SRMR=.025, RMSEA=.066, CFI = .992, TLI=.985, GFI=.984, AGFI = .958. A second-order, 6-item model of consumer generativity thus provided the best possible fit to the data, with 1 factor expressing communal generativity (3 items), and 1 factor expressing agentic generativity (3 items).

Reliability of the scale was also satisfactory: $\alpha = .92$ for the communal dimension of generativity, and $\alpha = .88$ for the agentic dimension. Following Fornell and Larker’s (1981) method, convergent validity presented adequate indicators (.79 for communal generativity, and .72 for agentic generativity), and discriminant and nomological validity were also confirmed using the various concepts we had included in our questionnaire (e.g., long-term orientation).

In order to assess the predictive validity of the scale, we performed a third data collection using a new sample. The design of the survey included the selection of pretested products perceived as intrinsically generative from a communal or agentic point of view: a research foundation for infantile diseases (the most communal-generative), a registered education savings plan (the most agentic-generative), and an espresso coffee machine (neutral on both dimensions). We then developed three fictitious brands and advertisements for each product category. These ads were all identical in their structure, and a generative slogan was included in order to assign a generative positioning to the product. For each ad, we measured the following dependant variables: attitude toward the ad (Aad), attitude toward the product (Ap), and buying intention. The survey was administered to American citizens via the same web platform, which generated a final sample of 187 questionnaires. Using data from the new consumer generativity scale, we then split respondents as either high- or low-generativity consumers following a median split for each of the two consumer generativity dimensions. In the case of products positioned as generative, our results showed that highly generative consumers on a communal or agentic level developed more favourable Aad, Ap and BI than did those whose level of generativity was below the median (except for Aad of the agentic generative consumer concerning the foundation). Also, by running analyses of variance (ANOVAs), we found that consumers with children were more generative on a communal level than those without. In addition, married or in-couple consumers, as well as consumers with higher family incomes were more generative in both communal and agentic ways than those who were single or had lower incomes. Moreover, in line with McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992), we found that fathers were more generative than mothers.

This research contributed to our understanding of the concept of generativity by developing a more appropriate scale for its measurement within a consumption context as opposed to a more generally social one. It also confirmed the ability of the scale to predict attitudes and behaviors. It thus demonstrated to be relevant the use of a generative positioning strategy when targeting generative consumers.

REFERENCES


