Encouraged Intrusion and the Entering of a Subordinate Consumption Field-Exploring Changing Gender Distinctions in the Foodie Consumer Culture

Sofia Ulver, Lund University, Sweden

In order to investigate the potential of consumer culture in changing social relations, in this investigation we will immerse into the growing consumer culture of foodies occupying the historically feminine space of domestic cooking. This article offers a tentative theory on the entering of subordinate consumption fields in benevolent contexts.

[to cite]:


[url]:

http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1019380/volumes/v43/NA-43

[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/.
Encouraged Intrusion and the Entering of a Subordinate Consumption Field
Sofia Ulver, Lund University, Sweden

ABSTRACT
In order to explore consumer culture’s potential to change social relations, this investigation immerses into the growing consumer culture of *foodies* occupying the historically feminine space of domestic cooking. It offers a tentative theory on the entering of subordinate consumption fields in contexts where the entering is sanctioned by cultural authorities.

INTRODUCTION
What happens in social relations when whole collectives enter new domains and start consuming in a new way? In critical research traditions such as consumer culture theory (CCT) (Arnould & Thompson 2005) the micropolitics of consumption is well known, described and problematized (e.g. Holt 1998). It has for example been illustrated in investigations of status-wise subordinate consumption fields that are entered by groups traditionally treated as superior to the field (Skæggs 2004) creating structural incompatibilities under conditions of heterology (Coskuner-Balli & Thompson 2013). Such entering gives the opportunity for the social field and its traditional members to raise its and their status, but conversely also the risk for the new members to partly lose their superiority. This article will specifically treat the social relations of gender and how its symbolic boundaries are negotiated in a consumer culture by looking at what happens when men enter a traditionally feminine consumption field.

Gender scholars have long agreed that a predominant share of the western middle-class is moving away from strict gender roles, and that we at best no longer need to ask the binary question if men and women subscribe to gender equality but rather how this is done (e.g. Szabo 2014, 2013, 2012; Beagan et.al. 2008; Deutsch 2007). Although this may be an altogether too optimistic stance, given that anti-feminist movements now are growing in popularity in the western world (on one hand through the extreme right parties’ growth in anti-feminist movements now are growing in popularity in the west), it is still of great interest to understand how gender relations change in a post-feminist context where such changes are at large encouraged.

In order to investigate the potential of consumer culture to contribute in changing social relations, this investigation immerses into the growing consumer culture of *foodies* occupying the historically feminine space of domestic cooking. It offers a tentative theory on the entering into subordinate consumption fields in contexts where the entering is sanctioned by public authorities; *encouraged intrusion*.

FOODIE CULTURE AND CHANGING GENDER CODES
*Foodie culture*, referring to “people with a passion for eating and learning about food” (Cairns, Johnston and Baumann 2010, p.591) refers to the contemporary proliferation of advanced cooking and eating among middle class consumers in contemporary western society. For the sake of further analysis I will henceforth tentatively use the term ‘foodies’ as referring to people who nurture a passion towards advancing their experience and knowledge regarding food, cooking and eating. In consumer research gender relations have often been investigated in the empirical domain of domestic food consumption where the focus predominantly has been on feminine identities (e.g. Bugge and Almås 2006; Moisio, Arnould and Price 2004) typically drawing upon the sociologist’s Marjorie DeVault’s (1991) seminal findings on women “nurturing” their families with love through food. Masculine identities on the other hand have mostly been studied in other consumption areas (Coskuner-Balli & Thompson 2012; Ostberg 2010; Littlefield and O’Danne 2011; Littlefield, 2010; O’Barr 2006; Atwood 2005; Schroeder and Zwick 2004; Holt and Thompson 2004; Patterson & Elliott 2002) with a few noteworthy exceptions (e.g. Brownlie and Hewer 2007). However, turning to more general sociological and cultural studies, the focus on a growing male consumer culture oriented around food and cooking is more emphasized (e.g. Szabo 2014, 2013, 2012; Cairns, Johnston and Baumann 2010; Swenson 2009; Mechling 2005; Julier and Lindenfeld 2005; Hollows 2003ab; Adler 1981). Some of these researchers (e.g. Aarseth 2009; Chapman 1988) suggest that the so called “new man” has been torn between feminism and consumerism discourses for more than three decades, but that the commercially oriented lifestyles of today are offering a growing plethora of various masculinities; masculinities that one would not readily know where to place in terms of above discourses and its produced identities. At the same time some emphasize that the intensified interest in food, eating and cooking has thrived exactly by additionally stigmatizing the feminine in a quest to create a new masculine cultural space of ‘cool’ in the domestic kitchen.

Hence, the growing interest in food among men has in academia been regarded as a sign of both cultural feminization and modernization of masculinity (Aarseth 2009; Aarseth and Olsen 2008; Kemmer 1999, 2000) as well as a disguised masculinization of culture (Cairns et. al. 2010; Roos, Prättälä, and Koski 2009; Hollows 2003a, 2003b, 2002). It is a well-established conclusion in gender studies that historically when men have indulged in labor associated with femininity (such as cooking or cleaning) they have performed it in a way that makes it conspicuously distinct from the feminine associations by positioning it as leisure rather than labor, and making it understood as an art form motivated by pleasure and fun rather than a chore motivated by necessity (O’Barr 2006; Skæggs 2004; Felski 2000). In the case of cooking this is typically carried out by taking charge (only) at special occasions and then making it into a public performance of artistry and experimentation calling for praise (Kemmer 2009; Aarseth 2009; Hollows 2003b; Roos et.al. 2001) whereas women more typically have engaged in the mundane, necessary, more chore-like, everyday cooking to construct individual identity of caring femininity as well as family identity (Bugge and Almås 2006; Moisio et al. 2004; Miller 1998; DeVault 1991). Here Cairns et al. (2010) found affirmations in foodie culture the gendered distinction in cooking between leisure and work. The three dimensions of foodie discourse that they identified were (1) *pleasure*, where women foodies pursued the pleasure ethos but experienced that their vivid appetite was still in conflict with “proper” gendered culture, (2) *care work*, where women felt that their duty as care-takers came into conflict with foodie culture ideals, and (3) *knowledge and expertise*, where the never-ending refinement of food knowledge, the seeking out for new information, the looking up to celebrity authorities, the display of their expertise and the engagement in food “projects” were much more salient for the men’s identity construction than for the women’s. Indulgement into myths of cosmopolitanism and hunterism further distinguished men from women. According to Cairns et. al. (ibid) their findings suggest that even if the foodie culture indeed does challenge traditional gender norms, it is still constrained by structured gender relations. Women were still held back by the
cultural expectation to care for others and they could not choose how to be a foodie; that was a male privilege.

In relation to intersectionality between class and gender, according to Roos et al. (2001) gendered differences in food consumption are related to sociohistorical class dispositions where not least Bourdieu (1984) has suggested that men from the (French 1960’s) working class typically had an instrumental and functional relationship to their bodies, rather than the feminine, light, and sophisticated appetite embodied by women and middle-class men. Furthermore, Roos (ibid.) found among their male, Finnish carpenters and engineers that idle-class men have many masculinities to choose from which enables them to combine meanings from various classed associations to masculinity, and even femininity, to construct an eclectic, but “proper”, identity of new cool. Also, Swenson (2009) who studied televised representations of masculinities among TV chefs, found that when men entered the kitchen as scientists, entertainers and athletes, often all at once. This can be put in contrast to Skeggs’s (2004) proposition that “proper” feminine identity is locked into one position across classes; in other words, a woman must always behave “womanlike”, and if belonging to a higher status group she must never play with lower feminine class identities. Related to this construction of proper gender identity Hollows (2003b) found that British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver doesn’t only “educate the viewer about how to cook but manages to negotiate “the tension between the new man and the new lad” (citing Moseley 2001:38, p.230). He transgresses traditional class and gender boundaries and thereby constructs this new lad but must still detach himself from associations to femininity by constructing domestic cookery as recognizably manly. He not only shows that he can occupy the domestic feminine scene but simultaneously rises above it by making dull housewife dishes “really well” (Hollows 2003b, 241) and thereby occupy the domestic “but is not contained, or defined, by it” (ibid, p.242). He can, as suggested by Skeggs (2004), engage in feminine activities because whenever he wants he can escape. Likewise, in recent investigations of the meanings of men’s domestic cooking Szabo (2014, 2013, 2012) finds that the (in majority) middle-class men she studies, draw on both traditional cultural femininities and traditional culinary masculinities in parallel to blurring the roles, because they can.

In CCT attention has indeed been paid to the intersectionality of gender and class (e.g. Holt & Thompson 2004; Coskuner-Balli & Thompson 2013) but the context has been predominantly North American, not especially famous for hegemonic feminism. In fact the aims for those studies are rooted in the very assumption that men meet strong societal resistance when entering a feminized space, for example in their trial to enhance the status of domesticated cultural capital, as in Coskuner-Balli and Thompson’s (2013) investigation of at-home-fathers. However, what happens in a context where feminism is the cultural norm and the entering of non-traditional cultural domains is encouraged by cultural authorities, and even state-sanctioned? We should better be able to see how (and if) consumer culture can be part of changing (or further cementing) gender roles if we study in an empirical domain (domestic foodie culture) and a geographical context (a site where feminism is enforced by public and cultural authorities in various ways) where men are culturally encouraged to enter non-traditional cultural domains, and especially if we also study women in that same cultural domain. This way the potency of consumer culture to be part of influencing social relations should emerge in brighter light.

METHOD

Hence, in order to investigate the potency of consumer culture to organize gender relations, the empirical research aim was to explore the drawing upon traditional versus non-traditional, and blurred gender roles in an unusually gender equal, post-feminist context among both women and men. Focus was aimed at the use of language; how did respondents talk and write about their interest? The data collection was carried out among consumers in Sweden, a well-known country in terms of its feminist movement history (for example, Sweden has its own feminist party represented in the EU Parliament), welfare model and equality efforts in regards to gender and class. In 2011 UN’s development organ, UNDP, ranked Sweden as the highest in the world on gender equality (Bolling 2011). The relatively seen high gender equality in Sweden was in this research considered a significant advantage as possible gendered differences would be exceptionally telling in terms of remaining structural asymmetries on a symbolic level.

Consumer research-oriented ethnographic methods (Elliott & Elliott 2003; Arnould & Wallendorf 1994) were applied, with the aim to interpret the findings in an existential-phenomenological way (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989). Participant observation and interviews were conducted both inside people’s homes and during activities chosen by the consumers, and photo-diaries were given to the respondents a month before the interview. In the photo diary five days were to be covered in text and photography by the respondent according to the diary’s instruction (e.g. “A day when you plan to cook for a special occasion” and “Take a picture of an ingredient you are somewhat embarrassed about”). The photo-diaries were first-hand to be used as prompts during the interviews and not primarily as data material in itself, however, the stories in the diaries showed to be very interesting and ended up being coded as well. The author created the semi-structured interview guide and photo diary, and later involved eight graduate students to carry out the fieldwork. The students were carefully trained and instructed in ethnographic methods before sent out and the procedures and material quality-checked before use.

36 consumers (see table 2 below) were selected using a snowball technique. 19 of these were men and 17 were women. The author and students used their own contacts in order to find acquaintances of acquaintances making out an on one hand demographically, relatively heterogeneous (old and young, high-income and low-income, living in cities or in the country-side, various occupations) group. On the other hand the criterion of homogeneity for the selection was that the respondent should express a strong interest for cooking and eating food, in terms of for time, effort and money spent, relative other interests.

More than 1000 pages of verbatim transcripts, and 100 pages of written diaries were coded and analyzed by the author. However, the photos and diaries were in the analysis for this specific article used only as prompts during the interviews and not as data sources on their own. Quotes that showed to be relevant as illustrations of important insights were translated into English by the author.

FINDINGS

In this research the empirical domain is a traditionally feminine sphere entered by men. Among the male respondents I identified three ways to approach the “new” consumption field; (1) Isomorphic Navigation, (2) Deconstructive Rearticulation, and (3) Disruption.

Most men used all these three approaches but each individual weighed more towards one than the others. The interviews with the female respondents revealed responses to each of these approaches as unthreatened, co-operative and competing, or by-passed. Isomorphic Navigation: The men in this study tried to navigate among the cultural tensions coming out of different norms and pressures from different actors in their environment. In a quest to be
## Table 1. Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Income SEK/month</th>
<th>Food Budget</th>
<th>Life Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboma</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Project employee / PhD natural sciences</td>
<td>27 000</td>
<td>4 000</td>
<td>Living with girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agneta</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Dep. officer Service &amp; Care</td>
<td>37 000</td>
<td>7 000</td>
<td>Married + two children (18 and 21 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anders</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student BSc Service Management</td>
<td>11 000</td>
<td>2 000</td>
<td>Single (living in a collective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Project Manager advertising</td>
<td>45 000</td>
<td>5 000</td>
<td>Married + two children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birgitta</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student MSc Law</td>
<td>9 000</td>
<td>4 000</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camilla A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>24 000</td>
<td>2 500</td>
<td>Married + 1 child (3 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camilla S</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Student in interactive design / food blogger</td>
<td>7 000</td>
<td>2 000</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desiree</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Economically independent</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>3 000</td>
<td>Married + two children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisabeth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Sales and marketing</td>
<td>29 000</td>
<td>6 000</td>
<td>Single, living with friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>23 000</td>
<td>3 500</td>
<td>Married + two children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student MSc Engineering</td>
<td>10 000</td>
<td>1 500</td>
<td>Living with girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Machine engineer</td>
<td>31 500</td>
<td>3 300</td>
<td>Living with boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Sales and administration</td>
<td>12 000</td>
<td>2 500</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Marketing coordinator</td>
<td>31 000</td>
<td>2 500</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrik</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Student MSc Law</td>
<td>8 200</td>
<td>2 500</td>
<td>Living with girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johan H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Student MSc Business Management</td>
<td>10 000</td>
<td>2 000</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johan L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student in Criminology</td>
<td>9 000</td>
<td>3 000</td>
<td>Living with girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johan S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Researcher / Recruiter</td>
<td>24 200</td>
<td>3 000</td>
<td>Girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klas</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student Medicine</td>
<td>8 200</td>
<td>2 500</td>
<td>Girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Self-employed, marketing</td>
<td>45 000</td>
<td>5 000</td>
<td>Married + two children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malin</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>“In-between- jobs”</td>
<td>25 000</td>
<td>3 500</td>
<td>Married + 3 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matilda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student MSc</td>
<td>8 500</td>
<td>2 000</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mats</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Student MSc Literature</td>
<td>8 200</td>
<td>3 000</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattias</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Warehouse worker</td>
<td>16 000</td>
<td>3 000</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximilam</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student BSc Management</td>
<td>8 700</td>
<td>2 000</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>IT consultant</td>
<td>55 000</td>
<td>5 000</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nils</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student BSc Service Management</td>
<td>9 000</td>
<td>2 000</td>
<td>Single (living in a collective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paolo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Sourdough baker</td>
<td>40 000</td>
<td>3 000</td>
<td>Living with girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piero</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Researcher / PhD</td>
<td>21 000</td>
<td>3 000</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oskar</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>PhD student</td>
<td>23 000</td>
<td>3 500</td>
<td>Living with girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ove</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Student MSc Marketing</td>
<td>9 500</td>
<td>2 500</td>
<td>Girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siri</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Student Political Science / Arabic</td>
<td>10 800</td>
<td>8 100</td>
<td>Living with boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Project manager in youth project</td>
<td>20 000</td>
<td>5 500</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Controller</td>
<td>33 000</td>
<td>4 000</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronika</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Student MSc EU Food Law</td>
<td>9 000</td>
<td>2 500</td>
<td>Living with boyfriend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
gender-wise different the result is a movement towards unfamiliar sameness isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983), a feminine such. Seeing themselves as men different from other men, they navigate more towards already established rules and cultural capital aggregated in the female sphere than towards traditional signs of masculinity. They often refer back to their mother or grandmother as role models and prime inspirers. For example, Anders does not try to create a distance between himself and associations to femininity in domestic cooking. He talks, acts and seems to feel comfortable in the existing universe of codes.

I am just like my mum when I cook. [...] I get inspired a lot by cook books like for example Heston Blumenthal’s or Per Morberg but I always go back to what mum and grandmother taught me. [...] I’ve been telling my grandmother to write down her recipe for cabbage roll in order to be able to make them myself, but they tend not to write down recipes. It is just something that is ingrained in her spinal cord. (Anders 22)

In one sense someone in the family has already paved their way to foster this feminine interest, but so has consumer culture in that cultural authorities, like male chefs, at the market legitimize their interest. Likewise, women in the study that have men prone to this isomorphic navigation express pride of the fact that they have men cooking at home, and enjoy the “intrusion” in a way that also reflects some experienced sense of power traditionally held by men. For example Agneta, 57, who says, “we cook a lot together but during the week I come home and sit down at a set table, emphasizes the last words by humorously breasting up and acting pompous. A joke that would typically not have been politically correct if it were the other way around. Hence, immersed in the foodie culture embracing men cooking, they together with the State encourage their male partners’ occupation of domestic space.

This approach partly corresponds to what Thompson & Holt (2004) refer to as gender tourism where men adapt feminine practices as a “revitalizing treat”. However, in this State-sanctioned context the treat is not exotic or rebellious, but in contrast expected. By adjusting to the symbolic universe as is, these male foodies may risk lowering their status temporarily but in the long run contribute to raising the status of the field by making it more gender neutral.

Deconstructive Rearticulation: In this approach the enterers of the already existing consumption field, work discursively to turn the stigmatized into something admirable by breaking the unnecessary links of articulation (Hall 1986) in Koszinskis 2001) between two elements. Through so called rearticulation (breaking discursive and unnecessary links between elements) they can deconstruct cemented dichotomies of gender relations (Butler 2004) and that way redefine the symbolic universe as is, these male foodies may risk lowering their status temporarily but in the long run contribute to raising the status of the field by making it more gender neutral.

A similar rearticulation observed in the data is the connection between traditional male professional chefs and housewives on one hand and the demand on perfection as opposed to sloppiness on the other. Both men and women in this study speak about this perfection as a synonym to pretentiousness, and thereby deem imperfection a virtue, just as unpretentiousness, often with consumer cultural references to unpretentious TV chefs like Jamie Oliver, Per Morberg or Tina Nordström. Indeed the rearticulation into perfection vs. unpretentiousness somewhat degrades perfection but at the same time is more inclusive than its original binary. Like Birgitta who cooks and plans with passion and doesn’t conform to historically set ideals for the housewife perfection.

I think it’s more important that it tastes good than is good looking, and I’m probably a bit sloppy in a way, and also when I invite people to eat. Yeah, the onion is not perfectly chopped and everything is not really perfect, but I think that’s kind of typical of me. That maybe, I don’t know, but that my personality shows in my cooking. I maybe try to be ambitious, but when you look a bit closer you can see that the onion is poorly chopped, that there is a hole in the dress, and that the nail polish is cracking (laughing) and, yes, that’s probably how it is... (Birgitta 23)

Disruption. A final observation was that the men were eager to tell how they in some sense were parts of changing the domain, and that they were not limited by any boundaries given by the fact that it was an already existing sphere. They were not there to conform; they were there to change the premises. Like Ove, 24, who experiences his own approach to cooking as something almost provocatively new in the domestic arena. He is astonished with the obsolution of that scene and during the interview he often comes back to the need to create a new way to look at domestic cooking, where he sees himself as one of the pioneers;

“It is fantastic to cook. Combining tastes and just you know...to learn...I mean, I never cook the same thing. I experiment every day! ...This thing with just daring to test things...people poop in their pants when you say that you just tossed some spices in the casserole kind of; ‘but my God, didn’t you follow a recipe?? My God did you use more than salt and pepper??’ People are so God damn scared of trying things!”

They also embedded their stories in a much more dramatic (see e.g. Skeggs 2004; Holt & Thompson 2004) and homosocial context than the women and referred to friends and parties where they had a central role in setting the rules. Eva is a blogger and passionate sour-dough baker. She rambles about the dramatization fellow male bloggers and men in general engage in when they come up with something “new” in cooking. She is irritated about it in a way that reveals a slight experience of being set on the side-lines even if she knows she is better than they are. Here she comments on why she thinks so many men blog about their cooking:

I think it’s like barbecuing, “wow, this is masculine”. It requires some thought and can be complicated, and that feels good. God, I don’t think it is complicated at all! It’s like barbecuing, it is not complicated at all but they have peed territory and said “We are sooo good at this”. (Eva 43)
Whereas the Swedish middle-class cultural context puts strong pressure on gender equal ideas, sociality with other male friends was still revealed as very important. The academic meanings of hegemonic masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005) and homosociality (‘the nonsexual attractions held by men (or women) for members of their own sex’ and contributes to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity (Bird 1996) p 121) are naturally not reflected upon by the male respondents as something working against society’s equality quest. In contrast when talking about the interest in cooking and eating surprisingly traditional codes are used among these relatively gender-equal men. The women seem in one way more free (because this is their domain?) but also more constrained (because they know that the “right” way is today the man’s way?). The traditional culinary roles (Szabo 2014) and power relations are in that way here reproduced because the sphere of new meanings is not the original sphere but a parallel sphere of higher status organized by signs of masculinity floating in consumer culture.

**DISCUSSION**

To summarize the findings on a transferrable level they have been integrated into the tentative theoretical model of Encouraged Intrusion (see figure 1).

![Figure 1. Encouraged Intrusion approaches](image)

In this investigation the context was an at large encouraging one where the state officially sanctions gender equality actions. Hence, the consumers in this study were structurally free to change old gender structures. However, culture shows to be phlegmatic, as culture squelches any structural change, but also any structural change, benevolent contexts.

**REFERENCES**


Deutsch, J. (2005). “‘Please Pass the Chicken Tits’-Rethinking Men and Cooking at an Urban Firehouse.” Food and Foodways: History and Culture of Human Nourishment, 13(march), 91-114


(2013) “I’m a real catch: The blurring of alternative and hegemonic masculinities in men’s talk about home cooking.” Women’s Studies International Forum


Consumer Proclivity for Sustainable Consumption: A Social Normative Approach

Peter Voyer, University of Windsor, Canada

ABSTRACT
Some consumers deliberately reject normative sustainable consumption behaviors, while simultaneously engaging in others that are not normative. To understand this paradox a causal model is developed and three studies are used to test it. Results suggest that a personality trait drives particular consumers to reject a behavior if it is perceived as normative.

INTRODUCTION
Motivated by the prevailing need to understand CB as it relates to sustainability (Thøgersen and Schrader 2012), this paper addresses the research question: why do some consumers purposefully avoid particular sustainable consumption behaviors (SCBs), even in the face of social pressure to comply, while at the same time engaging in other SCBs where no such social pressure exists? In pursuing this paradoxical question, I consider consumer personality coupled with a social normative approach.

Sustainability is critical. The future well-being of humankind depends on how resources are consumed. It is estimated that by 2030, 60% of the world’s population will occupy the middle class as 150 million consumers enter this class yearly; accordingly, energy demand will increase by 40%, and the demand for water will surpass supply by 40% (WEF 2013). “We are living as if we have an extra planet at our disposal … using 50% more resources than the Earth can provide … by 2030, even two planets will not be enough” (WWF 2012, 1). The “business as usual” paradigm cannot continue. To avoid global disaster, ballooning consumption must be restrained.

As suggested in the foregoing paragraph, theoretical understanding of the importance of sustainability is known, however, there exists a gap between this knowledge and action directed at implementable solutions (Thøgersen 2005; Thøgersen and Schrader 2012). A spate of well-intentioned major global policy initiatives has done little to reduce worldwide consumption (Prothero et al. 2011). “We are living as if we have an extra planet at our disposal … using 50% more resources than the Earth can provide … by 2030, even two planets will not be enough” (WWF 2012, 1). The “business as usual” paradigm cannot continue.

To avoid global disaster, ballooning consumption must be restrained. As suggested in the foregoing paragraph, theoretical understanding of the importance of sustainability is known, however, there exists a gap between this knowledge and action directed at implementable solutions (Thøgersen 2005; Thøgersen and Schrader 2012). A spate of well-intentioned major global policy initiatives has done little to reduce worldwide consumption (Prothero et al. 2011). The seminal UN Brundtland Commission’s 1987 Report, the 2000 UN Millennium Summit, the 2005 UN World Summit, and others, have articulated the significance of protecting resources, however, their recommendations were characterized by implementability difficulties, resulting in no real tangible outcomes that have re-oriented the current global path of non-sustainability.

In this paper, I move from the esoteric and conceptual, to the practical and operational. Using the individual consumer as the unit of analysis, I seek to understand the interplay between social normative influences and consumers’ personalities that impact SCB. The extant consumer-oriented literature on sustainable consumption (SC) gives insufficient attention to the role of social influence. “Social influence is often poorly theorized or simply absent from behavioral models and research” (Axsen and Kurani 2012, 312). It is here that I seek to make a contribution and support the ACR’s mission to “facilitate the exchange of scholarly information among members of academia, industry, and government worldwide.”

This research is positioned within the limited CB social influence literature on SC and specifically, the Transformative Consumer Research movement, by providing research that, “benefits consumer welfare and quality of life for all beings affected by consumption across the world” (ACR Website). Adopting a multi-disciplinary perspective, this research is informed by literatures from marketing, CB, psychology, sociology, and policy works from the UN, government, and NGOs. In the following sections I overview salient literature and develop a model that addresses the research question. After testing the model, findings are presented, followed by a general discussion.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS
What we know about sustainability has originated from policy makers (governments and NGOs), and academics. Policy makers have generated wide-ranging policies intended to advance sustainability, but these have lacked operationalization. Resultantly, consumers have been reluctant to accept these efforts and modify their consumption behavior (OECD 2008). In contrast, academics have focused on issues related to implementability (Schrader and Thøgersen 2011). Specifically, a pervasive concern has been the divergence between knowledge and real action needed to advance SC, and the need to understand the reasons for this gap (Thøgersen and Schrader 2012). The notion of sustainability focuses on adopting a long-term perspective of natural resource management with environmental protectionism suggesting that via careful management, humankind can avoid resource depletion, making these resources available for future generations (Thøgersen 2005). Sustainability has been approached along two sides of an equation: SC (how products are demanded/consumed), and sustainable production (how products are produced to fulfill demand).

Conceptualizations of SC (demand side) have evolved over time with governments/NGOs driving world thinking. Most approaches have emphasized the need for consumers to behave in ways that can enhance the future well-being of humankind by minimizing the impact on the earth’s resources/environment. A pragmatic definition states that SC is, “the use of goods and services required to meet basic needs and improve quality of life without placing at risk the needs of future generations. This includes the selection, purchase, use, maintenance, repair and disposal of any product or service” (Government of Canada 2013). This behaviorally-focused approach is adopted here, and can be operationalized to reflect SCBs: recycling, self-sufficiency, and closeness to nature. These will be discussed later.

The CB literature has studied sustainability in relation to: ethnicity and skepticism (Luchs et al. 2010); congruency of political ideology and persuasive appeals (Kidwell et al. 2013); and product distortion and recycling (Trudel and Argo 2013). Although important, little research has involved social influence with SC (Axsen and Kurani 2012). Often unrecognized, social influence is a formidable determinant of behavior (Liu et al. 2012).

Central to social influence is the distinction between normative and informational influence. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) provided an enduring explanation of each concept where normative influence relates to the “influence to conform with the positive expectations of another” (629), while informational influence is the “influence to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality” (629) — people try to gain social approval and liking, and avoid negative outcomes (rejection/embarrassment). Also, they rely on others’ actions and attitudes as a source of information about the nature of reality (Goldstein et al. 2008; Cialdini 2001a). Other’s expectations (norms) are important and are the basis of social functioning.

Norms are rules that stipulate how members of a group are expected to behave under given circumstances, and “may be thought of as legitimate, socially shared guidelines to the accepted and expected patterns of conduct” (Birenbaum and Sagarin 1976, 11). Essential
for social life (Blau 1964), norms are directed at certain behaviors called social actions (Coleman 1990), like recycling. Much social behavior is driven by social norms. Here, society is defined as, “any fairly large group of people who share a common culture, think of themselves as having inherited a common set of historical traditions, interact with other group members frequently, and see themselves as being associated with a particular geographic area” (Teevan and Hewitt 1995, 26).

**CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The model (fig. 1) explains why some consumers intentionally avoid particular SCBs while engaging in others. Central to the model is the role played by the personality trait, consumer propensity to deviate (CPD). Psychological reactance is modeled as an antecedent to CPD, while as a consequent effect, SCB is captured by measuring representative behaviors: *recycling*, *self-sufficiency*, and *closeness to nature*.

**Consumer Personality: Consumer Propensity to Deviate (CPD)**

Consideration of personality in SC research has been limited. However, personality traits can predict SCBs. Luchs and Mooradian (2012) found strong evidence to support the importance of personality when they modeled the agreeableness trait as a mediator between gender and SCB. This reinforced related research that showed how

**FIGURE 1**

RESULTS OF PATH ANALYSES (STUDY 3)

*Psychological Antecedents → Behavioral Outcomes*

---

**Notes:**

- All paths are significant where H1: p < .001; H2: p < .01; H3: p < .10; and H4: p < .05.
- Path loadings are indicated and t-values are in parentheses.
- Reactance was measured using an 11-item, four-factor version of the Hong Psychological Reactance Scale (Hong and Faedda 1996): emotional response toward restricted choice (ER); reactance to compliance (RC); resisting influence from others (RI); and reactance toward advice and recommendations (RA).
- CFA Fit Indices (CPD alone): χ² = 30.98, (d.f. = 14, p = .01), χ²/d.f. = 2.21, GFI = .95, RNI = .97, CFI = .97, and RMSEA = .08
- CFA Fit Indices (Reactance alone): χ² = 36.71, (d.f. = 29, p = .15), χ²/d.f. = 1.27, GFI = .96, RNI = .97, CFI = .97, and RMSEA = .04
- CFA Fit Indices (Recycle, Self-Sufficiency, Closeness-to-Nature alone): χ² = 30.35, (d.f. = 24, p = .17), χ²/d.f. = 1.27, GFI = .96, RNI = .98, CFI = .98, and RMSEA = .04
- CFA Fit Indices for the Model: χ² = 388.76, (d.f. = 291, p < .001), χ²/d.f. = 1.34, GFI = .85, CFI = .93, and RMSEA = .05
- Recycling Scale Items: (1) newspapers; (2) glass jars/bottles; and (3) cans.
- Self-sufficiency Scale Items: (1) family/friends change oil in car; (2) gotten skills to increase self-reliance (e.g., carpentry, car repair, or plumbing); and (3) exchanged goods/services in lieu of payment with money.
- Closeness to Nature Scale Items: (1) intentionally avoid meat; (2) contribute to ecologically oriented organizations; and (3) grow own vegetables.
various personality traits can predict behavioral outcomes (Hirsh 2010; Hirsh and Dolderman 2007). A personality trait is a persistent, identifiable characteristic that defines a person (Solomon et al. 2014). This is consistent with Bandura’s (1986) approach emphasizing the personality-behavior link and states that it is, “a broad enduring disposition to behave in certain ways” (5).

As personality trait, CPD explains why some consumers are more likely than others to engage in norm-violating behavior and is formally defined as, “the inclination or tendency for consumers to willfully contravene consumption norms as defined by members of [their society]” (Voyer 2014, 723). A key feature is the deliberate/intentional norm-violation aspect (i.e., to be “anti”), which conceptually stands in contrast to a consumer’s desire to be “different.” CPD varies across all consumers to a greater or lesser extent. Like Midgley and Dowling’s (1978) innovativeness construct, CPD is not defined in terms of an actual behavior, but rather an individual’s propensity. Although a propensity cannot be acted upon without an opportunity, it’s omnipresent.

Psychological Reactance
Reactance suggests that when people feel that their freedom of choice is threatened in some way, they will become impelled to assert what is being taken away (Brehm 1966). Little CB research has been devoted to this construct apart from a few studies (e.g., Clee and Wicklund 1980; Kivetz 2005; Liu et al. 2012). Some consumers place great importance on (perceived) freedom to dispose of products in a manner of their choosing and find government regulations that mandate recycling provocative. For example, Seattle (USA) and Gatineau (Canada) have recently employed “garbage police” to randomly inspect residents’ garbage bags for (prohibited) recyclables; those consumers who are found guilty face fines. Such campaigns might trigger defiant behavior and negate the desired outcomes (Clee and Wicklund 1980). Reactance is related to consumers’ responses against normative pressure; some may respond aggressively, others with self-presentational methods using public image, yet others may try to facilitate a sense of control and establish an illusion of power (Gilbert et al. 1988).

Psychological reactance can be modeled (and measured) as a personality trait, and is positively related to other personality variables such as: internal locus of control, self-esteem, and others (Hong and Faedda 1996). Brehm (1966) suggested that any message (or ad) aimed at trying to change attitude or behavior could be construed as a threat to freedom. When faced with this perception, some consumers will violate norms and react by, “producing even more of the undesired behaviors as a means of demonstrating choice” (Burgoon et al. 2002, 215) – faced with a proscriptive norm, some consumers will embrace the (“prohibited”) behavior and engage in it (Brehm 1966); the behavioral outcome (a boomerang effect) will be contrary to the norm. A consumer who is likely to be highly reactionary would also be more inclined to breach norms. I hypothesize that reactance will be positively related to CPD:

**Hypothesis 1:** The greater the consumer’s psychological reactance, the greater the CPD.

Sustainable Consumption (SC)
The OECD (2008) maintains that SC includes: recycling, efficiency in the consumption of resources in the home, minimization of waste, and environmentally sound purchasing practices of households. This reinforces the aforementioned definition of SC, operationalized to include measures for recycling, self-sufficiency and closeness to nature. Closely related to SC, the concept of voluntary simplicity is about reducing consumption (Etzioni 1998; Prothero et al. 2011). Voluntary simplifiers are consumers “who are resisting high consumption lifestyles and who are seeking, in various ways, a lower consumption” (Alexander and Usher 2012, 66 – 67). The same authors directly link voluntary simplicity to SC and state, “human beings need to consume differently and produce commodities more efficiently” (67). Further, they emphasize that voluntary simplicity is a coherent and necessary behavioral solution needed for SC.

Voluntary simplicity is conceptualized as the degree to which an individual selects a lifestyle intended to maximize his/her control over daily activities, and to minimize his/her consumption and dependency (Leonard-Barton 1981). Leonard-Barton (1981) operationalized this concept by advancing several behavioral manifestations including: recycling; self-sufficiency; and closeness to nature.

**Recycling of Resources.** Recycling (paper, bottles, cans, etc.) is now normative in developed nations (OECD 2008). Enhanced by government programs (e.g., home “blue boxes,” public recycling bins), this expectation is a dominant consumption norm. The amount of recycled material can be increased through activation of norms (Schultz 1999). Given recycling’s normative aspect, I hypothesize an inverse relationship with CPD:

**Hypothesis 2:** The greater a consumer’s CPD, the lesser the likelihood of that consumer will engage in recycling behavior.

**Self-sufficiency** proposes that consumers rely more on themselves to do various tasks (e.g., repair one’s own vehicle, develop skills like carpentry/plumbing to enhance self-reliance, or engage in barter) (Leonard-Barton 1981). Unlike recycling, self-sufficiency is not normative, especially in developed nations. For busy consumers, time is at a premium; they purchase convenience goods, shop at retailers that offer convenience, and seek professional repair services. Lifestyles characterized by time scarcity/constraints, coupled with technological complexities, drive consumers to greater dependence on products and amenities. Social pressures compel consumers to adopt a work-and-spend lifestyle while simultaneously feeling the “conditions of urban living or the effects of pervasive marketing” (Sanne 2002, 273). I hypothesize that the more a consumer becomes self-sufficient, the more he/she digresses from social expectations of convenience-oriented consumption (lessened self-sufficiency):

**Hypothesis 3:** The greater a consumer’s CPD, the greater the likelihood of that the consumer will pursue self-sufficiency behaviors.

**Closeness to Nature** captures the essence of ecological awareness to include growing one’s own food, vegetarianism, and/or contributing to ecologically-oriented organizations (Leonard-Barton 1981). As the world’s population increases, food production and consumption become critical as does the interdependency between people and resources. Driven by consumer demand for inexpensive and plentiful food, large-scale commercial agricultural operations have become prevalent, and have led to the steady demise of smaller, more ecologically-friendly family farms. Consumers have not modified food demand based on what the land can more efficiently produce. Due to a socially-expected desire to enhance convenience, consumers retreat from nature (e.g., purchasing food items vs. growing them). Closeness to nature is not socially normative and therefore:
Hypothesis 4: The greater a consumer’s CPD, the greater the likelihood of that the consumer will pursue behaviors oriented to enhancing his/her closeness to nature.

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHOD, AND RESULTS
Central to the model is the notion of deliberate norm-violation (captured by CPD). Three studies were used to comprehensively assess the model. Study 1 was exploratory and sought to understand consumers’ beliefs related to norm-violation. To evaluate construct validity, study 2 focused on the psychometric behavior of the focal construct, CPD, by examining it in relation to conceptually related constructs. Lastly, study 3 served to ultimately test the hypotheses.

Study 1 – Exploratory
In study 1, I sought to better understand the domain, and examine how my theory-driven approach to norm-violation was consistent with that of the general consuming public’s (c.f. Netemeyer et al. 1995). Three open-ended questions asked respondents to describe: (1) the type of person that they associate with rule-breaking; (2) consumption rules they follow; and (3) what consumption rules, if any, they break. Questionnaires were completed by 51 students (11 PhD and 40 MBA) from a North American (N.A.) business school, and were analyzed for any general themes and/or frequently mentioned ideas. Results confirmed that norms and their violation are highly salient – 77% of respondents cited social norms as necessary for appropriate conduct. They construed the type of persons associated

| TABLE 1: INTERNAL CONSISTENCY AND CORRELATIONS (STUDIES 2 & 3) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Study 2** | **Internal Consistency** | **Correlations** |
| | **Comp.** | **Coef.** | **AVE** | **CPD** | **CNS** | **DUCP** | **Inf-N** | **Inf-I** | **Age** | **Income** |
| **CPD** | .90 | .90 | .57 | 1.72 | .08* | 4.24 | 4.45 | 3.35 | 4.33 | 18.95 |
| **CNS** | .92 | .92 | .60 | 2.29 | .48 | 4.45 | 3.12 | 4.33 | 3.12 | 24.50 |
| **DUCP** | .85 | .87 | .48 | .29 | .23 | .12 | 3.35 | 3.35 | 3.35 | 3.35 |
| **Inf-N** | .91 | .90 | .55 | .10 | .23 | .12 | 3.35 | 3.35 | 3.35 | 3.35 |
| **Inf-I** | .68 | .73 | .36 | .01, N | .27 | .18 | .63 | 4.33 | 4.33 | 4.33 |
| **Age** | -- | -- | -- | -0.06, N | -0.01, N | -0.14 | -0.60, N | -0.05, N | 18.95 | 18.95 |
| **Income** | -- | -- | -- | -0.06, N | -0.03, N | -0.02, N | -0.12 | -0.07, N | 24.50 | 1.16 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Study 3</strong></th>
<th><strong>Comp.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coef.</strong></th>
<th><strong>AVE</strong></th>
<th><strong>CPD</strong></th>
<th><strong>React.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Recycle</strong></th>
<th><strong>Self-Sufficiency</strong></th>
<th><strong>Closeness to Nature</strong></th>
<th><strong>ATSCI</strong></th>
<th><strong>SDB</strong></th>
<th><strong>Age</strong></th>
<th><strong>Income</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CPD</strong></td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.003, N</td>
<td>.01, N</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactance</strong></td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>-.02, N</td>
<td>-.07, N</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.003, N</td>
<td>.01, N</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recycle</strong></td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>-.07, N</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.003, N</td>
<td>.01, N</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Sufficiency</strong></td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.003, N</td>
<td>.01, N</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closeness to Nature</strong></td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.05, N</td>
<td>.08, N</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ATSCI</strong></td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.01, N</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>-.10, N</td>
<td>-.03, N</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SDB</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.06, N</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.04, N</td>
<td>.08, N</td>
<td>.12, N</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>26.82</td>
<td>26.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>26.82</td>
<td>26.82</td>
<td>26.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.04, N</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>.05, N</td>
<td>.01, N</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Correlations are Pearson Correlations. All correlations are significant at the .05, .01, or .001 levels (2-tailed), except where noted by * (p < .10) or N (not significant). Diagonal entries are mean values, and standard deviations (in parentheses).

a CFA Fit Indices (CPD alone): $\chi^2$ of 72.09 (d.f. = 14, p < .001), $\chi^2$/d.f. = 5.15, GFI = .95, RNI = .96, CFI = .96, and RMSEA = .10

b CFA Fit Indices (CPD & CNS): $\chi^2$ of 265.07, (d.f. = 89, p < .001), $\chi^2$/d.f. = 2.98, GFI = .92, RNI = .95, CFI = .95, and RMSEA = .07
c CFA Fit Indices (CPD & DUCP): $\chi^2$ of 214.46, (d.f. = 89, p < .001), $\chi^2$/d.f. = 2.41, GFI = .93, RNI = .95, CFI = .95, and RMSEA = .06
d CFA Fit Indices (CPD, Inf-N, & Inf-I): $\chi^2$ of 464.60, (d.f. = 149, p < .001), $\chi^2$/d.f. = 3.12, GFI = .89, RNI = .92, CFI = .92, and RMSEA = .07

Personal Income; t This value indicates annual mean income is < $40K
with rule-breaking as those who tend to deliberately breach norms (expectations/rules). Importantly, the recycling rule was the most frequently stated social norm. Thus, understanding of the domain was enhanced, and results suggested that the consuming public’s conception of deliberate norm-violation was in accord with mine.

**Study 2 – Validity**

The goals of study 2 were to assess construct validity and to ensure that CPD reflected the key notion of intentional norm-violation (“anti”) vs. a desire to be unique/innovative (“different”). Web-based survey methodology was used. By clicking a URL contained in an invitational email, respondents entered a commercial survey hosting site. Respondents were undergraduates from a large N.A. university (N = 395, M_age = 19.0, SD_age = 4.5, Female = 54%).

**Measures and Predictions.** The questionnaire consisted of: the CPD scale; three validity measures; and a demographics section. All scales’ items were seven-point. CPD was measured using a seven-item scale (Voyer 2014). To evaluate CPD’s dissimilarity with desire to be “different,” the Consumer Novelty Seeking (CNS) scale, measuring the desire for consumers to seek out new product information, was included (Manning et al. 1995). The Desire for Unique Consumer Products (DUCP) scale, measuring the extent to which consumers hold a personal goal of acquiring products that few others possess, was included (Lynn and Harris 1997). Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence was included. This two-dimensional scale [normative influences [Inf-N], and informational influences [Inf-I]] captures the need to identify with others (or enhance one’s image) by being mindful of others’ expectations [Inf-N], or by seeking information from others [Inf-I] (Bearden et al. 1989). These measures are conceptually related to, but distinct from, CPD. I expected all measures to be correlated positively and weakly to CPD.

**CFA Results.** Using AMOS, CFA on CPD alone indicated: acceptable fit (table 1, note a); appropriate item loadings (.70 to .79); and suitable squared multiple correlations (.49 to .62). CFAs that modeled CPD with one of the three validity measures individually indicated acceptable fit (table 1, notes b, c, d). Results confirmed CPD’s unidimensionality and satisfactorily performing items.

**Analyses.** CPD’s interitem correlations were acceptable (.45 to .64) as were corrected item-to-total correlations (.66 to .75). Internal consistency measures for CPD were satisfactory (table 1). Convergent validity was assessed; in CFAs conducted with CPD and validity measures, t-values of all CPD items exceeded 15.09 (p < .001) suggesting CPD’s convergent validity (Segars 1994). Two tests for discriminant validity were performed. First, variances ranged from .01 to .40 (from table 1), by squaring the correlations, and were substantially less than the constructs’ AVE values, indicating adequate discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Secondly, in a principal components analysis of a five-construct model (CPD, CNS, DUCP, Inf-N and Inf-I), CPD demonstrated that none of its items loaded more heavily on another construct than on itself, again, reinforcing discriminant validity.

**Construct Validity: Assessment of Predictions.** Predicted correlations (CPD and validity measures) were supported (table 1), suggesting CPD’s construct validity. The low mean CPD score (1.72) was not surprising since most consumers are not inclined to breach norms. CFAs (table 1, notes a, b, c, d) suggest that validity measures were seen by respondents as distinct from CPD.

**Study 3 – Assessing the Model**

The aim of study 3 was to assess the model and its hypotheses. Web-based survey methodology (per study 2) was used. Respondents were students (undergraduate, graduate, part- and full-time) at a small N.A. college (N = 159, M_age = 26.8, SD_age = 9.0, Female = 25.8%).

**Measures and Predictions.** The survey included measures for: reactance, CPD, three behavioral measures for SC, two validity measures, and a demographics section. Reactance was measured using the 11-item, seven-point, Hong Reactance Scale (fig. 1, note c). CPD was measured using Voyer’s (2014) scale. SC was captured using three behavioral measures: recycling; self-sufficiency; and closeness to nature (each reflected by three-item, five-point, Likert-type statements, fig. 1, notes h, i, j) drawn from Leonard-Barton’s (1981) multi-dimensional Voluntary Simplicity Scale. Additionally, the conceptually related measure, Attention to Social Comparison Information (ATSCI) (Lennox and Wolfe 1984), was included as a validity measure to assess its distinctiveness from CPD. It captures the extent to which one is aware of, and concerned about, the reactions of others to one’s own behavior. Both constructs (CPD and ATSCI) suggest that the consumer engages in comparison: CPD to norms, and ATSCI to others’ reactions. I predicted the correlation between them to be low or nonsignificant. Also, included as a validity measure, was Social Desirability Bias (SDB), assessed using a 10-item version of the Marlowe-Crowne scale (Strahan and Gerbasi 1972). I predicted SDB’s correlation with CPD would be low or nonsignificant.

**Results.** Initial analyses focused on examining measures’ factor structure and psychometric performance of items. CFAs were conducted on each measure individually; fit indices were found to be acceptable (fig. 1, notes d, e, f). Factors’ standardized item loadings were acceptable (all λ > .7), as were internal consistency measures (table 1). All hypotheses and predictions were supported as evidenced by path analyses in fig. 1, and correlations in table 1, respectively. Of note, the correlation between SDB and CPD was not significant and suggested that CPD did not likely suffer from this bias (table 1). All path loadings (fig. 1) were significant. The CFA on the complete model indicated acceptable data fit (fig. 1, note g).

**GENERAL DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

Paradoxically, there is a disparity between some consumers’ positive attitudes towards sustainability and their actual unsustainable behaviors (Prothero et al. 2011). This research helps to explain why this difference occurs. The model highlights the important role played by personality and norms in determining behavior. Findings suggest that when particular SCBs are perceived as socially normative, such as recycling, high-CPD consumers will deliberately breach that behavioral norm and thwart the behavior; however, when other SCBs are not seen as socially normative, as with self-sufficiency and closeness to nature, the same consumers will pursue them.

Several contributions have been made to CB theory. Understanding of the role of personality in relation to normative influence was broadened. The persuasion (attitude change) literature was enhanced by extending the prominent elaboration likelihood theory (Petty and Cacioppo 1986) – norms could act as peripheral cues in terms of their impact on various consumers’ personality-driven tendencies to adhere (or not) to the norms. For example, choosing to toss a used plastic bottle into either a recycling container or a garbage container is for most consumers a trivial decision and thus, would likely be processed peripherally. Also, by focusing on personality, I reinforce and extend Cialdini’s (2001a; 2001b) work on social and interpersonal influence where he proposed persuasion principles (social validation, consistency, etc.).

Policy makers can leverage these findings to formulate communication plans designed to boost SCB. Implementability is essen-
tial. Action-focused plans and ads must center on CB by recognizing varying consumer personalities. Ads should be designed to shape individuals’ perceptions of particular SCBs by controlling the manner in which the desired SCB is presented to consumers – market segmentation can help along with some principles of social influence extended by the current research. For a “low-CPD” target segment, the “if everyone is doing it, it must be right and so, you should do it too” approach could be employed – consistent with the principle of social consensus (Cialdini 2001b; Goldstein et al. 2008). For a “high-CPD” target segment, presenting the message as being normative should be avoided – ads could present the SCB as a suggestion, or as being “cool” and “unique” in order to reduce normative influence. Ultimately, academics, managers, and policy makers must work in a coordinated and synergistic fashion if SC is to be realized in practice.

**Limitations.** Rational choice has been assumed to prevail. No detailed consideration of potential biological, political and economic factors has been made. Research involving norms can spur concerns such as: (1) how many members are required for norm-formation; (2) what do people have in mind when judging norms; and (3) what the person evaluating the behavior regards as good/bad (Gibbs 1995).

**REFERENCES**


Consumption and Identity in Arduous Situations
How the Adaptation of Travel Practices Among Very Elderly People Modifies Their Identity
Jean-Baptiste Welté, Université d’Orléans, IAE, France

ABSTRACT
This research explores how elderly people continually modify their identity through consumption. We conducted an ethnographic research in the French railways, to observe how elderly people adapt their practices in a constraining context. The results also revealed how socio-material objects could help elderly people to travel successfully.

INTRODUCTION
The aging process can be considered under biological, psychological or sociological aspects, all of those having an impact on consumption (Moschis 2012). The biological aging of cells modifies one’s behavior (Moschis 1991 ; Goldberg 2009). Psychological aging focuses on the alteration of the decision and seeking information process (Yoon et al. 2009), and the changing of personality (Brown and Lows 2003). Social aging is characterized by the emergence of new roles like that of grandparent (Schewe and Balazs 1992) or the way social ruptures like retirement influence consumption (Schau et al. 2009).

Generally, the process of aging is considered either from a euphoric perspective, in which personal developments and other benefits are highlighted, or through a dysphoric one, in which the elderly face a global degeneration. From this perspective, elderly people are fragilized and the role of marketing and consumption is to assist and to take care of them. Notwithstanding that numerous research goes beyond a restrictive approach of aging based on the age of people and includes multi-dimensional aspects of aging (cognitive, psychological and social), it addresses the process of aging from a determinist perspective (Wells and Gubar 1966 ; Kang and Ridgway 1996 ; Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent 2010). To schematize, becoming an elderly person gives one an intrinsic status, whose consequences over consumption are ineluctable.

Recent developments in Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) have deconstructed this approach while considering the elderly as having a plastic identity (Arnould and Thompson 2005). This stream of research has two consequences concerning research about aging. The elderly and their personal entourage can modify and transform their identity (Barnhardt and Penaloza 2013). This research also shines a light on the role of consumption by inverting the relationship between consumption and aging. They apprehended how consumption could influence the process of aging (Schau et al. 2009; Barnhart and Penaloza 2013).

Our research aligns with this perspective and prolongs the role of consumption. The identity of an elderly person is perceived as a continuous negotiation on a meso-social (Barnhardt and Penaloza 2013) or micro-individual level (Schau et al. 2009). Our research shifts this perspective when observing the role of consumption for the elderly who do assume their identity as such. Under the prism of consumption, we investigate how elderly people navigate between a macro-social image of old age and micro-social interactions and how this navigation influences their identity. The impact of socio-material settings of objects is an essential piece of this research. We describe how elderly consumers interact with objects not designed for them, and how those strategies of adaptation nurture a redefinition of their identity. Our paper begins with the relationship between old age and consumption. Then we present our data gathering process based on an ethnographic investigation among elderly people in the French railways. Our results present their practices of adaptation during their journey along a semiotic square of analysis.

IMAGINARY OF OLDNESS AND CONSUMPTION
The social imaginary of oldness remains mostly negative (Gullette 1997). The evolution of the age pyramid and the increasing number of elderly people following the aging of the baby-boomer generation contributes to a better perception of the elderly. Notwithstanding, researchers remark a gap between the image of the elderly and the values promoted by our modern societies, what Kuyper and Bengtson describe as a social breakdown syndrom (1973). The emergence of liquidity and acceleration as values in the late modernity of capitalism (Bauman 2000 ; Rosa 2010) tends to ostracize elderly people as slow and backwards. Even among the elderly, those who are positively appreciated embrace the value of “jeunisme” (Ahmadi 2001, quoted by Rosa 2010). Rather than wisdom due to their old age, Ahmadi (2001) reveals that they put forward their youthfulness, particularly their flexibility and adaptation to new situations. They appreciate the features that mask their old age and distance themselves from other seniors. The elderly have to deal with this imaginary, which assigns them an expected role, that of the old man (Goffman 1959).

There is a constant negotiation within this role. At a macro-social level, the role the old man should assume is translated in an imaginary of wisdom but also progressive loneliness and distance towards material and mundane issues. Consequently, the elderly are apprehended as disempowered persons. In this perspective, consumption is a way to preserve the daily lives of those people (Kang and Ridgway 1996 ; Wells and Gubar 1966). This function of protection hinders the elderly from consuming as a means of negotiating their plastic identity. At the meso-social level, discussions about the endorsement of this role take place between the elderly and their acquaintances (Barnhardt and Penaloza 2013). The consumption is a central issue of this negotiation. There is also denial and acceptance about this role at a micro-social level. “Younger” elderly people would try more to conceal their status (Tepper 1994). In comparison, “Older” elderly people internalize this consumption as a form of assistance (Tepper 1994). They would better accept ways of consuming in accordance with their social role as an elderly person.

This path to disempowerment in their consumption seems all the more accepted as older people become older. However, what appears as an undeniable tendency should be questioned. Firstly, the increasing number of elderly consumers living alone implies a lot of individual decisions. Secondly, elderly people are still quite often puzzled by consumer situations in which they face challenging situations. They do not only have to develop adaptations like the SOC model (Baltes and Carstensen 1996 ; Freund and Baltes 1998), but also to deal with the specific collective imaginary associated with the elderly. Thus our research tries to understand how elderly consumers who assume their identity use consumption in arduous situations (when they may face the social imaginary of oldness). We chose travel contexts in which they have left their reassuring habits. In analyzing those practices, we articulate how they have an impact on the negociation process of the identity of older people.
METHODS AND RESULTS
We conducted an ethnographic fieldwork with elderly people in the French trains (high-speed, ie TGV and regional, ie TER). The train was an interesting research subject for different reasons. At first, this conveyance overlaps travel practices and forms of consumption as Warde defines them, ie “a process whereby agents engage in appropriation and appreciation, whether for utilitarian, expressive or contemplative purposes, of goods, services, performances, information or ambience, whether purchased or not, over which the agent has some degree of discretion” (2005, p137). Elderly people are engaged in routinized practices when they use those modes of transportation, and in return those practices structure how they use them as objects and services (Warde 2005).

Secondly, the train can be analyzed under the prism of materiality. Materiality is not considered as a symbol of this collective imaginary, but as a practical frame for the interaction between individuals (Miller 2005 ; Latour1994). The train as a material object can reveal what the discourse about the collective imaginary associated with elderly people might conceal. The socio-material settings (eg. stairs in the station, reservation kiosks) could be challenging for elderly people because they are not designed for them. They translate the collective imaginary, ie the inadequacy between traveling and elderly people.

Furthermore, among trains, differences exist between high-speed and regional. Those two objects overlay two different socio-material settings (in terms of speed, access, reservation) and offer two different experiences. The TGV has high speed, elevated cars, and long platforms whereas the TER has slow speed, short platforms and many stops.

Thirdly, train transportation happens in a social context with other passengers. The theater scene is dressed and senior citizens have to choose their social role in front of this audience. This context is a priori hostile because the elderly have to share this public space with the rest of the population and deal with material settings they do necessarily not fit in.

Our fieldwork was structured in two phases. We began with data collection in regional trains in the region of Rennes and Lyon. The SNCF (French National Railways) gave us full access to the trains between March and April 2014. We recruited senior citizens directly in the stations. They had to be old enough (between 65 and 92 years old) not to contest their social status. The selection was based on physical or cognitive clues (like difficulties finding one’s way in the station). After this phase of selection, we accompanied them during their trip inside the train. We followed fifteen elderly people on ten different journeys. We combined passive observation and informal interviews with the people recruited during the trip. Parallel to this stage of participant observation, we conducted twenty-two comprehensive in-home interviews with pre-recruited seniors varying in terms of socio-demographic and physical profiles: they experience some type of difficulty when travelling.

During the second phase, between May and June 2014, we observed four elderly people traveling on the high-speed train, the TGV. We accompanied them from their home to their final destination (we pre-recruited those people because of the obligation to book a reservation before getting on the train). We also observed the behavior of elderly people in the station before taking their train during several days of fieldwork in Parisian stations (Gare de Lyon and Gare Montparnasse). Seventeen in-home interviews with elderly people traveling via high-speed trains were also conducted (based on the same recruitment criteria as the regional train part of the research).

The data were analyzed to understand how elderly people travelling alone adapt their consumption practices in a hostile context. Different strategies were identified. Those strategies are presented along a semiotic square. The semiotic square organized two forms of opposition (contrary oppositions and contradiction oppositions) (Floch 1990). Another relation (implication) close the square. In our analysis, the semantic opposition is based on the difference between Life and Death (figure 1). Life represents mobility (when the elderly people can travel), and Death Sedentariness (when mobility becomes such a trial that they stay at home). Mobility becomes non-Mobility in a contradictory relation when the natural flow of moving is constrained by physical, financial or symbolic barriers. The other contradiction opposes non-Sedentariness to Sedentariness.

Those practices (along the semiotic square) describe how elderly adapt their journey and the consequences on their status role and specifically their own identity.

FIGURE 1
THE DIFFERENT ADAPTATIONS OF TRAVEL PRACTICES AMONG ELDERLY PEOPLE
The first practice is a stoïcal fatalism. In this practice, their expectations as travelers are quite low, by simply traveling they are fully satisfied. The ride is an end in itself, they derive individual benefits and pride from this accomplishment. Of course, this test should not be too painful, otherwise they do not repeat the experience. However they often attribute the fact that they accomplish their journey to the services provided by the carrier. Gilbert discusses his expectations for the regional train:

It is true that train information is displayed at the last moment, sometimes you have to hurry to catch the train. But when I get on the train, I always find available seats. Today I will go to Vitré to see a friend. She will pick me up at the station, and it is a chance because I no longer drive (Gilbert, 82 years, observation TER Rennes/Vitré, March 2014).

Gilbert accepts this transportation as a lesser evil. He realizes that his mobility has been constrained since his abandonment of the car and accepts the difficulties of the regional train, provided he can maintain his individual mobility. This stoïcal fatalism reduces margins of mobility to a bare core: the elderly person has internalized his or her social role as inactive and sedentary. They face growing barriers to their mobility (physical or social). In this tendency towards non-mobility, maintaining mobility is a chance that is worth sacrifices in transportation.

The second practice identified in the semiotic square is organizational routines. Those routines enact non-mobility situations but try to avoid the horizon of sedentariness. In the tendency to immobility, they sound like active strategies to compensate the encountered difficulties. In the logic of the semiotic square, non-mobility implies a sedentary lifestyle, and organizational routines are desperate attempts to stand up against this inevitable reality. These routines can be analyzed as an illustration of the SOC (Selection Optimization Compensation) theory (Freund and Baltes, 1998; 2002). They illustrate the need to secure mobility by reducing all sources of anxiety and uncertainty arising from transportation disabilities. The senior incorporates “habitus” of traveling like arriving long in advance at the train station or using luggage with a comfortable grip.

Those routines are a resurgence of former individual travel habits they duplicate now: they face disabilities.

But they are embedded in a more global organization managed by the train authorities. To reduce this potential gap, elderly travelers valorize human contact with employees of the station. They also crave interactions with other passengers. Those multiple experiences of human contact offer them a security blanket throughout their trip. They have a practical finality (to find their way for example), but in doing so, elderly people also assume their status. To arouse some feelings in other travelers, seniors play the role of the old man. They insert their behavior in social interactions related to this codification. When elderly people are playing this role they try to engage the other passengers. The case of André explains such strategies:

The rise in the train is laborious because everybody has to arrange his luggage. The entrance is often crowded and it is not always easy to get on and off either especially at my age… and often there is a nice person to offer to carry your luggage then I accept. You have to be in warm dispositions toward others. People have pity on you (Andrée, 81 ans, observation TER Brest/ Rennes, March 2014).

These first two practices identified (stoïcal fatalism and organizational routines) are mechanisms to delay the “death of mobility”, akin to a sedentary lifestyle. Their old routines do not bridge a growing gap with the socio-material settings of a travel environment (luggage to carry, a train to catch in a limited time, a cognitive timetable to understand…). Those solutions can be seen as a bandaid solution that new constraints would irremediably break down. Finally, they emphasize the difficulties regarding mobility and express publicly the social status of elderly people. Those two practices in the semiotic square also appear as a tacit acceptance of the reduction in the horizon of mobility.

The last two practices along the semiotic square introduce a shift in perspective. Instead of considering a narrowing mobility horizon, elderly people incorporate this perspective to better overcome it. The third practice identified is one of rewarding mobility. Mobility makes sense for seniors, especially through an easier grip with the train considered as a material object. Regional trains are assimilated to such an object, particularly when they are compared with the “trial” of taking the TGV. The TER is a train whose socio-material features are easily appropriated by elderly people. They can get on the train with level access of use (without stairs); inside the train, moving from one car to another is possible; there are no reservations needed, anyone can sit anywhere; and next to the door, individual seats are available, where many elderly people enjoy resting before getting off. Through their socio-material properties regional trains offer elderly people the possibilities of exploration and marking, two aspects of appropriation (Caru et Cova, 2003). Commuting during the day is also possible because of the short travel distance. When they take regional trains, elderly people rediscover control over mobility. The example of Ali is enlightening:

Ali lives in Venissieux and takes the train to Verpillyere two/three times a month to visit his daughter and grand-daughter. With regional trains he can make same day return trips. During the way back to Venissieux, he keeps an eye on the screen inside the train on which the next stations are displayed. He doesn’t get up immediately when Venissieux is announced as the next station. He knows this journey quite well, and calculates he has enough time to get ready before arrival. He leaves his place just before the train enters the station, he stays on the first stair while the train is stopping, then walks down. Downstairs, he himself opens the door and leaves the train without difficulties (Ali, 74 ans, observation TER Lyon/Bourgoign Jallieu, March 2014).

Ali does not travel despite the ruggedness of the trip, but thanks to the socio-material characteristics of the train which give him a physical fluency and a symbolic pride. Despite growing problems hindering his ability to drive, his independence in the inner circle of his family is maintained by the properties of the regional trains. While many modes of transportation like the TGV underscore their inadequacy in a mobility context, the regional train is an object which corresponds to his capacities.

This convergence also relies on the symbiosis of two imaginaries. The TER connects many rural stations and villages abandoned by modern means of transport. The meshing of the territory evokes memories and nostalgia for seniors who lived there, or grew up with these evocative names. In elderly people’s minds, regional trains are the last bastion of an idealized rural past. This rewarding mobility is a strategy based on physical and symbolical appropriation from elderly people. This appropriation offers their identity a narrative continuity. They can accept who they are at present (through their mastering of the journey) while remembering themselves who they were before (through memories).
The last practice identified is that of reenchant mobility. The elderly may have a difficult time coming to terms with their reduced mobility. Elderly people fantasize new trips through the possibilities trains offer them. The destinations served trigger new travel opportunities and a resurgence of the desire. Gisèle’s trips to Saint-Malo are one such example of reenchantment:

This morning Gisèle decided to take a little excursion to Saint-Malo to «see the ocean» because the weather in Rennes was pretty nice. She decided to leave her 90 years old husband for the day when she discovers the shining sun in the morning. During the trip, quietly installed in the train she reads some magazines. Halfway, she noticed that her excursion was compromised by the fog. The weather was completely deteriorated when arriving in Saint-Malo, so... she immediately took the next train to Rennes (Gisèle, 82 ans, observation TER Rennes/Saint-Malo, March 2014).

Departing is a quick decision for Gisèle. She is always ready to travel. Her mobility is restricted by her age and her disabled husband. She can not travel long distances, but considers the train as an opportunity for escape which can be easily mobilised. The structural restrictions in her mobility do not eradicate her desire for consumption. When other modes of transportation are impossible, trains and particularly regional trains allow her access to new opportunities to travel. With the TER, Gisèle has a window through which to escape from the routine of her mundane life and her identity as a devoted wife.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This research identifies four practices in which the elderly adapt their journey while their mobility tends to reduce. We specifically analyzed the role of transportation in these arrangements. Such adaptations also mobilize the social status associated with their old age, and have an impact on them in return. Our results can be discussed and bring contributions with several streams of research.

Our first contribution concerns the role of consumption in relation to the identity of the elderly. Consumer research and particularly CCT have explained how elderly people may renegotiate their identity through consumption (Barnhart and Penaloza 2013; Schau et al. 2009; Price et al. 2000). Our research confirms those results but also emphasizes the fact that this renegotiation is marginalized by growing constraints. They tend to nuance the theory of a successful aging process that stresses self-fulfillment strengthened by consumption (Steverink et al. 1991; Tornstam 1997; Schau et al. 2009). Consumer research considers mostly discourse from seniors about their aging, whereas our research tends to focus on their effective behavior. Our research stresses that the influence of consumption in the redefinition of their identity reduces as the physical and symbolic constraints expand. But we precise that this process still functions with people becoming very old. Elderly people always deny their own limit through desire (Comte-Sponville 1984). In this research, regional trains like the TER are a source of desire. This dialectic (to push away the boundaries through opportunities of consumption) maintains a constant albeit less effective redefinition of their identity.

The second contribution of this research concerns the link between objects and identity. Previous research exposes how the socio-material properties of the object can frame the interaction between individuals (Miller 2005; Latour 1994). Our results underline also identical-material properties of the object. Through their materiality, conveyances (high-speed and regional trains in our research) circumscribe the possibilities of elderly people (what they can do and what becomes impossible for them). They also reflect how the identity of elderly people is evolving. However, people do not actively use the properties of objects as in other research (Schouten 1991). The process is passive, and properties of the objects follow the identity of people. In this research, seniors are diminished by the pressure of high-speed trains whereas they appreciate the peaceful slowness and the rural itineraries of regional trains which correspond to their own pace. Like a mirror which reflects their self-image, the regional train, in an isomorphic process, accompanies their own evolution.

**REFERENCES**


Floch, Jean-Marie (1990), Sémiotiques, Marketing et Communication. Sous les formes, les stratégies, Paris: Editions PUF.


Gulle, Margaret. M (1997), Declining to Decline: Cultural Combat and the Politics of the Midlife, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.


Bad Blood and Tender Nomadics: The Returns of Poetic Brutality
Roel Wijland, University of Otago, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

This article aims to liberate the possibility of poetics in the research of consumer and idea behavior. It proposes the concept of poetic brutality, and advances connections for the returns of poetics in ten themes. True to its generative nature, it performs a novel academic progression from pre-inventive insight generation to structured ideation.

INTRODUCTION

One thing still clings to poetry, like a wet piece of litter to the bottom of the bin, that advertising has lost but might yet exploit: the profitless, the nihilism, the truth that hurts, that doesn’t want to be heard.’

Nick Ascroft (2003)

Before the publication of a dedicated article on the role of poetics in consumer research (Sherry & Schouten, 2002), the qualitative landscape for lyrical research was deemed to be populated by an interpretive and phenomenological stream (Spiggle, 1994). In the early part of this century, poetics in the minds of the wider marketing research community has remained restricted under stationary interpretive, postmodern and introspective labels, which do neither the bold original advances of the past nor an energetic creative future of the poetic possibility justice. This article aims to revisit poetics as the road less taken, and remedies the lost attention to the liberal inclusion of art and literature in the aesthetic procurement of market intelligence (Belk, 1986; Stern, 1988a, 1988b).

The term poetics is used to denote figurative thinking in general, beyond the literal effect of poetry as a literary format condensed in language, and for predominantly metaphoric presentations in for instance language and psychology (Gibbs 1994), architecture (Bachelder 1978), sociology (Brown 1977) or anthropology (Brady 2000). Poetics refers to a mode of inquiry and form of presentation of reality that is aesthetically conscious, uses condensed evocative forms, applies figurative and metaphorical language, avoids the artificial distancing that characterises academic endeavours and is unafraid of experiential and sensual immersion. Poetics in academia result in an ‘arful-science’ (Brady 2004). Poetics has been reinvigorated in more recent theoretical contributions (Canniford, 2012; Wijland, 2011; Wijland & Fell, 2009). The acceptance of the representation in creative writing (Brown, 2014; Schroeder, 2014) as a form of inquiry has seen new projects that challenge aesthetic academic boundaries (Schouten, 2014; Wijland, 2014).

We see the future of the ancient heritage of poetics, as a nomadic hunt into the invisible everydayness, and a high potency option to open up deviant insights into the chaosmos and multiplicity of contemporary consumer and idea behaviour. It provides an alternative to examine the often ‘unrepresentable’ details or minuitia of life in pre-cognitive explanations in the mapping of affective and atmospheric intensities (Hill, Canniford, and Mol 2014). In idea behaviour, poetics procures managerial returns in the acceptance of fragmented brandscapes that live in the expressive contexts of digital brevity. Finally it offers methodological forays in post-ronic stylistics that may build on the previous attention for expressive form (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996) and on past applications of the roots of poetics in premodern allegories (Stern, 1989).

THE SITUATED RETURNS OF POETICS

Something between breaths, if only for the sake Of others and their desire to understand you For other centers of communication so that understanding May begin, and in doing so be undone.

(Asbery 1975)

The canvasses academics have at their disposal offer few opportunities to both illuminate a poetic process in theory, and make it perform itself as a transparent journey, from the intuition of contributive gaps and multi-sensory inceptions across media, to conceptualisation in the cool landings of textuality of an article. Or, to phrase it in the theme of this ACR conference: to advance the connections of a perceptual and conceptual process. The ACR tradition however makes a little explored allowance. Here, the publication of the winning entry in the 2014 ACR Film Festival functions as a pre-inventive exposure to the precognitive intuitions of the constructs surrounding poetic brutality. This article builds on the intuitively grounded multi-media sketching of the film ‘In Brutal Times’ (Wijland 2014) and unfolds a conceptual textual representation as repeatable process in form.

The following 10 film themes showcase the potential of songs in situ. They represent the returns of poetic brutality, as a cyclical refreshment of the accomplishments of past travellers, as a future oriented and innovative alternative in a digital world, and not least in positional nudges that aim to liberate poetics from ingrained limitations of its use in the narrow field of marketing and consumer behavior.

Surface Phenomena. The probing to sense the outer layers of a setting often metaphorically start on the reverse side of the screen of information, with an attention for external appearances as a less obvious perspective. The suspension of a priori mental conceptualisations in which the ‘phenomenon is likely to be envisaged as a large, indistinct mass’ (Hirschman 1986), with textures that are fully open to impressions. In hindsight, interpretive avenues have become the dominant qualitative operand in the last 20 years, since its difference with phenomenological approaches was made explicit (Spiggle 1994). This rekindles an aesthetic attention for what demands little notice, and ‘sets before our eyes the absent object’ (Dryden 1667).

Instant Brutality. One of the radical ways to discern the complexity of atmospheres, is to let attention zoom in on a stand-alone moment, and apprehend each component as an open-ended possibility. As a poetic attitude, it is deemed to adopt a firm rejection of closure (Hejinian 1985). The quest for acute perceptions may be a sequence of fragments, and an assimilation of instants in an as yet non-accumulative process (Lefebvre 2005). This itinerant rendering redresses the utilitarian allurement of conceptual imagination.

Narrative Fallacy. The meaning makers in marketing have long been infatuated with the aptitude to become ‘myth’ merchants (Wijland 2009a). At the level of noticing, a pre-emptive narrative may clean up the native messiness (Law 2004) of indigenous observations. The insight procurement in the lives and stuff in the market may paint an anti-paysage of disenchantment that fit stories in culture. Poetics ploughs in a more open field, and implicitly critiques the pre- and post-structuring in narrative possibilities.

Quick Inscription. Then again, the singularity of inscriptions (Sherry, 2000) of poetics may offer alternatives in future-oriented open-sourced marketing concepts and situated digital contexts. In
contemporary meaning markets every process is accelerated and clocks at increased speeds, for both producers and consumers. The returns of a brutal poetics relies on a quickening of perceptions.

Prospecting Outside. The method of introspection has been one of the bones of contention, even among fellow travellers (Sherry and Schouten 2002; Wallendorf and Brucks 1993) in the consumer Odysseyl (Belk 1986). While introspection as a way of knowing has been vindicated since (Gould 2011), the singularity of poetry specifically still suffers from a confusing association with subjectivity. Poetic brutality would argue for powerful returns in the opposite realm: as a revelatory approach that may be better attuned to the subtleties of the external rhythm of marketscapes, as a savage attitude and formal mediation to make surrounding superficiality sing, and as a better way to apprehend the fake, real and raw in the outside.

Material Poetics. Market intelligence and conceptual ideation have a great stake in being able to eloquently arrest the meaning of the silent things. Material poetics (Wijland 2009b) has been the subject of ACR’s heretical opening act (Wijland and Houston 2008). Brutality in this respect may have two perspectives: on the one hand a close attention to the form and presence of inanimate minutiae which are performative in their own right. They are deemed to possess a poetic agency (Wijland 2011), and especially idea development finds its inspiration the way in which tangible and touchable stuff quietly sings. On the other hand, textual poetry may be able to capture a fine representation of physical surroundings.

Lyrical Planning. Brutal insight generation in planning may be seen as is a reformulation of information ‘from below’(Mayer 1995); not as a linear chain of associations, but as a way of looking that by-passes the mental blocks of a functional fixedness that temporarily defers expertise. This works as a conscious counteractant to looking ‘from above’: with a specific goal in mind. Brutality then functions as a kind of open-minded deconstruction that gauges the creative ‘affordances’ in a given challenge. In Pattern Recognition (Gibson 2003) planner Cayce Pollard wears clothes from which every trade mark has been carefully removed; she responds to labels by getting sick. She lives in a ‘design-free’ zone to keep her sensitivity to brands optimized, when she is called into action as a market ‘dowser’, a tender nomad for a forensic apprehension of the bloody traces of marketable meaning.

Advertising Songs. In a similar way as researchers privileging interpretative alternatives, copywriters have been immersed in a cultural storytelling as a conceptual thought pattern. In the shifting sensibilities of the digital world however, in which a cohesive control of the narrative has been cut-up in bite-sized exclamations at the mobile fingertips of a lightening fast audience. Puma’s After Hours Atlete becomes a staccato ideation ‘with a ring of truth to it’ in which a runner’s category finds an identity (Droga 2011).

Pomo Postmortem. Few interventions have left more indelible traces in academic minds across beliefs than the promo of the pomo. Its success as a branded paradigm has made it a blanket response for all non-positivist adventures, and it has stopped the living development of poetics dead in its tracks. It is suitably ironic that the most fervent supporters of poetics (Brown 1998a; Sherry 1991) as a way of seeing and knowing in marketing and consumer behavior have provided reviewers sui generis with a one word short cut for the dismissal of ancient poetics in the late 90’s. With reviewers from all denominations mentally pre-categorizing and spelling every poem as a pomo, the fall-out for poetics as a distinct research methodology has been devastating. Poetics may offer new baroque possibilities, which accept the messiness of marketing moments, prioritizes evocation, and in its quilted questioning of narrative spills over the edges in an openness of interpretations in the disjointed scavenging of percepts.

Premodern Romance. And so in 2015, the lifecycle of particularistic singing may offer the post-romantic enticement of a nomadic tenderness and the post-ironic revelation of a scenic post-digital view that respects meteoric fluxes from the accelerated market scape. Then again in the ancient foraging of meaning, the hunting and gathering of impressions we may reacquaint with a more brutal market mechanic as an artful part of the academic guild ‘clothed alle in o lyveree / of a solernpe and a great fraternite’ (Chaucer 1977).

ON POETIC BRUTALITY
‘Je n’ai jamais été de ce people-ci. Je n’ai jamais été chré-
	ien; je ne comprends pas les lois.

Je n’ai pas le sens moral, je suis une brute…..’

(Rimbaud 1873b)

We unfold poetic brutality as an alternative to constitute a lyrical interdisciplinary meaning-making process that transcends the mental boundaries of art and commerce. The overall objective is to analyse how a poetic approach imaginatively works in the context of marketable meaning, not least in the inspirational context of brandscapes as mental spaces, which are particularly suited for assessment through aesthetic and evocative techniques. The article expands the positions which claim that the poets of consumer research are ‘brute empiricists’ (Sherry and Schouten 2002), and the managerial benefit to call on poetic techniques in facilitating the chunking of branded messages (Stern 1999). Poems, are a very literal variant of a poeticised research culture (Sherry and Schouten 2002), which mirrors the everyday occurrence of brands as a gathering of interactive artefacts (Lury 2004) that generate their own cultural poesis (Stewart 2005). Brandscapes form an emergent assemblage (Hill et al. 2014), that actively impacts forms of knowledge with a life of their own (Stewart 2005). This fortifies the idea, that the researcher of inherently metaphorical concepts such as brands, has to be ‘attuned to the poetic dimensions of culture’ (Friedrich 1996). Marketing research and poetry have been linked regularly, especially in representing consumer behaviour, although the poets’ ‘way of knowing’ was still considered ‘other’ compared to the researcher’s way (Stern 1998).

Gregory O’Brien, the curator of the Wellington Art Gallery, comments: ‘The branded environment, in the commercial sense, is a nightmare from hell!’ . The intentions of a contemporary lyrical engagement with marketplace artefacts is reflected in the working title of Une Saison en Enfer (Rimbaud 1873b) as an acute expression of the idealism of youth ‘hurt by the ugliness which it encounters’ (Starkie 1961). To paraphrase Rimbaud’s term: there is bad blood, ‘Mauvais sang’ (Rimbaud 1873a), between poets and the dominant culture of marketplace. A radical rebuke that is brutal in its form is as salient today as it was in the 19th century. The market functions as the dominant logic against which a poet, as projects critical sensibilities:

‘…if Rimbaud were to be revived, resurrected and reconfig-
ured today, it is doubtful whether he would be impressed by
our prosaic attempts to capture the poetics of the market
place […] it has to be said that the essential enchantment
of the market place still eludes us. Indeed, if Rimbaud were alive
today, one suspects that he would once again turn his back
on the world of marketing letters and seek the derèglement de
tous les sens …’. (Brown 1998b)

In terms of exposure and reach, advertising may have has dis-
placed unsponsored poetry as a vehicle for expressing a culture’s
sentiments. There is no doubt that poetry had an elevated place as a
guardian of cultural values, although poets themselves have ex-
pressed their worries on the death of the art form as a leading medium
of reduction, to some not dissimilar to pleasingly brief mathematical presentations (Sapir 1951). Secondly, in purveying uniqueness, conscious insights are fuelled by an awareness of aesthetic scarcity. It requires the compliant reconnaissance of edgy ‘connoisseurs’ with a sensitive cultural palate for unexpected niches of aesthetic expression. Brands, like all other economically worthy entities, derive their aesthetic value from the relative position of scarcity. In line with the required particularity that sets a brand apart from its competitors, the value of cultural capital is best expressed through aesthetic styles that are ‘socially scarce’ (Holt 1998). Following on from this, brute insights benefit from a discrepancy that explores paradoxical fits and counterintuitive matches. As is fictionally staged in the praxis of Pattern Recognition (Gibson 2003) and The Savage Girl (Shakar 2002), brutality revolves around locating a semiotic ‘differentia specifica’ as the most distinctive poetic acumen (Jakobson 1960). Beyond the radar for scarcity, brute poetic insight generation scopes the potency of difference, as an anti-dote in a market context that has a fundamental predisposition for integrated cognitive and relational structures. Finally, brute insight doesn’t shy away from intimacy, as the capability to fabricate embodied scenarios of ‘isolated objectivity’ and a way to conceive of intimate (Stern, 1997) perceptions in analogue and digital markets. This is a contradistinction from the subjective introspection to which poetic approaches are traditionally related. Instead, it shifts the fragile percepts on the basis of a situated interiority, in order to harvest vulnerable song lines from the marketplace.

Brute Ideation. How we re-present aesthetic market concepts, such as brandscapes, in content, form and style depends on the creative deed to conventionalise the mental relationships of an idea, with the intent to communicate. Etymologically poetics simply means ‘making’, an act to conceive in form. Be you poet, brand planner or copywriter: in the final instance we strive to give imagination a voice: ‘trouver une langue’ and find your tongue. We propose four poetic inflections of brutal ideation that authenticate its stylistic differential. First, the predisposition of the maker to adopt a brute mentalism, in the faculty to lyrically conceptualise possible worlds in bits and bites. The increasingly contingent character of unstable brandscapes favours a sequence of permanently opened enchainments, not primarily bound by consistency. The idea that brands are poetry volumes an disparate assemblage of moods and atmospheres, with an intuitive suspicion of a singular finger-print, seems more contemporary than the brand as a novel. As such, poeticised ideas benefit from a brutal currency, in which nowness translates with a pragmatic intentionality of purpose, is more important than stringent conceptual continuity. This prioritises an attuning to everyday, everywhere (digital) engagement, in which we seek a deconstructed harmony. Poets not only multiply live with the idea that no meaning, however sweeping, is ever intended to be finite: openness is a productive invitation. Advertising and poetics have always shared the persuasive addiction to brutal brevity. This urgency reconfirms a particular fashion of composing a style, with poetics as a creative condensation strategy to the shortest mean utterance, in which loans and tweets meet as equals (Droga 2011). Even though brevity makes poets seem like essentialists, lines may never intended to be more than inconclusive approximations. Finally, commercial and artistic ideation meet in the brutal beat. Rhythm is what sets poesy apart from other textual and literary expressions. The idea that a heartbeat is as quintessential as the meaning of words, and even that true poetry relies on white breathing spaces as silences in between lines and stanzas, defines what makes brutal ideation tick.
POETIC INDWELLING AS AN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Poetry is the subject of the poem, From this the poem issues and To this returns. Between the two, Between issue and return, there is An absence in reality, Things as they are. Or so we say.

From : The Man With The Blue Guitar
Wallace Stevens (1937)

In its conferential brevity, this article argues that the returns of poetics are an exciting part of the future of consumer research and idea behavior and its smooth ride badly needed debadging (Hewer and Brownlie 2010), not least from the branded dents caused by limiting introspection and the persistent aftershocks of pomofication. Its timeless contribution is both in the theoretical and situated argument to poetics as a logic of discovery. In its twinned poetic-prosaic presentation, it aims to confirm a fresh performative opportunity within the body of ACR. The subsequent film and article stages provide a powerful exposition of a pre-inventive multi-media- mediation, with a theoretical contribution that enhances the open future afforded by poetic brutality. The returns show how intuitive noticing, perceptual insight and conceptual ideation, comfortably live in the fluidity of market currencies.

REFERENCES
Dryden, John (1667), “Annum Mirabelis.”
McCracken, Grant (2009), Chief Culture Officer New York: Basic Books
--- (1991), Radical Artifice : Writing Poetry in the Age of Media, Chicago [Ill.]: University of Chicago Press.
--- (1873b), Une Saison En Enfer, Bruxelles: Alliance Typografique M.-J. Poot et Compagnie.


Online livestreams, community practices, and assemblages. 
Towards a site ontology of consumer community
Niklas Woermann, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark & University of Constance, Germany
Heiko Kirschner, University of Vienna, Austria

ABSTRACT
Extant research on consumer community assemblages and practices needs to be complemented by an understanding of community sites. We examine online livestreams from the Dota2 game community to show that multi-level sites allow for assemblage heterogeneity without requiring alignment, and that community practices might be universal but depend on specific sites.

CONSUMER COMMUNITY: ASSEMBLAGE OR PRACTICE?
Consumption communities are a long-standing and central object of consumer research. Over time, a large number of very different communities have been analyzed through a broad spectrum of theoretical lenses. Not surprisingly, many different qualities and descriptors have been worked out, even though authors by and large agree on a core set of commonalities (Chalmers Thomas, Price, and Schau 2013). There are even a number of alternative classification systems according to which different types of communities can be sorted, possibly calling for a typology of typologies (Schau, Muniz, and Arnould 2009; Canniford 2011; Chalmers Thomas et al. 2013; Närviänen, Gummesson, and Kuusela 2014). Across this multiplicity, two currently predominant and paradigmatic perspectives can be detected: the assemblage theory view exemplified by Chalmers Thomas, Price, and Schau (2013), and the practice theory view exemplified by Schau, Muniz, and Arnould (2009). Broadly put, the former perspective examines the elements which form communities in order to identify the structural forces that shape how communities develop and influence markets. In particular, communities are conceptualized as “an assemblage of diverse actors” or “social entities [that] are ‘patterned networks of heterogeneous materials’” (Chalmers Thomas et al. 2013, 1011). The dynamics of community are seen as effects of features of its elements; such as consumers’ needs or actors’ resources. In other words, assemblage approaches start with the ‘What’ of communities. The second perspective, in contrast, zooms in the ‘How’ by asking how “collectives exhibit community-like qualities” and “how they create value” (Schau et al. 2009, 30). The nature and effects of communities are thus derived from the characteristics of the core routine activities that sustain them. Both perspectives share key insights and can be seen as complementary. For one, both emphasize that individual consumers’ intentions or actions are not sufficient to explain community phenomena and thus acknowledge the importance of the cultural, technological and emotional dimensions. Moreover, the heterogeneity of community actors and resources highlighted by the assemblage approach is reflected in the different elements that are seen as shaping practices in the practice-based view. Further, assemblage views explicitly assume that it is in and through practices that the various elements of actor-networks come together to produce the social reality of consumer community. Rather than rivaling each other, we argue that both tacitly presuppose one another. Practice approaches tend to take the broad availability of uniform compatible elements as given, although the circulation and align-ability of elements themselves often depend on specific conditions or processes (Shove et al. 2010). When zooming in on practices, in other words, they trust that assemblages of actors and resources are already in place. Assemblage approaches, in turn, put much faith in the orderly and smooth operation of the practices through which the network is upheld in spite of heterogeneity and power play (Bajde 2013). If community dynamics and effects are the result of an interplay of the What and How, one could say, then each perspective focuses on just one side by presupposing the unproblematic givenness of the other. While this procedure is arguably inevitable, we hold that instead of remaining fixed on either approach, consumer researchers need to attend in more detail to the concrete circumstances that are required for community resources to be reliably mangled into community practices (Hill, Canniford, and Mol 2014). Prompted by our empirical case at hand, the present study seeks to remedy this oversight. In addition to the What and How, we ask about the Where and When of consumer community. Working towards a site ontology of consumer communities, we examine the sites in and through which consumer community manifests in the case of an online gaming community, because we contend that the affordances and constraints of these sites have formative influences on both community practices and community assemblages.

A SITE ONTOLOGY OF CONSUMER COMMUNITY
We borrow the concept of the site from Schatzki (2002, 2005, 468) who broadly defines it as “a type of context” in which “context and contextualized entity constitute one another.” Various sites have been studied in consumer research. One example is a public discourse which forms the context on which each single newspaper article (or discursive move) draws, and which is ultimately made up of the totality of discursive moves (Humphreys 2010). Unlike approaches that seek to demonstrate how a phenomenon is determined by some external and pre-given entity (e.g. the rationality of agents or stable class structures), site ontologies acknowledge the reflexive and performative nature of sociality, thus arguably avoiding the pitfalls of individualism or structuralism (Reckwitz 2002). Sites of consumer community that have been studied so far include tribes (tribal rituals and gatherings are both constitutive of and constituted by tribes; Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007), brand community practices (practice performances are expressions of practices, which are in turn bundles of repeat performances; Schau et al. 2009), networks of heterogeneous members (actors in a network are members by virtue of the community which is in turn comprised of members; Chalmers Thomas et al. 2013) and community websites (the web is the totality of webpages, which only exist as part of the web; Kozinets 2007). Because sites are contexts and an event can stand in several contexts at once, these different theoretical accounts of the sites of community do not necessarily contradict one another. But since a site is an “arena that surrounds or immerses something and enjoys powers of determination with respect to it” (Schatzki 2005, 468), different types of sites require the attention of the researcher depending on the phenomenon in question. Mechanisms through which sites shape communities are manifold: they can ease certain performances while constraining others; augment some aspect while masking another; problematize issues or normalize them; function to erect boundaries or transgress borders; exert power or challenge it. Per our definition, e.g. self-printed magazines or online forums are sites on which communities manifest through performances that draw on community resources. Thus, we do not claim that such sites of community have not been taken into account until now. While physical gatherings or face-to-face interaction are still routinely being presupposed as the
most vivid, authentic, or real site of the performance of community (Chalmers Thomas et al. 2013; Martin and Schouten 2014), the role of different media and especially the internet has since long been acknowledged. Following in the footsteps of such advances, we study the nature and impact of what we identify as a novel type of site of consumer community: online livestreams.

FROM WEBSITES TO STREAMSITES

Like most aspects of consumption, communities are influenced by the process of mediatization (Lundby 2009), the progressing transformation of social practices through the influx of media technology. With regard to the internet, communities have been quick to take advantage of new technological possibilities, yet also conservative in sticking to certain well-established forms (e.g., simple hierarchical text-only forums are still the backbone of much community activity). Websites are the dominant form of sites in which online community manifests. Per our definition, websites are asynchronous, that is, turn-based and permanent online media environments. Community performance proceeds in turns as for example forum entries, wiki entries, or videos are posted one after another and then remain accessible in their original form (often for years). The technological infrastructure parses community performance into units of actions and reactions which are distributed only as already completed acts. In our view, websites thus do not allow for interaction (coeval and joint conduct) in a strict sense. We suggest that many typical qualities of online communities result from this, for example their ability to collect detailed documentations, plan events or develop complex new solutions or products (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau 2008; Chalmers Thomas et al. 2013) – but also a tendency for conflicts and antagonisms (Giesler 2008; Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010). If these qualities are indeed due to websites’ structural co-determination, then they are bound to evolve as a new form of online site emerges.

We are currently witnessing the beginning of another important step in the evolution of online consumption communities. Livestreams enable consumers to attend live events from around the globe and engage audiences via multi-layered feedback architectures (Dholakia and Reyes 2013; Seo and Jung 2014; Woermann and Kirschner 2014). Online livestreams are live broadcasts of audio-visual content from the web in which several forms of interactive media like chatrooms, webcam video, twitter feeds, and more converge into a continuous stream of content. The focal activity of the Dota2 gaming community we studied consists of live casts in which the audience uses interactive media to co-create the content of the stream, e.g. by chatting with the presenter, voting for the next game or action, embedding links to YouTube videos or pictures, as well as donating during the stream. These screen practices create “synthetic situations” (Knorr Cetina 2009) which stretch over spatial, temporal and social boundaries whilst synthesizing several communication media and perspectives at once. Building on Goffman’s (Goffman 1969, 122) definition of a social situation, we might say that the media environment of streamsites “extends over the entire territory within which mutual monitoring is possible.” Because they include feedback channels, streamsites constitute a “screen-reality” (Knorr-Cetina 2009) for each individual participating in the synthetic situation.

METHODS AND CASE

Our study draws on 3 years of participant observation in the gaming community that has evolved around the computer game Dota2, currently one of the most widely played games with over 1 million concurrent players per day (Warr 2015). In addition to playing, consumers also watch professional players compete against each other in online or live tournaments that have to date awarded over 28 million USD in prize money. Our study focuses on online livestreams showing Dota2-related content. Established research practices of Netnography (Kozinets 2009) primarily focus their attention on data provided by websites. Therefore, the methodological stance in researching streamsites has to differ in some respects. Our engagement ranged from watching and recording different online-livestreams to participating in the chat or playing online on the same field as respective streamers. A dual or even triple monitor setup that is common in the community, for example allowed us to participate in an online match and watch another player’s stream at the same time, making it possible to adjust our strategy accordingly, or to interact with the community of a stream channel via its chat. With the help of screen-capture software we recorded our own conduct as well as the action on the screen. This heavily mediatized research environment allowed us to focus on our engagement in the site whilst recording and thereby archiving other perspectives of what is going on. In a second step we used this data to recombine the different perspectives of the observed by relying on the knowledge we acquire due to our deep engagement. The main corpus of our data from the Dota2 community consists in 957 hours of screen capture video collected during 3 years of participation in online livestreams, contextualized by 6 day-long video-aided participation in community events, 8 interviews with industry professionals and gamers, as well as netographic data from community websites.

Figure 1 shows a screenshot from a popular Dota2 livestream, illustrating the media architecture through which gameplay, video technology, audience and caster are pulled together and assembled into an intelligible site of community. The focal video content visible for the audience is a copy of (a part of) the caster’s own screen – in this case a game of Dota2 he is currently playing. Special streaming software transmits the signal via a broadcast platform like twitch.tv, together with the casters’ audio comment. The platform adds a chat window to the video stream through which the audience members continuously talk to each other. The caster can see the chat on a separate screen and will at times respond to the discussion via text or voice. Further, audience members can subscribe to the stream channel or donate small sums of money (typically 1-2$) through services like PayPal. These actions will in turn trigger an automated alert message on the stream, programmed by the caster. This technology creates a multi-layered feedback channel media architecture that shapes and frames the possibilities of how viewers and caster co-create the content of the stream. For example, if the caster gets a donation, a mini-video (a gif) is automatically shown which typically contains a reference to a meme, a joke or saying developed by the community. Additionally, an automated voice reads a message sent in together with the donation. In this way, the donator can e.g. thank the caster for his work, but also tell a joke or suggest an activity for the streamer or the community.

FINDINGS

On-site Practices

Figure 1 exemplifies the different layers of communication that impact the viewing experience of livestreams. Beyond being mere channels of communication, the different windows the stream combines are the site of the performance of community. As table 1 shows, the (brand) community practices found by Schau et al. 2009 to be key for the performance of community can all be found on Dota2 livestreams. In addition to these universal practices, however, we also observed community-specific practices such as troll-
Online livestreams, community practices, and assemblages. Towards a site ontology of consumer community

Figure 1: A screenshot from the popular Dota2 stream Wagamama showing a live game the caster is playing, the caster (bottom left), the chat and a overlay providing contextual live data (e.g. current viewers).

ability, however, are not just given, but established and organized by the site architecture.

Sited Assemblages

Similar to our argument that studying community practices require attention to community sites because practices can be site-specific, we hold that institutional perspectives focusing on how resources are mobilized within heterogeneous assemblages need to pay attention to sites. As our example shows, certain resources might require a particular type of site in order for an assemblage to produce or exchange it. For example, Kozinets et al. (2008) have shown how different forms of consumer creativity occur relative to particular types of sites (e.g. wikimedia vs. blogs). In contrast to prior accounts, which assume either that translation must occur between distinct (parts of) networks (Giesler 2012) or that obligatory points of passage exist which can control and manage touchpoints (Martin and Schouten 2014), our case shows how certain sites that are different from interactions or websites, enable co-presence and collaboration between heterogeneous and even antagonistic networks in real time.

As a detailed analysis reveals, this is because separate but interlinked media channels allow for distinct communication routines and thus (community) practices to be performed coevally and with the option of, but not a necessity for, sustained or regular ‘synch’ or mutuality. Unlike in a face-to-face talk, for example, a caster on a stream must not always visibly understand what is happening in-game, and (s)he can also choose to ignore what is being posted in the chat for longer stretches of time. Nevertheless, (s)he can and will also share a conversation with the chat, or become fully attuned to and emotionally immersed in the in-game action (e.g. to the point of shouting at the screen, or crying), or play a game with the community members.

In other words, the streamsite affords network homogeneity and shared performance of practices, but it does not require it constantly. Because the different performancescapes (Tumbat and Belk 2013) which the layered media channels offer are functionally and structurally de-coupled, they are stabilized in that they are to a large extent shielded from problematic or destructive mutual interference. Criti-
Empathizing: In figure 1: “Euphor1e: fine, just headache whole day :S” – “Slemsvap: wah, no good!”

Governing: As indicated by the sword-icon, acts as a moderator in the chat, he enforces social norms and can ban users.

Evangelizing: The caster regularly encourages the audience to follow or subscribe to his channel or to donate. Jokes or dismissive comments about rival games like League of Legends.

Justifying: Re-framing computer gaming as eSports. The caster reading out a message from a subscriber that the community “saved his life” during a time of depression.

Staking: The community follows a status hierarchy based on in-game prowess: Newbies ->Casuals->Competitive-> Pro. Special events such as “Newbie Tuesday” are held.

Milestoning: Members self-describe based on in-game achievements, e.g. “My name is Waga and I’m 7k MMR.” In figure 1, the “Sub counter” records the number of new channel subscribers.

Badging: In figure 1, chat participants who are subscribers are identified by a symbol.

Documenting: In figure 1, the total viewer count (>12,000,000) of the channel is shown, as well as the followers. A “Donator Leaderboard” and a weekly announcement of the highest donations by the caster.

Grooming: Optimal game strategies, the honing of personal skills and the right technological set-up are core themes across all gaming livestreams.

Customizing: Most streaming software and the game Dota itself was developed by the community. Fan art, modding and inventing new community-specific memes are core activities.

Commoditizing: Trading in-game items, item betting, donation practices that are similar to service transactions (“10$ Donation = 1h extra streaming”); the controversies these cause.

Table 1: Brand community practices in Dota2 livestreams, (based on Schau et al. 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Data Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming</td>
<td>In figure 1: “Emrecikil: How are u ladies and gentlemens”; “Slemsvap: and how are you?” Every new subscriber is automatically greeted by a bot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathizing</td>
<td>In figure 1: “Euphor1e: fine, just headache whole day :S” – “Slemsvap: wah, no good!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing</td>
<td>As indicated by the sword-icon, acts as a moderator in the chat, he enforces social norms and can ban users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelizing</td>
<td>The caster regularly encourages the audience to follow or subscribe to his channel or to donate. Jokes or dismissive comments about rival games like League of Legends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifying</td>
<td>Re-framing computer gaming as eSports. The caster reading out a message from a subscriber that the community “saved his life” during a time of depression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staking</td>
<td>The community follows a status hierarchy based on in-game prowess: Newbies -&gt;Casuals-&gt;Competitive–&gt; Pro. Special events such as “Newbie Tuesday” are held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milestoning</td>
<td>Members self-describe based on in-game achievements, e.g. “My name is Waga and I’m 7k MMR.” In figure 1, the “Sub counter” records the number of new channel subscribers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badging</td>
<td>In figure 1, chat participants who are subscribers are identified by a symbol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documenting</td>
<td>In figure 1, the total viewer count (&gt;12,000,000) of the channel is shown, as well as the followers. A “Donator Leaderboard” and a weekly announcement of the highest donations by the caster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grooming</td>
<td>Optimal game strategies, the honing of personal skills and the right technological set-up are core themes across all gaming livestreams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customizing</td>
<td>Most streaming software and the game Dota itself was developed by the community. Fan art, modding and inventing new community-specific memes are core activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commoditizing</td>
<td>Trading in-game items, item betting, donation practices that are similar to service transactions (“10$ Donation = 1h extra streaming”); the controversies these cause.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outlook - From virtual place to sites

The virtual as a place or space is the key theoretical metaphor that has structured research on forms of online consumption since the early 1990s (Kozinets 2002; Kozinets et al. 2008, 2010). Expanding on prior work by Dholakia (Dholakia and Reyes 2013; Zwick and Dholakia 2006) and Knorr Cetina (2009; Knorr Cetina and Preda 2007), we argue that the dominant metaphor of virtual worlds or online spaces is ill-suited to understand livestreams. Conceptualizing community performance as occurring in a single shared space like a website implies several general conditions which might be necessary for face-to-face interaction orders (Goffman 1983), but are not without alternatives when it comes to other sites. They include a shared focus of attention, the collaboratively established possibility of mutual intelligibility, and an at least superficially shared consensus, or the absence of open conflict. In the current literature, it is either tacitly presupposed that these conditions are being met, for example in that shared rituals are defined as core elements of tribes (Cova and Cova 2002); or else it is assumed that for example frame alignment practices must be invoked to remedy this lack (Chalmers Thomas et al. 2013). Our research shows that it depends on the site in which community is performed whether or not these conditions are indeed necessary or even feasible. As our empirical examples in table 1 make clear, the different layers of the site architecture that get synthesized in a livestream operate in relative independence from one another: sometimes they share a focus of attention (e.g. the chat and the cast both discuss the same in-game events happening at that moment), but often they do not (chat, caster, and game avatars are engaged in separate and idiosyncratic conversations, practices and time flows). The streamsite allows for the coeval performance of several different practices conducted by separate, heterogeneous actors or assemblages of actors (e.g. the caster, the eSports athletes, and the chat participants). At the same time, it also retains key necessi-
Online livestreams, community practices, and assemblages. Towards a site ontology of consumer community

sity of community coherence and collaboration, in particular their mutual observation capability and their mutual communication addressability. Having shown that the forms and effects of both community practices and community assemblages are dependent on community sites, we thus argue that further attention to the ways in which community sites enable and configure coherence, collaboration, communication, co-creation and ultimately consumption will allow future studies to better understand the paradoxes of both assemblage heterogeneity and practice universality.

REFERENCES


When do Partitioned Prices Increase Demand? Meta-Analytic and Experimental Evidence
Ajay Abraham, Seattle University, USA
Rebecca Hamilton, Georgetown University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Consumers encounter numerous surcharges and fees in the marketplace. Although some research has shown that dividing or “partitioning” prices into multiple components can increase consumer demand (e.g., Morwitz, Greenleaf, and Johnson 1998), other research has demonstrated negative effects.

We propose a theoretical framework to examine extant and new moderators of partitioned pricing, classifying moderators based on the source of their impact as presentational; varying the presentation, thus affecting recall biases and demand; evaluative: affecting surcharge evaluations as more or less acceptable, thus affecting demand; or attentional: affecting the attention paid to surcharges, thus affecting recall biases and demand. We tested these moderators by meta-analyzing 149 observations in 43 published and unpublished studies, using a hierarchical linear model (HLM) with experimental condition at the higher level and observation at the lower level to control for correlations.

The following moderators were examined—presentational: surcharge format and presence of total price (new); evaluative: surcharge benefit, seller reputation, and surcharge controllability (new; defined as the seller’s control over charging a surcharge); and attentional: absolute surcharge magnitude (ASM), relative surcharge magnitude (RSM), price level, and typicality of partitioning (new; defined as the extent to which partitioning a surcharge is the norm for a product category).

For each observation, we contrast-coded surcharge format, seller reputation, and presence of total price, and we coded price level, ASM, and RSM as continuous variables (ASM and RSM had low correlation in our dataset). Two independent judges contrast-coded surcharge benefit, surcharge controllability, and typicality of partitioning. We also used control variables for DV type (scale, non-scale), single- versus multi-item scales, number of variables manipulated, publication year, publication status, study location, within- versus between-subject designs, same control condition in multiple contrasts, and hedonic vs. utilitarian category. All these variables were mean-centered.

Cohen’s d (Cohen 1977) was computed for each observation, corrected for small-sample bias, and weighted by its inverse variance (Hedges and Olkin 1985). Next, we estimated an HLM on the weighted, bias-corrected d. We also estimated other models that tested an alternative specification (Viechtbauer 2010), pair-wise interactions between significant factors, only theoretical factors, only uncorrelated variables, and non-weighted Cohen’s d.

Our HLM correctly predicted the direction of 67% of the effects, and the mean effect of partitioned pricing on demand was marginally positive (mean effect = .09, p = .09). Of the control variables, only DV type, year of publication, publication status, and hedonic vs. utilitarian category are (marginally) significant. Of the significant presentational moderators, presence of total price is negative (β = -.16, p = .09), suggesting that partitioned pricing has a less favorable effect when the total price is present. Based on our contrast-coding, the change in the effect size of partitioned pricing for total price present versus absent is .32 Cohen’s d units, a small change. Turning to the significant evaluative moderators, surcharge benefit is positive (β = .31, p < .001), suggesting that high-benefit surcharges increase evaluations of partitioned pricing (vs. low-benefit surcharges) by .62, a moderate increase.

Finally, examining the attentional moderators, price level is directionally positive (β = .0003, p = .10), suggesting that a $100 increase in price level increases the effect of partitioned pricing by .03, a trivial increase. Fourth, typicality of partitioning is positive (β = .29, p < .005), suggesting that partitioned pricing has a more favorable effect when surcharges are typically (vs. atypically) partitioned by .58, a moderate difference. Other moderators are not significant, but this may be due to low variance. In the interaction model, none of the interactions was significant, but all models generally replicated our HLM’s results. Notably, surcharge benefit and typicality of partitioning are significant in all models. Presence of total price and price level were less robust.

Although the meta-analysis shows the moderating role of typicality, the driver of the effects is not clear: are we observing a positive effect for typical surcharges and a null effect for atypical surcharges or a null effect for typical surcharges and a negative effect for atypical surcharges? Moreover, in the meta-analysis, typicality varied based on whether surcharge components were typical or atypical. To address these issues, we ran a follow-up experiment to replicate the meta-analytic effect of typicality, but we held the component constant and manipulated typicality by using norms.

MTurkers were randomly assigned to a 2 (price presentation: all-inclusive, partitioned) x 2 (typicality of partitioning: typical, atypical) between-subjects design, and imagined searching for a flight. To manipulate typicality, we adapted the manipulation by Redden, Fitzsimons, and Williams (2007) and presented four reference flights. In the typical conditions, all flights had a base price and a taxes surcharge, making partitioned pricing typical. In the atypical conditions, all flights had all-inclusive prices, making partitioned pricing atypical. Next, participants saw the partitioned or all-inclusive target price and then responded to a preference scale. A 2 x 2 ANOVA on preference revealed an effect of typicality and a marginal interaction. Planned comparisons revealed a significant effect of price presentation in the typical conditions (F(1, 96) = 4.16, p = .04, d = .40), but not in the atypical conditions (F(1, 102) = .04, p > .83, d < .07): in the typical conditions, partitioned pricing increased preference (Mt = 5.2, Ma = 4.6) but, in the atypical conditions, there was no change (Mt = Ma = 5.3).

In sum, we proposed a theoretical framework to classify moderators of the effect of partitioned pricing on demand as presentational, evaluative, or attentional. We also meta-analyzed 16 years of partitioned pricing research, with results suggesting the moderating roles of typicality of partitioning, surcharge benefit, presence of total price, and price level. Coefficient magnitudes and significance levels suggest that marketers should first focus on typicality of partitioning, followed by surcharge benefit, presence of total price, and price level. Additionally, we introduced the typicality construct to partitioned pricing research; the meta-analysis and the follow-up experiment both show that typicality moderates the effect of partitioned pricing. Future research might use eye-tracking.
methodologies to test the role of attention in this process and thereby further our understanding.

REFERENCES
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A seemingly persuasive approach to promote consumption of healthy food is to highlight the health benefits of eating them, but is that actually effective? Applying extant literature to answer this question leads to predictions in both directions, i.e., that making healthiness of food salient could lead to decreased healthy consumption (e.g., Maimaran and Fishbach 2014; Raghunathan, Naylor and Hoyer 2006) or increased consumption (e.g., Irmak, Vallen and Robinson 2011).

In current research, we build a connection between the literatures on self-control, goals, and reactance to propose a mechanism to predict the outcome in this scenario. We find that emphasizing health benefits of eating healthy food is not only ineffective, but could negatively affect general self-control. Consumers - especially those who report health goals as less important - see the emphasis on health benefits of eating a food as goal imposition, and experience an impulsive reactance to act in opposition. The aversive state of reactance depletes regulatory resources and lowers subsequent self-control. This reduces not only healthy food consumption, but also the performance on other activities that require volitional self-control. In contrast, consideration of health-unrelated reasons to eat something healthy consumes relatively lower amount of self-regulatory resources. We refer to this backlash response to overt health persuasion as ‘health aversion’. Current research provides converging evidence of the phenomenon of health aversion through five studies.

In Study 1, we provide evidence of reactant behavioral response to health-related arguments through lowered consumption of healthy snacks after viewing a health (vs. taste vs. no) message. In a lab experiment, participants were shown a message that listed health (vs. taste) related reasons to eat spinach; those in the no message condition did not see any message. Following this, participants were provided some baby carrots and cherry tomatoes, ostensibly as complimentary snacks for participating in the study. Participants who saw the health (vs. taste vs. no) message ate significantly lower quantity of the healthy snacks. We replicated this in Study 2 by measuring self-reported intentions; participants instructed to write a list of health-related (vs. health-unrelated) reasons to eat spinach indicated lower intentions to consume spinach.

As Study 3, we ran a field experiment disguised as a small lemonade stand run by children. In a popular summer recreational area, we sold lemonade under two different framing conditions across three days. At this lemonade stand, passers by who were interested in buying lemonade could choose between a smaller serving size framed as “healthy” (vs. “eco-friendly”) or a larger “regular” (in both conditions) serving size. Purchase of the healthier option (i.e., smaller serving size) was found to be lower under healthy (vs. eco-friendly) framing.

In Studies 4 & 5, we used the ego depletion paradigm (Baumeister et al 1998) to demonstrate the negative effect of reading health (vs. taste) message on regulatory strength. In Study 4, we provide evidence of measured reactance mediating the path from reading a health (vs. taste) message to lower self-control. Participants in the lab were shown the same health (vs. taste) message as in Study 1, following which, they were asked to engage in a frustrating task (solving an unsolvable anagram). Persistence on this task served as a measure of self-control; state reactance was measured using Hong’s reactance proneness scale (Hong and Faedda 1996). Those who read the health (vs. taste) message felt higher reactance, which predicted lower persistence. Finally, we established through Study 5 that this health aversion effect is the strongest among those who least value the health goal. After presenting the health (taste) message, we measured participants’ self-control through persistence on squeezing a handgrip - ostensibly as a physical exercise task (Muraven et al 1998). In addition, we recorded the time each participant spent reading the message about spinach as a measure of healthy consumption behavior. Participants who were shown the health message and reported lower health goal importance performed worst in the handgrip exercise. The same pattern for results was found on the measure of time spent reading the message about spinach. Presumably, health communications are targeted toward consumers who do not consider healthiness as being important to them; yet, individuals who value the health goal less appear to be most resource depleted after viewing the health (vs. taste) message. These findings, in aggregate, highlight the need for health marketers to consider the unexpected backlash effects of communications that emphasize the health benefits of consuming healthy food.

REFERENCES


The Intensification Effect: Increasing Perceived Repetition Reduces Adaptation When Attending to Distinguishing Aspects
Nükhet Agar, Koc University, Turkey
Baler Bilgin, Koc University, Turkey

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Hedonic adaptation is defined as the drop in enjoyment of an experience with repeated exposures (Frederick and Loewenstein 1999). Because repetition is assumed to automatically translate into reduced enjoyment, existing research focused on reducing perceived repetition to reduce hedonic adaptation (Epstein et al. 2009; Redden 2008; Redden and Galak 2013). We question this assumption by proposing that the negative impact of perceived repetition is but one manifestation of its more general “intensifying” impact on experiences. We hence conceptualize each repetition of an experience as highlighting the aspects that people attend to. The consequence of increasing perceived repetition may be therefore increased or decreased hedonic adaptation, depending on the aspects one attends to. We believe that whether one focuses on non-distinguishing versus distinguishing aspects of an experience is an appropriate dimension to examine the proposed intensification effect.

We propose that when people focus on non-distinguishing aspects of an experience, increased perceived repetition serves to intensify their negative effect on enjoyment. This suggests that prior research that exclusively reported a negative effect of perceived repetition had, one way or another, participants focus on non-distinguishing aspects of the experience. Because this dimension has not been studied, prior studies have done nothing to control for the effect of such differential focus. Indeed, prior literature shows that when left alone, consumers are more likely to naturally attend to the non-distinguishing aspects of their experiences (Kahneman and Miller 1986; Festinger 1954). We find that this is also the case in the current setting, with participants who were left to their natural tendencies exhibiting similar rates of adaptation as those who were told to focus on non-distinguishing aspects of an experience.

What happens, however, when one focuses on the distinguishing aspects of their current experience? We contend that focusing on distinguishing aspects of an experience may extend enjoyment. If perceived repetition indeed has an intensification effect on enjoyment, as we propose, then increased perceived repetition may help to slow adaptation when attending to distinguishing aspects of an experience. In sum, perceived repetition may accelerate or decelerate adaptation, depending on whether one focuses on non-distinguishing or distinguishing aspects of an experience.

Experiment 1 (n=78) was a 2 (focus: control versus distinct) x 2 (repetition: high versus low) between-subjects design. Participants were told that they would listen to a song sample six times in a row, rating their enjoyment after each episode (101-point scale; 0=not at all, 100=very much). Participants were asked to focus on distinguishing aspects of their experience (the distinct condition), or were not given any instructions (the control condition). Perceived repetition was manipulated via an attention manipulation (cf. Epstein et al. 1997), with participants either observing (high repetition) or actively solving (low repetition) some math problems while listening to the song sample.

The perceived repetition manipulation worked as intended. While increased perceived repetition increased the rate of adaptation in the control condition ($\beta_{control}=3.19$, $F(1, 376)=3.99$, $p=.05$), it reduced adaptation in the distinct condition ($\beta_{distinct}=-.25$, $F(1, 376)=4.22$, $p=.04$). Stated differently, high (vs. low) repetition increased adaptation differences between distinct and control conditions ($\beta=4.64$, $F(1, 376)=6.62$, $p=.01$), supporting our intensification hypothesis.

Experiments 2A and 2B focused on the high repetition condition in Experiment 1. Experiment 2A (n=61) showed that forcing participants to focus on the non-distinct aspects of the song sample led to adaptation patterns similar to that in the control condition ($\beta_{control}=-3.75$ versus $\beta_{non-distinct}=-4.00$, $F(1,302)=.04$, $p=.85$), suggesting that consumers’ natural tendency may be to attend to non-distinguishing aspects of their experiences. In addition, we replicated the findings of the high repetition condition of Experiment 1, as those in the distinct condition had significantly lower hedonic adaptation rates compared to the non-distinct ($\beta_{distinct}=.11$ versus $\beta_{non-distinct}=-4.00$, $F(1,302)=7.83$, $p=.006$) and the control ($\beta_{distinct}=-3.75$, $F(1,302)=7.74$, $p=.006$) conditions.

Asking participants to focus on the distinguishing aspects of a song may have inadvertently increased their belief that it is a likeable song. Perhaps it is this implied likability of the song that led to its sustained enjoyment in the distinct condition. Experiment 2B (n=73) aimed to rule out this alternative explanation by asking about half of the participants to focus on the likeable aspects of the song sample, while the remaining half focused on its distinct aspects. We expected that focusing on distinct aspects would lead to slower adaptation than focusing on likeable aspects that are not necessarily distinct. Indeed, we found this to be the case ($\beta_{distinct}=-3.57$ versus $\beta_{non-distinct}=-1.03$, $F(1, 363)=4.20$, $p=.04$), ruling out this alternative explanation.

We hypothesized that focusing on distinctions (non-distinctions) increased (reduced) perceived variety in the category, a perception accentuated by perceived repetition. This in turn led to sustained (reduced) enjoyment. Experiment 3 (n=127) examined the proposed process using a 2 (repetition: high versus low) x 2 (focus: control versus distinct) between-subjects design with a different repetition manipulation. Replicating Experiment 1’s findings, we found a significant interaction ($\beta=-5.37$, $F(1, 609)=9.46$, $p=.002$); with increased perceived repetition increasing adaptation in the control condition ($\beta_{high-repetition}=-5.80$ versus $\beta_{low-repetition}=-3.13$, $F(1, 609)=5.14$, $p=.02$), but reducing adaptation in the distinct condition ($\beta_{high-repetition}=-1.01$ versus $\beta_{low-repetition}=-3.29$, $F(1, 609)=4.40$, $p=.04$).

In addition, we found that increased perceived repetition increased perceived variety in the distinct condition ($M_{low-repetition}=6.08$ versus $M_{high-repetition}=7.33$; $F(1, 126)=3.37$, $p=.07$), and reduced perceived variety in the control condition ($M_{low-repetition}=6.18$ versus $M_{high-repetition}=4.80$; $F(1, 126)=4.96$, $p=.03$). Importantly, perceived variety in the category mediated the interactional effect of repetition and focus on adaptation, where the increased repetition increased (decreased) variety perception in the distinct (control) condition, which then slowed down (enhanced) adaptation [Estimate:5.98, 1.55–15.12].

Our findings contribute to the adaptation literature by introducing the key insight that perceived repetition has an intensification effect on adaptation, suggesting that it does not always hurt the enjoyment of an experience. Attention to distinguishing vs. non-distinguishing aspects proved ideal to test this hypothesis. We also showed that the effect of perceived repetition on enjoyment occurs via its impact on perceived variety in a category. We believe it would be worthwhile for future research to further clarify the role perceived repetition plays in adaptation.
REFERENCES
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers sometimes anthropomorphize products, imbuing a nonhuman object with humanlike characteristics (Aggarwal and McGill 2007; Epley, Waytz, and Cacioppo 2007; Guthrie 1993). According to the SEEK model (Epley et al. 2007), one key basis of anthropomorphizing is the activation of knowledge structures about humans. The current research focuses on a similar cognitive process, and proposes a novel factor—beliefs about human-essence transfer—as a key antecedent of anthropomorphism. We propose that people are more likely to anthropomorphize products when given information about the person who created the product. We suggest that people believe that a person who creates a product endows that product with a small part of his or her own self. Once the creator is seen as residing in the product, the product is imbued with humaness. We call this the “Gepetto effect” after the classic children’s tale from Italy, The Adventures of Pinocchio (Collodi and Mussino 1968), which describes a woodcarver named Gepetto whose creation of a puppet becomes human.

We propose that consumers’ lay beliefs about the creation of a product often facilitate anthropomorphism of the product. The creation may be perceived to be the physical embodiment of the beliefs and character, the spirit and ambition, the goals and aspirations, and indeed, the humanness of its creator. Like conceiving a child is the unique instance where essence is transferred through one’s DNA to an offspring, the transfer of the creator’s essence to the product can be similarly perceived.

People often engage in magical thinking that a person has a hidden and unique essence composed of immaterial qualities that can leave one’s corporeal self and transfer itself on to an object through physical contact (Nemeroff and Rozin 1994). For instance, a T-shirt just tried on by a stranger is liked less and is less likely to be bought than when a T-shirt appears untouched (Argo, Dahl, and Morales 2006). We propose that touching may not be necessary because when an individual creates something, the individual is the origin and source of all causal forces acting upon the creation and is entirely responsible for the manifestation of those causal forces on the object. According to the property transmission hypothesis, “causes tend to impose their own properties on effect objects” (White 2009, p. 775). That is, a creator imposes his or her properties on a product. Further, the properties most likely to be transmitted are those that relate to perceptions of human essence. Hence, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1 When a product is seen as being created by a person, it is more likely to be anthropomorphized than when the product is not seen as being created by a person.

Empirical Evidence

Two studies test the hypothesis. Study 1 uses photographs of the actual creator of Roomba as well as the product itself, and creates six different morphs of the two pictures such that each succeeding morphed picture reduced the proportion of the creator’s image. Half the participants were told that the pictured individual was the creator and the other half were told the picture was of a random person. Participants viewed all 8 of the photos including the two pictures without the morph, and indicated the extent to which they saw the person or the product. Results show that participants ‘saw’ more of the person in the morphed photos when they thought the person was the creator of the product than when they thought that the person was a random individual, and this effect was significant when the visual of the person was less obvious.

Study 2 exposed participants to a brief description of four different products (Roomba, Deep Blue, Clocky (a wheeled alarm clock), and Pillow Mate (a torso-shaped pillow). Participants were asked to draw a sketch of the four products. Results revealed more anthropomorphized images were drawn when the participants thought that the product was created by a person than by a company – for three of the four product types.

In sum, across the two studies using different measures we find converging evidence in support of the premise that if a product is associated with a person as its creator, then that product is more likely to be anthropomorphized compared to a product that is not associated with its creator. This effect seems to occur because the essence of the creator gets transferred to the product through the very act of product creation.

Our research contributes to the burgeoning anthropomorphism literature by proposing a new antecedent of anthropomorphism. In addition to its theoretical value, our research highlighting the “Gepetto effect” has practical implications for marketers who may be able to encourage buyers to anthropomorphize inanimate products—via information that links the product with its creator.

REFERENCES


Collodi, Carlo and Attilio Mussino (1968), The Adventures of Pinocchio, Project Gutenberg.


Consumers’ Pro-Environmental Behaviors: The Role of Framing and Emotions
Cesare Amatulli, LUISS University, Italy
Matteo De Angelis, LUISS University, Italy
Alessandro M. Peluso, University of Salento, Italy
Isabella Soscia, SKEMA Business School, France
Richard P. Bagozzi, University of Michigan, USA
Gianluigi Guido, University of Salento, Italy

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Companies have been increasingly developing green (i.e., environmentally sustainable) products in order to attract consumers and be appreciated by the society at large (Olsen et al. 2014). Yet, despite the global relevance of the sustainability, little is known about the factors that might determine the effectiveness of communication strategies. Therefore, the issue of how sustainable products should be communicated to win consumers’ preferences represents an under-researched area of inquiry.

The present research investigates how different frames companies may use in their communications may produce different effects on consumers’ behaviors and pro-environmental attitudes. We first demonstrate that in communicating green products emphasizing positive social effects of environmentally sustainable behaviors (i.e., positive framing) activates pride, whereas emphasizing negative social effects of environmentally unsustainable behaviors (i.e., negative framing) activates shame (Bagozzi et al. 1999; Mizerski 1982; Soscia 2013, Tracy and Robins 2007). Moreover, we show that negative framing is more effective than positive framing at influencing consumers’ sustainable behaviors and attitudes.

Two separate studies test the effects of positive versus negative framings on environmentally sustainable consumers’ choices and attitudes. Study 1 explores the effect of message framing on environmentally sustainable choice. We manipulated the frame through hypothetical shopping situations involving the purchase of a green product, and then observed the effect of this manipulation on the tendency to choose that option. We also tested whether or not pride and shame mediated that effect, and whether or not the direct and indirect effects of the message frame on choice are moderated by personal concern for the environment. Study 2 shows that, when exposed to unsustainability-oriented stimuli, people feel a sense of shame that increases their pro-environmental attitudes. Moreover, the study analyzed whether or not consumers’ disposition to empathize with others (empathy as trait) moderated the effect of the framing used on shame and on individuals’ pro-environmental attitudes.

In Study 1 we used type of framing as independent variable, respondents’ choice as dependent variable, pride and shame as mediators, and concern for the environment as moderator. We estimated a moderated mediation model by using the PROCESS SPSS Macro (Hayes 2013). Regressing pride on the type of framing, environmental concern, and their interaction, we found a non-significant interaction between type of framing and environmental concern (p > .50). Regressing shame on the type of framing, environmental concern, and their interaction, in addition to a negative effect of type of framing (b = -.53, p < .001) and a positive effect of environmental concern (b = .25, p = .02), we found a significant type of framing × environmental concern interaction (b = -.25, p = .02). A simple slope analysis showed that, when concern for the environment was low (M – 1SD), the type of framing had no effect on shame (b = -.23, p = .22). Conversely, when concern for the environment was high (M + 1SD), reading a negatively framed scenario induced greater shame than reading a positively framed scenario (b = -.83, p < .001). To test whether or not shame transmits this interaction effect on choice, we estimated the effects of shame on choice, while controlling for type of framing. We found an effect of shame on choice that was positive and significant (b = .65, p = .002), while the effect of type framing was not significant (p > .20). More importantly, we found an indirect effect of the type of framing × environmental concern on choice, via shame, that was significant (b = -.16, 95% CI = -.47, -.02). The analysis also returned conditional indirect effects. When environmental concern was low (M – 1SD), reading a negatively framed, rather than a positively framed, scenario, had no significant effect on choice (b = -.15, p > .05). In contrast, when environmental concern was high (M + 1D), negatively framed scenario induced greater shame than positively framed one (b = -.54, 95% CI = -1.29, -.15).

In Study 2 we estimated the moderated mediation model by using the PROCESS SPSS Macro (Hayes 2013). We first regressed pride on framing; the results revealed a positive effect of framing on pride such that, compared to an unsustainability-oriented communication, a sustainability-oriented communication increased pride (b = .40, p = .013). We also regressed shame on the same independent variable by showing a negative effect such that, compared to a sustainability-oriented communication, an unsustainable-oriented communication made participants feel more ashamed (b = -.61, p < .001). Second, we regressed pro-environmental attitudes on both pride and shame (i.e., the mediators), in addition to framing, empathy, and their interaction. The results showed a positive and significant effect of shame (b = .33, p = .002) and empathy (b = .51, p < .001) on attitudes. More importantly, the analysis revealed a significant framing × empathy interaction (b = -.27, p = .04). To probe this interaction more closely, we examined this direct effect at conditional levels of empathy. When empathy was low (M – 1SD), sustainability-oriented communication, rather than an unsustainability-oriented one, increased consumers’ pro-environmental attitudes (b = .37, p = .04). In contrast, when empathy was high (M + 1SD), people’s attitudes did not vary as a function of whether communication was unsustainability- or sustainability-oriented (b = .16, p = .39). Furthermore, the analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of framing on pro-environmental attitudes, via shame, which was negative and significant (b = -.20, 95% CI = -.42, -.06), thus confirming that an unsustainability-oriented communication, compared to a sustainability-oriented one, induces greater shame, which in turn increases consumers’ pro-environmental attitudes. In contrast, the same indirect effect via pride was not significant (b = .04, p > .05).

Our studies show that negatively framed messages make consumers more willing to prefer environmentally friendly products than positively framed messages. This effect is mediated by shame, which thus appears to be a key emotional driver in sustainable communication. Therefore, to increase consumers’ pro-environmental attitudes and preferences for green products, marketers should develop communication strategies that focus on the negative consequences related to unsustainable behaviors.
REFERENCES


The Effect of Audience Expertise and Information Valence and WOM Transmission
Matteo De Angelis, Luiss University, Italy
Jonah Berger, University of Pennsylvania, USA
Chezy Ofir, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Scholars have investigated different factors shaping WOM conversations (see Berger 2014 for a review). One important element that can affect the type of information shared is the audience one talks to. For instance, when talking to close others, individuals may craft what they share in a different way than when talking to distant others. The issue of how audience shapes WOM communications has not received adequate attention so far.

Based on the idea that listeners can vary in their level of expertise on the topic at hand, we study the role of audience expertise in shaping WOM. Specifically, we investigate how talking to more or less expert others affects WOM valence. We rely on past work showing that both positive (e.g., Berger and Milkman 2012; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004) and negative WOM (Amabile 1983; Schlosser 2005) can help consumers project a positive image, and propose audience expertise as a factor explaining when consumers are more likely to share positive rather than negative information and when the opposite occurs.

Theory

Consumer prefer sharing positive WOM to signal their expertise to others (Packard and Wooten 2013) or to show they are smart shoppers (De Angelis et al. 2012) or bearers of good news (Berger and Milkman 2012). However, they prefer sharing negative WOM to show competence and knowledgability (Amabile 1983; Schlosser 2005). Thus, past research shows that consumers might self-enhance by sharing either positive or negative WOM. What is unknown is what makes them more likely to share positive WOM in some cases and negative WOM in others. We propose audience expertise as an element that can shed light on this issue.

While reality shows that consumers often craft their WOM messages to the audience they talk to, WOM literature has not given adequate attention to the issue of how audience shapes WOM, with the exception of a work by Chen and Berger (2013) showing that individuals talk about controversial topics with distant others rather than close others, and a work by Barasch and Berger (2014) showing that large audiences trigger sharing of self-presentational content while small audiences triggers sharing of content deemed useful for recipients.

We contribute to this literature by studying the effect of audience expertise on WOM. WOM research has focused on the expertise of the communicator, demonstrating that consumers often share WOM to signal their real (Wojnicki and Godes 2011) or ideal (Packard and Wooten 2013) expertise to others. We predict that consumers are more likely to engage in WOM after a positive than a positive experience when talking to expert others, whereas they are more likely to engage in WOM after a positive than a negative experience when talking to less expert others. We hypothesize this effect is explained by sharers’ desire to appear competent.

Methods and findings

Experiment 1 tested our hypothesis by randomly assigning 203 respondents to a 2 (WOM valence: positive vs. negative) x 3 (audience expertise: expert, non expert, control) between subjects design. Participants read a scenario about a car purchase situation, manipulated to be either positive or negative. To manipulate audience expertise, we had respondents imagine talking to either another person known to be expert on cars or to a person who doesn’t know much about cars, or to a person they know (control). Dependent variable was a 7-point measure of WOM likelihood.

Two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of audience expertise ($F(1, 197) = 10.79, p < .001$) and a significant WOM valence x audience expertise interaction effect ($F(1, 197) = 6.85, p < .001$): when talking to expert, WOM likelihood was higher after a negative than a positive experience ($M_{neg} = 5.97, SD = 1.03$ vs. $M_{pos} = 5.14, SD = 1.11, t(197) = 2.25, p < .03$), while no difference was observed when talking to non-expert ($M_{neg} = 4.42, SD = 1.99$ vs. $M_{pos} = 4.40, SD = 1.70, t(197) = .05, ns$). However, when audience expertise was unknown, WOM likelihood was higher after a positive than a negative experience ($M_{pos} = 5.81, SD = 1.22$ vs. $M_{neg} = 4.76, SD = 1.63, t(197) = 2.97, p < .001$).

Experiment 2 tested the mediating role of desire to appear competent. 177 respondents were randomly assigned to a 2 (WOM valence: positive vs. negative) x 3 (audience expertise: expert, non-expert, control) between subjects design. Compared to previous experiment, we changed the product (novels) and measured how respondents would feel if they happen to share their experience with the people described in the scenario using two 7-point measures (1 = totally disagree; 7 = totally agree): “I would be very much willing to appear knowledgeable,” and “I would be very much willing to show I have high standards in my evaluations” ($α = .84$).

Two-way ANOVA revealed a significant valence x expertise interaction ($F(1, 171) = 7.44, p < .001$). When talking to experts, WOM likelihood was higher after a negative than a positive experience ($M_{neg} = 5.07, SD = 1.48$ vs. $M_{pos} = 4.15, SD = 1.49, t(176) = 2.08, p < .04$), while no difference was observed for non expert ($M_{neg} = 3.89, SD = 2.11$ vs. $M_{pos} = 4.36, SD = 1.88, t(197) = 1.10, ns$). When audience expertise was unknown, however, WOM likelihood was higher after a positive than a negative experience ($M_{pos} = 5.32, SD = 1.22$ vs. $M_{neg} = 3.86, SD = 1.67, t(171) = 3.37, p < .001$).

Next, we ran a mediated moderation model, whereby we regressed WOM likelihood on audience expertise, WOM valence, their interaction, and the “desire to appear competent” (our mediator). The effect of the mediator on WOM likelihood was positive and significant ($b = .45, t(171) = 4.87, p < .001$). More importantly, we found a negative and significant indirect effect of expertise x valence ($b = -.34, 95% confidence interval = .87 and -.06$). This finding demonstrates that the desire to appear competent accounts for the differential impact of audience expertise and WOM valence on WOM likelihood.

REFERENCES


Context Effects in Word-Of-Mouth Communications:
The Effect of Crowdedness on Social Transmission

Irene Consiglio, Erasmus University, Netherlands
Matteo De Angeliis, Luis University, Italy
Michele Costabile, Luis University, Italy

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The development of new technologies has increased the amount of word-of-mouth (WOM) that occurs in places where the sharer is surrounded by others. For instance, consumers often engage in WOM in stores, by posting on social media their comments about what they have just bought. Events and conferences often encourage participants to share information by posting content on social media to increase buzz. In these cases, consumers share information in places that can be particularly crowded.

In this research, we investigate the effect of crowdedness on the likelihood to share information. We argue that people who are in more crowded places might feel to be less in control over the environment around them than people who are in less crowded places. When individuals perceive that their personal control is threatened, they are likely to engage in behaviors aimed at restoring it (Kay et al. 2010; Langer 1975), and engaging in WOM may be one means for individuals to reaffirm their sense of control. Individuals engage in WOM to shape the impression others have of them (Berger and Heath 2007), to give advice (Fitzsimons and Lehmann 2004), and to instrumentally express their own personality in social contexts (Belk 1988; Berger 2014; Sirgy 1982), thus WOM may help individuals re-establish a sense of influence and control. We hypothesize that when being in crowded places, individuals experience a loss of control, which in turn makes them more likely to share information with others than when they are in less crowded places.

In study 1, 101 respondents from an online subject pool were required to be in a public space and to use a GPS enabled hand-held device (such as a smartphone or a tablet) such that they could verify their approximate location. First, respondents indicated where they were completing the survey (bar, library, café, restaurant, etc.) Next, they rated how noisy and crowded their location was. Subsequently, respondents read an article about a product, and they indicated how they rated how crowded and noisy the lab room was.

Reactance is a motivational state that is aroused when a behavioral freedom – such as personal control – is threatened or eliminated, and that in turn triggers behaviors aimed at restoring this freedom (Brehm 1966; Wicklund 1976). Trait reactance is the chronic individual tendency to experience reactance: highly reactant individuals tend to react more strongly to threats to their freedom (Brehm and Brehm 1981). For example, consumers with high chronic reactance who experience physical confinement have been shown to make more varied product choices as a way to reassert their behavioral freedom, as compared to individuals with lower chronic reactance (Levav and Zhu 2009). Thus, if the effect of crowdedness on word-of-mouth is driven by the desire to compensate for a perceived loss of control, then the positive indirect effect of crowdedness through perceived control should be observed among those individuals who have a higher chronic reactance, because these individuals should be strongly motivated to reestablish their control.

As hypothesized, as crowdedness increased, respondents perceived that they had less control ($B = -.31, t(93) = -3.36, p = .001$). In turn, a greater lack of control led to greater likelihood to share, but only among respondents who had high chronic reactance—there was an interaction between perceived control and reactance ($B = -0.42, t(89) = -2.53, p < .05$), and mediation analysis revealed a significant mediation for participants high in reactance (+1SD; LLCI > 0, ULCLI = .31). There was also a significant 95% bootstrap confidence interval for participants low in reactance (-1SD; -0.38, < 0). Perceived crowdedness was correlated with noise ($r = .79, p < .001$), but all the effects outlined above hold even when noise is entered as a covariate in the model. These results suggest that the positive effect of crowdedness on sharing, mediated by perceived control, occurs among highly reactant people. Crowdedness instills a perception of lack of control, that in turn encourages greater sharing, among those people who are chronically more motivated to replenish their lost personal control.

In study 2, we tested our predictions by manipulating crowdedness. 119 business administration students participated in this study in exchange for course credit. Participants were assigned to one of two conditions: in the crowdedness condition, 6-8 participants were seated in a 4-person lab room; in the control condition, participants were seated in two adjacent 4-person lab rooms. First, participants read the same article as in study 1 and reported the likelihood that they would share that article with others. Next, they completed a short version of the PANAS (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988) and an arousal measure (Thayer 1989). Subsequently, participants completed a scale that measured their chronic need for control (Burger and Cooper 1979), and the same measure of reactance as in study 1. Finally, participants rated how crowded and noisy the lab room was.

Results revealed a significant two-way interaction between crowdedness condition and need for control ($B = 1.09, t(115) = 1.91, p = .01$): participants with high need for control (+1SD) were more likely to share the product information when they were in a crowded room, compared to their counterparts who were in a less crowded room ($B = 1.27, t(115) = 2.85, p < .01$). There was no effect for crowdedness among participants with low need for control ($p > .29$). Noise, negative affect, and arousal were similar between conditions, thus they are unlikely to explain the observed effects.

This research sheds light on the effect of the physical context in which WOM occurs on WOM sharers’ behavior, and it suggests that information sharing can be an important means through which individuals can restore a lost sense of control. Our work has also interesting managerial implications. Marketing practitioners can address targeted real-time communications to consumers when they are in crowded spaces or push their social media campaigns in places that a high number of people attend everyday (e.g., trains or metro stations).

REFERENCES
454 / Context Effects in Word-Of-Mouth Communications: The Effect of Crowdedness on Social Transmission


The Role of Desires to Trade on Favorable Terms in Producing the Endowment Effect

Laurence Ashworth, Queen’s University, Canada
Peter Darke, York University, Canada
Lindsay McShane, Carleton University, Canada
Tiffany Vu, University of Michigan, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Standard explanations for the endowment effect suggest that product owners are either averse to the loss of their product (and therefore demand more to give it up) (Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1986, 1991) or that ownership of the product imbues it with some additional value due to its association with the self (Dommers and Swaminathan 2012; Morewedge et al. 2009; Shu and Peck 2011). The current research investigates another possibility: that price discrepancies between owners and non-owners might be importantly influenced by the desire to trade on favorable terms. Specifically, we suggest that, when in a trading position (i.e., exchanging the product for money or vice versa), individuals will only agree to trade if they are sufficiently motivated to do so. We predict that they do this by setting prices at which they would be happy to trade. Trading non-owners (buyers) can do this by setting maximum WTP below what the product is actually worth to them. Trading owners (sellers) can do this by setting minimum selling prices above their subjective valuation. In short, we suggest that traders’ prices are not those at which they are indifferent between trading and not trading, but are, in fact, prices at which they would prefer to trade. Across three studies, we test this idea by comparing valuation in trading and non-trading contexts.

Study 1

Ninety-three students participated in a 2 (Owner vs. Non-Owner) x 2 (Trading vs. Non-Trading) between-subjects design. Participants were first endowed with a product (a chocolate bar) or not (Ownership). Trading conditions were identical to standard buyer/seller conditions. In the Non-Trading conditions, non-owners were identical to “choosers” in previous research (i.e., they chose between receiving money or the product). In contrast, non-trading owners were told they would have to choose between losing money and losing their chocolate bar. This is a novel condition that puts owners in an objectively identical condition to buyers, but which should not be construed as trading. All participants indicated product valuation using an identical incentive compatible procedure. Our primary prediction was that the difference between owners and non-owners would be reduced when not trading.

A main effect of Ownership on valuation revealed the standard endowment effect ($M_s = $2.52 vs. $1.94; $F(1, 89) = 4.08, p < .05$). This was qualified, however, by a significant Ownership by Trading interaction ($F(1, 89) = 30.62, p < .001$). Consistent with prior research, sellers valued the product more than buyers ($M_s = $3.63 vs. $1.46; $F(1, 89) = 30.18, p < .001$). In contrast, non-trading owners – who had nevertheless been endowed with the product – valued it less than non-trading non-owners ($M_s = $1.40 vs. $2.40; $p < .05$) in a complete (unexpected) reversal of the endowment effect. Note that non-trading owners also valued it no more than buyers ($M_s = $1.40 vs. $1.46; $p > .60$). This is an important comparison because both of these groups were in objectively identical positions.

Study 2: Removing a Confound

The purpose of Study 2 was to replicate the previous finding and to examine the unexpected reversal. One possibility was that we may have inadvertently caused non-trading owners to construe their situation as that of a buyer (note that we should still have seen the effects of loss aversion/ownership, which we did not). To address this, we repeated the previous design, adding one condition, leading to a 2 (Ownership) x 3 (Trading: Trading, Non-Trading, Forfeiting) between-subjects experiment. Non-Trading conditions were identical to the previous study. In the Forfeiting conditions, participants were asked how much less than $5 they would be willing to receive in order not to lose their chocolate bar (owners) or to receive a chocolate bar (non-owners). This was designed to prevent owners, in particular, from re-construing their circumstances as buyers. We used the same incentive compatible procedure in all conditions.

We replicated exactly the findings from Study 1: trading owners (sellers) valued the product more than trading non-owners (buyers) ($M_s = $2.52 vs. $1.21; $F(1, 192) = 21.25, p < .001$). Non-trading owners valued the product less than non-trading non-owners, as per the previous experiment ($M_s = $1.90 vs. $1.82; $F(1, 192) = 12.39, p < .001$). Most importantly, there was no effect of ownership in the new Forfeiting condition ($M_s = $1.98 vs. $1.69; $F < 1$), consistent with predictions.

Study 3: Converging Evidence

The final study provided another test of trading motivation, but also kept all participants in objectively identical positions (unlike our previous studies). First, we compared the standard seller/chooser comparisons that have been used to demonstrate endowment, and which put participants in objectively identical positions. We argued that the standard chooser conditions should not involve any trading motivation, but that seller conditions would. In order to remove the trading motivation from sellers (yet keep owners and non-owners in otherwise identical positions) we put owners and non-owners in a second condition in which we elicited valuation by telling participants that they would randomly win an amount from the list (the same list of amounts used in the previous studies). Non-owners were told they would have the choice of forfeiting their winnings in order to receive a chocolate bar, and that they should indicate what they would do for each amount on the list ($0-$4 in 25c increments as in all studies). Owners were told they could only keep their winnings or the chocolate bar (but not both), and should indicate their choice for each amount. This resulted in a 2 (Ownership) x 2 (Receive vs. Win) between-subjects experiment in which all participants were in objectively identical positions.

There was a significant interaction on product valuation ($F(1, 135) = 5.79, p < .05$). Follow-up analyses revealed the standard endowment effect when comparing sellers to choosers (i.e., the effect of ownership in the “receive” conditions) ($M_s = $2.34 vs. $1.48; $F(1, 135) = 15.99, p < .001$). However, there was no detectable effect of ownership in the win conditions ($M_s = $1.57 vs. $1.40; $F < 1$). Owner and non-owner valuation in the win conditions were also no different than valuation in the chooser conditions ($M_s = $1.57 and $1.40 vs. $1.48; $F < 1$), consistent with the idea that all three conditions lacked a trading motivation.
REFERENCES
Identity Refusal and the Non-Drinking Self
Emma Banister, Manchester University, UK
Maria Piacentini, Lancaster University, UK
Anthony Grimes, Manchester University, UK

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

This paper focuses on the identity refusal work of consumers; a refusal to accept a collective (‘non-drinker’) identity. Prior academic studies have invariably positioned non-drinkers in terms of collective identities based on their (non) drinking behaviors and motivations. In contrast we seek to develop understanding of the means by which non-drinkers defy or refuse the collective identity that is bestowed upon them, that of ‘the non-drinker’.

Conceptual framing

We frame our study within CCT-oriented work which has focused on the way in which marginalized groups seek to develop legitimate and positive collective identities (e.g. Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013); adopt practices of demythologization in order to protect themselves from identity devaluation (Arsel & Thompson, 2011); and demonstrate symbolic identities through the refusal of tastes (Wilk, 1997). Prior work provides examples of contexts where consumers are drawn to a particular practice, identity or brand yet disagree with the connotations, associations or meanings that others link to their consumption choices.

Non-drinkers are invariably positioned in terms of collective identities based on their (non) drinking behaviors and motivations (e.g. Nairn et al., 2006). The identity position as a non-drinker is, therefore, primarily understood as a spoiled identity (Goffman, 2009), which necessitates the employment of strategies for stigma management (Herman-Kinney & Kinney, 2013). While a number of studies have explored identity work in relation to non-drinking practices, these studies do not identify circumstances where those who do not drink question their assigned identity as a non-drinker; suggesting an acceptance of the (non-drinking) identity yet the challenge of what to do with it, how to re-position it. In contrast the concept of identity refusal has received little research attention. We question whether non-drinking is (always) perceived as an effective or relevant means of categorization by non-drinkers themselves, and consider this question in relation to work focused on consumption communities.

For some alcohol abstainers, not consuming alcohol can be an integral part of an important collective identity. However, under what conditions do consumers refuse a collective identity, perceiving it as an irrelevant or unwarranted identity marker? In community terms, some non-drinkers view the ‘non-drinking’ community as too heterogeneous (Thomas et al., 2014) to suggest shared experience. While communities of practice, by definition, suggest shared practices (e.g. not drinking alcohol), these shared practices should reflect a common endeavor (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). The focus of our study is on those consumers who ‘happen’ to share practices with others (not drinking alcohol) but reject commonalities, shared meanings, experiences and endeavors; essentially they resist the notion that not drinking alcohol is relevant to their identity work.

Methods

Eighteen undergraduate students participated in interviews. These varied in length from 45 minutes to two hours. An agreed approximate interview schedule was compiled, but our aim was to have an informed conversation with participants, accepting that their varied experiences would lead to diverse discussions.

Findings and discussion

Our findings reveal that non-drinkers specifically refuse understandings that position their non-drinking practices as central to their identity work, a set of practices that we term ‘identity refusal’. We elaborate this understanding with four themes: (1) Irrelevant identity marker: rejection of the ‘community’ of non-drinkers; (2) A matter of taste, not a moral judgment; (3) An identity marker but not relevant to me; (4) Concealment: the secret non-drinking self. These themes range from a complete rejection of the relevance of the non-drinker as an identity marker (1), to the concealment of non-drinking practices (4), a concealment that provides support for the existence of a non-drinking community with associated practices.

We demonstrate that identity refusal can be understood as a form of distancing from the perceived community of practice of the non-drinker. We reveal a complexity around defining ‘otherness’. We demonstrate that for some non-drinkers, it is non-drinkers who are ‘othered’ and viewed as more alien than drinkers. We therefore demonstrate that ‘otherness’ or difference is constructed in relation to consumers, but also in relation to other non-consumers.

We question whether alcohol refusal can be understood as a personal act of resistance (incorporating symbolic associations), regardless of the route to abstention and whether or not there are conscious political/ideological motivations (Portwood-Stacer, 2013). For some non-drinkers, the potential ‘misreading’ emerges from them not consuming something that has become normalized within their wider culture. The identity that they distance themselves from frustrates them, because they do not see it as their own making. Their refusal to embrace the identity, however, risks providing tacit support for the negative connotations (e.g. not social) and an acceptance that these associations are relevant to abstainers more generally. This risks marginalizing non-drinkers further and emphasizing abstainers’ positioning as against the norm, and is a key concern for public policy and social marketing in this context.

It is clear there is not one unified, homogeneous community of non-drinkers, and our informants demonstrate their refusal to be identified in this way. From a public policy point of view we need to be more open and informed to the heterogeneity that exists within non-drinkers (Thomas et al, 2013), and indeed what value emerges from this identification at all, since some people (such as our first category of informants) refuse to be identified in these terms.

REFERENCES


A Liquid Perspective of Consumption
Fleura Bardhi, Cass Business School, City University London, UK
Giana Eckhardt, Royal Holloway University, UK

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In this paper we conceptualize a new theoretical perspective of consumption we call liquid consumption. A range of consumption phenomena has emerged during the last decade that require new ways of conceptualizing and thinking about consumer behavior, such as global mobilities (Bardhi, Eckhardt and Arnould 2012), the sharing economy and access based consumption (Belk 2010; Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Chen 2009; Lambent and Rose 2012), digital consumption (Belk 2013); liquid organizations (Kociatkiewics and Kos- tera 2014), the rise of fast fashion (Samsoie and Bardhi 2014), and liquid art (Bauman 2007c). These phenomena challenge the foundations of our existing conceptualization of consumer behavior, including the centrality of possessions and the dominance of ownership, the nature of relationship to objects (such as notions of attachment, commitment, and loyalty), the raison d’etre of consumption communities, and the nature of value derived in consumption. To better conceptualize these changes, we propose using a liquid approach to understanding consumption, which is defined as having the following four characteristics:

1. No singularization of consumption objects. Consumers avoid identification with objects and are not necessarily looking to extend the self.
2. Situational value of consumption, which highlights the flexible rather than the solid, rigid or enduring nature of relationships or practices.
3. Use value dominates, in contrast to linking or identity value.
4. Dematerialization: a focus on the immaterial and access over ownership and possession. Value is placed on ‘lightness,’ in contrast to the economic, physical, emotional and social obligations/burden of ownership and materiality.

The liquid perspective of consumption is inspired by and anchored in the notion of liquid modernity, a social ontology of contemporary modernity put forth by the work of the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2000, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2011). Liquid modernity is a social condition where social structures are no longer stable or long-term, and thus cannot serve as “frames of reference for human actions and long-term projects” (Bauman 2007a, 1). It characterizes contemporary society as an age of individualization and uncertainty, dominated by instrumental rationality and fragmentation of life and identity. Liquid modernity is characterized as a chaotic continuation of modernity where a person can shift from one social position to another in a fluid manner. What is valued is flexibility, movement, lightness, access and speed rather than size, weight, fixity, ownership and locational control.

We propose that conceptualizing consumption as liquid has important implications for how we understand materiality, social distinction, the nature of consumption relationships, and consumer ethics. In liquid modernity, consumer identity is liquid and materiality needs to enable fluidity of lifestyle and movements between identity projects. Thus, we derive four implications for consumer attachment to objects: 1) the temporality of the relationship to materiality; 2) emphasis on use-value; 3) dematerialization and the increased value of access; and 4) emergence of liquid materiality. Further, we maintain that consumers are attached/anchored to practices rather than objects, and a liquid perspective is able to account for this shift. Further, a liquid perspective has important implications for understanding social distinction, one of the cornerstones of how we understand the purpose of consumption within daily life. As a social ontology, liquidity opposes the assumption of static social structures, including class. New forms of distinction have emerged. Bauman (2000) proposes that individual freedom rather than class has emerged as the axis of social distinction. Those who are free from commitments will gain stature in society, as compared to those anchored to people, places or things. It is suggested that geographic mobility will also be key in defining the new elites. Network capital rises in importance (Urry 2007), and conspicuous consumption decreases in importance (Eckhardt, Belk and Wilson 2015).

Regarding consumer relationships, the new ontology suggests that liquid relationships are temporary, bonds are loose and guided by instrumentality without commitment. Ephemeral relationships to products and brands as well as among consumers are valued rather than traditional conceptualizations of consumer loyalty and commitment. Finally, with regards to consumer ethics, it is challenging to be an ethical consumer in liquidity. Morality and social structures are dissolving (Bauman 2000), and there is not a solid base of morals to turn to for guidance. In a liquid consumer culture, one’s subjectivity is that of a consumer; one cannot escape being a consumer. Thus, one cannot be ethical as understood outside of consumer culture. To that extent, liquid consumption provides an explanation for the much discussed gap between attitudes and behaviors in the sphere of ethical consumption (Deviney, Auger and Eckhardt 2010).

A liquid view of consumption also has implications for a variety of other consumer research domains, such as consumer welfare, poor and disadvantages consumers, consumer governance, consumer surveillance, and how consumers use space. We unfold these implications and suggest a future research agenda that takes these into account. We also note that, contrary to Bauman, we do not see liquid consumption as an evolutionary imperative, and we recognize that some areas of the world and of consumption need to be solid to support a liquid lifestyle. We conclude by articulating the boundary conditions of liquid consumption and do not argue that all consumption is liquid. In sum, where the value lies in the consumption process is shifting, as is consumer subjectivity, and a liquid ontology is needed to understand and theorize these shifts.

REFERENCES


Examining the Global Boundaries of Mass Customization:
Conventional Configuration Procedures Clash with Holistic Information Processing
Emanuel de Bollis, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland
Christian Hildebrand, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland
Kenichi Ito, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
Andreas Herrmann, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland
Bernd Schmitt, Columbia University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Prior research revealed that information processing is inherently tied to an individual's cultural background. Specifically, Easterners share the belief that different pieces of information coexist independently and thus process visual information more holistically, whereas Westerners share the belief that each item exists autonomously and therefore process information more analytically (Nisbett and Masuda 2003). Companies that provide similar user interfaces to consumers across markets do not take these important cross-cultural differences into account and may not market their products most effectively (Haig 2011).

This shortcoming is particularly pronounced for product self-design systems that allow consumers to express their unique preferences (Simonson 2005). While the popularity of such customization systems is increasing among consumers, manufacturers still employ nearly identical user interfaces around the globe. For example, consumers configuring an automobile at Audi's country-specific websites in North America, Europe, or Asia always walk through exactly the same configuration process: first prospective car buyers select a model, an exterior color, and their preferred rims, followed by a number of interior features and add-ons. We propose, and find support based on both lab and field data, that such attribute-by-attribute customization (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer 2009) is not uniformly beneficial to all consumers; they may be effective for Western consumers but less so for East Asians, given their habitual, more holistic information processing style.

In study 1, which examined whether conventional attribute-by-attribute customization may be suboptimal for East Asian consumers (e.g., Japanese or Chinese), we collected field data in cooperation with a large European car manufacturer. The key dependent measure was the conversion rate of customers when configuring a car online. With a large European car manufacturer. The key dependent measure was the conversion rate of customers when configuring a car online. In line with our predictions, study 2 (N=142) revealed that when Singaporeans (vs. Germans) used the prespecified (vs. attribute-wise) choice architecture, they experienced an increased ability to mentally simulate using the car, and were more satisfied with their choice. In line with our prediction, these effects were moderated by consumers' information processing styles such that the influence of a prespecified choice architecture was amplified for consumers with a more holistic processing style and vice versa. In study 3, we tested whether priming consumers with their habitual processing style (i.e., priming Easterners holistically and Westerners analytically using the Navon letters task; Förster 2009) may offset the detrimental effects of an attribute-by-attribute choice architecture. As predicted, study 3 (N=713) revealed that priming Singaporeans with a holistic processing style before using the attribute-by-attribute architecture increased mental simulation as well as choice satisfaction. For Germans, priming them with an analytic processing style before using the prespecified choice architecture also increased mental simulation and choice satisfaction. In sum, priming consumers with their habitual processing style increased their experience with rather unfamiliar customization formats. In a final study, we aimed to replicate the previous findings by employing a more realistic priming technique. We therefore created two 45s videos based on the company’s TV commercials that were displayed without sound to reduce confounds. The “holistic video” included scenes that are closely related to holistic perceptions by focusing on overall broad-based characteristics of a car, such as power and safety. In contrast, the “analytic video” included scenes highlighting single product items, such as xenon headlights and features of the multimedia system. A pretest (N=202) confirmed the intended priming effect of the videos on the Kimchi similarity task and also revealed that consumers remembered more single car items after being primed with the analytic video. Using these realistic stimuli, study 3 (N=853) replicated the previous effects; the priming of habitual processing styles increased consumers' satisfaction with their product if they used a customization format that is not tailored to their habitual mode of information processing.

This research provides evidence that firms can benefit from tailoring the provided choice architecture to customers’ culture-specific information processing styles, therefore contributing to both the emerging field of cross-cultural consumer psychology and marketing (Burton 2009). Thus, consumers’ information processing styles establish an important boundary condition for the success of choice architectures in international markets. Given the increasing individualization of East Asian markets and the constant rise of mass customization, the current research provides a new lens on how culture-specific information processing can be aligned with interactive choice environments.
REFERENCES
The Cue-of-the-Cloud Effect: When Cues of Online Information Availability Increase Purchase Intentions and Choice
Rajesh Bhargave, University of Texas at San Antonio, USA
Antonia Mantonakis, Brock University, Canada
Katherine White, University of British Columbia, Canada

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Cues that highlight the presence of online product information are commonplace in offline purchase settings. For instance, salespeople or signage at retail stores mention product websites. We refer to such reminders as a ‘cue-of-the-cloud,’ and we examine the downstream consequences of these cues on consumers’ offline decision making. While past work has shown how reminders of the presence of online information have negative consequences (Sparrow, Liu, and Wegner 2011), we propose and find that when consumers absorb relatively large amounts of unfamiliar product information in offline purchase settings, a reminder of online content can enhance purchase intentions and choices. This occurs even when consumers do not visit the online site. We show this effect across four studies, including two studies that take place in a real purchase setting.

Our theoretical framework proposes that this “cue-of-the-cloud effect” is driven by a sense of cognitive ease. A reminder of the presence of online information enhances consumers’ feeling that the currently given information is easy to process. More specifically, when absorbing abundant product information that could de-motivate or confuse (Eppler and Mengis 2004; Jacoby 1977, 1984; Malhotra 1982), a cue-of-the-cloud leads consumers to feel that even if they do not know this information themselves, they can conveniently get this information externally. The information is “up there,” in the cloud, and it need not be stored locally, in one’s own mind. In turn, this reduced burden increases the sense of ease with handling the information, because the mind is freed up to address the information directly at hand. Importantly, we argue that this feeling of cognitive ease should be less likely to actualize when cued by non-Internet-related sources of information (e.g., reading printed brochures). We contend that the Internet is an extensive and omnipresent information source, and therefore may serve as an especially powerful cue of information availability (Ward 2013).

In our studies, we also demonstrate boundary conditions of the effect and replicate past findings of a negative influence of a cue-of-the-cloud (Sparrow et al. 2011). We compare the effects of a cue-of-the-cloud in low and high information environments, in which consumers are absorbing abundant (vs. relatively little) product information during the offline purchasing decision. The positive effect of a cue-of-the-cloud on purchase intentions and choices is more pronounced in high information environments. In contrast, we show that in low information environments, a cue-of-cloud can actually diminish purchase intentions and choices, because the cue draws attention to the limited amount of information offered with the product.

Study 1 was a field study at a winery involving a 2 (product information: low-detail vs. high-detail) x 2 (cue-of-the-cloud vs. no-cue) between-subjects design. Customers were greeted by winery staff who either told a lot of details about the wine, or very little detail. In another between-subjects manipulation, customers were either reminded that the winery’s information was available online, or no such reminder was provided. This cue occurred before the wine information was presented. Consistent with our prediction, we observed a significant two-way interaction between the manipulations (F(1, 129) = 8.59, p <.01). In the high-detail script, average revenue per customer was higher with the cue (M = $25.28) versus without the cue (M = $14.20; t(129) = 6.89, p <.01), but this effect was attenuated (and directionally reversed) with the low-detail script (M_cue = $10.86 vs. M_no-cue = $18.95).

In Study 2, we sought to demonstrate that a cue-of-cloud has a more pronounced effect on purchase intentions compared to a cue of a non-Internet information source. Customers at a winery festival were presented a sampling and information about a new wine before responding to a survey. In a three-cell between-subjects manipulation, customers were told either that (i) the wine information is online, (ii) the wine information is available in a printed sheet, or (iii) no cue was provided. Customers rated purchase intention for the focal wine (7-point scale) and indicated (yes/no) whether the sampling provided sufficient explanation about this wine. Customers that perceived the given information as sufficient in explanation showed greater purchase intentions in the cue-of-the-cloud condition (M = 5.46) versus the information sheet (M = 4.97) and no-cue (M = 4.60) conditions. In contrast, customers that thought that the given information was insufficient had lower purchase intentions in the cue-of-the-cloud condition (M = 3.86) versus the other conditions (M_info-sheet = 4.18, M_no-cue = 4.39).

Study 3, involving a scenario about a sleep aid product, demonstrated how consumers interpret an unspecified cue-of-the-cloud that merely mentions a website and how altering statements that accompany the cue could moderate the effects. We measured purchase intentions after presenting product information and the cue-of-the-cloud, both manipulated between-subjects. In high-detail conditions, purchase intentions were higher with an unspecified cue-of-the-cloud (M_cue = 4.86 vs. M_no-cue = 3.89), but this effect was reversed in low-detail conditions (M_cue = 3.76 vs. M_no-cue = 4.14), similar to our earlier studies. Further, study 3 showed that an unspecified cue-of-the-cloud, which only mentions the presence of a website, is by default interpreted as a cue that the same, given information is available to access online. When we presented a cue indicating that even more product information is available online, then this mentioning of the website actually reduced purchase intentions.

Study 4 tested the process mechanism through a mediation analysis. Participants read a winery scenario, similar to study 1, and indicated their intention to purchase wine. In high-detail conditions, purchase intentions were higher with the cue-of-the-cloud (M_cue = 5.92 vs. M_no-cue = 4.68), but this effect was attenuated in low-detail conditions (M_cue = 5.36 vs. M_no-cue = 5.20), similar to our earlier studies. Further, study 3 showed that an unspecified cue-of-the-cloud, which only mentions the presence of a website, is by default interpreted as a cue that the same, given information is available to access online. When we presented a cue indicating that even more product information is available online, then this mentioning of the website actually reduced purchase intentions.

Taken together, this work demonstrates how the Internet can affect consumers’ information processing, purchase intentions, and choices in offline settings. Our results can help managers by providing guidelines regarding when a cue-of-the-cloud is a suitable tactic, taking into account the types of consumers targeted, the information environment, and other elements of the purchase context.
REFERENCES


Rebel with a (Profit) Cause: How Rebellious Brand Positioning Leads to the Perceived Coolness
Alessandro Biraglia, University of Leeds, UK
J. Joško Brakus, University of Leeds, UK

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Coolness has been studied by scholars from different disciplines: semiotics (Danesi, 1994), psychology (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2012), and consumer research (Warren and Campbell, 2014). Before its commercialization, the concept of coolness was originally related to rebellious attitudes and behaviors (Frank, 1997). We contribute to the literature on coolness by linking rebellious behaviors to disadvantaged financial, social or cultural backgrounds. Such backgrounds are often presented in the companies’ narratives about the background of their founders (e.g., Steve Jobs “home brewing” computers in a garage). Gladwell (2013) refers to people with disadvantaged backgrounds who ultimately managed to be successful as “David,” alluding to the young shepherd who defeated the giant Goliath in the episode from the Bible.

Telling stories about a disadvantaged background and narrating how difficult and hard was for the owner to establish the venture has been shown to increase consumers’ connection with the brands (Paharia et al., 2011). We claim that when a brand is positioned in a rebellious way, consumers will perceive the brand as cooler if the brand has a disadvantaged rather than and advantaged biography, because disadvantaged brand biography seems more congruent with rebellious positioning.

We argue that brand authenticity mediates this relationship. Napoli and colleagues (2014) point out how consumers perceive a company as authentic if they think that it consistently behaves in accordance with its values and beliefs. In other words, the more a brand acts in congruence with these values at all stages—production, promotion, or customer care—, the more this brand is perceived as authentic by consumers. We believe that for a rebellious brand being perceived as an underdog may justify acting against the mainstream rules in order to succeed, increasing the authenticity of the rebellious claim and boosting, in turn, coolness.

Consumers may, nevertheless, evaluate rebelliousness in different ways depending on how important it is for them to be connected with or to be independent from other consumers. We therefore argue that self-construal can act as a potential moderator of the relationship between rebelliousness and brand authenticity, with consumers with higher level of independence finding the rebellious positioning more diagnostic (Aaker, 2000).

We conducted five experiments to test the hypotheses. In Experiment 1 (n = 116) we presented respondents with four descriptions of a person, manipulating his background (disadvantaged vs. advantaged) and his behaviour (rebellious vs. compliant). We found that the interaction between a disadvantaged background and a rebellious behaviour significantly impacts on the perception of coolness ($M_{\text{Disadvantaged, rebellious}} = 3.46, M_{\text{Advantaged, rebellious}} = 2.67; M_{\text{Disadvantaged, compliant}} = 2.48, M_{\text{Advantaged, compliant}} = 2.80; F(1, 112) = 4.13, p < .05$).

This result was replicated in Experiment 2 (n = 150), asking respondents to evaluate the coolness of a painting called “Revolution.” We found that an artist’s disadvantaged background significantly influences perceived coolness of the painting ($M_{\text{Disadvantaged}} = 4.12, M_{\text{Advantaged}} = 3.58, F(1, 149) = 5.14, p < .05$). We also introduced feedback about the authenticity of the artist inner feelings through the comment of an art critic. Results showed that a negative feedback about the authenticity of the artist inner feelings influences the perception of an artist with an advantaged background, but not the one with a disadvantaged background ($M_{\text{Disadvantaged, advantaged}} = 3.48, M_{\text{Advantaged, advantaged}} = 3.98, M_{\text{Control, advantaged}} = 3.28; M_{\text{Disadvantaged, disadvantaged}} = 4.38 vs. $M_{\text{Advantaged, disadvantaged}} = 3.68 vs. M_{\text{Control, disadvantaged}} = 4.36, F(2, 143) = 3.59, p < .05$).

In Experiment 3 (n = 160) and Experiment 4 (n = 127) we found the same effect of the previous two studies in a marketing context, testing the relationship between a disadvantaged company background and coolness (Experiment 3: $M_{\text{David}} = 4.74; M_{\text{Goliath}} = 3.27; M_{\text{Control}} = 3.98; F(2, 157) = 10.62, p < .000$). In Experiment 4, we also tested if this condition influences Coolness when the company becomes a big multinational corporation after having started from humble origins through a brand biography named Rags to Riches. The results confirmed this effect ($M_{\text{Goliath}} = 3.69; M_{\text{David}} = 4.83; M_{\text{Rags to Riches}} = 5.12; F (2, 125) = 5.34, p < .001$). Notably, the Goliath and Rags to Riches conditions contained the same information about company performance and sales, differing only for the presence of a disadvantaged brand biography in the latter.

We then tested the mediating role of brand authenticity on the relationship between perceived rebelliousness and perceived coolness of the brand together with the moderating role of consumer independence in a moderated mediation analysis (Hayes, 2013). Results showed that perceived authenticity indeed mediated the direct effect of rebelliousness on coolness and that consumers’ level of independence moderated the relationship between rebelliousness and authenticity.

Lastly, Experiment 5 (n = 127) examines the relationship between the disadvantaged company background and the perception of coolness in the context of more functional products (appliances). Notably, the effect of the company biography across conditions remained significant ($M_{\text{David}} = 4.88; M_{\text{Goliath}} = 4.21; F (1, 126) = 6.40, p < .05$). Also, when asked if it was appropriate to advertise the product as rebellious, the respondents in the David condition expressed a significantly higher agreement than the respondents exposed to the Goliath condition ($M_{\text{David}} = 4.95; M_{\text{Goliath}} = 3.87; F (1, 126) = 15.65, p < .000$).

This research extends the literature on brand coolness, brand biographies, and brand authenticity, demonstrating how these constructs can be applied to different domains and how they impact consumers’ evaluation of advertising clues (such as a rebellious positioning). On a managerial level, this research demonstrates that the use of a disadvantaged brand biography in presenting the company enhances the level of coolness for its brands no matter the size of the company and the product category.

REFERENCES


Advances in Consumer Research
Volume 43, ©2015


Making a Discount Feel Like a Favor: How Pairing an Offer with a Favor Request Helps Seal the Deal
Simon J. Blanchard, Georgetown University, USA
Kurt A. Carlson, Georgetown University, USA
Jamie D. Hyodo, Pennsylvania State University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
We demonstrate that, in consumer-seller negotiations, requesting a favor from consumers increases acceptance of an discounted offer made by a seller. The favor request effect occurs through increases in perceived reciprocity and in the confidence that the offer offered is the lowest possible. Implications are discussed.

To compel consumers to purchase without delay, sellers often allow consumers who have identified an appealing product to negotiate on price. In the US, this often occurs when buying houses, art, designer or vintage fashion, personal loans such as mortgages, and cars, and in some countries (e.g., India) negotiation is common for an even wider array of products and service. Our focus in this paper is on single-issue price negotiation, wherein a consumer has identified a product that they would like to buy, conditional on price. In this setting then, the focus shifts to overpayment concerns and consumers’ subjective evaluation of deal favorability (or viewed oppositely, perceived confidence in lowest price).

Sellers should thus be motivated to identify techniques convince consumers that a given offer has low overpayment risk. Inman et al. (1997) demonstrate that purchase restrictions (such as limited time offers or maximum purchase quantities) serve to “activate a mental resource that is used to render a judgment regarding a promoted product” (p. 77). This judgment typically involves a comparison of the current price to a reference price (Meyer 1981) that can come from contextual information (Alba et al. 1999). Without clear reference price information, contextual cues can determine intent to purchase. Research has shown that parties in a negotiation are aware that their negotiation partner will use a set of strategies to maximize their expected payoffs. As these strategies and the desired outcomes are not fully known to both parties, a negotiation process not only involves an expected set of actions, but also a learning opportunity regarding what the other party sees as a desirable outcome (Pruitt 1981). The implication from the expectation of concessions is that although any discount offered by a seller should decrease economic risk, a discount by itself may do little to reduce perceived overpayment risk during a negotiation. Uncertainty may still be significant.

We suggest that pairing a price discount offer with a favor request (i.e., making a request, of the consumer, for an act beyond what is typical in negotiations) will reduce overpayment risk by positioning the discount as worthy of reciprocation. We demonstrate this effect in four experiments.

Experiment 1 - Pairing a Discounted Offer with a Favor Request
This experiment provides the first test of whether pairing a discounted offer with a favor request increases the probability the offer is accepted. Two product categories (record player and coffee table) and two favor requests (recommending the store to a friend and writing a review) are tested.

Method
Participants completed a 2 (context: record player vs. coffee table) x 3 (favor request: none vs. online review vs. recommend) between-subjects design.

Shopping Scenario Manipulation
Participants began by reading a scenario in the role of a consumer seeking to buy either a record player or a coffee table. Participants were then imagined they found an appealing product: “You find a coffee table/record player that is appealing to you, but it’s listed at a price of $80 and you don’t have much spare money at this point in time. Given the nature of the store, however, you are fairly certain that the dealer will be open to negotiating on the selling price, so you initiate a negotiation with the seller.” Participants were then offered a lowered price by the shop owner: “I am willing to lower the price, but you need to know that $80 was already a very good price on this coffee table/record player. After deliberating for a while, the seller agrees to sell you the coffee table/record player for $64, saying that it is her absolute lowest price.”

Favor Request Manipulation
Those in the control condition read no further information. Participants in the favor request conditions (review/recommend) additionally read: “However, at that price she would hope that there is something in it for her. Specifically, she says that after purchasing the coffee table/record player and completing your purchase you should [post a positive review on the vintage furniture store/electronics dealer review website// recommend the store to a friend who might be interested in buying vintage furniture/audio equipment].”

At this point, participants indicated whether they wished to accept, reject & counter, or reject the offer. Although this measure has three levels, we group the two reject options together. We do so as our focus is whether a favor request increases acceptance of a discounted offer.

Participants and Procedures
319 mTurk participants completed a “4-minute study about shopping” in exchange for financial compensation.

Results
We analyzed the probability of accepting the offer (accepting vs. rejecting) via a logistic regression, with binary variables for scenario (coffee table vs. record player), recommendation favor request, review favor request, and the two favor requests’ interactions with the scenario. Both scenarios led to an equal probability of offer acceptance (coffee table = 52.38% vs. record player = 61.26%; β = .053; Z = .02, p = .88) and for each scenario we found that each favor request increased the probability of acceptance as compared to the control.

The request for a recommendation increased the probability of acceptance from 40.00% to 62.40% (β = 914; Z = 12.37, p < .01) (and this effect did not differ significantly between the coffee table (60.32%) and record player scenarios (64.52%; β = .126; Z = .06, p = .81). Second, the request for an online review increased the probability of acceptance from 40.60% to 67.69% (β = 1.91; Z = 19.75, p < .01). We found that the effect of the review request was marginally stronger for the record player scenario (β = .961; Z = 3.213, p = .07) with a probability of acceptance of 78.50% as opposed to 56.90% in the coffee table scenario. Despite this difference, the review favor request still significantly increased probability of discounted offer acceptance for both the coffee table (56.90% vs 39.30%; β = .712;
Experiment 2 - A Negotiation with Real Financial Stakes

In experiment 2, we investigate whether the favor request effect persists when consumers have real monetary stakes at play. We use a multi-stage negotiation paradigm adapted from Srivastava and Oza (2006), who incentivized negotiation in advance of a consumer choice. We created an iterative negotiation between a seller and a prospective consumer, wherein consumers requested a lower-than-initially-listed price and received at least one counter offer. To further generalize across product categories, the negotiation was for a piece of art.

Method

As in experiment 1, participants were told that they would participate in a shopping scenario as a consumer interested in a product being sold. In addition, they were then told that they would have a chance to earn a bonus based on the outcome of the negotiation. Because the task involved successfully purchasing a product at the lowest possible price, this incentivized participants to obtain a low price for an agreed-upon offer. Thus, participants had real money at stake during the negotiation. Second, to ensure that participants provided reasonable offers, each participant was warned that the seller would likely reject ‘extreme low ball’ offers and subsequently terminate the negotiation process. Participants would thus consider the amount of their offers as carefully as they would in a real-life purchase setting. After these instructions, participants were introduced to the actual shopping scenario which was the same as those in E1, aside from being about a $100 piece of art.

Setting the Stage: First Consumer Offer and First Seller Counter-Offer

Next, participants began the price negotiation with an initial offer of their choosing (less than $100) after which they wrote a short justification to the shop owner. The survey was programmed so that any initial offer below $40 was rejected outright. Participants who provided an offer of greater than $40 (denoted below by X) read a response and a counter offer of $Y, where $Y was calculated as a 25% movement from $100 toward the participant’s offer. Participants who countered continued to the next step of the negotiation and provided the sample for our analyses.

Participants were asked to provide a second counter-offer (W) and a short justification for the value of their offer. After doing so, they read: “After deliberating for a while, the dealer agrees to sell you the painting for Z. She says that Z is her absolute lowest price.” Z was a 50% movement toward the participant’s most recent offer from the seller’s previous offer.

Favor Request Manipulation

Those in the control condition read no further information, while those in the favor request condition read the same protocol as participants in experiment 1’s review request condition, adapted to be a review posted on “the local art dealers website”. Participants again decided between accepting, rejecting, or countering the offer. The ability to close at this stage, accept versus reject (and/or counter offer), was the focus of our analysis.

Results

We observed a positive effect of pairing a favor request with a discounted offer on the probability that the offer was accepted (68.9% vs. 48.4%; \( \chi^2 (1)=5.90, p=.01 \)). Separating the types of rejections, post-hoc tests suggest that consumers who did not accept the offer were not more (or less) likely to exit the negotiation (9.5% vs 12.9%; \( \chi^2 (1)=.02, p=.89 \)). That is, while requesting a favor increased the probability of closing the deal, requesting a favor did not come at the cost of encouraging other consumers to exit the negotiation.

Experiment 3 – Moderating Role of Contextual Appropriateness

For persuasion attempts to succeed, they must be seen as suitable or proper in the circumstances in which they are used (Miniard et al. 1991; Sengupta, Goodstein and Boninger 1997). For instance, use of images not suited for the focal product elicit thoughts of inappropriateness, which decreases persuasion (Miniard et al. 1991). For a requested favor to promote acceptance of a discounted offer, the favor request must increase the perception that the discounted offer is a favor warranting reciprocity. To the extent that the favor request is seen as contextually appropriate, these perceptions should naturally occur. When a favor request is contextually inappropriate (e.g., creepy), however, we expect this to mitigate the otherwise positive effect of favor request effect.

Method

Participants completed one of six conditions in a 2 (product category: jeans vs. painting) x 3 (favor request: none vs. online review request vs. send a picture) between-subjects design.

Shopping Scenario Manipulation

Participants in the painting scenario condition then read the same scenario as used in experiment 3, up until the favor request. Participants in the jeans shopping scenario condition read a similar scenario involving $90 jeans.

Favor Request Manipulation

The online review condition used the same format as previous studies. Those in the picture condition read: “Specifically, she says that after purchasing the jeans/painting and completing your purchase she hopes that you would take a picture of yourself posing with the jeans/painting when you get home and send it back, to potentially be used on the store/shop’s website.”

Contextual favor request appropriateness pre-test

A pre-test with a separate sample of screened mTurk participants confirmed showed that asking consumers for a picture of themselves wearing new jeans was seen as more inappropriate (\( M=5.24 \)) than asking for a picture with a new painting (\( M=3.78; F(1,73)=17.19, p<.001 \)). Within the jeans condition, asking for a picture was more inappropriate than requesting a review (\( M=3.36; F(1,73)=21.39, p<.01 \)). Finally, the online review request was considered equally appropriate for both scenarios (\( F(1,73)=.315, p=.58 \)).

Participants and Procedures

We recruited 392 participants for a study about shopping for consumer products from mTurk in exchange for financial compensation.

Results

The probability of accepting the discounted offer was analyzed via a logistic regression with binary coding of product category, picture request, review request, and interactions between the type of favor request (review vs. picture) and scenario.
First, in both conditions and consistent with previous studies, we found that the review favor request increased the probability of acceptance relative to the control (60.47% vs. 44.36%; $\beta=6.48$; $Z=6.66$, $p=.01$). This positive effect of the review favor request did not differ between the painting (64.2% vs. 43.9%) and jeans (56.5% vs. 44.8%) product categories ($\beta=.18$; $Z=.51$, $p=.48$), providing additional evidence that the review favor request can be similarly used across various product categories.

Second, and as expected, we found a significant interaction between the product category and the picture favor request conditions ($\beta=.66$; $Z=6.64$, $p=.01$). While there was a positive effect of the picture favor request on acceptance in the painting scenario (63.1% vs 43.9%; $\beta=.78$; $Z=4.76$, $p=.03$), the picture favor request did not significantly increase acceptance in the jeans condition (32.3% vs. 44.8%; $\beta=-.53$; $Z=2.15$, $p=.14$). Post-hoc analyses suggest that this reduction in acceptance was due to an increase in the probability that the consumers exited the purchase situation altogether (41.5% vs. 19.4%; $\chi^2(1)=6.64$, $p=.01$). In the jeans condition, participants reacted strongly to the inappropriate (picture) request, some to the point of refusing to continue the exchange.

**General Discussion**

Across three experiments, we show that consumers are more likely to accept a deal when a seller requests a favor than if the discount is offered on its own. We also identify one important boundary condition of this effect, as showing that the favor requested must be appropriate for the purchase context. This work has implications for both the persuasion and signaling literatures.

**REFERENCES**


Shifting Perceptions of Negative Experiences through Word-of-Mouth:
Episodic Dismissal and Asymmetric Effects of Valence on Consumer Evaluations
Daniel C. Brannon, Arizona State University, USA
Adriana Samper, Arizona State University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Negative product and service experiences often have such an impact on consumers that they can be vividly recalled for a long time afterwards (Mittal, Ross, and Baldasare 1998). As a result, research finds that negative (vs. positive) experiences weigh disproportionately on consumer evaluations such as attitude, satisfaction, and repurchase intentions (Dempsey and Mitchell 2010). Understandably, this has made marketers extremely sensitive to the ramifications of disappointing their customers. However, can the very thing that makes negative experiences so vivid and memorable also make the evaluations associated with them more susceptible to change? The current research examines how consumers who have had negative (vs. positive) product and service experiences respond to social influence in a dyadic word-of-mouth sharing situation. We find an interesting asymmetry, such that evaluations formed by negative (vs. positive) experiences are more malleable and more susceptible to change when consumers are exposed to the contrasting evaluations of others. Drawing from literature on memory, cognitive processing, and balance theory, we argue that this effect is driven by consumers’ greater tendency to dismiss their own negative (vs. positive) experiences as being formed by isolated or “one off” events, a behavior we refer to as “episodic dismissal,” in order to reduce perceived dissimilarities with a close other.

Study 1

We conducted a 2 (participant’s experience: positive vs. negative, between) × 2 (close other’s evaluation: contrasting vs. similar, between) × 2 (participant’s evaluation: before vs. after sharing word-of-mouth, within) mixed subjects study. We first asked participants to write about a negative (vs. positive) service experience (Zhang et al. 2014). We then asked three questions measuring initial consumer evaluations of the experience: attitude, satisfaction and re-purchase intentions, which we combined to form an evaluation index. All participants then imagined sharing the experience they wrote about with a close friend. In the similar close other condition evaluation, participants further read “to your surprise, your close friend responds that he/she also really likes (dislikes) the product or service, and appears satisfied that the two of you share the same opinion.” In the contrasting evaluation condition, participants read “to your surprise, your close friend responds that he/she actually really likes (dislikes) the product or service, and appears perplexed that you both don’t share the same opinion.” We found a significant three-way interaction F(1,263)=4.39, p=.04). In particular, participants who had a negative experience upwardly revised evaluations when the close other was revealed to have a contrasting (e.g. positive) evaluation (t1= 2.60 vs. t2=3.00, p=.000). However, participants who had a positive experience did not revise their evaluations when the close other had a contrasting evaluation (t1= 5.96 vs. t2=5.92, p=ns).

Study 2

We tested whether social distance moderates the results from study 1, such that consumers align negative evaluations with close others, but not with distant others. We used a 2 (participant’s experience: positive vs. negative, between) × 2 (partner’s social distance: high vs. low, between) × 2 (participant’s evaluation: contrasting vs. similar, between) × 2 (participant’s evaluation: before vs. after sharing word-of-mouth, within) mixed subjects design. Our manipulations were the same as in study 1, however, in this study, participants in the high (versus low) distance condition were asked to imagine an interaction with an acquaintance instead of a close friend. We found a significant four-way interaction F(1,455)=4.87, p=.03. Specifically, in the low distance condition, we again found that participants who shared a negative experience upwardly revised their evaluations when close others had a contrasting (vs. similar) evaluation (t1= −2.60 vs. t2=2.94, p=.000). However, participants who shared a positive experience did not change their evaluations in either the contrasting or similar close other conditions. In the high distance condition, these results were reversed. Participants who shared a negative experience became significantly more positive when the distant other had a similar (vs. contrasting) evaluation (t1= −2.22, t2=−2.53, p=.000), whereas there was a non-significant revision of evaluations among participants who shared a positive experience in both the contrasting and similar distant other conditions.

Study 3

We examined whether our results are driven by “episodic dismissal” (e.g. participants’ greater tendency to dismiss negative (vs. positive) experiences as isolated or “one off” events when motivated to align their evaluations with a close other. We conducted a 2 (participant’s experience: positive vs. negative, between) × 2 (close other’s evaluation: contrasting vs. similar, between) × 2 (participant’s evaluation: before vs. after sharing word-of-mouth, within) mixed subjects study. The procedure was the same as in study 1, however, following the imagined interaction, we asked participants to indicate the extent to which they considered the experience they shared to be an episodic or “one off” event (e.g. “To what extent do you feel that your experience with this product or service was an isolated event and not representative of the product in general?”). We found a significant three-way interaction F(1,230) = 9.35, p = .003) with a pattern of results similar to the previous two studies. Importantly, we also found moderated mediation, such that participants episodically dismissed negative (vs. positive) experiences after sharing them with a contrasting close other (95% CI exclusive of 0 [-.27, -.02]).

Study 4

We attempted to replicate our results in an actual word-of-mouth sharing interaction using the same design as studies 1 and 3. Participants shared a negative or positive on-campus service experience with a confederate who had either a contrasting or similar evaluation. We again found a significant three-way interaction (F(1,208)=12.92, p=.000) with a pattern of results similar to the previous two studies. In sum, we demonstrate that consumers are more likely to change negative (vs. positive) evaluations of products and services when sharing word-of-mouth exposes them to the contrasting evaluation of a close other. We show that the valence of their product and service experiences determines the extent to which consumers can subsequently be influenced to change their evaluations. We demonstrate that consumers are better able to dismiss negative (vs. positive) experiences as isolated events in the face of contrasting opinions, thereby engaging in “episodic dismissal.”
REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This research examines the influence of goal distance on the regulatory focus of goals. Individuals can construe goals as hopes, aspirations and ideals (promotion-focused goals) or as responsibilities, duties and obligations (prevention-focused goals) (Higgins 1997). Previous research identified individual (e.g., Higgins 1997; Aaker and Lee 2001; Cesario, Grant, and Higgins 2004), specific (e.g., Lee and Aaker 2004; Chitturi, Raghunathan, and Mahajan 2008) or situational characteristics (e.g., Mogilner, Aaker, and Pennington 2008) which can influence the regulatory focus of a goal. What remains to be seen is whether the regulatory focus of a goal can change as progress toward the goal is made. Here we demonstrate that goal distance can influence regulatory focus of a goal. We also demonstrate that goal distance is not temporal distance or, more broadly, psychological distance.

In earlier stages of goal pursuit, individuals rely on their initial state as a reference point (Bonezzi, Brendl, and DeAngelis 2011) which makes goal attainment/failure represent a gain/non-gain situation. Goal attainment is a positive deviation from the starting state as a reference point and, hence, it is a gain, while goal failure is a non-deviation from the starting state as a reference point and, hence, it is a non-gain; such representation construes a promotion goal (Higgins 1997, 2002; Shah et al. 1998). In later stages of goal pursuit, individuals rely on their desired end state as a reference point (Bonezzi et al. 2011) which makes goal attainment/failure represent a non-loss/loss situation. If a goal is attained it is a non-deviation from the desired state as a reference point and, hence, a non-loss, while goal failure is a negative deviation from the desired state as a reference point and, hence, a loss; such representation construes a prevention goal (Higgins 1997, 2002; Shah et al. 1998).

The goal distance construct involves two factors: assessment of the gap between the current and the desired state and the appreciation of actions necessary for goal attainment (Townsend and Liu 2012). The actual discrepancy between the current and the desired state is positively correlated with the actual amount of time to goal attainment and, hence, is positively correlated with temporal distance. Assessment of the actions necessary to reduce the “gap” draws attention to the difficulty associated with goal attainment (Townsend and Liu 2012); and, since perception of difficulty has been shown to reduce temporal construal (Vallacher and Wegner 1987; Thomas and Tsai 2012), it reduces temporal distance by constraining time resources. Hence, the two factors in the goal distance construct produce pressures on temporal distance which work in opposing directions.

For temporally unfocused goals, where the point in time of goal attainment or failure is not discretely specified (Madye and Gilovich 1993), goal distance influences both actual time to goal attainment and the amount of effort necessary to reach the goal. Therefore, for temporally unfocused goals, goal distance will likely leave the subjective experience of temporal distancing unaffected. Greater goal distance will increase actual time to goal attainment, thus putting upward pressure on temporal distance, but it will also increase the perception of difficulty associated with greater effort necessary for goal attainment, thus putting downward pressure on temporal distance. For temporally focused goals (Madye and Gilovich 1993), actual time to goal attainment/failure is fixed by some external factor (e.g., date of the driving test, deadline for the assignment, etc.). Hence, for temporally focused goals, goal distance will not influence actual time to goal attainment, but it will emphasize difficulty and make time seem less abundant. The more progress a person makes toward their goal, the more abundant any amount of time to goal attainment/failure will feel. Therefore, for temporally focused goals, goal distance and temporal distance will be negatively correlated.

In study 1, participants were asked to imagine that they passed one (large goal distance) or three (small goal distance) out of the four interview stages necessary to get a job. They were then asked to match promotion or prevention phrases to describe their goal. They were also asked to indicate to what extent getting the job represents a gain versus not getting the job represents a loss. Participants in the large goal distance condition reported being more in the gain frame of mind and matched more promotion phrases, while participants in the small goal distance condition reported being more in the loss frame of mind and matched more prevention phrases to describe their goal. In study 2 participants imagined having set a weight loss goal (15 pounds) and having made little (5 pounds) or substantial (10 pounds) goal progress. Participants then read a promotion or prevention framed advertisement for a fitness program. Large goal distance participants reported more favorable attitude and greater purchase intentions after reading a promotion (vs. prevention) focused advertisement; and the reverse was true for small goal distance participants. In study 3, to demonstrate process, all participants were asked to imagine being half way through goal pursuit (having raised $250 out of $500) for a charity. We manipulated reference points by framing goal progress in terms of “to date” or “to go” to manipulate the beginning or the desired state as a reference point (Koo & Fishbach, 2008). “To date” framing produced greater focus on positive (vs. negative) outcomes and a more gain (vs. loss) frame of mind compared to “to go” framing. In study 4, participants imagined having made little (vs. substantial) progress toward a weight loss goal. Large goal distance participants reported that their goal was more of a maximal goal, while small goal distance participants reported that their goal was more of a minimal goal. Temporal distance and construal level indicators were not affected. In study 5, participants imagined having covered 2 or 8 out of the 10 chapters necessary for an exam (temporally focused goal). Large (vs. small) goal distance participants described their goal as more promotion (vs. prevention) focused. Importantly, large goal distance participants imagined the exam to be closer in time and thought about it more concretely compared to large goal distance participants.

REFERENCES


Go Green or Go God? Religiosity Reduces Pro-Environmental Behaviors
Frank Cabano, University of Kansas, USA
Ahreum Maeng, University of Kansas, USA
Sanjay Mishra, University of Kansas, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

It is a truism that Americans are deeply religious. Recent surveys show that 77% of Americans consider themselves committed Christians (Newport 2012) and substantially more people believe in angels, the devil, and hell than do those who believe in evolution (Shannon-Missal 2008). Generally, religiosity is hardly negative as religious people exhibit more pro-social behavior than nonreligious individuals (Monsma 2007). For example, they volunteer and donate more (Monsma 2007), cooperate and share more (Ahmed 2009), trust others more (Fehr et al. 2003), and are more trustworthy (Tan and Vogel 2008). However, we believe that in a pro-social domain that requires individuals’ will power to change behavior, that is, making differences through human intervention, religiosity will have reversed influences. The current research focuses on one such domain, pro-environmental behaviors.

Freud (1927/1961) argued that at the heart of religion is the strong dependence of people on the omnipotent figure of God. Indeed, most Judeo-Christians believe in a controlling and omnipotent image of God (Laurin, Kay, and Fitzsimons 2012). People who believe and depend on a powerful other, like God, relinquish generalized control to that potent deity (Spilka and Schmidt 1983). Given that the only personality variable that is consistently linked to pro-environmental behavior is perceived personal control (Allen and Ferrand 1999), it is possible that Judeo-Christians are less willing to engage in pro-environmental behaviors than nonreligious individuals due to their external locus of control that is derived from their belief in an omnipotent God. In light of these findings, we explore a possibility that religiosity reduces willingness to engage in pro-environmental behaviors via an external locus of control. Through a field study and four laboratory experiments, we tested our predictions.

For the first study, we looked at the relationship between religious affiliation and pro-environmental behaviors using real-world behavioral data from the U.S. population. We collected data to determine each state’s proportion of registered Judeo-Christians and nonreligious people to its overall population, and each state’s level of pro-environmental behaviors. We found a significant negative partial correlation between Judeo-Christians and the environmental index \( r = -0.38, p < .01 \) and a significant positive partial correlation between the nonreligious and the environmental index \( r = 0.29, p < .05 \), controlling for gender, education, political affiliation, and income levels for each state.

Since Study 1 gives only correlational evidence, Study 2 was designed to replicate this effect in a laboratory setting using a 2 (religious affiliation: Judeo-Christian vs. nonreligious) x 2 (extrinsic religiosity (continuous) vs. extrinsic religiosity (continuous) between participants design. First, participants responded to two items that measured their pro-environmental behaviors: “How much are you willing to change your lifestyle to reduce the effects of global warming?” and “How much are you willing to spend extra money to reduce the effects of global warming?” Next, participants responded to the 12-item extrinsic religiosity subscale from the religious orientation scale (Allport and Ross 1967) to measure the strength of their religious beliefs. Study 2 found more evidence that Judeo-Christians tended to be less willing to engage in pro-environmental behaviors than nonreligious people \( t(123) = 1.8, p < .1 \). We also found that a weak commitment to one’s religion, or extrinsic religiosity, mitigated the effect \( (\beta = 1.03, t = 2.548, p < .02) \).

Study 3 tested the underlying mechanism that explains why Judeo-Christians engage in relatively few pro-environmental behaviors using a 2 (religious affiliation: Judeo-Christian vs. nonreligious) x 2 (prime: control vs. God) between-subjects design. Participants first completed a priming procedure where they formed grammatically correct sentences using four words from sets of five. In the God condition, five of the ten sets contained a word semantically related to the concept of God and in the control condition, the words were neutral. Participants then completed the external locus of control measure. We showed that Judeo-Christians had more of an external locus of control than the nonreligious \( (F(1, 91) = 8.8, p < .005) \) and that this difference was due to their religiosity as Judeo-Christians in the God condition had more of an external locus of control than those in the control condition \( (p = .01) \). As expected, there was no difference in the locus of control for the nonreligious between conditions \( (p > .8) \).

The objective of Study 4 was to further test the underlying mechanism of the observed effect. If in fact Judeo-Christians’ external locus of control is tied to their belief in an omnipotent image of God, then any attempts to manipulate their personal perceived control will not be successful because they believe that God has all of the power. This study used a 2 (religious affiliation: Judeo-Christian vs. nonreligious) x 2 (prime: high control vs. low control) between-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to either the high or low control condition. In the high (vs. low) control condition, they wrote about 3 examples of times when they felt they had complete (vs. no) control over a situation. The dependent measure was the likelihood of purchasing various environmentally-friendly products. We found a significant interaction effect between religious affiliation and priming condition \( (F(1, 71) = 3.810, p < .06) \). Planned comparisons revealed that the nonreligious in the high control condition were significantly more likely to buy green products than those in the low control condition \( (F(1, 71) = 3.754, p < .06) \). However, there was no significant difference between likelihood of green consumption for Judeo-Christians in the high and low control conditions \( (p > .3) \). Judeo-Christians’ religiosity acts as a buffer to any attempts to change their sense of control. If we use a primary (vs. secondary) approach to increase control, or attempt to change the cause of the perceived lack of control (vs. the result) (Rothbaum et al. 1982), we expect to effectively change Judeo-Christians’ low levels of green consumption. In other words, by manipulating the external locus of control (the omnipotent image of God) rather than manipulating the effect (the external locus of control), we expect to see an increase in their green behavior. This was the rationale for Study 5.

Study 5 utilized a primary approach to manipulating locus of control such that we manipulated the cause of Judeo-Christians’ perceived lack of control using a 2 (religious affiliation: Judeo-Christian vs. nonreligious) x 2 (priming condition: controlling God vs. facilitating God) between-subjects design. Participants either were primed with the image of God as a controlling or facilitating figure. They then indicated their willingness to buy various green products as in Study 4. We found a significant interaction between religious affiliation and image of God \( (F(1, 81) = 9.9, p < .01) \). Planned comparisons indicated that Judeo-Christians who were primed with a facilitating God image were significantly more likely to purchase the green products than those who were primed with a controlling God image.
forms of the products than were Judeo-Christians in the controlling God condition ($F(1, 81) = 4.1, p < .05$).

In summary, our research provides the demonstration of a negative influence of religiosity on prosocial behavior in the domain of pro-environmental behaviors, while simultaneously providing the underlying conceptual basis for why we observe this effect. Thus, this research suggest that the external locus of control that is tied to the belief in a controlling image of God should affect consumers in other domains when they experience uncertainty.

REFERENCES


Developing a Behavior-Based Measure of Online Brand-Engagement
Colin Campbell, Kent State University, USA
Robert D. Jewell, Kent State University, USA
Cathy Hessick, Kent State University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The authors introduce the concept of online brand-engagement, and develop a behavioral scale to assess it. Online brand-engagement is conceptualized in terms of consumers’ behaviors online about a specific brand, in contrast to previous research exploring enduring personality trait differences in general engagement with brands (Spratt et al., 2009).

While practitioner use of the term continues to grow (Levy, 2013; Posner, 2013), with jobs titles such as “Chief Brand-Engagement Officer” emerging (New York Times, 2008), advertising agencies specializing in it, and leading social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn all reporting engagement as a metric, academic progress has been largely limited to discussions of its conceptualization. In this paper we offer both a reconciliation of debate over conceptualization of online brand-engagement and an online brand-engagement scale. We develop a scale to measure this new construct, validate it along established criteria, and situate it within a nomological network (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011).

Brand Engagement Conceptualizations In Marketing
While research exploring brand engagement is in relative infancy, important efforts have been made to conceptualize and define the construct. These efforts can be loosely categorized into two groups which we term behavioral and psychological. Behavioral conceptualizations define brand engagement entirely in terms of brand-related consumer actions. MSI (2010, pg. 4) offers the most precise definition, describing engagement as a “customer’s behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm beyond purchase”. Psychological conceptualizations view brand engagement as encompassing more than behaviors such to include psychological processes (Bowden, 2009, pg. 65). Several conceptual papers consider engagement to have cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Hollebeek, 2011; Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, and Ilic, 2011; Brodie, Ilic, Juric, and Hollebeek, 2011; Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan, 2012).

While it is apparent researchers are making efforts to better define and conceptualize brand engagement, agreement has yet to emerge. Given the conflicting understanding of the engagement concept within marketing and its importance in constructing a valid measurement scale, we designed our first study to clarify brand engagement’s definition and dimensionality.

Study 1: Consumers’ and Experts’ Conceptions of Online Brand-Engagement
We approached our first study with two objectives: firstly establishing whether a behavioral or psychological conceptualization should be adopted, and secondly uncovering the dimensions inherent to our adopted definition. These aims naturally lead to a qualitative approach being adopted (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Insights from both consumers and academics in conjunction with the literature on brand engagement formed the data for our first study. Feedback provided offered important insights, with a more precise conceptualization, emerging. Insights were used to further refine understanding of the engagement construct.

Analysis of data generated supported a behavioral conceptualization of brand engagement, with little data supporting a more psychological or relational view of the concept. Support for emotions and cognitions as components of brand engagement also was not found. Consumers and academics alike considered affect as a possible antecedent to engagement rather than part of brand engagement itself.

Integrating the results of our qualitative investigation, we define online brand-engagement as the extent of conscious performance of brand-related public consumer behaviors online beyond purchase and consumption.

Study 2: Item Generation and Selection
In addition to deduction from our theoretical definition and earlier data, we re-explored the existing literature on brand engagement as well as conducted further literature reviews related to its dimensions of interaction and creation. From these sources we developed 41 total items that passed initial face validity checks. To further assess initial items, thirteen academics rated the content validity of each item relative to our conceptualization of online brand-engagement (following the procedure of Spratt, Czellar, and Spangenberg, 2009). Results and feedback were used to delete and modify items. This resulted in a revised set of 39 items.

Study 3: Item Reduction and Scale Dimensionality
Factor analysis with analysis of the scree plot indicated two factors were significant (explained variance = 70%). All items had loadings of 0.4 or higher on at least one factor. Examination of the first two factors yielded one dimension related to interaction items and a second dimension related to creation items comparable to what was found in the qualitative research.

A second sample (N = 330) employing the same methodology was conducted using the 20 items to aid in further reducing the number of items. The scree plot for this sample indicated three significant factors (explained variance = 70%). Six items loaded onto the first factor, “Interaction”, three items loaded onto the second factor, “Creation”, and two items, loaded onto the third factor, “sharing”.

Study 4: Confirming Scale Dimensionality
In Study 4 we examined the dimensionality and stability of the scale. We collect data from a new sample of consumers (N = 516). An exploratory factor analysis extracted three factors (explained variance = 81%). We also ran a confirmatory factory analysis for a three-factor model ($\chi^2 = 132.27, df = 32, p < .01, \text{CMIN/df} = 4.13$). Suggested cutoff values of 0.95 were met for NFI (0.97), CFI (0.98), and GFI (0.95) (Hu and Bentler, 1999). RMSEA of 0.08 and SRMR of 0.03 also both indicated good model fit.

Study 5: Assessing Discriminant, Nomological, and Convergent Validity
The purpose of Study 5 was to assess the extent to which our online brand-engagement construct demonstrated discriminant, nomological, and convergent validity. Results supported hypothesized relationships. Correlations between our 10-item measure of online brand-engagement and constructs expected to demonstrate discriminant validity ranged from non-significant to 0.19. Correlation with constructs expected to demonstrate nomological validity ranged from 0.27 to 0.46. The strongest correlations with our 10-item online brand-engagement scale were found with the single-measure forms of online brand-engagement.
Conclusion

Our work makes several contributions. First, we resolve debate over the conceptualization of online brand-engagement and clearly situate it within the behavioral realm. Second, through a multi-stage qualitative investigation we develop a grounded definition and dimensionalization of the construct. Finally, we develop and validate a scale to measure online brand-engagement at a brand-specific level.

REFERENCES


The Art of Brand Name-Dropping: A Dual Attribution Model of Conspicuous Consumption
Christopher Cannon, Northwestern University, USA
Derek D. Rucker, Northwestern University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Brand name-dropping—the act of explicitly mentioning brands in a conversation—appears commonplace in society. From the music industry and social media to television shows and everyday consumer interactions, brands appear to often find their way into conversations. A number of these brands appear to be expensive and prestigious. In this work we examine how brand name-dropping of expensive and prestige brands affect observers’ perceptions of the actor (i.e., name dropper). With few exceptions (Ferraro, Kirmani, and Matherly 2013), little work has studied conspicuous brand usage, which includes the more specific act of brand name-dropping.

At one level, brand name-dropping can be viewed as a specific instance or means of displaying status, commonly referred to as conspicuous consumption. As discussed by Thorstein Veblen (1899), a central idea behind conspicuous consumption is to portray one’s wealth to others. More than a century later, a renewed interest has emerged in the benefits of conspicuous consumption with respect to its signaling value (Griskevicius et al. 2007; Nelissen and Mejiers 2011; Sundie et al. 2011; Wang and Griskevicius 2014) and means of addressing psychological needs, such as a desire for power and status (Rucker and Galinsky 2008, 2009; see also Dubois, Rucker, and Galinsky 2012). This prior work suggests that conspicuous consumption is largely positive or produces favorable social outcomes. However, recent work introduces the notion that conspicuous consumption carries with it social costs such as negative attitudes toward the consumer (Ferraro et al. 2013). These two streams of work produce an interesting tension as to when conspicuous brand name-dropping produces positive versus negative consequences. The present work provides theoretical scaffolding for understanding when displaying one’s brands has positive versus negative outcomes and helps explain the complexities of conspicuous brand name-dropping.

Whereas past research has studied individual signals of conspicuous consumption with regard to increased status or decreased likeability, we build on the multi-dimensional perception of social categories such as the warmth-competence perspective of person perception (Fiske et al. 2002; Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007) and the more general framework of agency-communion (Bakan 1966; Abele and Wojciszke 2011; Sundie et al. 2011; Wang and Griskevicius 2014) and means of addressing psychological needs, such as a desire for power and status (Rucker and Galinsky 2008, 2009; see also Dubois, Rucker, and Galinsky 2012). This prior work suggests that conspicuous consumption is largely positive or produces favorable social outcomes. However, recent work introduces the notion that conspicuous consumption carries with it social costs such as negative attitudes toward the consumer (Ferraro et al. 2013). These two streams of work produce an interesting tension as to when conspicuous brand name-dropping produces positive versus negative consequences. The present work provides theoretical scaffolding for understanding when displaying one’s brands has positive versus negative outcomes and helps explain the complexities of conspicuous brand name-dropping.

Whereas past research has studied individual signals of conspicuous consumption with regard to increased status or decreased likeability, we build on the multi-dimensional perception of social categories such as the warmth-competence perspective of person perception (Fiske et al. 2002; Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007) and the more general framework of agency-communion (Bakan 1966; Abele and Wojciszke 2011; Sundie et al. 2011; Wang and Griskevicius 2014) and means of addressing psychological needs, such as a desire for power and status (Rucker and Galinsky 2008, 2009; see also Dubois, Rucker, and Galinsky 2012). This prior work suggests that conspicuous consumption is largely positive or produces favorable social outcomes. However, recent work introduces the notion that conspicuous consumption carries with it social costs such as negative attitudes toward the consumer (Ferraro et al. 2013). These two streams of work produce an interesting tension as to when conspicuous brand name-dropping produces positive versus negative consequences. The present work provides theoretical scaffolding for understanding when displaying one’s brands has positive versus negative outcomes and helps explain the complexities of conspicuous brand name-dropping.

Experiment 1
Participants (N = 194) were assigned to read an ostensibly real blog post, which described an individual’s night out at a club, with reference to either conspicuous brand names or just the products. In both conditions, the individual did not own the mentioned brand or product. We find that participants perceived the target individual to have higher status (F(1, 190) = 30.81, p < .001) but lower likeability (F(1, 190) = 6.40, p = .012) after conspicuous brand name-dropping, compared with the no name-dropping condition. This experiment sets the stage for exploring when brand name-dropping may have negative or positive consequences.

Experiment 2
The second experiment aimed to show when brand name-dropping would have negative social consequences (i.e., when communality or likeability is important). Participants (N = 101) were assigned to read a job applicant profile with either conspicuous brands or products mentioned in the hobbies section for an account manager position, which required “maintaining relationships with different clients”. We find that conspicuous brand name-dropping negatively impacted the candidate’s likelihood of being hired for a job position (β = -0.56, t(99) = -2.92, SE = .19, p = .004), mediated by applicant likeability (95% CI around the mediator [-1.21, -0.60]).

Experiment 3
The third experiment aimed to show when brand name-dropping would have positive social benefits (i.e., when agency or status is important). Participants (N = 118) were assigned to rate the likelihood of admitting potential customers into an exclusive nightclub. Half read statements from the customers with conspicuous brand names mentioned while the other half read the same information with just the product name. As expected, we show that conspicuous brand name-dropping positively impacted the potential customer’s likelihood of being admitted into the nightclub (β = 0.71, t(116) = 4.09, SE = .17, p < .001), mediated by perceived status (95% CI around the mediator [.02, .29]).

Experiment 4
This final study demonstrates a boundary condition for the effects of brand name-dropping. Participants (N = 101) were assigned to read excerpts from ostensibly real interviews. Half read about interviewees who brand name-drop by bragging about owning the brand while the other half read similar information with the brand name-dropping construed as aspirational by talking about future ownership of the brand. We test and confirm the hypothesis that the perception of high status and low likeability observed in experiments 1-3 are reversed when the brand name-dropper is perceived as aspirational rather than as bragging (F(1, 93) = 78.24, p < .001).

The present work offers several contributions. First, we demonstrate evidence for a dual attribution model of brand name-dropping. As such, we demonstrated that, depending on the social context and what signals are diagnostic of the situation, conspicuous brand name-dropping has predictably favorable or unfavorable outcomes for the consumer. Critically, these effects are not inevitable; the status and likeability attributions are reversed when the brand name-dropper is perceived as aspirational rather than as bragging. These results resolve what might be viewed as contrasting findings in the conspicuous consumption literature via the introduction of a more integrated framework.
REFERENCES


Can Buying a Product with a Cause Make Us Better People? Licensing Effect after Purchasing a Product with a Cause

Chun-Tuan Chang, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan
Xing-Yu Chu, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan
Zhao-Hong Cheng, National Sun Yat-sen University
Dickson Tok, National Sun Yat-sen University

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

As companies experience increasing competition, social causes take on a more prominent role in the profit-seeking efforts of the corporate domain. Partnership between product and cause is referred to as cause-related marketing (CRM) (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). Donating money to a charity each time a consumer makes a purchase has become a major corporate philanthropic trend. To consumers, they have opportunities to demonstrate their moral views through consumption decisions. Researchers make the general conclusion that CRM is linked with altruism or warm glow (Gupta and Pirsch 2006; Nowak and Clarke 2003; Webb and Molin 1998). However, we are going to show that this altruistic influence of CRM is not always true based on recent advancements in research on the licensing effect. If people feel as if they have been taken more ethical decisions (e.g., installing tankless water heaters and caring about global warming) or taken healthier options (e.g., drinking diet Coke and going to gym), they might compensate by behaving less ethical or healthy in a subsequent context. Research suggests the licensing effect on sequential behaviors in a variety of contexts including consumer purchases (Khan and Dhar 2006), charitable giving (Krishna 2011), energy policy and home energy use (Davis 2008), ethical behaviors (Mazar and Zhong 2010), job hiring (Kuo 2006), racial attitudes (Effron, Cameron, and Monin 2009), and health-related decision-making (Chiou, Yang, and Wan 2011; Wilcox et al. 2009).

This article contributes to this evolving stream of research by proposing that purchasing a product with a cause may license indulgence in self-interested behaviors later. Furthermore, we are going to show that consumers are not aware of how their prior CRM decisions impact their subsequent choices. In support of our theory, we will show that a prior purchase of CRM boost moral regulation and satisfaction in empathetic altruism, which will mediate the preference for a self-indulgent option. Furthermore, we explore how the licensing effect differs after hedonic and utilitarian product purchase. Product type (hedonic vs. utilitarian) has been identified as an important factor in CRM research (Chang 2008, 2011, 2012; Strahilevitz 1999; Strahilevitz and Myers 1998; Subrahmanyan 2004). Strahilevitz and Myers (1998) proposed the concept of affect-based complementarity in that the feelings generated by hedonic products appear to work in concert with the feelings generated after making a contribution to a charity to give the consumer a positive experience. Consumers may also use the donation to a cause to rationalize their purchase of hedonic products and thus overcome cognitive dissonance (Polonsky and Wood 2001). If consumers appear to feel that “they have fulfilled their philanthropic obligations,” this may decrease their further efforts for altruism. Krishna (2011) found that people appear to realize their motives for participating in CRM are more selfish than for charitable giving, and then reduce their subsequent happiness. CRM is found to be more effective with products perceived as hedonic than with those perceived as utilitarian (Chang 2008; Dickinson and Holmes 2008; Drumwright and Murphy 2001). If the emphatic altruism is more likely to be satisfied when purchasing hedonic products than utilitarian products with a cause, the licensing effect is expected to be enhanced after purchasing hedonic products with a cause than such utilitarian ones.

We design four experiments to investigate the licensing effect after purchasing a cause-related product. A pilot study first examines that people attach higher social and ethical values to a product with a cause than to a product without a cause. In Experiment 1, a 2 (store: conventional vs. CRM) x 2 (task: priming vs. purchase) between-subjects design is conducted and a one-shot anonymous dictator game is used to test the predictions that a priming task of CRM and actual purchase will trigger opposing effects on money-sharing behavior. Experiment 2 employs a 2 (store: conventional vs. CRM) x 2 (task: priming vs. purchase) between-subjects design. Participants’ choice between virtue and vice food served as the dependent measure. Same as Experiment 1, a 2 (store: conventional vs. CRM) x 2 (task: priming vs. purchase) between-subjects design is designed for Experiment 3, and uses an E-drawing task as an unconscious way to measure degree of perspective-taking. Experiment 4 extends the licensing effect of purchasing a product with a cause in a field setting and explores the moderating role of product type in the licensing effect. A 2 (store: CRM vs. discount) x 2 (product type: utilitarian vs. hedonic) full-factorial design is conducted. There was no overlap of participants across the pilot study and experiments.

Our studies suggest that exposure to CRM may contribute to a sense of moral self but license socially undesirable behaviors in a variety of domains. To be specific, the results from four experiments showed that CRM purchase causes a licensing effect: consumers become less willing to share (money), become more self-centered (drawing an E on one’s forehead), and prefer something vice (choose vice food over virtue food). This confirms that buying a product with a cause affirms individuals’ values of moral beliefs and ethical consciousness but the purchase can license subsequent asocial and more self-indulgence behaviors. Compared with utilitarian consumption, hedonic consumption strengthens the licensing effect. Both moral regulation and empathetic altruism serve as mediators behind the licensing effect. In a nutshell, consumers may become more selfish and self-oriented after purchasing a product with a cause, suggesting that CRM does not always show the glory side.

Several avenues present opportunities for future research. Future research may explore when the licensing effect could be dampened. For example, some people buy less preferred items because they are with a cause. If the purchase decision is not made totally voluntarily, the purchase may ease the licensing effect. Furthermore, will the type of cause (i.e., giving to a cause more related to the purchaser or not) and donation magnitude matter? The licensing effect may disappear when the cause is more egoistic or when the donation magnitude is high. More future research should identify boundary conditions associated with the roles of product, cause, and consumer individual differences in the licensing effect.
REFERENCES
Being Correct or Feeling Protected:  
A Process Account of the Effect of Personal Control on Product Information Processing  

Anne-Sophie Chaxel, Virginia Tech, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Recent studies have focused on how individuals restore a sense of structure when their personal control has been threatened (e.g., Cutright 2012). In this vein, the present research investigates how consumers regain structure in their environments during the act of product choice. In contrast to prior research, the present research proposes an in-depth process analysis of the different cognitive strategies that individuals use to regain control and the conditions under which these alternative strategies are adopted.

To study consumer information processing, and, specifically, the manner in which new product information is integrated with prior beliefs, I rely on two decades of research on “information distortion” (for a review, see Russo 2014). The phrase “information distortion” reflects decision makers’ tendency to bias their evaluations of new information to support their emerging product beliefs, resulting in confirmatory information processing bias. For instance, in deciding between two vacation packages (Hotel A and Hotel B) described by several attributes, the first piece of information might be seen as favoring Hotel A. Information distortion occurs if subsequent information is evaluated to favor Hotel A to a greater extent than it should, that is, to a greater extent than if one had seen the same information without an existing preference for Hotel A.

How can threats to personal control impact how new product information is integrated with one’s prior product beliefs? Two streams of research have made conflicting predictions. The first stream contends that individuals are motivated to defend themselves from psychological threats (a “defense” motivation). Thus, a threat to personal control should trigger a cognitive strategy that protects one’s beliefs and favors the appearance of distortion. The second stream, embedded in the selective exposure literature, contends that individuals are motivated to be more vigilant after a threat (an “accuracy” motivation), which should discourage distortion. What conditions trigger these two conflicting motivations? I hypothesize that individuals’ generalized beliefs regarding control (locus of control; Rotter 1966) might influence how they respond to situational threats to personal control. Locus of control refers to the extent to which a person expects a situation to be contingent on his or her own behavior (“internals”) versus fate (“externals”). If internals a) believe that they are in control of their experiences and b) are exposed to a threat to personal control, I hypothesize that they should attempt to process information carefully to allow them to regain control over the situation. In contrast, if externals a) believe that the environment controls them and b) are exposed to a threat to personal control, I hypothesize that their logical response should be to protect themselves against the threat. Overall, following a threat to personal control, internals (vs. externals) are therefore hypothesized to activate a defense motivation (vs. accuracy motivation) and to thereby distort information more to protect their beliefs.

Under a baseline condition in which there is no threat to personal control, what would happen to this hypothesized relationship between locus of control and information distortion? Prior research has shown that internals tend to exhibit higher levels of achievement in nearly all domains (Findley and Cooper 1983). Therefore, internals should have learned to trust their judgment more, suggesting that they might exhibit greater confidence. Because confidence is a known driver of distortion, internals should therefore distort information more than externals under baseline conditions. In summary, the following interaction is hypothesized: under baseline conditions, internals trust their beliefs more than externals do and should therefore exhibit more information distortion (a cognitive explanation), whereas under a threat to personal control, externals activate a defense (vs. accuracy for internals) motivation and therefore exhibit greater confidence and information distortion than internals do (a motivational explanation).

This interaction and its associated mechanism are tested in five studies. All of the studies share similar experimental procedures. First, locus of control is measured using a unidimensional scale, with higher scores reflecting a more internal locus of control (Rotter 1966). Second, a manipulation of threat to personal control is administered (Whitson and Galinsky 2008). Finally, following a manipulation check, all of the participants complete a sequential binary choice task that allows for the measurement of distortion.

Study 1 verifies the predicted interaction between locus of control and a threat to personal control with regard to information distortion. Study 2A tests the hypothesized cognitive and motivational mechanisms, by deactivating (through goal accomplishment) the accuracy and defense goals before the choice task and by comparing the effects of this manipulation on distortion in the presence and absence of a threat. In the absence of a threat to personal control, the typical positive effect of an internal locus of control on information distortion is found to remain unchanged by deactivating goals, confirming that the mechanism is cognitive. Conversely, in the presence of a threat, deactivating the accuracy or defense goal nullifies the impact of locus of control on distortion, confirming that the mechanism is motivational. Study 2B replicates Study 2A. However, instead of inserting manipulation of goal accomplishment, it directly measures the activation level of the defense and the accuracy goals in the act of decision-making, using a recent method developed by Carlson et al. (2014). In the absence of a threat, the relationships between locus of control and both the defense and accuracy measurements are found to be nonsignificant, confirming that the relationship is cognitive. In the presence of a threat, internals are found to activate an accuracy motivation (vs. defense for externals). Finally, Studies 3A and 3B demonstrate that the different information-processing strategies employed by internals and externals drive different choices (Study 3A) and different levels of willingness to pay (Study 3B).

The present study introduces the notion that individuals might not react homogeneously to loss of control. Internals react by adopting an accuracy-motivated strategy, whereas externals react by adopting a defense-motivated strategy. Future research could examine other phenomena that imply a confrontation between beliefs and evidence, such as wishful thinking or the influence of expectations on experience. Such phenomena might be affected by lack of control in a manner similar to information distortion.

REFERENCES


The Effect of Anthropomorphism on Consumer Preference

Echo Wen Wan, University of Hong Kong, China
Rocky Peng Chen, University of Hong Kong, China
Liyin Jin, Fudan University, China

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Anthropomorphism, defined as imbuing non-human objects with humanlike characteristics (Epley et al. 2007), is often adopted in marketing communications. Prior research has shown that specific appearance designs can enhance the effectiveness of anthropomorphism in marketing (e.g., when the grille of a car resembles the mouth of a friendly person). The current research goes beyond the specific physical attributes of specific products and documents a general elevated effect of anthropomorphism on consumers’ preference for products with superior physical attributes (e.g., products with a more attractive appearance design or packaging design). In the next section, we review key findings in the literature and elucidate how and why anthropomorphism impacts consumer preference. Then we present four studies that test our propositions.

Recent research in marketing shows that anthropomorphism induces consumers to apply knowledge in human schema in processing information about products and brands. For example, Aggarwal and McGill (2007) find that product anthropomorphism leads consumers to evaluate the product based on human schema congruity. Consistent with findings in marketing literature, research in neuroscience shows that the same neural systems involved in making judgments about humans are activated when people make anthropomorphic judgment about non-human agents (Castelli et al. 2000). We thus posit that consumers are likely to use the way they comprehend a person to understand a product when the product is anthropomorphized. It is fairly common in our daily life that people form impressions about other people based on their physical appearance (Asch 1946). Person construal research by Freeman and Ambady (2011) shows that appearance cues, such as facial and body features, are often the first input that people access when they form impressions about other people. Empirical studies in the literature have demonstrated many cases that people rely on a person’s appearance to make judgments in a wide range of contexts such as strategic games playing (Tingley 2014), criminal sentencing (Porter, Brinek, and Gustaw 2010), political voting (Antonakis and Dalgas 2009), and business practice (Gorn, Jiang, and Johar 2008). Based on prior research on anthropomorphism and person perception, we propose that anthropomorphizing a product would increase the importance of the physical attribute in consumers’ product evaluation and choice. As a result, in a decision context involving the trade-offs between physically superior product and functionally superior product, anthropomorphizing the product would increase consumers’ preference for products with superior physical (vs. functional) attributes. We first test the importance of physical attributes using the information search paradigm in experiments 1, and then examine the downstream effect on consumers’ product preference in experiments 2-4.

Experiment 1 served as an initial test of our basic proposition using an information search task (Jacoby 1977). If anthropomorphism enhances the importance of physical attributes in consumer judgment and decision, we then expect that consumers would allocate more resources (e.g., money) to search information about the physical attributes when the product is anthropomorphized. We used a pictorial presentation to prime anthropomorphism in this study (Puzakova, Kwak, and Rocereto 2013). Participants completed an information search task in which they need to allocate limited forum coins to view product information about physical attributes and functional attributes. Results of experiment 1 reveal that participants allocated more resource to acquire information about physical attributes when the product was anthropomorphized.

Experiment 2 aimed to test the downstream effect of anthropomorphism on product preference in a real purchase context. Adapted from Aggarwal and McGill (2007), we manipulated anthropomorphism using either first-person or third-person language in the introductions of the product (i.e., portable charger). After reading the introduction, participants used their own money to purchase only one of four portable chargers. Two of them were physically superior whereas another two of them were functionally superior. The percentage of participants who purchased the physically superior chargers served as the dependent variable. As expected, a larger percentage of participants in the anthropomorphism (vs. non-anthropomorphism) condition actually purchased the physically superior chargers.

Experiment 3 aimed to replicate the downstream effect of anthropomorphism using a different sample and a different product category. Participants were asked to describe a pack of cereal as either human or product, a method adapted from Aggarwal and McGill (2012). Next, all participants were presented with information of two options of packaged cereal involving the trade-off between the physical attribute and the functional attribute. Specifically, cereal A, the physically superior option, was rated as five-star for the package design and four-star for nutrition, whereas cereal B, the functionally superior option, was rated as four-star for the package design and five-star for nutrition. Then participants indicated their choice between the two options. Results of experiment 2 suggest that anthropomorphizing the cereal increased participants’ choice share for the physically superior product option.

The purpose of experiment 4 was to reveal the mechanism using a moderation approach. If consumers indeed apply the same way of person perception to their understanding of a product, priming the belief that physical appearance is an unreliable criterion for judging a person would eliminate the effect. In the belief priming condition, we showed participants a research report and claimed that it was drafted by distinguished scholars. The key message of the report was that physical appearance is not a reliable criterion for judging people. The participants in the baseline condition did not perform this task. Then participants went through a procedure that was identical to experiment 3, and indicated their preference for physically (vs. functionally) superior laptop computers. Result in the baseline condition replicated that of experiment 2-3, but the effect was eliminated in the belief priming condition.

The present research contributes to the literature of anthropomorphism by documenting novel effects and mechanism for product anthropomorphism, and advances the understanding of consumer decision-making involving the assessment of a combination of physical and functional attributes.
REFERENCES
Double Mental Discounting: How a Single Promotional Rebate Feels Twice as Nice

Andong Cheng, Pennsylvania State University, USA
Cynthia Cryder, Washington University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Our research identifies the tendency for consumers to feel as if they spend less money than in reality when they use promotional rebates. We define promotional rebate as a promotion where Purchase 1 (at Time 1) comes with credit to apply towards Purchase 2 (at Time 2). We find that when consumers receive a promotional rebate, they erroneously mentally apply the rebate amount to reduce costs of both Purchase 1 and Purchase 2. We name this phenomenon “double discounting”. We believe double discounting occurs because Purchase 1 and Purchase 2 both feel coupled with the rebate gains.

We hypothesize that a promotional rebate may feel coupled with Purchase 1 because a consumer incurs the cost of Purchase 1 and receives the rebate tender at the same time. As a result, consumers may believe that Purchase 1 subjectively feels cheaper to purchase than its listed, objective price. Purchase 2 might also may feel coupled with the rebate because the value of the rebate is actually applied to deduct the cost of Purchase 2. Purchase 2 therefore also can feel cheaper than its listed, objective price.

We explore the double discounting effect in a series of four studies. S1 establishes the basic effect. S2 demonstrates that the effect is exacerbated when consumers treat rebates like windfall gains. S3 shows that double discounting can be mitigated upon deliberation of which account the rebate belongs to. S4 demonstrates one consequence of double discounting on choice.

Study 1. We demonstrate the basic effect of double discounting in S1. Undergraduate participants from a large northeastern university were randomly assigned to either the “rebate condition” or “discount condition”. We informed the rebate (discount) condition at Purchase 1 that they will receive a $150 gift card to spend on Purchase 2 (they will get a $150 discount off Purchase 1) upon buying Purchase 1. The listed price of Purchase 1 was $500 and the listed price of Purchase 2 was $300. There was a main effect of promotion type on subjective costs where the rebate condition thought the sum of Purchase 1 and Purchase 2 costs felt lower (M=$584.53) than the discount condition (M=$655.02; F(1,98)=20.54, p<.001). In other words, the rebate (vs. discount) condition reduced the total cost of the two purchases by $215.47 (vs. $144.98), an amount statistically higher than the rebate’s $150 objective worth; t(50)=4.97, p<.001. Study 1 shows that a promotional rebate reduces the subjective cost across two purchases to a greater extent than a direct discount of the same value applied to one of the two purchases.

Study 2. Upon showing the basic effect of double discounting, we hypothesize that framing rebate gains as windfalls would exacerbate double discounting effects because windfall gains are unlabeled and flexible to assign to any account (Thaler 1980; 1985). Mechanical Turk participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. The discount condition received $150 off Purchase 1. The rebate condition received a $150 voucher for a future purchase upon buying Purchase 1. The windfall condition received a $150 voucher for a future purchase as an unrelated event that occurs simultaneously with Purchase 1. While each condition should have rationally deducted a total of $150 from the costs of Purchase 1 and Purchase 2, we found that the discount condition deducted a mean of $147.28, the rebate condition deducted a mean of $198.41, and the windfall condition deducted a mean of $238.30; F(2, 112)=11.14, p<.001. Further contrast effects showed that the rebate condition deducted more than the discount condition (t(112)=2.60, p<.01) but less than the windfall condition (t(112)=2.05, p<.05). Participants in the rebate condition deducted more value (M=$198.41) across the two purchases than the rebate amount was objectively worth ($150); t(36)=2.99, p<.01. This over-discounting effect was exacerbated in the windfall condition (M=$238.30).

Study 3. In S2, we showed that rebates framed as windfalls exacerbated double discounting effects. In S3, we aimed to mitigate double discounting effects through decoupling rebate gains from Purchase 1. We predict that decoupling will occur when consumers are prompted to deliberate what they will spend their rebates rewards on. Mturk participants were assigned to a discount vs rebate vs think condition. The think condition received a promotional rebate at Purchase 1 but were prompted to think about what they would buy with the rebate before assessing Purchase 1’s subjective cost. There was a main effect of promotion type how much money participants subjectively deducted from the cost of Purchase 1 (F(2, 116)=8.50, p<.001). Participants in the think condition deducted less off Purchase 1 (M=$50.68) than participants in the rebate condition (M=$111.94; F(1, 118)=6.81, p<.01) and discount condition (M=$198.87; F(1, 118) = 9.09, p<.001). The results suggest that thinking about using the promotional rebate on Purchase 2 helps decouple the rebate from Purchase 1, thus also reducing the double discounting error.

Study 4. S4 aims to demonstrate whether offering a promotional rebate with Purchase 1 can encourage consumers to choose a more expensive product at Purchase 2 when participants are given a continuum of choices for Purchase 2 (low price/low quality to high price/high quality). We find that participants who received a promotional rebate with Purchase 1 chose to spend more money on Purchase 2 (M=$249.94) than participants who received the same value discount off Purchase 1 (M=20.09; F(1, 328)=34.69, p<.001). We find that as participants double discount subjective costs, they also tempt themselves into spending more money.

Discussion. We identify a mental accounting phenomenon that occurs when consumers use promotional rebates. In four studies, we demonstrate the basic phenomenon, how it can be strengthened and weakened, and how it impacts choice. Framing a rebate as a windfall allows the rebate to feel more easily coupled with both Purchase 1 and Purchase 2. Reminding consumers to think about how the rebate will be spent in the future decouples the rebate from the present purchase. Finally, because double discounting decreases subjective cost of purchases, the phenomenon also encourages upgrades to pricier options.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

During recent years, one of the fundamental changes in online user environments is the input device which has moved from a mouse to a touch interface. However, little research has examined users’ computer device types as part of online retail environments, and it is important to understand how using a touch interface influences or a mouse differs in online shopping experiences.

In offline retail environments, touch has been an important cue for purchase intentions and attitudes (Peck and Childers 2003). In online user environments, touch (i.e. touching computer interfaces) has a positive impact on perceived ownership (Brasel and Gips 2014) and students’ engagement and performance (Enriquez 2010). Engagement leads to higher recall of commercials (Moorman, Neijens, and Smit 2007) and enhances satisfaction, trust, and commitment in a virtual brand community (Brodie et al. 2011). Product involvement level also affects consumer evaluations of products or services (Solomon 2013), however, little is known about how these device types and PIL influence online shopping experiences.

This study proposes a positive association between a touch interface and 1) shopper engagement among low involvement product shoppers and 2) purchase decision measures (product information recall, purchase intentions, product evaluations and satisfaction). The hypotheses also include a mediation effect of engagement between a touch interface and purchase decision measures.

Prior to the main experiment, a pilot study was conducted. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine 1) the appropriate product categories for online browsing and 2) the appropriate design and styles of test websites for the experiment to test in the main experiment. Sixty-two undergraduate students participated in a survey to receive course credit. Based on the results, clothing, computers and electronics were among the top five popular product categories that students reported shopping for online. For the website design and styles, students found the e-commerce websites using large visuals and a simpler layout relatively pleasing and easy to use in terms of design and usability.

Study 1 had a 2 x 2 between-group design (touch interface and mouse × camera and sweatshirt). 127 college students were recruited through e-mail to participate in experiment sessions at a research lab, where each partitioned desk had a 22-inch touch screen monitor, mouse, and keyboard. All participants were randomly assigned to four conditions of 30–35 subjects. Two conditions browsed a camera website, and each condition used either a touch interface or a mouse. The other two conditions browsed a sweatshirt website, using either a touch interface or a mouse. Product types and website details were decided based on the results of a pilot study and on the findings of previous studies of touch interfaces (Brasel and Gips 2014). Sweatshirts were low involvement products (LOW), whereas cameras were high involvement products (HIGH). After browsing the site, participants completed a questionnaire on engagement, purchase decision measures and a few manipulation checks.

Study 2 also used a 2 x 2 between-group design (touch interface and mouse × high and low product involvement). Experimental sessions were held in the same lab with the same equipment and experimental conditions except for a few minor changes in the questionnaire and procedure. Unlike Study 1, this new study tested a single product category (camera) instead of two while manipulating the product involvement level separately to ensure the role of product involvement and device types is replicated. Two different scenarios were used to manipulate the product involvement level, and each scenario was designed to induce either high (HIGH) or low involvement (LOW) toward the test product category.

Study 1 found a negative effect instead of the positive impact of using a touch interface as proposed. Touch interface users recalled brand names worse than mouse users, and this effect was significant among camera shoppers (HIGH) only (p < .02). Touch interface users were more engaged with their shopping than mouse users. As proposed, this effect was significant among sweatshirt (LOW) shoppers only (p < .02). Higher shopper engagement led to higher satisfaction with shopping, higher purchase intentions, and more positive product evaluations of product design and product availability (p < .05). However, engagement level was not significantly associated with product information recall or product evaluation of prices, resulting in no significant mediation effect of engagement (p > .05).

The significant findings from Study 1 were all consistent in Study 2 as well. Using a touch interface resulted in less accurate brand name recall than mouse users, and it was significant in the HIGH condition only as in Study 1. The positive association between touch interface users and engagement was also consistent in the LOW condition, and engagement level predicted product evaluation, purchase intentions, and satisfaction except for information recall.

In addition to the findings replicating the previous outcomes, Study 2 found several new effects as well. Along with brand name recall, touch interface users also did not recall price information as accurately as mouse users (p < .05), and this effect was significant in the HIGH condition only as in brand name recall. There was an additional main effect of touch interface, which resulted in higher purchase intentions than mouse users (p < .002). Finally, according to the Hayes’ PROCESS macros (Hayes 2013), the mediation effect of engagement between touch interfaces and purchase intentions was significant. The mediation effect of engagement was not significant in other associations. In both Study 1 and 2, the product involvement manipulation was performed successfully according to the manipulation check.

The findings of this study highlight the need to view a touch interface as part of online retail cues in addition to the traditional cues such as website design. The study also suggests that online retailers need to be aware of the device type that customers use to ensure the optimized shopping experience for different product categories as the device type matters to product information recall and purchase intentions.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Brands are often confronted with negative or inappropriate comments made on their Facebook pages. Judgments on whether or not the comment should be removed are often subjective. The temptation for social media managers is to remove all negative comments in an effort to protect the brand from public scrutiny. Common sense would suggest that deleting trolling-type comments intended to shock or embarrass is appropriate. But what are the implications of deleting comments from customers expressing genuine disgruntlement with the brand’s product or service? If not deleted, could these kinds of negative comments somehow help the brand?

Although there has been much research done in the Marketing literature to understand customer disgruntlement and service recovery (Aggarwal 2004; Davidow 2003; MacKinnon and Boon 2012), there has been little research done to understand how observer’s perceived satisfaction and trust are affected by a brand’s attempt to fix other peoples’ disgruntlement. Prior research has identified an opportunity for brands who engage in a service recovery incident to mitigate the negative effects of a transgression. Known as the “Service Recovery Paradox”, a disgruntled customer who experiences an effective service recovery may develop greater satisfaction with the brand than if the transgression never happened (Gilly 1987; Maxham and Netemeyer 2002; McCollough, Berry, and Yadav 2000; McCollough and Bharadwaj 1992; Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999). This is in contrast to the absence of an attempt at service recovery which may ultimately result in spiraling dissatisfaction. (Bitner 1990; Hart, Heskett, and Sasser 1990). One way consumers make judgments about the integrity of a brand is by observing the brands actions. (Kelley and Davis 1994; Ruyter and Wetzels 2000). Consumers may form opinions about a brand based on judgments and expectations of a brand’s equity and fairness. (Blodgett, Granbois, and Walters 1993; Oliver 1980). One byproduct of an effective service recovery is an increase in trusting intentions towards the brand (Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran 1998). Trust is thought to be a key mechanism affecting brand loyalty (Morgan and Hunt 1994). As a result of observing a brand’s potential for meeting expectations, consumers may form trusting relationships with a brand (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol 2002), perceiving the brand to be honest and having integrity (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Sirdeshmukh et al. 2002). In light of these studies, we propose that observers of a brand’s successful service recovery effort may also form more positive judgments and expectations towards the brand, than if no transgression was perceived.

To test our prediction, we conducted two experiments using fictitious Facebook pages. Our results find that perceived satisfaction with the brand is greater for a service recovery perceived as sufficient, than a service recovery perceived as insufficient, and that perceived satisfaction with a brand is greater when a sufficient service recovery is observed, than when no transgression is observed. When evidence of a service recovery was signaled by the brand, our research finds that respondents perceived the brand to be more honest, more genuine, and more trustworthy than when no service recovery was signaled. Our findings suggest that as a result of increased perceptions of brand integrity, respondents indicated they would be more likely to purchase the brand, and estimated they would be more satisfied with their purchase, than when no service recovery signal was given. Of interest, our results also showed that participants thought the brand with a service recovery signal was more honest, genuine, and trustworthy than when all comments were positive.

The implication of our findings for social media managers is clear. It is suggested that brands should not systematically delete all negative Facebook comments, but rather make a careful distinction between inappropriate comments, and comments motivated by genuine product or brand related disgruntlement. A negative comment from a customer who has a genuine product or brand related grievance could be viewed as an opportunity to signal to others an ability to recognize justice and offer a satisfactory recovery. Paradoxically, negative comments could translate it into increased brand loyalty and profitability.

LITERATURE CITED


The Undercover Altruist: When Doing Good Is Socially Awkward

Jan-Willem Bolderdijk, University of Groningen, The Netherlands
Gert Cornelissen, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

People try to be at their best when observed by others. We smile when our pictures are taken and dress up to go to social events. In a typical friendly interaction, we monitor and regulate our behavior to assure a smooth and pleasant social situation. We are even willing to tell white lies about how much we like the, in fact, horrible new hairstyle of the people we are conversing with. In this paper, we propose the counter-intuitive notion of avoiding sending signals of one’s moral inclinations may be part of this arsenal of techniques to smoothen social interactions.

This suggestion runs contrary to previous findings on the effect of social presence on moral behavior. People have various reasons to put their moral selves on display, such as reputation building (Roberts, 1998), or the avoidance of punishment (Fehr & Fischbacher). As a result, (even minimal) social presence typically assumed to promote pro-social behavior, such as making a contribution to an honesty box when getting coffee (Bateson, Nettle, & Roberts, 2006).

We argue that the opposite may occur in certain situations. Individuals like to think of themselves as good and decent people, and cultivating one’s moral self is an importance source of self-worth (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Consequently, individuals get upset by signals that suggest that they are not as moral as they would like to believe, such as being confronted to others who are more virtuous than us (‘moral do-gooders’; Monin, Sawyer, & Marquez, 2008). The confrontation with a moral do-gooder may make an observer look bad by comparison and thus produce an awkward situation that feels uncomfortable for both. We argue that prospective do-gooders anticipate this. What’s more, they may take regulatory action: in order to avoid awkward situations, individuals may shy away from virtuous actions that they may privately endorse, but that carry the risk of making others look bad by comparison. Thus, we predict that the presence of others may discourage virtuous behaviors: people might hide their true moral inclinations in order to avoid socially awkward situations.

In Studies 1a-1c, we observed the likelihood to make a donation across three real-life settings. In Study 1a we observed consumers’ donations to a food drive, in the context of a grocery shopping trip, and in Study 1b and 1c, we observed donations to a beggar and a street musician, respectively. Across the three studies the findings suggest that, unless there is a clear social norm favoring donating, the presence of others discourages donating. In Study 2, participants showed less interest in campaign material of a human rights organization when their actions were visible (versus invisible) to a confederate. Participants in Study 3 were intercepted on a busy street, and prompted to verbally report on their moral behavior in comparison with others. Despite the fact that, privately, most people reported to think about themselves as more generous than average, the large majority of our participants did not admit this publicly.

Together, these studies run counter to the common wisdom that public situations promote instances of virtuous behavior. Instead, it seems people sometimes want to appear less virtuous than they actually are: they may reduce their observable levels of virtuousness as to avoid socially awkward situations. Thus, at times we may privately feel motivated to contribute to a greater good, but relinquish that possibility in order not to jeopardize social harmony. Importantly, our work adds to an increasing body of evidence suggesting that the current view of human nature may be overly pessimistic: low levels of observable moral behavior (e.g. the small market share of conspicuous but as yet uncommon green products) may not reflect consumers’ true preferences. Instead they may be the result of individuals’ choice not to exceed existing moral norms, in order to avoid causing a socially awkward situation.

Currently, we are setting up studies to provide more evidence for our claim that prospective do-gooders anticipate that going “beyond the norm” may produce socially awkward situations, when those actions are observed by others. Additionally, we are testing whether individuals who “get caught” being too nice search for alternative ways to reduce the awkwardness of the social setting, for example by coming up with non-moral justifications for their behavior.

REFERENCES

Pleasure as an Ally of Healthy Eating? Contrasting Visceral and Epicurean Eating Pleasure and their Association with Portion Size Preferences and Wellbeing
Yann Cornil, University of British Columbia, Canada
Pierre Chandon, INSEAD, France

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research on food and eating has overwhelmingly associated pleasure with impulsive visceral drives (Dube and Le Bel 2003). Visceral eating occurs because external cues, such as the mere sight, smell or taste of a pleasant food, activate the pleasure centers of the brain (Berridge 2009; Plassmann, O’Doherty, and Rangel 2010). Emotions can also trigger visceral eating urges, as people seek pleasurable foods as a way of regulating negative emotions (for a review, Macht 2008). This view highlights the negative characteristics of eating pleasure, leading to immoderation (van Strien et al. 1986) and food anxiety (Coveney 2000). It also echoes a long tradition in philosophy of considering gustatory pleasure as animal and uncontrolled (i.e., visceral), pursued by “brutes” (Korsmeyer 1999).

We contrast this view of pleasure with an “Epicurean” perspective, which recognizes that the sense of taste in particular, and the pleasure of eating in general, can be controlled by volition, educated and refined (Kass 1994). We define Epicurean eating pleasure as the pleasure derived from the multisensory, aesthetic and symbolic aspects of food. These facets of eating pleasure have received little attention in consumer behavior research, partly because of the difficulty of capturing them via traditional experimental paradigms (Alba and Williams 2013). Yet, recent studies have started to show how these Epicurean facets contribute to pleasure, for instance, by improving food presentation (Hoyer and Stokburger-Sauer 2012), providing rich multisensory information (Elder and Krishna 2010), giving meaning to food (Wansink, Payne, and North 2007), “ritualizing” the experience of eating (Vohs et al. 2013), or simply, paying more attention to senses while eating (Quoidbach and Dunn 2013).

In the current research, we aim to develop and test a scale measuring Epicurean eating pleasure tendencies, show how it differs from visceral eating pleasure tendencies (measured with External eating and Emotion eating tendencies), and more importantly, that Epicurean pleasure can be associated with moderation (e.g. preference for smaller portions) and a sense of higher well-being. Indeed, psychological wellbeing depends on our ability to “savor” pleasurable experiences, rather than accumulating pleasurable experiences (Quoidbach et al. 2010). In line with this argument, cross-cultural studies point at the fact that portion sizes and obesity rates are both lower in cultures with a strong focus on aesthetic and experiential food pleasures, like France and Japan (e.g. Rozin 2005).

First, we developed two new instruments: one designed to assess Epicurean eating pleasure tendencies, and the other to assess Preferences for larger food portions. The 29 original Epicurean items reflected the multisensory, aesthetic and symbolic facets of eating pleasure (e.g. “I value the look, the smell, the taste, the texture in mouth of foods”, “There is a lot of beauty in food”), and the 25 original Portion size items measured preferences for larger food portions (e.g. “One regular serving of food never seems to be enough to satisfy me”). We presented the pool of items to seven judges to assess face validity and then examined the item reliability in a pre-study involving 265 adult Americans on an online marketplace (Amazon Mechanical Turk). We analyzed the results using exploratory factor analyses and finally obtained a seven-item Epicurean tendencies scale and a 6-item Preference for larger portions scale.

For the main study, we recruited 250 adult Americans on Amazon Mechanical Turk. We started the study with the two new scales measuring Epicurean eating and Preferences for larger portions. We then administered the complete Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire (DEBQ, van Strien et al. 1986), which contains the 10-item External Eating scale (measuring visceral responsiveness to external food cues), the 13-item Emotional Eating scale (measuring visceral eating in response to negative emotions), and the 10-item Restrained Eating scale (measuring dieting tendencies). We also measured health worries with a 3-item scale developed by Rozin et al. (1999), and psychological wellbeing with the 8-item short version of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills and Argyle 2002). Finally, we asked the participants to indicate their age, gender, income, highest diploma, and weight and height (to compute their body mass index).

The Epicurean Eating scale and the Preference for larger portions scale had satisfactory Cronbach’s alphas (respectively .86 and .75). Confirmatory factor analysis with the Epicurean Eating scale, the External Eating Scale, and the Emotional Eating scale showed that Epicurean eating tendencies were clearly distinct from visceral eating tendencies. Gender was the only demographic variable significantly associated with Epicurean eating tendencies scale, with women scoring higher than men (p<.04). Epicurean eating tendencies were equally distributed across age, income, education, and BMI levels. In contrast, external and emotional eating increased with BMI and were strongly influenced by income.

We then estimated a structural equation model with seven latent variables using AMOS 19.0 (Arbuckle 2010) in order to compare the associations between the different scales. As expected, Preferences for larger portions were negatively correlated with Epicurean eating tendencies (c=-.14, p<.03) and positively correlated with external eating and emotional eating (resp. c=-.21, p<.001, c=.15, p=.02). The expected contrast between Epicurean and visceral eating tendencies was also found when looking at wellbeing, which was positively correlated with Epicurean eating tendencies (c=.19, p<.01) but negatively correlated with both external and emotional eating (resp. c=-.18, p<.01; c=-.35, p<.001). Importantly, Epicurean eating tendencies were clearly distinct from dieting tendencies (c=.06, p=.31), which were associated with lower well-being (c=-.14, p=.02).

In conclusion, our research underlines the pitfalls of the moralization of food pleasure in research, which has tended to perceive eating pleasure as a “vice”, a “sin of gluttony” that needs to be tamed (Askegaard et al. 2014). We believe that this dominant visceral perspective on eating pleasure, which highlights its uncontrolled and negative characteristics, should be complemented by an Epicurean perspective. The Epicurean perspective invites us to challenge the morality of food pleasure, suggesting that pleasure may in fact facilitate moderation and well-being, and calls for research to give a more holistic and positive role to taking pleasure in food (Block et al. 2011).

REFERENCES


Creating Hybridity: The Case of American Yoga
Gokcen Coskuner-Balli, Chapman University, USA
Burcak Ertimur, Fairleigh Dickinson University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In today’s global consumptionscape, cultural practices are characterized and constituted by multi-directional flows of people, technology, financial capital, mediated images and ideas (Appadurai 1990). In line with this disjunctive order of global cultural economy, research on globalization outcomes has increasingly diverted attention away from the perspective that globalization produces homogeneity and cultural uniformity, to one that emphasizes cultural heterogenization (Robertson 1992; Wilk 1998). Starting with Ger and Belk’s (1996) work on alternatives to global uniformity, consumer researchers examined complex outcomes of global flows in a variety of contexts including consumer resistance to Coca-Cola in India (Varman and Belk 2009), re-appropriation of yoga in India (Askegaard and Eckhardt 2012), reterritorialization of rock music in Turkey (Yazicioglu 2010), and appropriation and creolization of youth culture in Denmark and Greenland (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006). These studies point to what globalization scholars conceptualize as hybridity, “a continuous two-way borrowing and lending between cultures, a form of transculturation or sociocultural process in which discrete structures and practices that existed separately, are combined to create new structures, objects, and practices” (Garcia Canclini 2005, 8).

In this paper, we build on this stream of research by exploring the processes through which hybrid practices are created in the marketplace. Specifically, we conceptualize the global flow of yoga practices and the emergence of American Yoga in the U.S. in terms of institutionalization of hybridity through market practices. Although there is no official description of what American Yoga is, institutional actors such as the Yoga Journal often allude to its hybrid form (Cushman 2000; Isaacs 2008). American Yoga has appropriated some of the ancient Indian yoga poses (i.e., asanas) and spiritual aspects of the practice (e.g., mantras such as control, self transformation, gratitude), and combined it with the physical exercise culture, English script, and popular music appealing to Western audiences. Its experience is also commoditized and hybridized with classes for beginners, intermediate, and advanced students, new styles such as acroyoga and antigravity yoga, and forms like spinning yoga, yoga for dogs (i.e., combination of yoga and martial arts), yoga and chocolate, yoga and wine, as well as doga (i.e., yoga for dogs) (Brown and Leledaki 2010; Merry 2010).

Globalization Processes and Consequences

The influence of globalization processes on consumer identities, experiences and practices is multifaceted. On one hand, the flow of goods and ideas from the West to the East are suggested to endorse capitalism and Western values leading to a homogenous global consumer culture (Belk 1995; Featherstone 1990). On the other hand, the effects of globalization are posited to be not just unidirectional and the ensuing consequences to be more complex in the form of local interpretations. In line with this latter view, Ger and Belk (1996) identify four types of reactions globalization can bring about in local contexts: return to local roots, consumer resistance, local appropriation, and creolization. Fueled by marketization of global goods by multinational firms and the global media, local effects of globalization in Less Affluent World include increased ethnic and religious movements, and geographic nationalism. While these reactions can lead to fundamentalism and polarization among local communities, they can also indicate return to roots and revival of local traditions. Globalization can also result in consumer resistance in local contexts such as in the cases of boycotting Coca-Cola in India (Varman and Belk 2009) or foreign and infidel brands in Turkey (Izberk-Bilgin 2012). Another reaction to global consumer culture is appropriation of global consumer goods and reconfiguration of their meaning to better fit local contexts. Consumers can appropriate meanings and functions of global goods as evidenced, for instance, in the use of dishwashers to wash muddy spinach in Turkey (Ger and Belk 1996).

Finally, globalization can lead to creolization or hybridization, that is, “the meeting and mingling of meanings and meaningful forms from disparate sources” (Ger and Belk 1996, 290). Some creolized consumption patterns may be more like a fragmented post-modern pastiche rather than an integrated adaptation; yet, through transformation of meaning and local sense-making, they can be locally experienced in a coherent manner. Yazicioglu’s (2010, 240) analysis of Turkish Rock music showcases how hybridization comes to being through the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Deterritorialization refers to “an appropriation process, a cultural pattern that is taken from its social context and applied to a new one in a different physical space, whereas reterritorialization denotes the making of this cultural pattern one’s own by producing a local form in this new society and geography.” In the process of reterritorialization, multiple variations and hybrid forms rather than merely homogenized and/or singular appropriations of cultural practices may emerge in their new contexts. Yazicioglu (2010) finds that, rather than homogenization of rock music, a new form of Turkish rock emerges in the local context of Turkey through processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

In summary, these multiple processes that connect and integrate different aspects of cultural products to the local cultures they travel to go beyond accounts of global homogenization and local appropriation. While the diversity of consumer responses to global cultural flows is well documented, the role of market actors (i.e., brands, service providers, journals) in deterritorialization and reterritorialization of products/practices have gained less attention. Towards this end, we examine the market actors’ practices in collectively creating the hybrid practice of American Yoga.

Methodology

Research began with an aim to understand the evolution of yoga in the U.S. We sought to gain insight into the history of yoga in the U.S. with a focus on the actors who introduced as well as shaped the practice over time. We collected articles with the word “yoga” in the headline and the lead paragraph from the New York Times (n = 868) and the Washington Post (n = 604) published between 1980 and 2012. The collection of this archival data served as a starting point in forming a historical trajectory of the market capturing evolving meaning of yoga, identifying actors and brands that were involved in building of the market. We then conferred to a number of historical sources including books on history of yoga (n =14), journal and magazine articles (n =166), and websites of yoga associations to critically evaluate how American Yoga emerged over time. In addition, we engaged in participant observation in yoga classes in the U.S. between 2009 and 2014, taking field notes on the activities and content that made up these classes.
The data were coded iteratively to identify patterns and themes (Corbin and Strauss 2007). In the initial open coding process, we noted specific mentions of ‘American Yoga.’ We then analyzed the data to identify the strategies through which local actors create American Yoga. During this process, we also examined the literature on globalization and hybridity linking our findings to higher level constructs.

**Findings**

Yoga is a 2500-year-old discipline that is traditionally associated with quieting of the mind, transcending the physical self, and achieving union with the divine in journey to spiritual enlightenment (De Michielis 2004). While its origins lie in Sanskrit culture and the religious traditions of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism, the theory and practice of yoga in modern and postmodern times stem broadly from the philosophies, teachings, and practices of Hinduism (De Michielis 2008). Swami Vivekananda’s speech in 1893 at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago marks the official introduction of yoga to the U.S. (De Michielis 2004). Vivekananda focused on contemplative dimensions of yoga, emphasizing metaphysical and devotional (i.e., Raja yoga) rather than physical (i.e., Hatha yoga) forms and articulated yoga as the core component of Hindu spirituality and the “unifying sign of the Indian nation” (Van der Veer 2007, 319). In the 20th century, a distinct American yoga started to emerge that gradually valued Hatha yoga and embraced “the physical as a route to the transcendent” (Albanese 2007, 247). Today 20.4 million Americans practice yoga and spend about $10.3 billion a year on yoga classes and products (Yoga Journal 2012). The wide variety of yoga styles and brands that have caught on range from Power Yoga to Jivamukti Yoga and constitute products of American appropriation of yoga that is covertly metaphysical and heavily inscribed within medical and fitness domains (Albanese 2005, 2007; Powers 2000). The analysis of our data reveals a series of deterritorializing and reterritorializing practices in creation of American Yoga.

**Detterritorializing Practices**

Our data indicates that the diverse meanings of yoga were picked and adopted selectively in the U.S. market via decoupling of the practice from its Hindu roots while continuing to emphasize its fitness and health benefits. The American Yoga Association (AYA), for example, is a non-profit organization that was established in 1968 dedicated to provide instructional and educational resources on yoga to students, teachers, and journalists. Its mission is to “convey the essence of Yoga philosophy in a manner that is nonreligious, educational, and sensitive to the particular needs of Americans” (www.americanyogaassociation.org). This conceptualization of the practice stands in contrast to that of Vivekananda’s. Yet, such de-ethnicization of the practice came to define contours of American Yoga and made the practice accessible to wider range of consumers who had different religious beliefs or sought purely physical benefits from the practice (Little 2011).

The resulting cultural product is set apart from traditional yoga practices in several aspects. While the variety of American yoga brands range from meditative to athletic practices, yoga acquired secular meanings over time to accommodate interest in physical exercises and religious diversity of American practitioners (Cushman 2000; Miller 2008; Powers 2000). For example, Tara Guber, the creator of the “Yoga Ed.” program that is now adopted in twenty-six states in the U.S. took the Hindu language out of the program: “I stripped every piece of anything that anyone could vaguely construe as spiritual or religious out of the program.” (Guber quoted in Miller 2008). Such transformations of yoga via its disassociation from Hinduism served to mitigate tensions regarding its incompatibility with Christianity.

Other market actors adopted similar decoupling practices as well. For example, the YogaFit brand was created as a “user-friendly” practice that dispensed with the Sanskrit names of postures and eliminated om-ing and chanting to address the challenges of teaching yoga in health clubs that appeal to diverse practitioners (Oldenburg 2004). Tara Stiles, the founder of Strala Yoga, arguing “people need yoga not another religious leader,” dismissed discussions of sacred Hindu texts, chakras. Instead she introduced plain terminology such as “push-ups” and “lower back” instead of “chaturangas” and “sacrum” (Alvarez 2011). Interestingly, while stripping down the Hindu scripts from the practice, new scripts and traditions were created in yoga classes such as those for kids, wherein yogic panting became “bunny breathing” and “meditation” became “time in” (Miller 2008). It also became common for some practitioners to adapt their yoga practice by integrating asanas (i.e., physical poses) with prayers and readings from their religion of choice (Morris 2010).

**Reterritorializing Practices**

Following deterritorializing practices involving selective decoupling, market actors appropriated yoga to the American context via embedding the practice with culturally relevant narratives and histories. For instance, yoga instructors often brought in their personal stories and experiences such as having a mishap and going through a stressful day, which are closely tied to the American geographic and cultural context, to their sessions. They, then, encouraged consumers to imbue their practices with such personalized meanings and employ yoga to cope with the daily ordeals of their American lives: “The instructor arrived with an enthusiastic spirit greeting everybody. He was dressed in striped swim trunks and a tank top with a sunset image on the front. He looked like he was ready to go to the beach. He started the class with a story to guide the day’s practice: “Let me tell you something that happened this weekend. I was driving up to Santa Barbara to see my best friend. In my excitement I must have been pushing the gas pedal a bit too much and all of a sudden there was a police siren behind me. I got a speeding ticket. So I want this to remind us to control ourselves and let go off the gas pedal. As you engage in your practice today dedicate it to self-control.” Throughout the practice he reminded us to focus on control as we held each pose. Right before the squads he started playing a Janet Jackson song, “Control,” to bring inspiration to our practice” (Field notes at CorePower Yoga).

We observe that the processes of institutional story telling and appropriation of yoga as a healing practice with the potential to overcome the ills of the modern Western society were successfully incorporated into individual consumers’ practices. The resulting individual and private meanings mark reterritorialization of yoga in the U.S. and come to define the core of American Yoga: “For 65 consecutive classes I had not given up. I can’t give up because six years ago I was a junkie living on the streets of New York, shooting heroin, drinking methadone and feeding my addiction to pills. So what are the odds of me winding up here, at 49, training to be a Bikram yoga teacher? …Bikram yoga is a challenge for anyone, much less a recovering addict wracked with pain. It is a 90-minute class, practiced in a room heated to 105 degrees, with the same series of 26 postures patented by Bikram Choudhury. The postures are accessible to anyone, in any shape, but challenging for everyone, in any shape. The front mirrors force you to face the truth and the reality of your life. Slowly, I found a sliver of hope that I could change. I learned to allow my sadness, my anger, my discomfort, my fight-or-flight drama to just be.” (Heaton 2011; The New York Times, March 11)
Another reterritorialization strategy that emerged from our data pertains to the building of brand communities. First, a variety of yoga festivals were created that brought together like-minded yoga enthusiasts (www.yogafestival.com). The Wanderlust festivals, for example, are multi-day events that combine yoga classes with outdoor expeditions, music performances, wine tastings, and organic dining featuring top chefs. Taking place in a variety of different states and cities across the U.S., the festivals are “all-out, ecstatic celebrations” that aim to create community around shared values and mindful living. The founders express their enthusiasm in seeing “a large community grow around the pillars of mindful living — yoga, the arts, personal spirituality, environmentalism, organics and conscious consumerism” and having Wanderlust serve as a central gathering point for this community (www.wanderlust.com).

Second, yoga studios cater to a sense of community. Special appearances of gurus and yoga celebrities, workshops and events in the studios offer experiences of collective flow as well as status to members (Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006). For example, kirtan chanting sessions are gaining increasing popularity among American consumers. While traditionally kirtan is a form of worship in India’s bhakti devotional traditions, in its American appropriation it has become more of a meditation to escape from the stresses of American culture “relieving it [the mind] from its usual chatter — grocery lists, money worries, petty arguments.” Centers such as the Integral Yoga Studios or the Jivamukti Yoga School in Manhattan, sometimes host donation based kirtan sessions and draw hundreds of practitioners (Eckel 2009, E6).

Discussion

We explored the practice of yoga in the U.S. to illustrate the processes of hybridization evidenced in creation of American Yoga. Our findings that detail deterritorializing and reterritorializing practices of market actors point to an emerging consciousness of kind among American yogis. Some trained by Indian gurus, the American masters have combined different strains of Indian yoga to suit modern American tastes. Increasing number of yoga conferences, often sponsored by key institutional actors like the Yoga Journal and regional yoga associations provide an opportunity for prominent yoga teachers and yoga enthusiasts to socialize, become familiarized with and practice various styles of the hybrid cultural practice of American Yoga.

By focusing on how market actors’ practices helped create hybridity, this paper makes two key theoretical contributions to the prior literature. First, while extant conceptualizations of globalization have mainly focused on the outcomes of borrowing and lending between cultures and the diversity of consumer responses to globalization (e.g., Askegaard and Eckhardt 2012, Ger and Belk 1996, Yazi-cioğlu 2010), our study identified strategies by which market actors mobilize flows of meanings to create hybridity in the marketplace. Second, we extend on the consumer culture theory work that explores the role of brands in construction of cultures and identities by showcasing their part in creation and institutionalization of hybridity (Cayla and Eckhardt 2008; Luedicke et al. 2010). Our longitudinal and multi-actor analysis of the U.S. yoga market reveals how brand practices contributed to shaping of the American yoga as a hybrid form of cultural practice.

REFERENCES


Garcia Canelini, Nestor (2005), Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Learning Modernity, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Despite a recent wave of scholarly interest on masculinities and the marketplace (Bettany et al. 2010; Holt and Thompson 2004; Moisio, Arnould, and Gentry 2013), there has been limited attention on how the marketplace-enabled construction of masculinities intersects with the dynamics of transnational mobility. While consumer acculturation theorists have contributed important insights regarding the intersections between gender and mobility, studies in this area have been predominantly drawn on the perspectives of female migrants (Chytkova 2011; Kjeldgaard and Nielsen 2010; Üstüner and Holt 2007) and second generation migrants (Lindridge, Hogg, and Shah 2004; Takhar et al. 2010). Furthermore, theorists in the broader social sciences have tended to focus on the experiences of low capital migrant men (Datta et al. 2009; George 2005), thereby privileging the narrative of migrant emasculation.

To redress these current asymmetries, this paper seeks to understand masculinities from the perspective of skilled first generation migrant men. In particular, beyond the well-established accounts of migrant emasculation (Kalra 2009), how do skilled migrant men use marketplace resources to perform remasculation? In the context of challenges to masculine gender identities in migration, to what extent do the remasculation practices of skilled migrant men facilitate the re-inscription or revision of pre-migration gender regimes?

Our exploration of these questions is informed by the concepts of gender regimes and remasculation. Gender regimes refer to “an amalgam of practices, values and meanings” which cumulatively produce idealized standards of masculinity and femininity (Hopkins and Noble 2009, 813). Gender regimes are contextualized social performances (Hibbins and Pease 2009), which intersect with other identity constructs and wider sociocultural forces (Collins 1994). While they may produce power asymmetries (Connell 2005), they are also subject to challenge and change (Datta et al. 2009). The gender regime of pater familias, in which manhood is strongly associated with having paid work, providing for a family, and being head of the family (Connell 1998; Datta et al. 2009; Elmhirst 2007; Herbert 2008; Lupton 2000; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Thai 2012), is often challenged in migration, leading to experiences of emasculation. In order to cope, migrant men have been theorized to deploy various remasculation strategies which include hypermasculine strategies (McKay 2007; Osella and Osella 2000), protest masculinity (Broudé 1990), local hegemonic masculinity (Hibbins and Pease 2009), and flexible masculinity (Chua and Fujino 1999).

To empirically explore how skilled migrant men use marketplace resources to perform remasculation strategies through consumption practices, we conducted a hermeneutic analysis (Thompson 1997) of depth interviews with 14 skilled migrant men who had migrated from Southeast Asia to New Zealand. To enrich and deepen the consumer narratives, visual and reflexive methods were deployed. First, each participant was asked to select objects and photographs which represent their experiences of migration (Zaltman and Coulter 1995) and use drawings to represent their social networks and social identities (Bagnoli 2009). Second, each participant was interviewed twice in line with open narrative reflexivity (Thompson, Stern, and Arnould 1998). In their second interview, participants were presented with the researchers’ emerging interpretations and provided an opportunity to correct, qualify, or further deepen their initial responses.

Participants conveyed common experiences of emasculation resulting from reductions in occupational status, discourses of gender egalitarianism in New Zealand, and gender role reconfigurations in the household. In order to cope with these changes, participants deployed three remasculation strategies: status-based hypermasculinity, in which participants used marketplace resources to cast themselves in the role of the successful professional migrant and abundant provider; localized hypermasculinity, referring to appropriations of new regimes of masculinity from the local cultural context, and flexible masculinity, involving the re-framing of gender regimes in favour of domesticity. Marketplace resources, such as symbolic objects and practical knowledge of key consumption practices, were essential to successful performances of remasculation. These performances further involved a range of audiences spanning both the culture of origin and the culture of residence. While status-based hypermasculinity largely represents a reassertion of pre-migration gender regimes, localized hypermasculinity and flexible masculinity represent an expansion and re-framing.

By contributing a transnational dimension to the academic discourse on masculinities and the marketplace, this paper extends previous studies which have largely focused on masculinity within a single consumer culture (Holt and Thompson 2004; Moisio et al. 2013). This paper also extends emerging research on masculinities and acculturation (Lindridge and Hogg 2006; Takhar et al. 2010) by augmenting existing perspectives of female migrants and second generation immigrants with the perspective of skilled first generation migrant men. In particular, our study uncovers a wide range of remasculation strategies which show how pre-migration regimes of manhood are both reproduced and reworked in acculturation.

However, the extent to which gender regimes shift must not be overstated. Despite the availability of alternative modes of masculinity, the skilled migrant men in this study largely adopted status-based hypermasculinity as a dominant remasculation strategy. This pattern underlines how myopic constructions of masculinity in terms of professional status and wage-earning power (Connell 1998) continue to delimit possibilities for identity reconstruction in the context of transnational mobility. In the end, “while men may move themselves with relative ease across the globe, shifting their own masculinities proves rather more difficult” (Donaldson and Howson 2009, 217).

REFERENCES

Bagnoli, Anna (2009), “Beyond the Standard Interview: The Use of Graphic Elicitation and Arts-Based Methods,” Qualitative Research, 9 (5), 547-70.


Questing for Capital: Tourism as Acculturation Practice

Angela Gracia B. Cruz, Monash University, Australia
Margo Buchanan-Oliver, University of Auckland, New Zealand

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Within the converging literature streams of consumer acculturation and mobility in consumer culture theory, tourism has been conceptualized as a form of temporary mobility which is distinct from more extended forms of mobility such as long-term migration. While scholars have discussed the role of acculturation practices in the context of tourist journeys (Bardi, Ostberg, and Bengtsson 2010; Bengtsson, Bardi, and Venkatraman 2010), there is currently limited understanding of the role of touristic practices in the context of acculturation journeys. An important exception is Thompson and Tambyah’s (1999) study, which showed how cosmopolitan consumers use touristic practices to consume authentic alterity and self-transformation. Thompson and Tambyah’s (1999) interpretation echoes dominant understandings of tourism in consumer culture theory as the “consumption of […] local culture, nature, history, or otherness” (Gotham 2007, 305). Moving beyond the context of highly mobile cosmopolitans and beyond theories of tourism which emphasize authentic alterity and self-transformation (Arnould and Price 1993; Belk and Costa 1995; MacCannell 1973; Rodriguez 2001; Sherry 1987; Urry 2002), this paper poses the following question: in the context of long-term migration, how and why might acculturating consumers perform touristic practices?

This paper draws on theories of capital consumption (Arsel and Thompson 2011; Allen 2002; Bourdieu 1984; Douglas and Isherwood 1979; Henry 2005; Holt 1998) in which consumers are seen to draw on multiple types of resources – economic, social, and cultural – to accrue symbolic capital and establish their social status vis-à-vis other members of society in a “multidimensional status game” (Holt 1998, 3). The consumption practices associated with the quest for capital have been shown to intersect with multiple, and at times competing, identity myths which are circulated and shaped by wider socio-cultural and marketplace discourses (Dong and Tian 2007; Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Thompson and Tian 2008; Üstüner and Holt 2010). Within consumer acculturation theory, the importance of capital is also widely recognized, with levels of economic, social, and cultural capital understood to structure and delimit acculturation outcomes (Luedicke 2011; Úçko-Hughes 2012; Üstüner and Holt 2007). For acculturating consumers, capital therefore provides an important means of gaining and enhancing inclusion within their new cultural contexts.

This paper is empirically grounded in a hermeneutic analysis (Thompson 1997) of depth interviews with 26 Southeast Asian immigrant consumers in New Zealand. To enrich and deepen the consumer narratives, visual and reflexive methods were deployed. First, each participant was asked to select objects and photographs which represent their experiences of migration (Zaltman and Coulter 1995) and use drawings to represent their social networks and social identities (Bagnoli 2009). Second, each participant was interviewed twice in line with open narrative reflexivity (Thompson, Stern, and Arnould 1998). In their second interview, participants were presented with the researchers’ emerging interpretations and provided an opportunity to correct, qualify, or further deepen their initial responses.

Participants conveyed a range of iconic domestic touristic practices in New Zealand as part of their acculturation journey. Given the centrality of the myth of ‘100% Pure New Zealand’ (Ateljevic and Doorne 2002), it was unsurprising that participants’ touristic practices largely centred on the natural landscape, including visits to iconic landscape attractions and iconic outdoor experiences. These touristic practices involved high degrees of ritualization and social display.

In contrast to previous studies which have framed touristic practices as the consumption of otherness (Rodriguez 2001) or a quest for self-transformation (Arnould and Price 1993), the participants in this study enacted touristic practices in a quest for economic, social, and cultural capital. On one level, the performance of touristic practices served as an index of sufficient levels of economic capital, enabling participants to perform the identity of an economically established migrant in New Zealand. On another level, the performance of domestic touristic practices provided participants with linking value (Cova 1997), thereby facilitating the process of building social ties and accruing social capital in New Zealand. On yet another level, domestic touristic practices functioned as an index of local cultural capital in New Zealand, enabling participants to demonstrate their knowledge of and ability to competently enact New Zealand cultural values and practices.

Additionally, because participants were primarily motivated by capital consumption rather than the consumption of cultural authenticity, their practices of domestic tourism tended to emphasize iconic rather than singular experiences. Despite the relative prominence of indigenous Maori myths in the construction of contemporary New Zealand tourism discourses (Amoamo and Thompson 2010), there was a remarkable lack of Maori-related or heritage-based touristic practices. Also notable was the lack of practices relating to adventure-based adrenaline (Ateljevic and Doorne 2002). This is because in order for touristic practices to be translatable into economic, social, and cultural capital, they must be recognizable by the local and transnational family and friendship networks who form the implicit audience for these practices. Therefore, in contrast to Thompson and Tambyah’s (1999) cosmopolitan consumers who emphasized local attractions which were ‘off the beaten track’ and Arnould and Price’s (1993) river-rafting participants who emphasized peak experiences, participants’ touristic performances largely involved the repetition of highly commodified tourist tropes.

This paper contributes to the converging literature streams of consumer acculturation and mobility in several ways. First, while scholars have largely treated tourism as a specific form of mobility (Bengtsson et al. 2010; Bardi et al. 2010), this paper reconceptualizes and explores tourism as a key acculturation practice. Second, this paper demonstrates that touristic practices are key acculturation practices not only for expatriates (Thompson and Tambyah 1999), but also for long-term migrants. Third, while previous studies have focused on how capital constrains acculturation outcomes, this paper explores how a consumption practice enables the expression and accumulation of capital. Finally, this paper demonstrates how questing for capital in long-term migration drives touristic practices which are iconic rather than singular.

REFERENCES


Competitive Forces When Choosing from Assortments of Varying Size: How Holistic Thinking Mitigates Choice Overload

Ilgim Dara, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA
Elizabeth G. Miller, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Choice overload has long been a controversial topic in consumer research (Scheibehenne, Greifeneder and Todd 2009), with some researchers believing large assortments benefit consumers and others arguing they decrease satisfaction. The lack of consensus has led to a focus on moderators of the effect (i.e., when choice overload occurs; see Chernev, Bockenholt, and Goodman 2015 for a recent review). Yet, greater understanding is needed regarding why choice overload occurs, especially since no single moderator reliably explains choice overload’s occurrence (Chernev, Bockenholt, and Goodman 2010). Accordingly, this paper aims to explore the mechanism(s) underlying how assortment size impacts decision-making and demonstrates the competing forces (overload effect and variety effect) that help explain the contradictory findings in the literature. Further, by systematically exploring these competing forces, we highlight opportunities to better pinpoint exactly how (i.e., by which path) moderators impact decision-making. As an example, we identify and test a new moderator of choice overload effects – holistic thinking. Since holistic thinkers utilize less cognitive resources to come to decision compared to analytic thinkers (McElroy and Seta 2003; Nisbett et al. 2001), we propose they will be less negatively affected by the overload feelings accompanied by depleted cognitive resources. Specifically, we test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Large assortments will lead to (a) greater overload feeling and (b) greater perceived variety than small assortments.

Hypothesis 2: Preference satisfaction will be (a) negatively impacted by overload feeling and (b) positively impacted by perceived variety.

Hypothesis 3: Assortment size has both (a) a negative indirect effect on preference satisfaction through overload feeling (overload effect), and (b) a positive indirect effect on preference satisfaction through perceived variety (variety effect).

Hypothesis 4: Thinking style will moderate the overload effect such that the negative effect of large assortment size on preference satisfaction will be lower for holistic thinkers.

Across 6 studies, we support our competing forces model for how assortment size influences satisfaction and demonstrate that holistic thinking moderates the impact of assortment size on satisfaction by mitigating the impact of overload feelings. Further, we show that the overall effect of assortment size on preference satisfaction depends on the dominant indirect effect.

In Study 1, we empirically support the competitive effects of perceived variety and overload feeling (H1-H3). Respondents (n =100) chose chocolates from a large (20) or small (5) assortment. As expected, assortment size significantly increased both overload feeling and perceived variety ($M_L = 4.7, M_S = 3.5, F(1, 98) = 37.98, p < .05$) (Wilks’ Lambda <.001). In addition, overload feeling negatively impacted preference satisfaction ($\beta = -.28, p < .001$), while perceived variety positively impacted satisfaction ($\beta = .56, p < .001$). Using bootstrapping (5,000 samples, 95% CI), we found a negative indirect effect of assortment size on satisfaction through overload feeling ($\beta = -.20, CI [-.41, -.08]$) and a positive indirect effect of assortment size on satisfaction through perceived variety ($\beta = .64, CI [.33, 1.07]$). Further, consistent with our argument, since the perceived variety effect is larger than the overload effect, the total effect of assortment size on satisfaction is significantly positive ($\beta = .49, p < .05$). These results support H1-H3.

In Study 2 (n=277), we replicate the findings from Study 1 using different assortment sizes (6, 24, 48) and include a measure of holistic processing style (Choi, Koo, and Choi 2007) to test H4. Hypotheses 1-3 were again supported. Assortment size significantly increased both overload feeling ($F(2, 274) = 23.10, p < .001$) and perceived variety ($F(2, 273) = 52.98, p < .001$) (Wilks’ Lambda <.001). Overload feeling negatively impacted preference satisfaction ($\beta = -.17, p < .001$), while perceived variety positively impacted satisfaction ($\beta = .28, p < .001$). The indirect effects were also significant. Due to the dominance of perceived variety over overload feeling, the total effect of assortment size on preference satisfaction was significant and positive ($p < .01$). A moderated mediation analysis was used to test H4 and revealed that, as expected, the more holistic thinking a person engages in, the less the indirect negative effect of assortment size (through overload feeling) on preference satisfaction.

In study 3 (n=97), we replicated the parallel mediation of overload and variety effects (H1-H3). Since the variety effect was slightly stronger than the overload effect, the total effect of assortment size on preference satisfaction was marginally positive ($\beta = .36, p = .06$). We found support for moderated mediation using both the chronic holistic thinking measure and a measure of holistic thinking based on decision strategies used during the choice task; thus, H4 was supported.

Studies 4, 5, and 6 provide additional support for our hypotheses showing the mitigating effect of holistic thinking through positive mood (Study 4) and hedonic choice goal (vs. utilitarian; Study 6). These studies also generalize our findings to a new category (carry-on luggage) with a utilitarian decision goal (Studies 5 and 6).

Together, our findings contribute to the literature on choice overload by better articulating and explicitly testing the underlying mechanisms of the phenomenon. Assortments can increase satisfaction by increasing perceived variety, but also decrease satisfaction due to feelings of overload. By systematically investigating these two underlying drivers of the effects of assortment size on satisfaction, we highlight why inconsistencies might exist in the current literature. When the variety effect is dominant, large assortments increase preference satisfaction (Studies 1, 2, 3), while if the overload effect is dominant, large assortments decrease preference satisfaction (Study 5, Study 6 utilitarian condition). On the other hand, if these two drivers have similar strengths, large assortments do not have a significant effect on satisfaction (Study 4, Study 6). Further, by examining this underlying process, we were able to identify a new moderator – holistic thinking – which helps mitigate the negative impact of overload feeling on satisfaction. We show that this mitigation happens for both chronic and decision-specific holistic thinkers.
(Studies 2, 3, 5), as well as those who adopt more holistic thinking style due to situational aspects, such as mood (Study 4) or decision goal (Study 6). Future research may want to investigate different parts of the decision making process, and discover new moderators; e.g. see how variety effect can be enhanced.

REFERENCES


A Framework For Exploring Consumer Motivation Across The Spectrum of Consumer-Brand Connections Using Utopian Theory
Rebecca Dare, The University of Melbourne, Australia
Angela Paladino, The University of Melbourne, Australia
Yoshihisa Kashima, The University of Melbourne, Australia

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Existing brand management frameworks are misleading and incomplete without fully accounting for the spectrum of bonding types consumers may have with brands (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013). This research offers a framework for understanding consumer motivation to create connections to brands, using contemporary utopian theory.

Colloquially, utopia is generally understood as an unrealistic fantasy world. However, the contemporary definition of utopia is an expressive desire for a better way of living and an articulation of dissatisfaction with present reality (Levitas, 1990) that is believed as realizable (Žižek & Thompson, 2013). Utopia can be whole imagined worlds or an idealized life, such as a cozy nuclear family, dream homes, work / life balance, or obtaining the ideal body. The fundamental essence of utopia is desire for a more positive state – a primary motivating factor in contemporary consumption.

Utopian theory is applied as theoretically distinct from self-related constructs in brand connection studies such as possible and ideal selves and self-expansion (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Málár, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011; Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013; Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Utopia is characterized as a mechanism of coping with life’s incompleteness (Maysier, Scheibe, & Riediger, 2008; Scheibe, Freund, & Baltes, 2007).

Approaching utopianism as a consumer process rather than a ‘place’, utopian function theory is used to explore utopianism as motivating brand connection, with a specific focus to understanding the full spectrum of brand connections (described as Attached (strongly positive, love type connection), Averse (strongly negative, adversarial connection), Ambivalent (weaker, conflicted love-hate connection) or Indifferent (weak not connected) (Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013).

Utopian function is conceptualized as a process that reveals how individuals respond to utopian thoughts. Utopian functions are Catalyst, Criticize and Compensate (Goodwin & Taylor, 1983; Levitas, 1990). Catalyst is holding a utopian vision to bring about positive change to the current reality. Criticize is holding a utopian vision to criticise current reality, that can be directed to the world or to the self. Compensate is holding a vision to escape from current reality. It seems likely that each utopian function could have a differing effect on why a consumer forms connections with a brand. For example, purposes of ‘running away’ from reality versus criticizing reality are fundamentally different objectives, presumably expressed in uniquely identifiable thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

To assess the conceptual association of brand connection and utopian theory, exploratory qualitative research was undertaken. Twenty-two structured in-depth interviews were conducted, including a projective sorting task (Keller, 2008) to associate the spectrum of brand connections to utopian visions. The data and accompanying notations made during interview were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded into themes using narrative analysis.

This research found that utopian thoughts are frequent, emotionally intense experiences for individuals. Utopian visions are used to orientate daily life tasks, goals and projects towards a desired utopian future. Motivation to achieve a utopian future influenced consumers to assess brands in relation to their utopian vision. Averse brand connections, where brands were interpreted as contra or ‘in the way’ of utopia, are identified in direct relation to utopian content.

Attached, Ambivalent and Indifferent connections were influenced not only in relation to utopian content, but also by utopian function identified and associated feeling that is either positive or mixed. This influenced brand connection in the following ways:

- **Catalyst with Positive Feeling** is associated with weaker Ambivalent and Indifferent connection(s). Participants exhibited greater self-regulation than individuals in other functions, which appeared to weaken brand connection.

- **Catalyst with Mixed Feeling** is associated with stronger Attached connection. Participants felt ‘overwhelmed’ and ‘scared’, and indicated an underlying fear of their ability to achieve utopia. Following recent literature exploring fear and brand connection (Dunn & Hoegg, 2014; Rindfleisch, Burroughs, & Wong, 2009), this research also found that consumers fearful about their ability to achieve a desired utopia show stronger Attached brand connection.

- **Compensate with Mixed Feeling** is associated with Ambivalent connection. Participants actively attempt to escape from thinking about their utopia by engaging in activities that are inconsequential to tomorrow, such as shopping and watching television. Participants engage with brands that made them feel ‘Happy’, ‘Positive’ and ‘Healthy’. However, acknowledgement that actions associated with this function were inconsequential to achievement tomorrow appeared to weaken brand connection.

- **Criticize with Mixed Feeling** is associated with Ambivalent connection. Participants focused on creating ‘Peace’ and ‘Harmony’. An explicit acknowledgement that wider political and social change beyond the influence of brands needed to occur appeared to weaken connection.

This research presents a novel approach to understanding the spectrum of brand connections using utopian theory. It discusses an initial exploration of the nature of utopian thought; how consumers respond to utopian thoughts; and the influence of utopian function to brand connection.

REFERENCES


Adult Food Insecurity and the Hunger-Obesity Paradox:
Are these distinct consumer segments?
Debra M. Desrochers, University of Westminster, UK
Stephan Dahl, University of Hull, UK

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Dietz (1995) noted a positive correlation between food insecurity and obesity, and labeled this counter intuitive relationship the hunger – obesity paradox. The paradox continues to be a relevant topic of research as both food insecurity and obesity maintain a troubling presence in the US. In 2012, 14.5 percent of households were food insecure, meaning that these households had difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for all their members due to a lack of resources (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2013). Meanwhile, national estimates in the US indicate that more than two-thirds (68.5%) of adults were either overweight or obese in 2011 – 2012 (Ogden et al. 2014).

Researchers at the Yale Rudd Centre claim that it may be feasible to address both problems simultaneously since the goal is to see that individuals have access to sufficient and nutritious food (The Economist 2014). However, while these conditions co-exist and, in some cases, within the same person, there are also separate segments exhibiting these conditions; some individuals suffer from hunger and malnutrition while others suffer from obesity and diet-related disease (Ashe and Sommino 2012).

Past empirical investigations into the hunger-obesity paradox largely cover 1) segmentation, and 2) diet and consumption behaviors. The first and largest stream of research attempts to describe the segment of adults where these conditions co-exist using demographic variables. Here, research consistently shows that women who were food insecure were more likely to be obese than women who were food secure, while men who were food insecure were less likely to be overweight than men who were food secure (Burn 2004; Dinour et al. 2007; Franklin et al. 2012; Larson and Story 2011, Larial 2010).

The second area, which is the focus of this study, pertains to diet and consumption behaviors. The findings in this area show that as food insecurity increases, many adults alter their food intake as food resources run low (Grutzmacher and Gross 2011); individuals consume fewer fruits and vegetables (Burns 2004); food insecure individuals were less likely to engage in fat lowering behaviors (Mello et al 2010); diet quality and health change through an overabundance of less healthy foods in the home (Nackers & Appelhans 2013).

Using the 2009 – 10 NHANES data, the objective of this research is to investigate whether these food insecurity conditions are also representative of individuals who are overweight. If not, then addressing them may not, by default, help lessen the prevalence of overweight and obesity. The NHANES program examines a nationally representative sample of about 5,000 persons each year (CDC 2013), and the 2009 – 10 dataset contains information from 10,253 individuals of all ages. The data collection process has two components, a questionnaire, followed by an examination at a mobile medical center. The questionnaire includes the Current Population Survey (CPS) Food Security Supplement Module to determine the level of food insecurity in the household. Each respondent also provides information about the food in the house, diet quality, consequences of food insecurity, and self-assessments of physical and mental health statuses. The examination component provides the actual Body Mass Index (BMI) for each respondent.

In this analysis, the definitions of weight status are defined by the CDC (2008). If the individual has a BMI less than 18.5, he or she is considered underweight, and is of a healthy or normal weight when the BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9. However, if the BMI is between 25 and 29.9 he or she is considered overweight and an adult who has a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese. Household food security is based on the CPS, which is a series of 10 questions (with 8 additional questions for households with children) that gauge a variety of specific conditions, experiences, and behaviors that serve as indicators of the varying degrees of severity of food security (Bickel et al. 2000).

For purposes of this study, individuals for whom no BMI data are available, who were under age 20, who did not respond to the food security questions, or women who were pregnant are deleted from the data, leaving a sample of 5,500 individuals.

Analyses were prepared by regression, where the dependent variable is one of the many food related behaviors prevalent in food insecure households. The independent variables indicate the weight and the food security statuses of the respondent. The sign and significance of the coefficients indicate whether these behaviors can be predicted from the presence of one, or both of these conditions.

The results show, as expected, that as food insecurity increases all foods (except soft drinks) become less available. However, across all weight statuses, there is no significant difference in the availability of nutritious food. This may imply that access to, and availability of nutritious food is not as much of a problem in the fight against obesity.

Relatedly, while both food insecure households and obese individuals recognize the unhealthiness of their diets, these results show food insecure households are concerned about quantity as well as quality, while quantity does not appear to be a concern as weight status increases.

Finally, both food insecurity and obesity take a toll on overall perceived health and activity levels. First, while perceived general health status declines as both conditions worsen, obesity does not create the same levels of anxiety that are created by food insecurity. Also, while eating home prepared meals together becomes less frequently as food insecurity increases, the same is not true as weight status increases. Therefore, interventions that focus on activities surrounding meal behaviors need to recognize the changes in these activities inherent with the specific condition.

In summary, while there is an intuitive connection between food insecurity and obesity, the behaviors associate with these conditions differ sufficiently and, consequently, should be addressed as separate issues in the world of public health.

REFERENCES


So Many Selves: The Effect of Self-Complexity on Attitudes toward Identity Goods
Sara Loughran Dommer, Georgia Institute of Technology, USA
Nicole Verrochi Coleman, University of Pittsburgh, USA
Karen Page Winterich, Pennsylvania State University, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
While previous literature has acknowledged that consumers hold a multitude of identities (Reed et al. 2012), the typical approach to understanding the effect of identity on consumer behavior has examined single identities in isolation. The present research attempts to bridge this gap by introducing self-complexity to the consumer behavior literature. Self-complexity captures the structure of self-representations by assessing both the number of identities and the degree to which distinctions are made among identities (Linville 1985, 1987). Greater self-complexity involves having more identities and maintaining fewer redundancies between them.

We propose that greater self-complexity is associated with a more malleable self for two reasons. First, when an individual holds only a couple identities, the potential variation in the working self-concept is reduced compared to an individual with multiple identities. Second, when there is greater overlap among identities, the ability for the self to vary in a particular context is further limited. Consistent with this theorizing, in their “boundary theory” of roles, Ashforth, Kreiner, and Fugate (2000) argue that boundaries enable one to concentrate on whatever role is currently accessible. Given that boundaries make it easier to focus on a particular identity and individuals with high self-complexity have both numerous identities and boundaries between identities, these individuals should have a more malleable self.

A malleable self means that there is more variation in the identities that are accessible at any moment (Markus and Kunda 1986). Consumers prefer and have more positive attitudes toward products and brands that are consistent with an accessible identity (Aaker 1999; Reed 2004; Reed et al. 2012). Individuals who have a more malleable self due to higher self-complexity should find it easier to activate and focus solely on the product-relevant identity whereas those with lower self-complexity and thus less malleability may lack the fluidity to focus on this particular identity. In sum, we predict that greater self-complexity will be associated with more positive attitudes toward identity-linked goods and that the malleability of the self will mediate this effect.

Undergraduate business majors (n = 119) began study 1 by completing the measure of self-complexity (Linville 1987). Following a filler task, participants saw a series of goods, two of which contained the logo of the students’ business school and were of primary interest to us, and evaluated them on three nine-point bipolar words. Following the response latency task, participants saw a series of goods, three of which (a highlighter set, a travel coffee mug, and a t-shirt) contained the logo of the students’ university and were of primary interest to us, and evaluated each of the items using the same measures from study 1. Self-complexity was significantly associated with both attitudes toward the identity goods (b = .59, t(209) = 3.30, p < .02) and response latencies (b = -.47, t(209) = -2.25, p < .03). The latter result supports our theorizing that people with greater self-complexity have more malleable selves and thus their identities are more accessible to them. Furthermore, response latencies significantly mediated the effect of self-complexity on attitude toward identity goods (95% CI = .0017 to .1775).

In study 3, we examined the moderating effect of an identity threat. Because individuals with low self-complexity have less malleable selves, they should be more likely to fight back against an identity threat. In contrast, individuals with high self-complexity have more malleable selves so they may buffer against a threat by disassociating with the identity. Therefore, we expect attitudes toward identity goods to be lower (higher) in the identity threat condition than in the control condition among individuals with high (low) self-complexity.

Participants (n = 236) began study 3 by completing the measure of self-complexity. Those in the identity threat condition then read either the gender identity threat or a control passage (White and Argo 2009). Next, participants saw items, two of which (a coffee mug and a notebook) were related to the participant’s gender, and evaluated the items using the same measures from the previous studies.

The interaction of self-complexity with identity threat significantly predicted product attitudes (F(1, 230) = 5.80, p < .02). Greater self-complexity was associated with more positive attitudes toward identity goods in the control condition (b = .71, t(230) = 2.46, p < .02), but had no effect in the identity threat condition (b = -.25, t(230) = -.88, p > .37).

To better understand the nature of the interaction we employed the Johnson-Neyman Technique (Spiller et al. 2013). We found that at high levels of self-complexity participants reported higher product attitudes in the control condition than in the identity threat condition (Johnson-Neyman point = 3.6830, alpha = .05). At low levels of self-complexity product attitudes in the control condition were lower than in the identity threat condition (Johnson-Neyman point = 1.6316, alpha = .05).

Across three studies we find that individuals high in self-complexity have more positive evaluations of identity-linked goods than individuals low in self-complexity and that the malleability of the self mediates this relationship. We also show this effect can be reversed under an identity threat, as individuals with high (low) self-complexity react to an identity threat by associating (disassociating) with the identity. In sum, self-complexity presents a novel way to capture the dynamic structure of individuals’ self-concepts. By examining the effect of self-complexity on identity-linked product attitudes, we offer a more comprehensive understanding of how one’s self influences consumer behavior.

REFERENCES

Follow Your Curiosity, You Won’t Regret It: How Disconfirmed Expectations Will Not Always Result in Dissatisfaction

Liesbet Van den Driessche, Ghent University, Belgium
Iris Vermeir, Ghent University, Belgium
Mario Pandelaere, Ghent University, Belgium

EXTEND ABSTRACT

Satisfaction with a product or service is of utter importance for marketing-practices (Han & Hyun, 2015; Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003). The most widely used framework to predict a customer’s satisfaction, is the ‘expectancy disconfirmation paradigm’ (Oliver, 1980), which argues that consumer satisfaction depends on pre-purchase expectations one has about the performance of the product or service. The extent to which these expectations are met determines the perceived disconfirmation experience. If the outcome matches or exceeds one’s expectations, one is expected to be satisfied. However, when the product underperforms and thus negative disconfirmation occurs, a decrease in satisfaction is to be expected. This paper poses the question if dissatisfaction after negative disconfirmation occurs when curiosity about the product is evoked prior to product experience. The current paper argues that negative disconfirmation does not result into dissatisfaction when curiosity about the product is evoked prior to product experience. In particular, we suggest that satisfying curiosity is rewarding and evokes pleasure, which can override the negative feelings one might experience when being confronted with negative disconfirmation.

Marketers often spark consumer’s curiosity over a product to capture and hold consumer’s attention and to evoke interest in a product. As such, multiple studies on curiosity evoking ads demonstrate their effectiveness (Smith & Swinyard, 1988; Gibson & Zillman, 1993; Menon & Soman, 2002).

Although academic research thus proves the effectiveness of using curiosity to make customers interested in your product (Menon & Soman, 2002; Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2007, very little research has looked at what happens once one’s curiosity is satisfied, namely when people buy the product which they were made curious about. Loewenstein (1994) suggested that often people can be disappointed with an outcome when satisfying their curiosity since their expectations are often not met. This implies that people create high expectations when being made curious over something. When expectations are (too) high, they are often difficult to meet resulting in a higher probability to be disconfirmed (Turorlia, Andersson, Maritkaia & Salovaara, 1998). Following the expectancy disconfirmation theory, one would predict that the raised expectations caused by curiosity will readily lead to dissatisfaction with the product or service, since there is a negative disconfirmation between these inflated expectations and the actual performances. However, we suggest that this does not result in dissatisfaction. We argue that the pleasure accompanying satisfying curiosity, can override this feeling of disappointment associated with negative disconfirmation of expectations.

Previous research supports this hypothesis. Loewenstein (1994) states that satisfying curiosity is itself pleasurable. Research in education literature also finds that students derive more pleasure in learning activities when they feel that the subject matter has satisfied their curiosity (Csikszentmihalyi et al, 1993). Recently, Kang and colleagues (2009) supported this idea and found correlations between reported curiosity and activity in the caudate nucleus, a brain region that is involved in reward anticipation and is driven by feedback.

In the following paragraphs, we present three studies. The first study is set up to explore if curiosity indeed causes expectations to be higher which in turn leads to a negative disconfirmation between expectations and performance. A second study illustrates that satisfying curiosity evokes pleasure, while a curious state leads to displeasure when it is not satisfied. This shows that it is not being in a curious state that is pleasurable, but the pleasure stems from satisfying curiosity. Finally, a third study looks further at the interaction between disconfirmation and curiosity on satisfaction and regret with the aim to explore if disconfirmation only leads to dissatisfaction when there was no curiosity evoked prior to product-trial.

In the first study (n=120) respondents were randomly exposed to one out of two fictitious film announcements in a newspaper. The film-announcements were created to evoke different degrees of curiosity. We found that respondents who were made curious about the short-film had higher expectations and that respondents indicated that their expectations had not been met, while respondents who were not made curious had lower expectations but reported that their expectations were met.

In a second study (n=132) respondents participated in a 2 (curiosity, control)x2(open box, closed box) design. Participants were presented with a little non-transparent white box which had either a question mark on top of it (curiosity-condition) or a picture of the candy that was inside (control-condition). Participants were either told to open the box (satisfying their curiosity) or to leave the box closed. We found that there was a significant difference in pleasure between the curiosity and the control condition, when respondents were in the ‘not able to open box’ condition, that is respondents in the curiosity-condition experienced more displeasure than respondents in the control condition. This effect disappears in the ‘able to open box condition’, where there is no difference in pleasure between curiosity-condition and control-condition. This shows that there may be two mechanisms at play: people are happy when they get what they expect (control-condition) and people are happy because they are able to satisfy their curiosity (curiosity-condition) even though the product that evoked their curiosity was not as good as expected.

In a third study (n=120) respondents were asked to participate in a chocolate-tasting test. They were randomly assigned to one out of two taste conditions (either ‘tasteful’ chocolate condition (confirmation) or ‘distasteful’ chocolate condition (disconfirmation)) and curiosity was measured prior to tasting the chocolate. Our results show that people are still satisfied when experiencing curiosity prior to tasting, even though the chocolate tasted not good at all. Moreover, they regretted their choice to taste the chocolate less when the chocolate tasted not good (and their expectations were thus even more negatively disconfirmed) compared to when they were less curious.

The primary contribution of this work is the demonstration that unmet expectations do not always result in dissatisfaction or regret with one’s choice. Our findings suggest that evoking curiosity is beneficial for product satisfaction regardless of how a product performs.

REFERENCES

Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 43) / 511


Exploring the Effectiveness of the Label “NEW” in Product Packaging and Advertising

Jiska Eelen, VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Bram Van den Bergh, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Peeter W. J. Verlegh, VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Every day consumers are exposed to novel products. The label “new” is often used on product packages and in advertising of innovations, but how effective is it? In which circumstances is it good to make use of the label? Intuitively, it could be argued that the word “new” is not very informative and may not, in itself, trigger any consumer responses. In contrast, people are afraid of the unknown, and as such the label could invoke responses of avoidance within consumers. Too much novelty can give rise to feelings of anxiety (Berlyne 1960) and can sometimes lead to lower trial probability (Steenkamp and Gielens 2003). However it is also suggested that people have a drive to seek out information about novel products (Hirschman, 1980). Because the future is uncertain, exploring product innovations might be beneficial sometime later. In this research we empirically demonstrate that the presence of a simple verbal “new” label on product packages and in advertising is effective. Moreover, we show that its effect is driven by a boost in curiosity that instigates positive consumer responses.

In a first online experiment we found that a washing detergent of a familiar national brand was evaluated more positively with a “new” sticker on the bottle than without the sticker (between-subjects design, N = 65). The new label led to a more positive product attitude, and to a greater purchase and word of mouth intention. As literature suggests, positive effects of novelty might be driven by exploration (Hirschman, 1980). This was tested explicitly in the follow-up studies.

In Study 2, we tested the label in the field. For one week, we organized a taste booth in a supermarket where consumers could walk by and try out a cup of a known chocolate drink. The bottles at the booth were presented without label, a label “whole milk” (i.e., a control label, the drink was made of whole milk), or a label “new”. Hours of the day of label presentation were counterbalanced. We found that significantly more people visited the stand when the bottles were presented with the new label than with the control label or without label. Visitors who had tasted the product were requested to fill in a questionnaire to evaluate the product (purchase intention, product attitude, taste, quality, price/quality perception). At the end of the questionnaire, they were invited to tell how they felt in the supermarket at that moment (including curiosity items, and filler items such as cold/warm). Overall we found that all dependent measures were significantly more positive when consumers had tasted the “new” product than in the other two conditions. Moreover, consumers in the “new” condition felt more curious, and all positive evaluations were contingent on that feeling.

Direct evidence for the impact of the new label on exploration is provided by Study 3 in which eye movements of participants (N = 132) were tracked while they scrolled through an online magazine containing several advertisements. The lab experiment had a 2 (label: no label vs. new label) x 2 (advertising clutter: absent vs present) between-subjects design. We measured attention for the brand elements (Pieters, Warlop and Wedel 2002) in the target advertisements. For half of all participants the target advertisements were presented among four other advertisements that created advertising clutter. In line with earlier findings, advertising clutter reduced attention for the advertisements. However when the new label was present, attention was boosted to the level of participants who watched the advertisements without experiencing clutter. Hence, as in Study 2, it was demonstrated that the “new” label boosts exploration. Interestingly, the study points to real-life circumstances in which exploration or interest for marketing is low (i.e., advertising clutter) that make the label more effective.

In Study 3 we predicted that if the “new” label triggers exploration, the impact of the label on consumer responses should be similar to that of an exploration mindset. Therefore we manipulated the mindset of consumers, and had them focus on what was usual or unusual. We know from prior research that unusual circumstances instigate exploration (Berlyne 1950; Verplanken and Wood 2006), whereas habitual circumstances lower the chance of detecting changes in the environment (Fazio, Ledbetter and Towsle-Schwen 2000). The experiment had a 2 (mindset: habitual vs. exploration, between-subjects) x 2 (label: no label vs. new label, between-subjects) x 2 (product: tea, vitamin drink, within-subjects) mixed design. Participants (N = 154) were recruited online through a market research agency and were requested to give their opinion about several products after describing what was usual (or unusual) about the day. Overall, the products were liked more (i.e., product attitude, brand attitude or purchase intention) in the exploration mindset condition than in the habitual mindset condition; and more with the new label than without. Most importantly, individuals with a habitual mindset who saw the products with a new label liked the products more than those with a habitual mindset who saw the products without label. As expected, the new label boosted product liking to the level of those in the exploration mindset, indicating it had a similar effect.

In sum, we find that a “new” label on product packages and in advertising gives rise to positive feelings towards the observed product. We show that the new label triggers an explorative or curious mindset in consumers, both by measuring and manipulating exploration. This is in line with theories (Berlyne 1960; Hirschman 1980) and empirical research (Steenkamp and Gielens 2003) about novelty seeking suggesting that moderate product novelty gives rise to positive consumer responses. In further research it could be investigated explicitly whether the label is more effective for incremental changes in products (e.g., line extensions) rather than radically new products.

It is remarkable that the “new” cue did not lose its influence on decision making when intrinsic cues, such as taste, were made available. The “new” cue even biased taste perception, like price does (Plassmann, O’Doherty, Shiv and Rangel 2008). It could be investigated how the cue can be turned off to make judgments more “rational”.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Many service providers offer their customers supplementary-products that are related to their core services (e.g., an Internet service provider (ISP) that offers a router). In many of these cases, customers choose to pay for supplementary product in multiple-payments. In this study, we show that the payment method for the supplementary, product has a substantial effect on customers’ likelihood of defecting from the service provider. Specifically, we show that when customers pay for a supplementary product (e.g., a handset) in multiple-payments rather than in a single payment, defection rates from the core service provider (e.g., cellular provider) increase over time.

From a pure economic perspective, once the decision to purchase a product has been made, consumers should consider its cost as a sunk-cost, regardless of the payment mechanism chosen. Thus, the payment method for the product should not influence consumers’ decision to leave the service provider. We propose that multiple-payments create a psychological lock-in experience, which dissolves over time, as the payments are made. Thus, the magnitude of these switching costs diminishes over time. Hence, we refer to these costs as temporal switching costs. This decrease in perceived switching costs results in an increase in the customer’s tendency to defect from the core service provider over time.

We find that the counter-intuitive effect of multiple-payments on customers’ defection decisions holds even when the supplementary-product is universal and can be used under a new service provider, thus ruling out the alternative explanation that customers refrain from switching to a new provider due to their concern of incurring additional expenses. Finally, we show that customers’ increasing likelihood of defection over time in the presence of multiplepayments occurs above and beyond customers’ fundamental satisfaction with the incumbent provider.

In Study 1 we compare defection intentions over time between customers paying for a service-related supplementary product in multiple-payments versus customers who pay for the same product in a single lump sum. Student participants (n=202, M=30.9) read a scenario in which they had joined a cellular provider’s service program and purchased a handset. Participants were each randomly assigned to one of five time-duration manipulations, indicating the assumed number of months that have passed. Half the participants were told that the handset was to be paid in equal monthly payments, while the remaining participants were told that the handset was paid for in a single payment. Participants were asked to report their intentions to defect from the service.

Slopes analysis (Spiller et al. 2013) results show a significant decrease in perceived switching costs in markets.

In Study 3, M-Turk participants (n=240, M=34.4) read a scenario in which they had purchased a coffee-machine for their office from a company that also provided ongoing-coffee-supply-services. Participants were each randomly assigned to one of six time duration manipulations, which indicated the time that have passed. Participants were told that switching to the new coffee-supply-service provider would not require purchase of new equipment. Participants reported their defection intentions and the extent to which they felt tied and bound to their current provider.

Regression results show that duration was a significant positive predictor of defection intentions. Importantly, mediation analysis was conducted (Model 4), using bootstrapping mediation tests (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007) with 5,000 replications. We find that the effect of time duration on participants’ defection intentions was positively mediated by participants’ lock-in perceptions (95% CI: .0007 to .0229).

Finally, in Study 4, we surveyed 290 M-Turk participants currently engaged in various multiple-payment programs for handsets supplied by their cellular providers. Participants reported the number of payments already paid, intention to defect from their current service provider and satisfaction from their provider. Regression results show that the percentage-of-payments-paid predicted defection intentions above and beyond customer satisfaction (F (2,269)=65.47, p<.001).

This research links customers’ chosen payment method to their decision to defect from a service provider. We demonstrate how multiple payments for a supplementary, service-related-product affect customers’ decisions to defect from the core service provider, resulting in an increase in customers’ defection rates over time. This underexplored phenomenon provides a more complex perspective on the findings of past studies, according to which a customer’s likelihood of defection typically decreases over time (e.g. Gupta and Lehmann 2005; Schweidel, Bradlow and Fader 2011). These studies generally took place in settings that did not involve switching-costs, assuming that customers were free to defect from their providers at any time. Our results have important implications for service providers’ managers as well as for regulators, who aim to reduce switching costs in markets.

REFERENCES

Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 43) / 515


**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Consumers pay ever more attention to nutrition content when choosing food products. Thus, voluntary front-of-pack nutrition labels have become popular communication tools for food marketers. While such nutrition information should help consumers to decrease calorie intake, food manufacturers and retailers can manipulate the presentation of relevant information to increase healthiness perceptions. A widespread strategy is health framing, the adoption of a smaller serving size on nutrition labels which decreases the reported amounts of calories and nutrients. The health-framing effect implies that consumers neglect the ‘per-serving basis’ and evaluate the healthiness of food products solely by the nutrition values disclosed on the label (Mohr, Lichtenstein, and Janiszewski 2012). As a result of lower serving-size specifications, consumers may have reduced anticipated guilt of consumption and, thereby, increase their consumption volume (Belei et al. 2012; Mohr, Lichtenstein, and Janiszewski 2012; Wansink and Chandon 2006). Mohr, Lichtenstein, and Janiszewski (2012) even found that respondents who were most focused on avoiding calories were more susceptible to health framing. This means that nutrition information-induced health framing can create health halos, where consumers will overestimate the healthiness of food products and underestimate the food’s energy content (Chandon and Wansink 2007). As a consequence, lower serving-size specifications can lead to overeating because consumers do not tend to consume the ‘per-serving basis’ (Ueland et al. 2009), but rather consume a single entity (Geier, Rozin, and Doros 2006) or a fixed share of the package size (Chandon 2013; Scott et al. 2008).

We hypothesize that the introduction of a front-of-pack nutrition label will increase sales volume of products with lower serving-size specifications. We further posit that this effect occurs in healthier categories, but not for less healthy categories. This prediction derives from previous research demonstrating that consumers tend to ignore nutrition information when buying indulging products, but use such information in healthier categories (Balasubramanian and Cole 2002; Nikolova and Inman 2015).

To test our contention, we analyze real purchases collected as supermarket scanner data. We compare purchase behavior of store brands before and after a voluntary front-of-pack nutrition label introduction, where the retailer had no restrictions in setting the ‘per-serving basis’ for the amount of nutrition content. Our study analyzes two food categories, yogurt and cookies. We have chosen these two categories based on data availability and to test our hypothesis that predicts effects in healthier categories (i.e., yogurt compared to cookies). We estimate two-way fixed effects models for each food category to account for unobserved heterogeneity of products and time periods. We supplement our models with price, time-dependence and the objective healthiness as control variables which can also affect sales volume next to the serving-size specification. In our models, we check for omitted variable bias and, furthermore, use a robust estimation procedure to account for heteroskedasticity and serial auto-correlation (Stock and Watson 2008).

Our results show that a lower serving-size specification on front-of-pack nutrition labels affects sales volume in the yogurt category. We observe that sales volume of yogurt products increased after label introduction when lower serving-size specifications were chosen as basis for the disclosed nutrition amounts. Notably, the effect held after controlling for price, time-dependence and the objective healthiness as well as unobserved heterogeneity across products and weeks. Our findings reveal that consumers may be misled by the nutrition label information.

In line with our expectation, we show this effect prevails in the healthy product category. Specifically, sales volume was not changed significantly in the cookies category. This finding is in line with previous research indicating that consumers pay less attention to nutrition labels when they choose indulgent food products (Balasubramanian and Cole 2002), which would make consumers less susceptible to reduced serving-size specifications. As found by Mohr, Lichtenstein, and Janiszewski (2012), consumers who are most focused on avoiding calories are more susceptible to health framing. Accordingly, when consumers seek healthier options (as we expect consumers with yogurt) a lower serving-size specification will become more effective. By contrast, cookies predominantly are consumed for indulgence, where consumers seek taste rather than healthiness (Raghu Nathan, Naylor, and Hoyer 2006). In this situation, the nutrition information will be less useful in general. As a side effect, this will also impair the health-framing effect. Our results corroborate the results by Mohr, Lichtenstein, and Janiszewski (2012) in a ‘real world’ setting and additionally indicate that consumers purchased more when the serving-size specification was particularly small.

We conclude that lower serving-size specifications are a major threat to consumers who seek to choose healthier options by using nutrition labels but are, in fact, deceived by lower serving-size specifications. As a result, we emphasize the importance of public policy efforts towards higher regulation standards for (voluntary) nutrition labels regarding the ‘per-serving basis.’ Binding rules for the recommended serving size as basis for nutrition values are deemed necessary to prevent overeating induced by the health-framing effect. This should result in standardization for the serving-size specification on nutrition labels to increase comparability of food products regarding their healthiness. As long as food manufacturers and retailers have the possibility to apply health framing, more consumers have to be informed about such strategies to decrease susceptibility. Consumers should be strongly advised to double-check nutrition labels regarding the serving-size specification when choosing food products, and especially when comparing different food items.

Our research also suggests that future research should distinguish between nutrition labels as public policy tools or as part of firms’ food marketing. Particularly voluntary nutrition labels are introduced as a marketing strategy that can easily be used as a tool to manipulate perceived healthiness. The objectives and the according design of the labels differ substantially across the two implementations. As long as the design of nutrition fact labels does not fully aim to inform consumers about nutrition content in an easy-to-process way without room for manipulation, they will fall short of reaching their intended goal of promoting healthier purchase behavior.
REFERENCES


Trust and Reputation in the Sharing Economy: 
The Role of Personal Photos in Airbnb

Eyal Ert, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
Aliza Fleischer, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
Nathan Magen, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Airbnb is one of the most successful “sharing-economy” businesses. It is an online marketplace through which individuals become ‘hosts’ by renting residences to other individuals (‘guests’) for a short-term accommodation (Zervas et al. 2014). The direct face-to-face interactions implied by Airbnb entail more risks than regular e-commerce (e.g., asset abuse, physical violence). Therefore a necessary condition for Airbnb transactions is trust. To increase trust Airbnb presents the online review-score that hosts receive from their guests. Hosts are also encouraged to post their personal photos together with their listings. We assert that reputation, as communicated by the online review-score (Zhu and Zhang 2010), and trustworthiness as perceived from the hosts’ personal photo (Eckel and Petrie 2011) will both affect the demand for listings in Airbnb. Specifically we test the effects of review score and hosts photos on the listing’s price (Study1) and its likelihood to be booked (Studies 2 and 3).

Study1 evaluates the impact of the hosts’ review scores and their personal photos on their listing’s market price. We focus on market price since change in the listing’s attributes affects its price more than its sales volume in fix capacity markets like Airbnb. In such markets hosts, realizing an excess demand for their listing, respond by increasing prices. To test the effects of online reviews and hosts photos on their listing’s price we downloaded all available data on 395 listings in Stockholm (e.g., apartment size and features, review-score, price). We then combined this data with trustworthiness score for each host’s photo collected from 260 Mturk respondents. In addition we estimated the attractiveness of each apartment photo using another 640 Mturk respondents.

The results revealed that surprisingly online review scores have no effect on Airbnb listings’ price. However, trustworthy photos do result with a price premium: hosts whose pictures are perceived as more trustworthy charge higher prices than their less trustworthy counterparts. Specifically, an increase in one unit of trustworthiness score is reflected by a 7% increase in the listing’s price. The other control variables (e.g., apartment size, apartment photo) were also significant as expected.

A further investigation of why review scores had no effect on price, revealed that they reviews were associated with very low variance; 97% of the scores were astonishingly high between 4.5-5 stars. To assess the robustness of this finding we compared Airbnb listings with hotels review scores in five large European cities. In all cities the Airbnb listings’ review scores were significantly higher, by 20% on average, than the hotels’ scores. Furthermore, over 90% of Airbnb hosts received a review-score of 4.5-5 stars making them practically indistinguishable (Reznick and Zeckhauser (2002) report similar phenomenon in ebay).

Our next two studies are controlled experiments that assess the effect of hosts’ photos on guests choice to stay at the listed unit when review scores are all high (Study 2), and when the review scores are varied (Study3). One hypothesis suggest that the effect of hosts photos in Airbnb results from the fact that the review scores are in effect meaningless, so consumers seek other trust signals and rely on the hosts photos. This hypothesis predicts a significant effect of the hosts photos in absence of meaningful reviews (Study2), but that this effect should disappear when review scores are meaningful (Study3). Alternatively, consumers might respond to the hosts photos regardless of whether reviews are meaningful, in which case the hosts photos will impact significantly guests on choice in both studies.

In each experiment participants had to choose a listing from a menu of four options for accommodations in Stockholm. A pre-test preceded each experiment in which individuals rated the trustworthiness and attractiveness of 70 photos of unfamiliar people (see Lundqvist, Flykt, and Öhman 1998). The photos with the most extreme average rating scores of trustworthiness and attractiveness were selected for the experiments.

The experiments simulated listing choice on Airbnb when attractiveness and trustworthiness of hosts’ photos vary and review scores are kept constant (Study2) or also vary (study3). The choice set was presented on computer screen. Three options represented Airbnb apartments and the fourth option featured a hotel room. Each apartment option included the host photo and her name, price, apartment photo, a short description of the apartment, and guests’ average review score. The hotel option featured the logo of the Best-Western hotel in place of the host photograph.

The experimental design used the full factorial principle for combining photos and price levels. The prices varied systematically and were based on actual prices of Airbnb listings in Stockholm. The hotel option was fixed throughout all of the choice sets, and offered a price equivalent to that of a three stars hotel in Stockholm. Participants (N=566 in each study) were drawn from a custom online panel. We first screened participants who have used the Internet in the past to book or seek information on accommodation for their travel. Participants were asked to choose their preferred option of accommodation for one night in Stockholm.

The results of the mixed-logit analysis revealed that both trustworthiness and attractiveness of the hosts photos affected guests choice: the higher they were ranked, the higher the likelihood of the listing to be chosen, holding all other attributes constant. In Study3 the review scores also had significant impact on guests. Yet even in this study the effect of the trustworthiness as perceived by the host photo remained significant.

In summary, the choice of listings, as reflected by their price (Study1) and their likelihood to be booked (Study2), is affected by the perceived trustworthiness of the host’s photo. This effect holds even when review scores vary (Study3). Interestingly, guests were not conscious of this personal photo effect on their judgment: only a minority (8%) mentioned the hosts’ photo as a factor that influenced their choice in a post-study questionnaire. The results show that in platforms like Airbnb, the review scores of the product/asset are less influential (and are actually neutralized by guests tendency to give maximal scores) than the guests’ impression of the hosts personal photo.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Identities affecting consumer behavior most directly often stem from social positions that a person inhabits and to which he or she is committed. These identities change over time in a process characterized by transition and unfolding. Identities can be actively cultivated “projects,” remnants of the individual’s past, or an aspired-to future. New identities are explored, constructed, and/or dismissed. Established identities undergo active development and maintenance. Many of these issues are recognized by consumer research, but the field has yet to consider the theoretical implications of identities evidenced discernible cultivation stages (rookie vs. veteran). This is problematic because identity cultivation stages differ not in degree, but in kind. “Rookie” vs “veteran” represent distinct experiences in how an identity is experienced and enacted. The cultivation process manifests through accumulation and deployment of identity resources such as possessions, social connections, and relevant expertise.

This investigation examines how identity cultivation stage impacts symbolic self-completion and self-retention. Employing a survey methodology in a well-established identity context, respondents reported on identity resources and stated importance for six concurrent identities. Via recruitment, individuals indicative of rookie and veteran cultivation stages were incorporated into the study sample. All respondents provided information about such factors as possessions owned, description of favorites, and extensiveness of social network. Respondents were also queried about their views on appropriateness of using various identity-related items in differing social contexts.

Patterns in collected data were examined to test basic predictions of differences between rookies and veterans. We generally predicted that veterans in an identity domain possess more identity supporting resources than rookies. Individuals early in identity disposition will also have more identity related resources available than further along individuals. Rookies were predicted to self-symbolize a new identity more often than veterans due to a symbolic self-completion effect. Rookies were also predicted to self-symbolize a past identity more often than veterans, reflecting a symbolic self-retention effect.

Evidence indicated that identity cultivation stage is an important moderator of self-symbolization. Rookies and veterans had different self-structures with multiple identities differing according to cultivation stage. Consequently, identity resources were variable based on identity cultivation stage. Veterans had larger and higher quality social networks suggesting more well-developed identity supporting infrastructures. A similar pattern was evident with possessions. Veterans had more possessions with which to self-symbolize than rookies, even though identity importance did not differ significantly between the two groups. These findings are the first to provide evidence of this variation in the context of multiple identities; others have observed support only for a single identity.

In addition to identity resource variability, symbolic self-completion and symbolic self-retention were evident in the data. While veterans owned more identity related items, rookies deployed such items more often. This was the case even after controlling for importance and size of possession inventory. The result pattern is consistent with rookies engaging in symbolic self-completion. Rookies also reported more frequent use of possessions related to a past identity, reflecting a symbolic self-retention effect. This evidence suggests that generalizations should not be made lightly from rookies to veterans within an identity domain, or vice versa.

The study briefly described in this abstract provides evidence of identity cultivation stage predicting usage for favorite identity-related possessions across contexts. Results were consistent with the observation that favorites are not always used instrumentally, but are retained for contemplative and/or emotional purposes. Rookies and veterans did not differ in their perceived appropriateness of favorite current identity related possessions across contexts. However, rookies did perceive that their favorite item related to a current identity as more appropriate for public display than veterans, suggesting a symbolic self-completion effect. Rookies also viewed their favorite possession related to a past identity as appropriate to use in more contexts than veterans, consistent with symbolic self-retention.

Results overall indicate identity related social ties, ownership of related possessions, self-symbolizing with relevant possessions (including self-completion and self-retention uses), and perceived appropriateness of favorite identity possessions varied according to identity cultivation stage. These results support the assertion that individuals deploy identity resources differently as they move through cultivation stages. A general implication is that identity cultivation stage is fundamental to understanding the person-possession linkage in future research.

REFERENCES


Burke, Peter J. and Jan E. Stets (2009), Identity theory, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.


Advances in Consumer Research
Volume 43, ©2015