



# ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

---

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

## **Duped, Scammed and Suckered: the Development of the Sugrophobia Scale**

Catherine Armstrong Soule, Western Washington University, USA

Marcus Wardley, University of Oregon, USA

Robert Madrigal, University of Oregon, USA

The research reports the development and validation of a scale measuring sugrophobia, a trait motivated by a desire to avoid the aversive consequences associated with being duped. The final Sugrophobia Scale includes nine items representing three dimensions (apprehension regarding marketplace transactions, vigilance against duping, and anticipated remorse over possible duping).

### **[to cite]:**

Catherine Armstrong Soule, Marcus Wardley, and Robert Madrigal (2014), "Duped, Scammed and Suckered: the Development of the Sugrophobia Scale", in NA - Advances in Consumer Research Volume 42, eds. June Cotte and Stacy Wood, Duluth, MN : Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 592-592.

### **[url]:**

<http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1017257/volumes/v42/NA-42>

### **[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/>.

# Duped, Scammed and Suckered: The Development of the Sugrophobia Scale

Robert Madrigal, University of Oregon, USA

Marcus Wardley, University of Oregon, USA

Catherine Armstrong-Soule, Western Washington University, USA

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

To date, little academic attention has been placed on duping despite its serious financial and emotional consequences. Vohs, Baumeister and Chin (2007) introduced the term “sugrophobia” to describe a consumer’s aversive emotional response resulting from one’s own choice to engage in an interpersonal exchange, typically economic in nature, that leads to the perception of having been taken advantage of. The term’s root derives from the Latin *sugro*, which means *to suck*; thus the term may literally be translated as a person’s fear of being suckered. Sugrophobia is a self-protective mechanism that motivates consumers to avoid the aversive self-conscious emotions (e.g., self-blame, embarrassment) associated with being duped.

The present research creates a psychometrically sound measure of trait sugrophobia. Although sugrophobic motives may arise in a variety of situations where there is the possibility of being “suckered”, we assume that some people simply go through life constantly on guard against the possibility of being duped while others rarely worry about it. It is for this reason that Vohs et al. (2007) suggested that creating a valid and reliable measure of individual differences in sugrophobia should be possible. Such a scale would be of considerable use to researchers in a number of different realms, including prosocial behavior, decision-making, behavioral economics and social dilemmas.

Marketplace transactions are paradoxical in that they are both antagonistic and mutually beneficial. For example, a new car buyer benefits with a source of transportation, while the seller benefits from the money. However, negotiating the price is an antagonistic exercise because both parties seek to maximize self-interests. A fundamental problem in an exchange is that it is difficult to objectively determine how much of X should be traded for Y. Yet, due to increased role specialization in modern markets, consumers must rely on sellers’ products and services to survive. These issues give rise to the possibility that one party may profit at the other’s expense. Hence, some level of sugrophobia is normal and adaptive for consumers. However, there are also negative consequences associated with the trait. Beyond the heavy cognitive resources required to maintain a constant state of vigilance against being scammed, high sugrophobes are also apt to signal their distrust to potential trading partners who are otherwise acting fairly and this may lead to negative effects. Finally, high sugrophobes may miss out on some opportunities that are genuinely good deals because of their persistent vigilance to avoid being scammed (Cialdini 2001).

Underlying a consumer’s perception that they “have been had” or unfairly manipulated by a marketing agent is a complex cognitive appraisal process centered around the notion of equity (Campbell 1995). Along these lines, Vohs et al. (2007) identified four conditions necessary for duping to occur. First, the victim must believe at the outset that a standard of fairness was operating. Second, the outcome must be perceived as being unfair in a direction that disadvantages the victim. Third, the victim must believe that the trading partner intended to dupe, which means the norm of trust was deliberately violated. Fourth, the victim must believe that she or he made choices along the way that contributed to the outcome and duping could have been avoided had different decisions been made.

There are both cognitive and emotional consequences associated with being duped. One such cognitive consequence is counterfac-

tual thinking. However, emotional consequences are likely to predominate. These might include self-blame and anger. Particularly likely are self-conscious emotions (e.g., guilt, shame, pride, regret). Rather than eliciting specific behaviors, these emotions are more apt to affect cognitive processing by focusing on how such duping and its associated pain might be avoided in the future.

A pilot study is reported describing the development of 44 items to measure trait sugrophobia. We also report the results of an exploratory factor analysis of 206 Amazon Mechanical Turk workers. The results yielded three distinct factors (see Table 1). The first factor included items representing apprehension in marketplace exchanges. The second factor represents vigilance in terms of being able to spot a potential duping situation early on. The third factor includes items describing anticipated emotions related to potential remorse for having been the victim of duping. Factor correlations ranged from -.39 to .16.

Also reported are the results of two studies. Study 1 (N = 197 MTurk workers) was conducted for purposes of item purification and to test for convergent validity. In addition to these same purposes, study 2 (N = 179 undergraduate students) was conducted to provide evidence of construct validity. The results of confirmatory analyses led to a nine-item scale representing three dimensions (apprehension, vigilance, and remorse), each consisting of three items (see Table 2). In both samples, the tests yielded non-significant chi-square values, thus indicating an excellent fit to the data. Subsequent analyses also indicated evidence of discriminant validity. In all cases but one, the dimensions were distinct from one another.

Study 2 also reported the results of tests of nomological validity (see Table 3). All three dimensions were positively related to Rotter’s ITS exploitation subscale and Melbourne’s vigilance in decision-making subscale. Thus, a distrust of others and a tendency toward rational decision-making positively predicted marketplace apprehension, vigilance against duping and anticipated remorse over duping. The results also revealed that greater vigilance against duping was inversely related to impulsive buying. Also found was that increased apprehension about marketing agents and heightened anticipated remorse over possible duping was associated with a less favorable attitude toward marketing.

In sum, the results of this research yielded a Sugrophobia Scale comprised of nine items represented by three latent dimensions: vigilance, apprehension and remorse. Evidence was provided indicating that the scale demonstrates convergent validity, discriminant validity and construct validity. It is our hope that the Sugrophobia Scale will fill an important gap in the consumer behavior literature and will be of value both to academics and practitioners.

## REFERENCES

- Campbell, Margaret C. (1995), “When Attention-Getting Advertising Tactics Elicit Consumer Inferences of Manipulative Intent: The Importance of Balancing Benefit and Investments,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 4 (3), 225.
- Cialdini, Robert B. (2001), *Influence: Science and Practice*, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Vohs, Kathleen D., Roy F. Baumeister, and Jason Chin (2007), “Feeling Duped: Emotional, Motivational, and Cognitive Aspects of Being Exploited by Others,” *Review of General Psychology*, 11 (2), 127-41.