Impact of Numerosity on Allocation Behavior

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Across four experiments, we show that numerical values representing the quantity of a resource systematically bias decision-makers’ perception of the quantity to be less than, adequate, or more than adequate. The bias significantly impacts decision makers’ final allocations. Thus, the paper demonstrates and explains the impact of numerosity-bias on allocation-behavior.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
We often decide how to allocate resources between ourselves and others, or, between our needs and other causes we support. The traditional Dictator game is probably the most frequently used tool to study allocation behavior. In the standard Dictator game, an individual referred to as the ‘dictator’ is allotted an initial sum of money (initial endowment) and is asked to allocate a portion of it to another individual who must accept the allocated amount (Forsythe, Horowitz, Savin & Seflon 1994). Ideally, the dictator should take all the money for herself and allocate nothing to the recipient. However, past research has demonstrated that many allocate a substantial share of their initial endowment to the recipient. Recent research has sought to understand several factors that influence the level of allocation (See Engel 2011 for a review). Despite the considerable research in this area, there is little work on how the ‘numerosity’ of the resource itself impacts the decision-maker’s allocation to the recipient.

To this end, we find that the form of the numerical value representing the quantity of a resource (e.g., 5 Kg vs 5000 grams; $20 vs 2000 cents) systematically biases the decision-maker to perceive the quantity she is thinking of allocating as being ‘less than adequate’ or ‘more than adequate’ - consequently influencing her final allocation decision. We attribute this systematic bias to ‘numerosity’ bias.

Numerosity Bias

“Make six slices of the pizza, I can’t eat eight” - ‘not so hungry’
Yogi Berra

As the classic pizza slices joke depicts, we may perceive a resource, such as a pie of pizza in the above case, to be greater in quantity if it’s represented in terms of the more-numerous eight slices than the less-numerous six slices. This is Numerosity “bias” (Pelham, Sumarta & Myaskovsky 1994), because the size of the resource (i.e., the pie) remains the same. The numerosity bias explains that individuals over-infer quantity when it’s represented with higher numeric values or bigger numbers (Pelham et al 1994).

Recently, numerosity has been shown to impact judgments across consumer domains (Bagchi & Davis 2016) such as points in loyalty/reward programs (Bagchi & Li 2011; Nejad & Onay 2014), quality perceptions (Burson, Larrick & Lynch 2009) and pricing (Coulter, Choi & Monroe 2012; Coulter & Coulter 2010). However, how numerosity can impact pro-social behavior, is under-studied (Bagchi & Davis 2016). We look to fill this gap as our work has implications for charity behavior. Across four experiments, we show that numerical values representing the quantity of a resource systematically bias decision-makers’ perception of the quantity to be less than, adequate, or more than adequate. As we demonstrate, this bias significantly impacts decision-makers’ allocations.

In our studies, we manipulate the decision-maker’s perception of quantity of resources (which is money in this case) by describing the initial endowment using objectively equivalent amounts expressed in either dollars or cents. Essentially, we posit that when a decision-maker contemplates how much to allocate to the recipient in ‘cents’, the numerosity bias will occur. By that we mean, a certain amount in cents such as 300 cents, will be perceived to be greater in quantity or more abundant than an objectively equivalent amount expressed as 3 dollars, as the numerical representation of 300 is much bigger than 3. Consequently, under this ‘Cents’ condition, any amount in cents that the decision-maker is thinking about allocating to the other person (e.g., 300 cents) will be perceived to be greater than an objectively equivalent amount that a counterpart decision-maker may be thinking of giving in the ‘Dollar’ condition (e.g., 3 dollars). Because the decision-maker tends to over-infer the amount when represented in cents, and thus perceives it to be more than adequate, she will adjust her contemplated allocation in cents to a lower value (for e.g. 270 cents), when compared to an allocation decided by the counterpart decision-maker in dollars. Accordingly, as a direct result of the numerosity bias, we expect to see that the final allocation made to the recipient in the ‘Cents’ condition will be lesser in absolute value when compared to the allocation made in the ‘Dollar’ condition. We check this intuition in study 1 and find that the other individual’s share was substantially (more than 10%) lower in the more numerous Cents condition when compared to that in the Dollar condition.

To provide further insight into the manner in which numerosity drives allocation, we manipulate the decision-maker’s focus by framing the decision as “giving to the other” versus “keeping for oneself” (study 2a), and, manipulate the decision-maker’s relative attention by bolding either the numerical value or the denomination (study 2b). Finally, we use a hypothetical currency to validate our process account and show that numerosity biases the decision-maker’s perception of ‘adequacy’ with respect to quantity of the allocated resource (study 3).

Past research has often used dictator games to study charity behavior (e.g., Bekkers 2007; Engel & Grosman 1996). In the context of charitable giving, the Dictator is in the role of the benefactor and the recipient takes the role of the charity. Thus the present work, which demonstrates the impact of numerosity on allocation behavior in dictator games, can have implications for charity behavior as well. In this vein, our paper paves the way for further research on how numerosity affects pro-social behavior, which is currently understudied (Bagchi & Davis 2016). In this way, our work contributes to the numerosity bias literature as well as adds to research studying determinants of allocation behavior.

REFERENCES


The Effect of Temporal Distance on Self-Presentation by Brand

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we examine how consumers’ self-presentation of self-brand connections is affected by the temporal distance. Although the research on self-brand connections and consumer-brand relationship have been well documented (MacInnis and Folkes 2017), the effect of temporal distance on self-brand connections is less well understood. We are particularly interested in the extent to which the temporal distance influences the brand’s ability to serve as a means of consumers’ self-presentation.

Consumers make choices based on their self-construal via the attitude object, which is influenced by their judgment of how far into the future the event will happen (Trope and Liberman 2010). Further, consumers assess the value of a symbolic brand depending on how they construe themselves with the brand hypothetically (Sung and Tinkham 2005). Thus, the interesting question is—does people’s temporal distance determine his or her self-presentation?

The current paper suggests that the way the consumer perceives, comprehends, and interprets a brand’s ability to serve as a means of self-presentation by brand (SPB) is dependent on whether the brand is to be used in a near-future event or in a distant-future event—in other words, it depends on temporal distance. As such, our research contributes to the self-brand connections literature, which emphasizes the effect of temporal distance on consumers’ self-construal via the brand as a means of presenting their actual self or ideal self.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

SPB

Self-presentation relates to impression management with interactions involving close relationships, those of the same-sex, those of the opposite-sex, and strangers (Leary et al. 1994; Tice et al. 1995). Apart from verbal presentation, non-verbal expression, and purposive behaviors, people use artifactual displays for self-presentation tactics (Schneider 1981). To illustrate this point, people tend to project their desired images on cues for physical appearance (Schneider, Hastorf, and Ellsworth 1979), clothing and jewelry (O’Guinn, Tanner, and Maeng 2015), and conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption (Berger and Ward 2010).

SPB is defined as the connection of the self with a brand—the self-brand connections—in which the consumer utilizes the brand as a means of self-presentation to create a positive impression in the social world (Escalas and Bettman 2009). SPB engages the consumer’s self with a brand by involving the signifying and connecting processes (Schmitt 2012). Thus, SPB enables consumers managing their self-presentation by associating with a symbolic brand, which serves as a means of presenting their actual self and ideal self (Cialdini and De Nicholas 1989).

Effect of Temporal Distance on SPB

We adopt temporal distance because it has a significant effect on the use and effectiveness of self-presentation strategy (Carter and Sanna 2008). Temporal distance refers to the judgment of an upcoming event in terms of how far into the future the event will happen (Trope, Liberman, and Waksłak 2007). It has a significant influence on people’s evaluations, predictions, and choices (Trope and Liberman 2003). Waksłak et al. (2008) state that people perceive self-concept more abstractly in the temporally distant condition than in the temporally proximal condition and tend to perceive a wider form of self-concept due to broader self-reflection.

When construing near-future events, people tend to think more concretely as they are currently engaged with low-level constraints and are inclined to utilize all the rich and contextualized details (Trope et al. 2007). Therefore, their psychological distance from the direct experience of reality should be closer when compared to people who are considering a distant-future event. Consequently, people in the temporally proximal condition are motivated to engage with an actual self because the event is closer to the “here and now” and therefore at a smaller psychological distance (Malär et al. 2011).

People tend to conceptualize objects more abstractly while they think about distant-future events (Trope et al. 2007). Thus, people in the temporally distant condition are likely to engage with an ideal self because they are motivated toward involvement in self-enhancement activities (Malär et al. 2011). Furthermore, self-enhancement involves moving toward one’s ideal self by promoting self-presentation and exaggeration of one’s strength (Alicke and Sedikides 2011). Therefore, we hypothesize:

When considering events in the near future (vs. distant future), people exhibit more favorable attitudes and choices towards a brand that serves as a means of presenting their actual self (vs. ideal self) rather than a brand that serves as a means of presenting their ideal self (vs. actual self).

STUDY 1A AND STUDY 1B

The goal of Study 1a was to examine whether considering a near-future (vs. distant-future) event; people tended to exhibit more favorable attitudes towards a brand that served as a means of presenting their actual self (vs. ideal self). The objective of Study 1b was to examine the effect of temporal distance on the choices of familiar brands that served as a means of presenting consumer’s self.

Study 1a

One hundred twenty adults from across the US (63 men; age 18–69, M_{age} = 32) were recruited from an online panel to participate in this study in exchange for a fee. The study was a 2 (temporal distance: near vs. distant) × 2 (consumer’s self: actual vs. ideal) between-subjects design. The participants were randomly assigned to a near-future or a distant-future event (Appendix). They were then asked to indicate three items on a temporal thought index (TTI, α = .91; adapted from Spassova and Lee 2013). Next, the participants were told to imagine they were currently inside in a shopping complex to search for clothing for the event. A sales assistant approached them by showing four clothing items (i.e., Tommy Hilfiger, Gant, Clarks, and Esprit) that could serve as a means of presenting their actual self or ideal self. The participants were then asked to rate a manipulation check item. We assessed brand attitude as dependent measure by asking the participants to evaluate the fashion brands using a three-item, 7-point scale (α = .88; adapted from Spassova
and Lee 2013). All the measurement items were listed in the methodological details appendix.

Results

The results revealed successful manipulations of temporal distance (t = 14.33, p < .001) and consumer’s self (t = 5.44, p < .001). Table 1 showed that the participants in the temporally proximal condition evaluated the brands more favorably when they were offered the brands that served as a means of presenting their actual self (M_{actual} = 1.75 vs. M_{ideal} = 1.04; t(58) = 2.57, p < .05), whereas the participants in the temporarily distant condition evaluated the brands more favorably when they were offered the brands that served as a means of presenting their ideal self (M_{actual} = .87 vs. M_{ideal} = 1.49; t(58) = -2.53, p < .05).

Study 1b

One hundred adults from across the US (52 men; age 18–62, M_{age} = 34) were recruited from an online panel to participate in this study in exchange for a fee. The participants first were told to choose three brands that could serve as a means of presenting their actual self and three brands that could serve as a means of presenting their ideal self from a pool of fifteen familiar brands (i.e., Nike, Adidas, Levi’s, Calvin Klein, Michael Kors, GAP, Coach, Armani, Forever21, Gucci, Old Navy, H&M, Ralph Lauren, Zara, and Puma). They were then randomly assigned near- or distant-future travel prizes (Appendix) and were asked to indicate their TTI (α = .93). Next, the participants were informed that they had bought the selected six brands and they wanted to use the clothes of the brands during the trip. We assessed brand choices as dependent measure by asking the participants to allocate a percentage of how much time they would spend wearing the clothes for the trip, and the total percentage had to add up to 100%. The participants then answered a brand-checking question.

Results and Discussion

The result revealed successful manipulation of temporal distance (t = 11.54, p < .001). All the participants scored at least 50% correct answers for the brand-checking section and the average percentage of correct answers was significantly above the 50% (t = 26.53, p < .001). The participants in the temporally proximal condition allocated a significantly higher percentage to the brands that served as a means of presenting their actual self (M_{actual} = 54.78% vs. M_{ideal} = 45.22%; t(49) = 1.98, p < .05). In contrast, the participants in the temporally distant condition allocated a significantly higher percentage to the brands that served as a means of presenting their ideal self (M_{ideal} = 55.16% vs. M_{actual} = 44.84%; t(49) = 2.35, p < .05).

Study 1 provides empirical evidence that the participants construed themselves via the brands to present their actual and ideal self, which then influences brand attitude and choices. However, there is no evidence whether temporal distance shifts the way people construe a brand’s ability to serve as a means of self-presentation. Further, Study 1 did not cover such effect reflected on a comparison with a brand that might not relate to self-presentation. Thus, we addressed these issues in the next study.

Table 1: Key findings from studies 1–2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies &amp; (Dependent) Variables</th>
<th>Near future</th>
<th></th>
<th>Distant future</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Actual self M (SD)</td>
<td>1.75 (.96)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.87 (1.02)</td>
<td>1.49 (.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>1.04 (1.16)</td>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>t(58) = 2.57*</td>
<td></td>
<td>t(58) = -2.53*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideal self M (SD)</td>
<td>54.78% (17.11)</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.84% (15.53)</td>
<td>55.16% (15.53)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>45.22% (17.11)</td>
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<td>Ideal self M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand choices</td>
<td>t(49) = 1.98*</td>
<td></td>
<td>t(49) = -2.35*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual self M (SD)</td>
<td>2.29 (.64)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.97 (.83)</td>
<td>2.53 (.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>1.57 (1.35)</td>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>t(38) = 2.17*</td>
<td></td>
<td>t(38) = -2.58*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SPB</td>
<td>5.99 (.89)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.58 (1.13)</td>
<td>6.28 (.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>5.38 (.91)</td>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand choices</td>
<td>t(38) = 2.12*</td>
<td></td>
<td>t(38) = -2.34*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actual self M (SD)</td>
<td>61.94% (21.71)</td>
<td></td>
<td>58.84% (21.97)</td>
<td>69.04% (18.57)</td>
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<td>Listed brand M (SD)</td>
<td>38.06% (21.71)</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.16% (21.97)</td>
<td>30.96% (18.57)</td>
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<td>Ideal self M (SD)</td>
<td>60.64% (26.02)</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.37% (26.02)</td>
<td>Ideal self M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed brand M (SD)</td>
<td>39.37% (26.02)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Listed brand M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand choices</td>
<td>t(19) = 2.46*</td>
<td></td>
<td>t(19) = 1.83</td>
<td>t(19) = 1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: *p &lt; .05, **p &lt; .001</td>
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</table>
STUDY 2
To minimize potential confounding effects, we used a fictitious brand to prompt the SPB. A self-customization procedure was adopted because this method enables consumers to construct a customized offer for each of the brand’s attributes that best fits their preference (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer 2009).

Method
Eighty adults from across the US (46 men; age 18–64, $M_{age} = 30$) were recruited from an online panel to participate in this study in exchange for a fee. The study was a 2 (consumer’s self: actual vs. ideal) × 2 (temporal distance: near vs. distant) between-subjects design. The participants were first asked to list three fashion brands that they preferred. They have subsequently invited to an imaginary near- or distant-future event and have been asked to indicate their TT1 ($\alpha = .93$). The participants have been asked to imagine they had entered a new fashion outlet called Zeemiata. Next, they were randomly assigned to customizing Zeemiata clothing that could serve as a means of presenting their actual self or ideal self (Appendix). The participants were first asked to report on their brand attitude ($\alpha = .94$) and three items on SPB for Zeemiata ($\alpha = .90$): “I believe that Zeemiata could help me to present myself effectively in front of my friends,” “I believe that Zeemiata could help me to present myself effectively in front of strangers,” “I believe that Zeemiata could help me to give a positive impression of myself in front of the public”; ranging from $1 =$ strongly disagree to $7 =$ strongly agree), they were then informed that they had finalized two clothing options for the event: a customized Zeemiata clothing and clothing item produced by the first fashion brand listed by the participants. The participants were asked to allocate a percentage of their choices to both Zeemiata and the listed brands, ranging from 0% to 100%. This was followed by answering one manipulations item of consumer’s self.

Results and Discussion
The results revealed successful manipulations of temporal distance ($t = 14.11, p < .001$) and consumer’s self ($t = 12.16, p < .001$). As predicted, Table 1 showed that the participants in the temporally proximal (vs. distant) condition evaluated Zeemiata more favorably and had significantly higher levels of SPB when it served as a means of presenting their actual self (vs. ideal self). Participants in the temporally near condition chose Zeemiata more than the other brands, which served as an indicator of their self-construal via the brand as a means of self-presentation (Appendix for an additional study). This is because consumers are more likely to wear a purchased product of a brand to a near-future event once they have received positive comments about using the brand.

This research is relevant to the practical implication of authentic branding strategy (i.e., a strategy that targets on the fit of the perception of consumer’s actual self with the brand’s personality) and aspirational branding strategy (i.e., a strategy that focuses on consumer’s ideal self-congruence). To enhance SPB, marketing managers should consider individuals’ construals of future events while emphasizing a brand personality related to actual self or aspirations, especially on product self-customization, remarketing, and retargeting.

The samples of this research were recruited from the US. Thus, it limits the universality of SPB in Eastern cultures. In the third study by Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus (2000), the results show an unrelated independent self-concept for Chinese and East Asian samples, and this could be due to the self-criticism found in Eastern cultures, wherein people are vigilant about their self-presentation and try to fulfill their roles in the eyes of their parents, family, relatives, and friends rather than trying to be self-sufficient and autonomous (Heine 2001). Further, Eastern consumers may heavily emphasize status consumption, which is significantly influenced by the power distance belief (Gao, Wintersch, and Zhang 2016). Future research is needed to generalize the findings to different cultures.

A SUMMARY OF AN ADDITIONAL STUDY
Our framework proposes that consumers tend to evaluate a brand that serves as a means of presenting their actual self (vs. ideal self) more favorably when they are thinking about events in the near future (vs. the distant future), but it does not rule out an alternative explanation for this effect. We argue that consumers are excited to wear or use purchased products in the near future once they have received positive comments from others, regardless of whether the brand serves as a means of presenting their actual or ideal self. Thus, this study set out to test the effect of a brand’s ability to serve as a means of presenting the consumer’s self on a choice regarding a near-future event versus a distant-future event. One hundred twenty adults from across the United States (62 men; age 18–69, $M_{age} = 33$) were recruited to participate in this study in exchange for a fee. The participants were randomly assigned to imagine that they had bought a dark suit or gown that highly recommended by their friends and family members, which was also served as a means of presenting their actual self, their ideal self, or no specific self-concept. The participants then were required to make a decision about wearing the dark suit or gown for either a near- or distant-future event and were asked to provide a brief description of their choices.

GENERAL DISCUSSION
Our work contributes to the self-brand connections literature (Escalas and Bettman 2009), which addresses the consumer’s self-construal via a brand as a means of presenting their actual self and ideal self. Current research moves the examination of self-brand connections beyond an association of brand personality and brand image (Aaker 1999; Malaf et al. 2011) toward an understanding of how the symbolic attributes of a brand could be further enhanced by tapping the psychological distance that results from the shift in the temporal distance. We demonstrate fine-grained insight into how the consumers’ self-construal via the brand as a means of self-presentation is affected by their thoughts about events in the near or distant future, which results in a more favorable attitude toward a symbolic brand and influences the choices consumers make.

An important remark is that we found that the consumers’ choice of near- and distant-future events is not influenced by the brand’s ability to serve as a means of presenting their actual self or ideal self (Appendix for an additional study). This is because consumers are more likely to wear a purchased product of a brand to a near-future event once they have received positive comments about using the brand.

Further, Eastern consumers may heavily emphasize status consumption, which is significantly influenced by the power distance belief (Gao, Wintersch, and Zhang 2016). Future research is needed to generalize the findings to different cultures.
Results and Discussion

The results showed that the participants wished to wear the purchased black suit or gown for a near-future event; either it served as a means for presenting their actual self (83%), their ideal self (75%), or they were in the control condition (85%; χ² (1.40), p > .10). We crosschecked the written explanations with the event choice, and the given reasons were reasonable because the dark suit or gown was perfect and the participants were excited to wear it to a near-future event. In contrast, the participants who wished to keep the dark suit or gown for a distant-future event had provided various reasons that were not related to the consumer’s self.

REFERENCES


METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS APPENDIX

Temporal Distance Scenarios

| Study 1a and 2 | Imagine that you have been invited to a significant annual event that will be held on next Friday (after six months). Assume that you have accepted the invitation and that there is no particular dress code for the event. |
| Study 1b | Imagine that you have won a trip for five days and four nights to Barcelona from American Airlines, and the travel prize includes two flight tickets, accommodation, and other packages such as two nights’ fine-dining and tickets to various attractions and shows. Assume that you have accepted the travel prize and have found a person to go with you on next Friday (after six months). |

Manipulation of Self-customization

| Study 2 | Imagine that you are currently in a new fashion brand store called Zeemiata; a sales assistant approach you by introducing a mobile application that can customize offerings to your preferences. Kindly use the online clothing design studio to customize a Zeemiata clothing style that best fits your actual self (ideal self) by tailoring it to a particular size, color, clothing material, and by adding personalized texts to the clothing. |

Measurements

| Study 1a, 1b, and 2 | Temporal Thought Index (Spassova and Lee 2013) | This event is going to happen (1 = soon, 7 = not so soon) I will be going to this event (1 = in a few days, 7 = in a few months) I have (1 = limited time, 7 = a lot of time) to plan for this event |
| Study 1a and 2 | Brand Attitude (Spassova and Lee 2013) | bad (-3) versus good (+3) unpleasant (-3) versus pleasant (+3) unfavorable (-3) versus favorable (+3) |
| Study 1a | Manipulation Check of Consumer’s Self | Just now, the sales assistant was trying to present me with fashion brands that could serve as a means of presenting my (-3 = actual self, 3 = ideal self) |
| Study 2 | Manipulation Check of Consumer’s Self by Self-Customization | Generally, Zeemiata could serve as a means of presenting my (-3 = actual self, 3 = ideal self) |


INTRODUCTION

O’Henry famously quipped that New York would have made a great city if they finished it. This observation is meant as an exaggeration but it also registers an important truth—cities are works-in-progress. The question of a city’s identity is ultimately one about people—the local communities who shape the outlook of a place and the visitors who try to decipher or contest this outlook. In terms of the human factor, however, cities present a modern paradox—they facilitate both quiet anonymity and stark individuality. Ever since the Parisian flâneur of the nineteenth century, this paradox has driven our perception of our cities and of our own selves. The study of residents’ relation to, evaluation of, and identity with the city tends to be rooted in the disciplines of environmental psychology (i.e. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996; Lewicka 2008) and geography (i.e. Molotch 1976; Harvey 1989), while the field of marketing tends to approach the consumption of the city from an overly general, value-based perspective (Dennett 1983; Rannisto 2003) or destination marketing (Goss 1989) that underpins the confluence of these narratives for city dwellers. These narratives and how they clash within the context of the city as a consumable entity are an object to be consumed.

In this interdisciplinary study, we draw from philosophy, geography, environmental psychology, anthropology, and consumer research, we explore the various narratives which make social, cultural, economic, and political change intelligible to us, that account for the dynamic personality of a city. The city is not a person, but it lends itself to articulations of personhood similar to those that apply to any urban dweller. Our life stories are thus not merely responsive to the city’s symbolic identity but also are in equal measure constitutive of it.

We look at the relationship between two types of narratives which we label as dominant and emergent and explore the tensions that underpin the confluence of these narratives for city dwellers. Cities invariably give rise to dominant narratives, which include the historical records, urban legends and major branding campaigns. Conversely, cities also inspire and facilitate emergent narratives—stories that capture the personal, the particular and the idiosyncratic, but find resonance beyond the private individual.

In this brief treatment of our thesis we structure our paper as follows: We first introduce the concepts of dominant and emergent narratives and how they clash within the context of the city as a consumed entity. We chose to examine the ways in which food is used as a medium of communication to expound on the way narrative modes of thinking and expression contribute to the identity of the city. Los Angeles serves as the context to understand how dominant narratives and emergent ones shape our conceptual understanding of the city. We focus on a particular form of cultural engagement—a series of thematic dining events titled Los Angeles Eats Itself (LAEI). LAEI, in particular, is a pertinent example of the productive tension between dominant narratives and emergent ones. We explore this tension through the dinner series that recreates and re-consumes notorious events that shape the narratives of Los Angeles. The real Los Angeles is a notion whose validity hangs in the balance between the two extremes—a negotiation between competing narratives, in which the dominant and emergent narratives conspire to respond to the dynamic nature of the city.

DOMINANT AND EMERGENT NARRATIVES

It is our desire to grasp the city in its totality that accounts for what we have identified as dominant narratives. The city’s identity, on Certeau’s (1984) reading, is not the sum total of such dominant stories. Instead, it is a function of the intersect between both and what we have identified as emergent narratives. We understand the latter as stories of real human lives that implicate the city as a character.

The dominant narrative is defined as a top-down imposition of city branding from historians, politicians, corporations, advertising and marketing professionals. We suggest examples of qualifiers meant to elucidate both the origin of this type of narrative (marketing, branding) and its essential character (overarched, organized, homogenous, dogmatic, totalizing). While the emergent identity represents the unregulated agglomeration of micro-narratives that find resonance upon the symbolic urban fabric. The following qualifying terms are examples that capture how emergent narratives are formed (individually, spontaneously, arbitrarily, authentically) and what challenges they present for the dominant narrative of the city (irreverence, subversiveness, fluidity).

In the case of Los Angeles, branding labels such as “The City of Angels,” “Tinseltown” and “La La Land” represent aspects of so-called dominant narratives. The reason Los Angeles makes a perfect study subject is that it does not cater to dominant narratives as readily as the average global metropolis. While cities like New York and Paris have built strong brands that lend themselves to immediate articulation and recognition, Los Angeles challenges its visitors by defying the preconceptions they seek to confirm. But this challenge is equally present for Los Angeles residents because they often mythologize the parts of the city they do not frequent. In this sense everyone in Los Angeles is a visitor. The effect this has is that the city amplifies the two contradictory conditions that the nineteenth century flâneur was trying to enjoy at the same time—it oscillates between the extreme existential anonymity of the sprawl and the radical individualization of the spotlight. The middle ground that exists between the two is the narrative function of identity. We approach Los Angeles as a city-making toolkit—a story each one of us, visitor and resident alike, pieces together to ever more idiosyncratic specifications.

The convergence of these two types of narratives creates what we term negotiated identity. This occupies the shared space of the previous two—a contested ground whose boundaries are perpetually redrawn. In the tension between artificial order (dominant narrative) and organic chaos (emergent narratives) there exists a conceptual space, which we qualify as liminal, collaborative, dynamic, transitional, mediated, and relational. And while both extremes—the dominant and the emergent—are real and ever present in our reading of the city, it is this middle negotiated ground that represents the urban reality that informs our judgments and actions.

CONSUMING THE CITY THROUGH CULINARY ADVENTURES

The physical aspect of cities is just as inconstant as that of humans. When we think of cities it is not of statistics or infrastructural...
agglomerations that supply our operational concepts. Instead, it is certain events, people and places that command disproportionately important status in the urban imagination. The sanction of what is remembered and what is conscripted to oblivion is a function of the city’s narrative arc. For Baudelaire, the city is a spectral accumulation of “glorious perspectives, only increased by the thought of all the drama they contain” (as cited in Benjamin 1999, 231). This is in agreement with Hughes’ (1964) insistence on the vital role partially arbitrary abstractions play in the composition of historical narratives. Each event, place and person that lends itself to such arbitrary abstraction, to the multiple perspectives of multiple beholders and storytellers, gains entry into the symbolic identity of the city. The unique trajectories we travel along—commutes, diversions, explorations—are not derived from the city’s identity but are, rather, constitutive of it.

The construct of place encompasses three components: geography, available activities, and the cultivated meanings its residents give to the city (Gustafson 2001). The identity of each place/city is unique, and is created in consort with both official narratives (originating with government entities and marketing firms) and communal ones, both of which are separate from the influence of any one group of residents (Lewicka 2008). Much of the literature on place argues that the way people understand cities is similar to the way they understand brands (Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009), which suggests that the branding of a city can be similar to that of other goods and services (Freire 2005). Each year, billions of dollars is spent marketing places (cities) as “commodities to be consumed” (Rainisto 2003), and as invigorating, entrepreneurial, alluring and fun, yet safe and distinct (Prytherch 2002). Still, Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009) have argued that a city is more than simply a product to be marketed—it is also an object to be consumed. Hence, our focus here is not city/place branding/marketing.

Understanding a particular location allows for deeper insights into the specific consumptive behavior of its inhabitants. Freire (2005) argued that a city’s residents consume the goods, services, and experiences in and of the city, and these acts of consumption serve as the foundation of belongingness and identification with that city, which ultimately drives its continued consumption. Invariably, place plays a pivotal role in the formation of any negotiated identity (Tiwger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). In an urban environment, the highly differentiated consumption spaces often leave residents negotiating multiple identities.

The critical components of a brand—equity, essence and authenticity—are all relevant on the relevant modes of consumption. This is why those who live in and consume the city co-create its identity and culture. Living in a particular city impacts each resident’s identity constructions including values and culturally-influenced customs (Aitken and Campelo 2011). Cities inherently create a binary engagement which suggests not only a sense of one’s individual place in society, but also of others’ place in it (Bourdieu 1984). The extent to which values and customs are disseminated by residents drives the collective understanding of the city’s brand for both residents and non-residents (Aitken and Campelo 2011). Although people consume a city through a variety of means -- transit, geographic layout, entertainment choices/venues, festivals, to name but a few, -- food is perhaps the most quotidian. In its many shapes and forms, and cultural/ethnic/racial affiliations, food shapes our relationship to a city. It is a system of communication (Barthes 1961 1997; Douglas, 1991) in which the relations between the members of a social group are reflected. When treated as a code, the message food encodes can be “found in the pattern of social relations being expressed” (Douglas 1991, 249). When treated as a narrative device, culinary adventure becomes a metaphor for cultural consumption writ large.

Los Angeles Eats Itself is “a dinner series where cuisine and LA noir merge like freeway onramps in a savory digestible history.” (http://losangeleseatsitself.com/about/). The themes for each dinner “event” are notorious LA moments that “border on the tragic, catastrophic and macabre” (http://losangeleseatsitself.com/about/). Our taste of and for Los Angeles is in part a function of these adventures which are centered around some of Los Angeles’ most notorious events, like the Black Dahlia murder and the Heidi Fleiss (Hollywood Madam) scandal, and the salacious stories that drive them. “If the narrative of Los Angeles is one of an industry that makes narratives but has no singular story, Los Angeles Eats Itself is an effort to present a range of narratives in a unique and tangible way” (http://losangeleseatsitself.com/about/).

The Los Angeles Eats Itself project affords a contextualized understanding of the city’s negotiated identities. Since the stories around which the dinner series is built are sealed in the formaldehyde of urban legend, their deconstruction through the clash of culinary and artistic visions is truly transformative. All relevant parties—the creators, the artistic and culinary luminaries, and even the intrepid diners—are given the opportunity to reread history from a highly personal viewpoint. The dominant narratives of exploitation, inequality and disaster are confronted by the idiosyncratic personalities and reminiscences of everyone involved. It is a scripted clash, but the resultant mythologies are impossible to predict. So are also the new identities Los Angeles assumes as it consumes itself.

CONCLUSION

In exploring the way cities are understood and consumed, scholars operate on a reductive picture of the formation and structure of the city’s identity. With the help of philosophy and critical theory we explore a series of unresolved dichotomies that frame our understanding of the city as a disjunction of two types of narrative identity—the dominant and the emergent. Dominant narrative is the centralized top-down image of the city produced over time through marketing, branding, etc. Emergent narrative is the idiosyncratic fabric of individual, bottom-up storytelling that links to and challenges the dominant narrative. While the extant literature accommodates both sides of the dichotomy, the relationship between the two is left unexplored. We propose a third kind—negotiated identity—which not only furnishes a novel ground for conceptual analysis, but also captures the realities of how the identity of the city is constructed and, consequently, how the city is consumed. We show that narrativity is as helpful in understanding our consumption of the city as it is in articulating our phenomenological and semiotic engagements with it.

Between the dominance of urban legend and the emergence of personal association we are able to apprehend a middle ground—negotiated narrative identity at its most palpable. Further discussions on the dominant and emergent narrative construct could explore the mechanisms through which negotiated identities enable emergent narratives to become dominant narratives over time, and examine whether dominant narratives are fixed, or dissolve over time through negotiated identities?

While our study has its limitations, one of which is the specific context of Los Angeles and the food theme, we propose that the scope of our thesis reaches far beyond the example of this series of culinary adventures. Our notion of negotiated identity could benefit from intentional application to other cultural contexts such as art, education, sports, or politics.
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Corporate Branding as a Source for Employees’ Moral Identity Work
Philipp Wegerer, University of Innsbruck, Austria

INTRODUCTION
There is a growing interest on the moral dimension of consumption (Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler 2010, Belk 1988; Arnold and Thompson 2005; Holt, 2002, 2006, Curana and Crane 2008) and the ethical dimension of branding (Palazzo and Basu 2007, Land and Taylor 2010, Jeanes 2013, Arvidsson 2005). The present study engages in this discussion and sets the focus of inquiry onto how brands affect the ‘self’ of employees. It studies how the ethical branding of a chocolate company becomes a key resource for employee identity work.

The ethical dimension of consumption and the ambivalent moral nature of brands gained increasing attention over the past years. There is an extensive critical literature that has highlighted the role of branding in the manipulation of consumers (Klein 2000, Curana and Crane 2008), and the role of brands in various consumption practices such as ‘brand avoidance’ (Lee and Conroy 2009) and ‘anti-brand activism’ (Palazzo and Basu 2007), free labour (Arvidsson 2005, 2015, Cova and Dalli 2009, Curana and Crane 2008, Land and Taylor 2010), and in terms of managerial control and organizational culture (Jeanes 2013, Klein 2000, Willmott 2010). The question how branding conceptually relates to employee identity still matters.

The study draws on social identity theory (Giddens 1991, Watson 2008) and organization theory (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) in order to link the concept of self-identity with the concept of corporate brands. This perspective highlights how corporate brands can transform discourses in society into coherent brand-stories, which can be understood as meaningful social identities used by employees in their identity work. The paper then presents a case study which illuminates the various ways by which a corporate brand informs and affects employee identity work. The findings show the crucial importance of moral stories in the branding process and, furthermore, their significance in framing the moral superiority of employees who draw upon these stories in their identity work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: BRANDING AND IDENTITY WORK
There is a growing body of research examining the relationship of brands and consumer ethics (Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler 2010, Belk 1988; Arnold and Thompson 2005; Holt, 2002, 2006; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001), and the interplay of brands and other stakeholders (Vallaster and vonWallpach, 2013), such as employees (Kärreman and Rylander 2008, Land and Taylor 2010, Jeanes 2013, Miles and Mangold 2007). This study engages in this growing stream of research by shifting the attention onto how employees consume brands. Thus, it seeks to highlight the complex, yet ambivalent relationship of brands, ethics and employee identity work.

The reflexive self and the process of branding share a common mechanism in their creation on the grounds that both rely heavily upon storytelling and narrative construction in their enactment. Following Belk (1988), this paper argues that consumers and employees alike draw on brand stories in shaping their own self-identities. Where Belk (1988) emphasised the role of possessions for consumer identity work Watson (2008) has pointed the role of non-material stories and discourses for identity work. Watson (2008) argues that social Identities are personalized elements of a discourse “in a way which makes them [the discourses] meaningful, accessible, and appealing or unappealing to the individual” (Watson 2008, p. 129). The analytical category of ‘social identities’ allows us to understand ‘identity work’ as “a coming together of inward/internal self-reflection and outward/external engagement – through talk and action – with various discursively available social identities” (Watson 2008 p. 130). How does the concept of ‘social identities’ relate to brands?

Brands draw on, reflect and re-interpret discourses in society by crafting meaningful stories that provide narratives that overcome personal struggles with contradictions in society (Holt and Cameron 2010). Thus, successful brands provide meaningful ‘social identities’ for consumers and employees to position themselves in the discursive landscape. We can understand brands as carefully narrated ‘social identities’ (Watson 2008) based on the absorption, reflection and play with contradictions, discourses and cultural shifts within society. Following Watson (2008), I argue that the brands have become an important element of ‘social identities’ that consumers and employees draw on in the shaping of their own personal self-identities. According to this line of argument, brands do not merely offer one story amongst other possible accounts of ourselves and our world, but provide “an idealized image that one strives to become” (Kornberger, 2010, p. 92).

METHODOLOGY
Data gathering was based upon a set of qualitative methods including a number of visits to the organization, interviews, participant observations, informal conversations, field notes and document analysis. In sum 15 semi-structured interviews including the marketing director, the director of distribution and retail staff employed in the three retail shops located beyond the headquarter were conducted. In addition, the researcher analysed company branding documents including the company website, advertising materials, social media platform activities, and employee training documents. The analysis followed an inductive approach to research in order to identify emerging patterns within the data related to the branding process (Miles and Huberman 1994; Flyvbjerg 2006).

FINDINGS
The data indicates that the brands communicational efforts, although directed towards consumers, has a major effect on its employees. The theory driven analysis revealed that 3 modes of identity work predominate the branding process: i) moral self-definition by differentiation, ii) explicating morals and values as moral superiority, and iii) categorization and affiliation into a common sense of mission. Check the table for illustrative interview data.

Moral self-definition by differentiation
Differentiation is the primary strategy for defining what Chukka is and, logically, what it is not. Differentiation was a pattern that appeared in talking about their customers, competitors, products, and their way of doing business. The emphasis was not so much on what Chukka actually does or on what makes Chukka unique, but what Chukka does (and of course does not) as compared to others. The others, be it competitors, customers or society at large, are framed as being average, amoral, normal or mainstream.

One instance of differentiation occurred when we talked about the business policy of Chukka. Questions about topics such as fair trade and organic production were regularly answered in a negative, excluding way. Interviewees explained what the others believe, think, and do wrong. However, questions about what the company actually
Table 1: Illustrative data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral self-definition by differentiation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sentiments against competitors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>“There are chocolates [on the market] I doubt if they have cacao in them, they look like they are only painted brown, they just taste like sugar, some of them have this white milk inside them, probably they don’t have milk in them, so [they consist] only of sugar, basically they are sugar bombs.” (Shop assistant)</td>
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<td><strong>Using brand vocabulary for differentiation</strong></td>
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<td>“(...) I used to eat Milky before, but since I know the difference, since I know what is the difference between standard chocolate and ‘bean to bar’; I don’t eat that anymore (...) I don’t know (...) this Milky thing, that is something completely different, it is chocolate but it is a product I would not buy.” (Shop assistant)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Critique against customers</strong></td>
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<td>“For sure, something stays in the employees’ minds. But when a customer was in our manufactuary five or six years ago, what stays in his mind is that he could eat as much chocolate as he wanted to, and not that the beans have to be harvested by hand. And I doubt that the people are really more sensitive for this topic after their visit.” (Shop assistant)</td>
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<td><strong>Constructing employees as true believers</strong></td>
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<td>“(...) they [the customers] have the impression of a prestige organization. I don’t think that all people see the Fair Trade, organic, sustainability concept that Chukka wants to be seen and associated with, I don’t believe that. I believe that people basically think that it is expensive chocolate.” (Shop assistant)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Constructing employees as true believers</strong></td>
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<td>“There are customers who are well informed [about Chukka business approach], others have basic information and got in touch with the topic of sustainability recently, and there are customers who ask directly in the shop what we are about. But there is definitely a tendency among the customers towards the insight that they are doing something good if they consume [our product] (...) but basically I have the impression that the customers have less of an idea on the topic [of sustainability and fair trade] than they believe.” (Shop assistant)</td>
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<th>Explicating moral and values as moral superiority</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethical conception of work</strong></td>
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<td>“Hmm (...) to live up to Chukka’s philosophy, Yes I think I feel a kind of pressure, because Chukka has for me (...) if I look at the label, they are so damn good that I really want to try hard to do better [in following a sustainable lifestyle].” (Shop assistant)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The myth of the charismatic leader</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>“There is a name and a face which stands for his values. There is a personality, a character that is transformed into our products. This is what most products do not have anymore.”</td>
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<td><strong>Voluntary constrain of consumption</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>“I only stand here [as a shop assistant] this I really have to say, because it is for Chukka and because it is this product. If it would not be this brand I would not work in here, that is clear, I have to say that”.</td>
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<th>Categorization and affiliation into a common sense of mission</th>
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<td><strong>Conversion of competitors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Market participants, no we don’t talk about them in any evil or aggressive way, (...) [our CEO] talked to one of these guys from Jupiter [an industry leader], it was at a trade fair, he said you could rebuild your business, you could work sustainably, you could work in a fair way. So he appealed to his conscience (...) but I think in those companies the will for change is missing (...). And I think that’s the difference between [them and] Chukka, which is a stable family business that does not want to grow above a specific size within a given time period.”</td>
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<td><strong>Conversion of customers</strong></td>
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<td>“(...) we have certain customers which show a strong awareness [for fair trade and sustainability], and who have an awareness that they are buying organic and fair trade products [at Chukka] (...) but of course that’s not everybody. That’s why we try to bring it close to everybody. Because it is us who represent the company’s philosophy and it is our duty to create and maintain this awareness (among the customers).”</td>
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| Expansion as ethical education                              |
| “[With the expansion to Shanghai] Chukka can teach the Chinese people, whose economy is based mainly on the exploitation of resources, how to conduct business in a sustainable way (...), that is really cool, this social-pedagogical approach, this market education approach, that’s really cool shit!” (Shop assistant) |
| **Social transformation**                                   |
| “So you would say that Chukka has some effects?” (Interviewer) | “Yes definitely, that [the customers] start at least to think, or if they don’t start to think that they are at least offended, and that somebody else starts to think for them.” (Shop assistant) |
| **The high price as moral**                                 |
| “Our price is not something that we calculate arbitrarily like a stock price, or that we check the market for what we can get, or how much we can get out of the customer for our product. It is actually very simple: it is the raw material plus working hours, then we get a price X, and then of course we want to earn something, so that the company can be successful. In sum this is the retail price. It is very simple; we all want a fair wage and a safe place to work. We cannot work or give something away for free. We can only produce more cheaply if we buy cheaper raw materials, but this would change the character of our product.” (Shop assistant) |

**does** were answered vaguely or by using common statements such as “Chukka is fair trade”. If asked what fair trade, organic or sustainability actually meant, or what the terms meant for Chukka, the answers remained vague, or differed significantly from each other.

The interviewees explained Chukka’s strategy by highlighting how their competitors exploited native farmers and the environment and that Chukka avoided this by sticking to fair-trade or organic production. The interview respondents did not show in-depth knowledge of Chukka actual business practices. Some competitors were seen as so inferior that they were described as having a different product, serving a different market and having a different manner of production and distribution.

The brand created a strong division between ‘them’ vs. ‘us’, where the employees clearly distinguish themselves as being brand
believers in contrast to both their competitors and even their own customers. Competitors were seen as exploiting nature and native societies, customers were perceived as naive and ignorant, society is framed as blind and based on exploitation. This negative framing of others is used as a source of differentiation. Employees framed Chukka as a responsible producer and themselves as experts in the chocolate business and as responsible members of society.

**Explicating Moral and Values as Moral Superiority**

In addition to the tendency to define Chukka by differentiating it from others, the organization was also positioned as being morally superior. The two labels ‘fair trade’ and ‘organic’ in particular played a key role in this realm; both were regularly subsumed under the term ‘sustainability’ and used to define Chukka directly as a morally outstanding organization. The position of Chukka was framed as “against profit maximization”, “authentic” and “driven by its own values”. Phrases used by interviewees included “we do not outsource sustainability” and “we stand behind what we say”, and Chukka is a “credible”, “authentic” and “reliable” organization.

Interviewees also saw and presented themselves as morally outstanding individuals. They expressed doubts about topics such as endless growth, profit maximization and reservations towards capitalism and globalization in general. Western capitalism was seen as being an exploitative, destructive force. Their job as shop assistants was seen as an ethical practice in which these negative tendencies of capitalism are addressed. Working for Chukka is thus an expression of a different, responsible way of life.

The dimension of moral superiority can also be found in the pricing policy. Chukka is situated in the premium sector. Today a 70-gramme bar of chocolate is sold about three to four times the price of a regular bar of chocolate. This high price was legitimised by the employees on a moral level. The rationales given included: the complex production process, the high quality of the raw materials, and the fair prices paid for raw materials. Additionally, the price is seen as being calculated in a reasonable, and thus an ethically correct way. The price is ‘credible’ and ‘authentic’; it is seen as the ‘real’ expression of the production costs.

The high price becomes an expression of the company’s ethical brand; it is justified as being the result of a morally superior purchasing policy and production techniques. It cannot be questioned as being illegitimate because it is the proof of the high quality of the raw materials, the sustainable production methods, and the fair prices paid to farmers for these materials. The chocolate is framed as a luxury product which must be consumed in an ethically conscious way.

Based on Chukka’s branding efforts the employees developed a clear understanding of the production reality in the mainstream chocolate production sector. This includes the exploitation of the chocolate farmers, market inequalities and environmental issues. Chukka is seen as being in opposition to those practices, as producing in a responsible (‘organic’) and fair (‘fair trade’) way and is therefore in a morally superior position. When we asked in detail about Chukka practices and what the terms ‘fair trade’ and ‘organic’ implied, the answers remained vague and differed significantly between interviewees. Questions such as “What does it mean to be organic?” or “What does it mean to be fair trade, what is that exactly?” were answered in a vague way.

The employees used the moral vocabulary provided by the brand messages in giving moral justifications. Employees used the brands vocabulary to portray Chukka as being morally superior in terms of the company’s business practices (fair trade and organic) and the production techniques (bean to bar). The brand image of the organization has also become a key element of the employees’ identity work. Employees explicitly draw on the images, the vocabulary and discourses of the brand for defining themselves as morally superior to others.

**Categorization and Affiliation into a Common Sense of Mission**

“Categorization and affiliation” is a key mode of identity work, which engenders a sense of community and a common sense of purpose. In the present study, this was apparent both from the respondents’ feelings of being morally superior to their competitors, but also in terms of their missionary zeal. The interviewees had a desire to spread their worldview and convert the whole world (including me as a researcher) to a new form of business. This included a strong belief in the notions of ‘organic production’, ‘fair trade’ and ‘sustainability’. Employees talked about converting their competitors to “better business practices”.

Employees expressed a sense of mission to transfer Chukka business practices to other organizations in order to create a sustainable society. Some shop assistants described Chukka expansion plans to China not as a new business opportunity, but as a way of disseminating Chukka sustainability concept to other countries.

The missionary zeal of Chukka is also apparent in their relationship with the customers. For instance, the visitors centre (an important tourist attraction with more than 200.00 visitors a year) was not seen as a marketing tool, but as a way of ethically educating the consumers and of changing their minds in thinking about fair trade, sustainability and the condition of our society in general. The shop assistants understood their job as containing a sense of mission that goes far beyond selling chocolate. Their part-time job as a shop assistant is understood as containing an ethical duty of educating the customers in responsible consumption practices.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The main empirical finding of this study is that quite specific modes of identity work are engaged by the brand in its effects on employee identity formation. The company’s brand-story is largely built on the incorporation and modification of available social discourses, such as ‘organic production’, ‘fair trade’ and ‘sustainability’ into meaningful ‘social identities’. The employees draw upon these ready-made ‘social identities’ as meaningful narratives in the construction of their own self-narratives. The choice of these particular discourses is significant because they all tend to focus on the moral qualities of the product and the way in which it is being produced. The moral values and stories that have been drawn upon in the development of the brand directly mimic the brand-stories found in successful social movement organizations. In fact, the social discourses that the brand taps into are themselves brands associated with social movement organizations such as the Fairtrade movement and the organic farming movement, and the organizations whose work is involved in supporting these social movements.

The theoretical contribution extends existing research on ethical branding and consumption (Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler 2010, Arnold and Thompson 2005; Holt, 2002, 2006, Caruana and Crane 2008) by identifying the specific ‘modes of identity work’ (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) that are mediated by company branding processes. This research shows that in the case of branding, specific modes of identity work appear to be far more influential than others, and offers a theoretical refinement of the existing work on identity work for understanding the effects of the branding process on employee identity. The brand is largely built around the three modes of identity work achieved through the employees’ moral justifications, the company’s position in relation to the market, and the employees’ sense of mission.

In the case of Chukka the brand not only communicates a moral position, but also positions the organization’s actions within a wider meaning system as a contribution to a vision of a ‘better world’ situated beyond endless growth and capitalist exploitation. The brand enables employees to make sense of their job in a way that goes far beyond earning money. The work identity of the individual is shifted from being a low paid shop assistant towards experiencing the job as being part of wider ethical and social movements within society. The brand connects the employees with desirable lifestyles in society and thus helps the individual to address their struggle to choose between the different competing discourses in work and life.

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When Doing Healthy is Scary: The Case of Detection versus Prevention Health Messages
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Nidhi Agrawal, University of Washington, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Engaging in a healthy behavior is often seen as a self-control issue and conceptualized as a tension between goal-oriented self-regulation and temptation-driven indulgences (Trope & Fishbach, 2000, 2005). As a result, much of literature on health consumption has identified that higher-level, goal-focused thinking increases healthy behavior (Agrawal & Wan 2009, Fujita & Han, 2009; Zhang et al. 2010). The intuition behind this is that higher-level thought (operationalized either as the construal or the mindset with which an action is considered) increases focus on the goal, while reducing focus on lower-level thoughts of indulgences, efficacy and resource concerns (Fujita et al. 2006).

The premise here is that the higher-level outcome (e.g., losing weight) is more desirable than the lower-level process (e.g., exercising everyday, avoiding high-calorie foods) and therefore higher (vs. lower)-level focus is more likely to lead to healthy behavior. We ask: does this premise hold true to all health consumption contexts? What if a healthy action was not a pleasant one? In the current research, we identify healthcare actions with outcomes that - while healthy - may be dreadful and therefore, undesirable. Specifically, we consider the case of messages that suggest illness detection health actions.

Consider a health message about mammograms claiming that “early detection saves lives” and encouraging women with risk of breast cancer to take the screening test. This is a detection message, which promotes actions that help early detection of health problems. Prevention messages, in contrast, suggest actions that prevent a health problem from developing in the future. An example is a sunscreen ad suggesting “shield yourself with sunscreen & prevent skin cancer.” In this way, health messages can be classified as two types with a clear demarcation between preventive and detective actions (Detweiler et al. 1999; Fielding 1978).

In current research, we demonstrate that detection (vs. prevention) health actions are associated with the scary outcome of finding out that one is ill. Next, we show that as a result of this dread, a higher (vs. lower)-level thought about the action reduces the persuasiveness of a detection (vs. prevention) health message. This is a reversal of past predictions. On the other hand, a lower (vs. higher)-level thought focuses on efficacy concerns and reduces the persuasiveness of prevention (vs. detection) messages. This replicates predictions from past research. We provide converging evidence for this phenomenon through a dual mediation process.

This work makes two major theoretical contributions to consumer behavior. First, we explore the understudied psychology of detection health messages (Keller and Lehmann 2008) and show that the unique dread associated with illness detection (vs. prevention) drives their persuasiveness. Second, we contribute to the literature on construal level & persuasion (White, MacDonnell, & Dahl, 2011) by showing when the predictions of the past literature about high (vs. low)-level thought hold, and when they reverse.

Theoretical Development
While both prevention and detection advocacies are types of messages that advocate healthy behaviors, they differ in how consumers might conceptualize these actions. Complying with a detection message might lead to discovery of an illness. On the other hand, complying with a prevention message might lead to maintenance of or improvement over the current state of health. Given this, is the outcome of, say, detecting skin cancer as desirable or pleasant as preventing skin cancer?

Detection Actions Have Scary Outcomes. Research has shown that individuals perceive detection behaviors as riskier than prevention behaviors because detection behaviors involve the risk of finding out whether they are ill (Kirscht 1983; Rothman et al. 1999). For example, complying with a health message promoting mammography can be construed as a gamble because getting a mammography involves the chance that one might get a positive test result for breast cancer. On the other hand, prevention behaviors can maintain one’s current health state and have little, if any, shortcomings. For example, complying with a health message promoting sunscreen use does not present a gamble; rather, sunscreen use is considered protection from future risks.

In the context of illness-detection, health actions have the dreaded outcome of finding out that one is ill. For example, the outcome of getting a mammogram is the possible detection of breast cancer. In contrast, outcome of engaging in an illness-prevention action is desirable. For example, the use of regular sunscreen leads to prevention of cancer. As a result of this difference, consumers are likely to view detection (vs. prevention) actions as taking a gamble (Rothman, Salovey, Antone, Keough, & Martin, 1993).

Message Types and High (vs. Low)-level Thought. The important behavioral implication of viewing detection behaviors as scary is that focusing on the goal or outcome of the behaviors may reduce the likelihood of performing the goal-oriented action since individuals are reluctant to pursue that goal. This is counterintuitive to the extent literature which conceptualizes that higher level thought leads to focus on the outcome of a healthy behavior and is therefore more effective in comparison to lower-level thought which leads to focus on resources and efficacy (Agrawal & Wan 2009).

We posit that there is a message type and construal level match such that a) detection messages are more persuasive when combined with lower-level thought, and this is driven by reduced scariness of the behavior and b) prevention messages are more persuasive when combined with higher-level thought, and this is driven by goal focus.

Four experiments that systematically test this theory are reported below. In study 1, we demonstrate that participants anticipated that using a skin lotion would be scarier when they were told that it detects (vs. prevents) skin cancer. In study 2, we show that the scariness is reduced when individuals are made to elaborate on low (vs. high) level thought about a detection (vs. prevention) product and that this is moderated by disease severity. Participants were more likely to use a detection skin lotion when elaborating on how (vs. why; study 3) and use a detection dental rinse when in the process...
(vs. outcome) mindset (study 4). These findings reverse for prevention messages. Study 3 also presents a dual mediation test to demonstrate that lowered scariness drives the effectiveness of detection messages whereas lowered efficacy concerns drive the effectiveness of prevention messages.

**Study 1: Detection (Prevention) Actions are Scary**

In Study 1a, our objective was to empirically verify the premise that the outcomes associated with detection (vs. prevention) actions are scary. For this purpose, we developed stimuli about a skin lotion (adapted from Mathur et al. 2013), which is presented as either designed to detection skin cancer (detection condition) or prevent skin cancer (prevention condition).

105 undergraduate lab participants (Mage = 21.2 years, 46 females) were assigned to a one-way (detection vs. prevention) between-subjects design. Each participant saw one of two health messages about a skin lotion. They were then asked to rate “how scary would it be to use this lotion (not scary at all =1, very scary = 9), how much would you dread using this lotion” and “how scared would someone be to use this lotion” (not at all =1, very much = 9). Participants anticipated that using the lotion would be scarier under the detection condition (M=4.20) than the prevention condition (M=2.43; t(103)=3.20, p=.002).

This study conceptually replicates past literature that detection (vs. prevention) actions are perceived to be riskier (Rothman and Salovey 1997). This also empirically confirms the premise for the following studies. In Study 2, we test if the scariness associated with detection (vs prevention) actions is changed based on high (vs. low)-level thought.

**Study 2: ‘How’ (vs. Why) makes Detection (vs. Prevention) Actions less Scary**

In Study 2, we tested the prediction that lower (vs. higher) construal thinking about the outcome of an action reducing the scariness associated with the outcome. Further, we used disease severity moderator as test of process. We reasoned that the scariness of engaging in detection (vs. prevention) actions would hold for high (vs. low) severity diseases. Study 2 (N=230) had a 2 (advocacy: detection vs. prevention) X 2 (disease severity: high vs. low) 2 (elaboration: how vs. why) design. Participants were presented with a health message about an oral rinse that either helped detecting or preventing a disease. The target disease was called dental plaque (low severity) or dental cancer (high severity). Participants were then instructed to write about how (vs. why) they would use the rinse (adapted from White, MacDonnell, & Dahl, 2011). A three-way ANOVA (F(7,218)=4.73, p=.001) using an index of scariness (used in study 1) as the DV revealed that participants anticipated that they would be more scared using the oral rinse when it was framed as detecting (vs. preventing) and under high disease severity (b=6.12, p=.007). Interestingly, thinking about why (vs. how) increased how scared they expected to be while using this rinse (b=2.91, p=.004).

Study 2 provides evidence that low (vs. high)-level thinking about detection actions reduces the dread associated with them. This finding sets foundation for the following studies in which we test the thought-level and message type matching effect.


Study 3 tested that high (vs. low) construal thinking enhances healthy behaviors as response to prevention advocacies (as predicted by Fujita & Roberts, 2010), but reverses for detection advocacies (as predicted by current theory).

A panel of 205 participants were randomly assigned to one condition in a 2 (advocacy: detection vs. prevention) X 2 (elaboration: how vs. why) design. The primary dependent variable was their intentions to use the lotion by indicating their answers to “how likely are you to use this lotion”, “how interested are you in using this lotion” on a scale of 1 to 10 such that higher numbers are higher intentions.

**Health Intentions.** ANOVA results showed that participants in the detection condition were more likely to use the lotion when they thought about how (vs. why) (M=7.89; M=7.29), while those in prevention condition were more likely to use the lotion when they thought about why (vs. how) (M=6.89; M=7.67; F(1, 200)=4.17, p=.042).

**Dual Mediation.** We had theorized that a thinking about how (vs. why) enhances the effectiveness of detection advocacies by reducing the scariness of the action, thinking about why (vs. how) enhances the effectiveness of the prevention advocacies by reducing the perceived difficulty of the action. Scariness and efficacy concerns were measured and used as two mediators in analysis (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes 2013). In case of detection advocacies, elaboration on why (vs. how) increased how scary using the lotion was and this mediated persuasion such that higher index of scariness reduced attitudes toward the action (b=-.13; 95% CI -.39, -.07). Conversely, in the case of prevention advocacies, elaboration on why (vs. how) reduced the felt difficulty of prevention actions, acting as a moderator, such that reduced difficulty improved persuasion (b=-.64; 95% CI .09, 1.26).

These results show that different processes drive the effectiveness of detection (vs. prevention) health messages under high (vs. low) –level elaboration. Detection health messages are more effective when associated with lower (vs. higher)-level elaboration – in contrast to findings in the past literature – and this is driven by scariness of detection. However, in case of prevention messages, we replicated the findings from past literature that high (vs. low) level thought is more effective and is driven by lowered efficacy concerns. In study 4, we present another test of process through moderation.

**Study 4: Outcome vs. Process Mindset Influences Detection (Prevention) of Dental Cancer**

In study 4, we used another operationalization of high (vs. low) level thinking by inducing the participants with an outcome (high-level) or process (low-level) mindset. Further, to test that the underlying process in the effect is that of dread, we used relevance as a moderator, pre-measured as ratings of their perceived dental health while recruiting participants.

**Relevance as test of process.** Among individuals with poor dental health, detection is more likely to lead to discovery of dental cancer, therefore they are scared and more likely to use the product when thinking about the process (vs. outcome). However, among individuals with good dental health, detection is very low likelihood; therefore they are not threatened by it and are indifferent to outcome vs. process. Similarly, among individuals with poor dental health, prevention is a salient goal but are deterred by efficacy concerns (Fujita & Roberts 2010, Agrawal & Wan 2009). Therefore, they more likely to use the product when thinking about the outcome (vs. process). However, to individuals with good dental health, prevention is not a salient goal, therefore they are indifferent to outcome vs. process.

**Procedure.** In a 2 (mindset: outcome vs. process) x 2 (advocacy: detection vs. prevention) x 2 (relevance: high vs. low; continuous) design, 408 online participants (Mage = 34.43 years, 189 females) were asked to evaluate a ‘dental rinse’ and focus on the outcome.
Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 45) / 495

(vs. process) of using the product. They were then presented health messages that framed the product as a dental cancer detection or dental cancer prevention rinse. The 3-way model using product use intentions as dependent variable (adapted from study 3) was significant (PROCESS Model 3; Hayes 2013; F (7,400)=2.34, p=.023). The three-way interaction among independent variables was significant (b=.54, p=.04). Among participants who thought their dental health was bad (-1 SD on dental health; high relevance) were more likely to use the detection rinse when they were in the outcome mindset (b=1.31, p=.019), while they were more likely to use the prevention rinse when they were in the process mindset (b=-1.75, p=.002). Participants who thought they had good dental health (+1 SD on dental health; low relevance) were indifferent to mindset and message type (b=.02, p>.50) in forming their intentions.

Note. Means are provided as data labels. Under low relevance, means are not significantly different between message type and mindset conditions. Under high relevance, contrasts are significant (p<.05) between mindset conditions in both detection and prevention message types.

General Discussion
Using five experiments, this paper demonstrates that a) detection (vs. prevention) actions, are perceived to be scary, b) a lower (higher) level elaboration enhances the effectiveness of detection (prevention) advocacies, and c) two different processes jointly mediate this effect. This research presents implications to consumer behavior theory by identifying that a lower-level, ‘how’ construal might lead to healthier behavior when the outcome of the healthy action is scary.

One limitation of the set of studies reported here is that the thought level was manipulated as mindset or elaboration outside the health message. Future studies can test if framing the health messages at a high versus low level will replicate this effect.

Findings presented here offer insights to health marketers about the thought-level matching effect to promote the effectiveness of detection versus prevention advocacies.

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Advances in Consumer Research
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Consumer-Brand Relationships in Conspiratorial Narratives
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

To summarize this research, I show that conspiracy theories infuse marketplaces, leading to specific conspiratorial relationships between consumers and brands. Discourse analysis of 30 consumption-related conspiracy narratives available on the Internet -- in English and in French, underlines that consumers and brands can play the integrative roles of the culprit and the victim.

In the realm of consumer research, a conspiracy theory can be defined as an alternative, explanatory, non-refutable, and logical narrative about a brand-related event which is rooted in consumer’s belief that nothing happens by accident, and that there must be a secret and powerful group of people pulling the strings behind the scene. It therefore differs from rumors, (urban) legends, hoaxes, and gossip. Marketers are particularly interested in understanding and anticipating conspiracy theories in that these conspiratorial narratives happen outside of marketing channels of communication and therefore out of marketers’ control. Moreover it is difficult to persuade conspiracists that their theory is unfounded once they start to believe in it (Nyhan, Reifler, and Ubel 2013; Sunstein and Vermeule 2009). Reasons for such hardly debunkable narratives might be, among others, that some theories revealed to be true (Keeley 1999). To Aupers (2012) and Jane and Fleming (2014), conspiracy thinking carries a cultural logic of modernity that is taken to its extreme through the accumulation of proofs in a methodological and rational way, finally leading to a manifestation of distrust and “fashionable conspiracism” (Aaronoivitch 2010, 3). Recent increase of conspiracy thinking might be understood as a consequence of new technologies of information, and more particularly the advent of the Internet (Barkun 2003). The abundant flows of online information would decentralize all forms of discourses and favor echo chambers in which ideas and theories are no longer challenged, but only strengthen (Puriser 2011; Sunstein 2009).

Several convincing reasons might lead consumers to develop conspiracy thinking. For example, some business traditions such as special-interest lobbying that are characteristic of the late 20th and early 21st centuries can only feed conspiracy thinking since on many occasions particular industries -- especially the tobacco industry -- have been accused and found guilty of conspiring against the law (Brandt 2009). Another plausible reason for the belief in conspiracy is to be found in the Goliath effect (Fine 1985). Like the too big to fail theory in economics, there might be a too big to be honest consumer theory developed regarding the size of major companies such as Nestlé, Google, Amazon, Procter & Gamble, Monsanto, Walmart, ExxonMobil, or Toyota. When one of these giants is involved in a scandal, such as the recent Volkswagen emissions scandal, consumers might give more credit to conspiracy theorists and to the possibility of hegemonic entities that try to deceive and control them.

In order to better understand conspiratorial relationships between consumers and brands, 30 consumption-related conspiracy narratives, available online, were analyzed through a poststructuralist perspective (Moisander, Valtonen, and Hiristo 2009; Thompson and Hirschman 1995). Analysis was also structured around the idea that characters and storylines structure texts and semiotic relationships (Hirschman 2000). We have therefore used Greimas’ (1966) concepts of acteur and actant. Results underline the different roles that consumers and brands can play, and more particularly two integrative roles that gather all the other roles: the victim and the culprit. Most conspiracy narratives in the field of consumption involve a culprit/victim relationship between consumers and brands/companies. From the analysis, we find that a majority of conspiracy theories make consumers the victims, while brands, companies, or industries are considered the guilty party (e.g., McDonald’s ice cream machine conspiracy). We also find narratives in which the company is a victim of consumers’ conspiracy. These narratives often appear as official counter-narratives to answer conspiracy theories that directly attack the company (e.g., Phil Schiller from Apple about the removal of the audio jack). Two other kinds of consumer/brand relationships are the culprit/culprit and victim/victim situations. In these cases, events are interpreted either as the consequence of collaboration between consumers and brands/companies/industries (e.g., black market of Hollywood movies in Iran organized by consumers themselves and the USA to pervert Islam, local culture, and Americanize the whole world) or as the unfortunate cause of both consumer and brand misfortune (e.g., Malaysia Airlines flights 370 and 17 in 2014, allegedly shot down for secret political reasons). Finally, the brand can sometimes benefit from conspiracy theories and even feed them. For example, the Newton community considers Microsoft to be a conspirator (Muniz and Schau 2005). Drawing on this narrative in which Microsoft is the villain, Apple takes the roles of both the victim and the hero fighting the suppressor of superior technology. These conspiracy narratives are even more plausible to the audience when the media announces that Microsoft shares consumers’ information with the NSA whereas Apple refuses to collaborate with the FBI in order to protect its consumers’ privacy.

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Unsustainable Luxury and Negative Word-Of-Mouth: The Role of Consumers’ Cultural Orientation

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Sustainability is often treated as an unimportant driver of luxury consumption (Davies et al. 2012), if not simply deleterious to their perceptions about the quality of luxury items (Achabou and Dekhili 2013). Although most studies have focused on the link between luxury and positive emotions such as pride, prior research neglected to explore the association between luxury and negative emotions. To supplement this growing literature, first, we investigate how negative emotions—shame in particular—affect unsustainable luxury consumption. We propose that messages highlighting the unsustainable (vs. sustainable) nature of luxury products may trigger a sense of shame in consumers, which will then affect their subsequent behavioral intentions, in particular their intention to share negative word-of-mouth (hereafter, NWOM). We also study the moderating role of culture (Hofstede et al. 2010) by focusing on individualism (the tendency to seek personal rewards) versus collectivism (the tendency to prize collective wellbeing). These orientations are relevant to sustainability research, inasmuch as sustainability is linked to people’s concern about making a positive (or at least non-negative) contribution to the well-being of society.

In this research, we specifically examine NWOM as a type of pro-social behavior that follows consumers’ exposure to messages emphasizing the unsustainable (versus sustainable) nature of luxury goods. Because shame leads individuals to engage in coping behaviors aimed at restoring their self-worth (Duhachek et al. 2012), we expect, first of all, that ashamed consumers would strive to restore a positive view of themselves by engaging in NWOM. Existing research shows indeed that people engage in WOM behavior to re-establish a positive self-image in social contexts (De Angelis et al. 2012). Second, we consider consumers’ cultural orientation as a moderator of the effect of unsustainable-luxury driven shame on NWOM and predict that shame will increase (decrease) the tendency to share NWOM about a company selling an unsustainable luxury product when consumers have a collectivistic (individualistic) cultural orientation. We expect indeed that individualistic consumers will be more concerned with preserving their social image than others’ welfare.

METHOD AND FINDINGS

We tested our predictions with 104 consumers (M_age = 35, SD_age = 11.77; 50% females) who participated in a 2 (type of message: sustainable product vs. unsustainable luxury product) x 2 (cultural orientation: collectivistic vs. individualistic) between-subject experiment. We manipulated cultural orientation through participants’ nationality—American vs. Russian—following Hofstede’s classification of U.S. and Russia in terms of the individualism versus collectivism. Thus, we administered the questionnaire to a random sample of U.S. (M_age = 35, SD = 9.75; 64% males) and Russian consumers (M_age = 34, SD = 13.51; 36% males), who were both extracted from national consumer panels and invited to fill in an electronic questionnaire that assigned them to one of the two experimental conditions.

The questionnaire instructed participants in the sustainable product condition to imagine they were about to purchase a luxury car able to reduce pollutants drastically and thus to contribute to environmental protection. In contrast, participants in the unsustainable product condition read a message about a luxury car producing more emissions than similar cars and thus contributing to increase environmental pollution. Then, participants answered seven items drawn from Lindsay-Hartz (1984) that measured their sense of (anticipated) shame (e.g., “I feel a sense of blame,” α = .88) and three items that assessed their willingness to share NWOM about the company selling the car (e.g., “I will say negative things about this company to other people”; α = .95), all measured on 7-point scales (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree), and provided socio-demographic data.

Participants assigned to the unsustainable scenario (coded as +1) felt a more intense feeling of shame (M = 3.60, SD = 1.68) than those assigned to the sustainable scenario (coded as −1; M = 2.66, SD = 1.32, F(1, 102) = 10.08, p < .05). We regressed willingness to share NWOM on sustainability, shame, and participants’ cultural orientation (coded as +1 for Russian consumers and −1 for American consumers), and the interaction between shame and cultural orientation. This analysis returned a significant index of moderated mediation (b = .49, 95% CI: .15, 1.02), indicating that cultural orientation moderates the effect of shame on willingness to share NWOM. In particular, type of message had a significant and positive effect on anticipated shame (b = .47, p < .001). Controlling for type of message and cultural orientation, we found that shame had a significant negative effect on NWOM intentions (b = -.37, p < .05); controlling for type of message and shame, cultural orientation had a significant negative effect on NWOM intentions (b = -4.23, p < .001). The analysis revealed a positive and significant effect of the interaction between shame and cultural orientation (b = 1.05, p < .001) on NWOM intentions. The effect of type of message on willingness to share NWOM was negative for American consumers (b = -.17, 95% CI: -.43, -.01) and positive for Russian consumers (b = .32, 95% CI: .10, .61), thus showing that collectivistic consumers expressed increased NWOM intentions in response to their feelings of anticipated shame. Meanwhile, NWOM intentions decreased among individualistic consumers.

Our study contributes to the research on luxury and sustainability which still lacks an examination of how negative emotions aroused by unsustainable luxury products can shape consumers’ responses. By assessing how shame affects WOM intentions, this research also extends the literature on the emotional antecedents of WOM intentions. Moreover, our research investigates the previously unexplored role of consumers’ cultural orientation in the relationship between luxury and sustainability. Operationally, our results suggest that managers could deliver messages that emphasize the differences between their firm’s sustainable products and their competitors’ less-sustainable ones, thus fostering negative buzz around competitors’ products. Not-for-profit organizations may use our results to design and diffuse messages aimed at warning consumers against deleterious unsustainable products especially in collectivistic cultures. Finally, for luxury managers interested to introduce their products in international markets, our research points to the need to consider the cultural aspects when designing their communication actions.

Advances in Consumer Research
Volume 45, ©2017
REFERENCES
The Belonging Process: Elements and Enactment within a Consumption Context
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Given the centrality belonging is to daily life, it is not surprising that the phenomenon attracts scholars’ attention from many disciplines (Maslow 1943). Yet what is notable is that while consumer researchers allude to concepts related to belonging (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), research on the actual construct, and how belonging relates to consumption activities (Mead et al. 2011), remains undertheorized. We believe focused attention to belonging in our discipline is crucial, especially considering it may provide further enlightenment on related and entrenched topics such as power and self-esteem (Rucker, Galinsky, and Dubois 2012).

Most belonging consumer research examines how people fulfill needs to belong after being excluded. Yet this does not account for how people actively leverage consumption practices to construct, maintain, or enhance belongingness. Consequently, our overall goal in this paper is to leverage empirical research to delineate a broader conceptualization of belonging than dominant definitions currently reflect, and to offer evidence for a new understanding of belonging, one we term the belonging process (referred to as “BP”). This conceptualization reflects the relatively recent assertion that belonging is best understood as a process rather than a state-based construct (Yuval-Davis 2006). Importantly, delineating the process first required us to identify previously unarticulated but focal elements within it. Our overall contribution, therefore, is that we develop and illuminate elements of belonging conceptualizations. Furthermore, our longitudinal phase provided deep insights not only into how these elements work, but also how they interact.

Our overall contribution, therefore, is that we develop and illuminate elements of belonging conceptualizations. Furthermore, our longitudinal phase provided deep insights not only into how these elements work, but also how they interact.

Context
Belonging is frequently studied in education-based contexts. In university contexts, research finds students’ identities may change, depending on the specific groups, times, and places in which they interact, demonstrating the enacted nature of belonging (Bhopal 2008). Such relocation implies students’ social relationships are disrupted, especially for freshmen, transfer students, and international students. Consequently, we follow precedents from social psychology and sociology and consider the university campus a conducive context for examining belonging.

Our context is a large Midwestern university serving over 45,000 students (30,000 undergraduates). Tuition averages approximately $27,000/year in-state and $41,000/year out-of-state. Though 73% of undergraduates are in-state, about half come from a large city over 120 miles away. In two phases, we study general college students and then a specific honors program.

Methodology
We employed qualitative methods to understand how students use consumption to pursue belongingness. Two researchers acquired a dataset composed of written narratives pertaining to consumption and belonging by eighty-three undergraduate business students. Narratives require participants to organize experiences in temporally meaningful episodes, framing experiences as “part of a whole… and that something is a ‘cause’ of something else” (Polkinghorne 1988, 6). We recruited these students from two classes, offering extra credit for voluntary participation.

While our initial narrative sample provided breadth, the first author engaged in a longitudinal exploration of a second specific cohort in the college. Specifically, he conducted an ethnography in a college honors program to study how the students selected for this community establish and maintain belongingness. These honor students must enroll in four courses restricted to the cohort during their freshman and sophomore years, and are strongly encouraged to participate in an international immersion experience at the end of their freshman year.

Refined Research Questions
We began with one broad research question: “How do people proactively leverage consumption to enhance their sense of belonging?” We found our analysis demonstrated that consumers’ belonging experiences involve constructs previously unidentified in either the NTB or sense of belonging conceptualizations. Furthermore, our longitudinal phase provided deep insights not only into how these experiences unfold, in their attempt to fulfill goals pertaining to social inclusion.

The Need to Belong Construct
Baumeister and Leary (1995) are the first to compile empirical evidence to support the existence of the NTB. They propose the NTB possesses two distinct features: 1) frequent personal contacts or (non-negative, ideally pleasant) interactions with others, and 2) perceptions of “an interpersonal bond or relationship marked by stability, affective concern, and continuation into the foreseeable future” (500). These features distinguish the NTB from other social needs; e.g., the need for attachment or social connection. For example, one’s need for attachment can be met by maintaining a stable relationship filled with negative interactions, falling short of the NTB’s requirement of pleasant personal contact. Or one may fulfill the need for social connection via brief stranger encounters, but never form a stable relationship, thus eschewing the second feature.

Consumer Behavior and Belonging
We assert that much extant consumer research relates to belonging, although belongingness-related theoretical constructs are often left unarticulated or undeveloped.

Social Exclusion. Consumer research often approaches belonging experimentally, treating social exclusion as an implicit proxy for a heightened NTB. Research finds consumers spend strategically after being excluded, demonstrating increased desires for goods and experiences that aspirational social groups valorize (Dommert et al. 2013). Extant findings suggest people are willing to sacrifice “personal and financial well-being for the sake of social well-being” (Mead et al. 2011, 902). The authors find such sacrifices include tailoring spending preferences to an interaction partner’s preferences, spending money on unappealing food favored by peers, and even an increased willingness to try cocaine, when doing so increases chances of social connections.

Brand Communities. One of the most relevant contexts linking belonging with consumption is the brand community, defined as a “specialized, non-geographically bound [and] based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand” (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001, 412). This research acknowledges the importance of belonging – at least indirectly. McAlexander and colleagues (2002) suggest that one potential barrier to brand community participation is the fear of not belonging. Importantly, newer members’ fears are partially alleviated when experienced members initiate interactions with newcomers (McAlexander et al. 2002, 46-7).

Advances in Consumer Research
Volume 45, ©2017
constructs intersect, but how belonging unfolds as a process, and how consumption practices foster and fit into this process. Thus, our analysis necessitated refining our original research question, and breaking it into two, as follows: 1) What elements structure the BP? and 2) How do these elements relate to each other and contribute to the BP?

Findings

Elements and their Enactment in the Belonging Process

Cultural Context. All belonging processes are embedded in a specific cultural context. Ours is a North American university campus in the Midwest, which encourages a broad range of extracurricular activities. It is also embedded within a first-world consumer culture, containing aspirational middle and high income consumption patterns. These characteristics are important as they shape the cultural norms and behaviors, which may be very distinct from a university in a different country or even from different colleges accommodating lower or higher-income consumers. Darryl, a university administrator, articulates how these broad cultural forces may influence the students, “...students don’t like to brag about [being] in the honors program because I think we have a little bit of a Midwest value set. … That’s a different context than I see in other schools, but they’re very supportive of each other…”

Belonging Targets. Belonging targets (hereafter; targets) are the social entities within which one aims to belong. Consistent with prior research on the level of analysis of belonging, targets emerge on three distinct structural levels: macro, meso, and micro (Christenson 2009). Utilizing Christenson’s (2009) framework, we describe macro targets as “imagined communities,” resembling a concept broader than a specific collective of people (such as national, kinship, religious, or cultural groups). We employ the term meso to describe social entities in which a consumer may interact with other members, but still does not know everyone within the target. Finally, we reserve the term micro targets for social entities in which a consumer knows and interact with everyone in the group; this is usually limited to a small number of individuals. One informant provides an example of how she conceptualizes her university as a macro-level target, and how she belongs in it:

Belonging in a group so vast and diverse happens more in terms of values than relationships. My sense of being a student is similar to the sense of citizenship one feels for their country; there are some shared priorities and behaviors,...but little direct connection with the many subcultures that exist (NARR, WF, 21).

Belonging Conduits. Belonging conduits are the resources both from the marketplace and other sources consumers leverage to facilitate belongingness pursuits. One informant notes that once he bought his Sperry TopSiders, “I felt like I belonged to a group, community, and culture. The group was my fraternity...the community was all of Greek life on campus, and the culture was...Greek culture [as a whole].” (NARR, WM, 21) The plethora of consistent research noting linkages between branded clothing and a strong sense of self, and affiliation with a group supports the salience of this finding (e.g., Chaplin and John 2004; Fernandez 2009). Significantly, we observe that technology products like smartphones and gaming gear can act as both functional and symbolic conduits, while apparel, accessories and jewelry are primarily symbolic. Similar to how a consumer may rely on a symbolic product to reinforce family identity, our consumers leverage these conduits to enhance belongingness within their targets (Epp and Price 2008). One gamer notes he needed an XBox “to interact with my friends the way I wanted to...[it] helped me become even closer to [them] and eliminated our distance barrier.” (NARR, WM, 21) As such, consumers rely on conduits to transcend limitations rooted in time and space, barriers that otherwise could contribute to the weakening of social ties (Ones et al. 2014).

Belonging Barriers. Lee and Shrum (2012) identify two types of belonging threats: being rejected and being ignored. However, our data support a broader interpretation of hindrances to belonging that extend beyond mere ostracism. We find evidence of belonging barriers, defined as enduring forces that hinder people from achieving belongingness within a target. A participant explicitly indicates how he did not achieve belongingness within the program due to demographic variables:

Our class is primarily White females. And guess what demographic I’ve had the least contact with? White females....Asian guys and White girls don’t mix. I don’t mind, but other people do....I just noticed that they’re [students in honors cohort] mostly women.”

Zack clearly identifies gender and race as two sociological factors he believes impact his ability to belong in his honors program.

Belonging Outcomes. We use this term to capture the various belonging-related goals consumers desire and proactively pursue. These outcomes relate to their general perceptions and feelings of belonging, and manifest across a broad spectrum, from engaging in simple interactions or establishing strong, stable relationships within a target. In fact, while extant research links positive social interactions to belonging and acceptance (Baumeister and Leary 1995), consumers even express just having non-negative interactions as desirable outcomes. For example, a young African-American woman compares the negative reactions that White people sometimes express toward her natural-state hairstyles, to post-purchase experiences after she undergoes professional hair-straightening:

Although many are unconscious of it, straight hair is more accepted, and less threatening to others in this society; and I would prefer to be unnotice but accepted than to be ostracized. However, when unnoticed, there are not many affirmations that you are accepted. (NARR, AAF, 21)

As this young woman frequently straightens her hair, she knows the type of reactions she will garner after purchasing a relaxant. More importantly, she understands the (negative) reactions she will avoid. She relies on this particular consumption activity to manage the stigma of “natural” hair (Crosby 2012) and explains how even the absence of negative reactions can serve as a reflection of acceptance. Importantly, these quotes evidence desired outcomes beyond simply fulfilling the NTB or establishing a sense of belonging. Our data demonstrates consumers may simply aim to belong functionally, or “fit in just enough” to go unnoticed, or, to be accepted (NARR, AAF, 21).
The Belonging Process

This section demarcates the interrelationships among the various elements of the belonging process. The cultural context shapes and influences all of the elements, as it encompasses the entire process. Importantly, this impact includes the social context of a consumer’s intended belonging target. Within a target, a consumer may live through a variety of experiences that lead to specific outcomes, and we emphasize those pertaining to consumers’ conscious pursuit of belonging outcomes.

The nature of the target will shape how consumers evaluate potential marketplace resources (i.e. conduits) to achieve particular outcomes. Targets can influence the selection of conduits explicitly, directing a consumer’s attention toward specific consumption opportunities (e.g., branded shirts of a student club, the honors program strongly encouraging students to participate in the international trip) that can enhance belonging. Conversely, the influence of a target on conduits can be less overt, as a target can merely act as an information source that communicates to the consumer what consumption activities the target (de)values.

Discussion

Our findings demarcate key theoretical constructs to help illuminate the process of consumers’ efforts to belong. The identification of these constructs allows scholars to be more precise when designing research studies. More importantly, we theorize how the constructs operate in relation to one another, forming the belonging process. The process we theorize reveals important belonging/consumption issues beyond the scope of NTB and sense of belonging conceptualizations. Thus, we move beyond the compensatory perspective of restoring belonging needs and illuminate a previously overlooked area in consumer/belonging research, that is, consumers’ proactive pursuit of belonging. Here, we highlight a variety of marketplace resources that may facilitate belonging, the role targets may play in shaping consumers’ preferences, and alternative belonging-laden outcomes beyond attaining a sense of belonging and fulfillment of the NTB.

Conclusion

We find support for emergent constructs and classifications that pertain to consumers’ belongingness desires. We discuss five elements essential to the BP: cultural context, targets, conduits, cues, barriers, and outcomes. We offer preliminary theorization of how these emergent constructs relate to each other. Our research contributes to work on identity, belonging, and consumption by advancing understanding on the processual nature of consumers’ proactive pursuit of belonging, heretofore unexamined in consumer behavior. The belonging process we propose provides scholars with a theoretical foundation to build upon and advance the nascent research link between belonging and consumption.

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Catching the Health Wagon: Consumers’ Strategies of Control in Healthy Food Consumption
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

 Debates about healthy food have once again come to the fore as obesity rates increase in most parts of the world and more people suffer from diet-related illnesses. In the contemporary consumption-scape where meanings assigned to food items and practices of cooking and eating are fluid and ever-changing, it is becoming more and more challenging for consumers to practice healthy food consumption. The current research focuses on this issue and investigates how consumers, in interaction with other actors, establish the practices related to healthy food consumption.

In order to explore the topic, a two-step research methodology was used. First, a multi-sited netnography (Kozinets, 2010), on four websites (discusscooking, cookingbites, SparkPeople, eggheadforum) consisting a total of 4000 consumer posts, was conducted. The sites were chosen due to their high circulation rate and diversity of the posts related to food preparation and consumption. Then, semi-structured in-depth interviews with six consumers and 10 dieticians provided further insights. The consumer informants were chosen among consumers who declared an interest in healthy eating and/or cooking. The interviews with consumers started with general questions about daily eating and meal preparation routines and moved onto more specific inquiries about healthy food, healthy eating, and food preparation. The interviews with dieticians depicted multiple discourses around healthy food consumption and processes of behavioural change.

The data set was coded and analysed with research goals in mind; first separately, then altogether by comparing and contrasting within and between the texts from interviews and netnography. Data analysis followed an iterative process and was in constant dialogue with the literature. Analyses revealed four strategies that consumers use to eat healthily and, ultimately, gain control over their bodies and lives: 1) relocating the locus of control to external actors, 2) shifting the focus away from food, 3) planning in advance, and 4) cooking.

Relocating the locus of control: In a world where people occasionally feel out of control of their own body, well-being, and even their future, some consumers paradoxically find it necessary to temporarily relinquish control in order to regain some power over their life in the long-term. Control is transferred to external parties such as dieticians and renowned experts or even to sports and diet applications. External agency keeps consumers in check by provoking feelings of fear, anticipation, and anxiety:

Pauline: It (seeing a dietician) motivates you, well, you know, when you do not have the willpower. Someone to continuously watch over you, follow you...and you pay, you know, it motivates...cause the fear of not showing any improvements in the next appointment, I mean, it makes you, you know, go...

The interaction with the external agency (e.g., dietician) is not one without any problems. The educative process fails when consumers resist submitting to the authority of the dieticians in the first place. Such resistance is specifically prominent among children and teenage patients as well as when the individual goes to the dietician without her own will.

Shifting the focus away from food: Another strategy through which consumers regain some control over their diet is by forming a more functional relation with food:

Alice: Before, food was priority, a culture. Now the logic is to eat as little as possible. …I don’t eat unless hungry, I avoid occasions to eat...

In some cases, consumers replace eating with activities that further destroy their self-control (e.g., smoking, extreme shopping). However, many find healthier alternatives such as exercising.

Planning in advance: Healthy eating and cooking are associated with a great deal of planning in advance. Planning involves projecting on activities of what to cook and therefore what to buy, cooking ahead in batches and freezing in single-serve portions, as well as daily planning of the ideal balancing of the food intake. Such planning and cooking ahead affects healthy consumption through four positive (availability of healthy food, portion control, efficiency, sense of control/confidence) and two negative (overconsumption due to availability, frustration due to over-planning) routes.

Cooking as a form of control: Cooking provides higher control over the ingredients and the process. However, a complementary explanation that emerges from our dataset is that the effort one invests into preparing a meal make the consumers more committed to the food produced and, consequently, to a dietary regime based on health concerns. Cooking also leads to a healthier diet by enhancing consumers’ awareness of what goes into a meal and, consequently, appreciation of the activity. Consumers describe this as a form of education, during which they not only enhance their cooking skills but also “train their taste buds to appreciate healthy food”.

This study extends the discussion that consumers try to establish a sense of control by moderating their food consumption when they feel powerless in other domains of life (Rezek and Leary, 1991). We found the pursuit of health to be perpetual, full of uncertainties, and a source of anxiety for consumers. The strategies of control we delineated above help consumers navigate those dynamic discourses. Hence, while the pursuit of healthy eating can add to the feelings of stress, distrust, and confusion – trademarks of postmodern times – it can, at the same time, provide consumers with a sense of control over their lives and hope for their future wellbeing.

Our findings have significant implications for researchers, managers, and policy makers. We observed that high levels of planning may have negative consequences and should be done in moderation to prevent cognitive overload. Furthermore, when consumers give up unhealthy food or try to shift their focus from eating, they usually need other activities to broaden their horizons. Moreover, our analyses hint at tensions between dieticians and consumers as the latter tries to form a balance between submission and autonomy. Future research could focus on such tensions as well as their resolutions to reveal new forms of value co-creation in service environments.

1. Introduction

As obesity rates increase and more people suffer from diet-related illnesses (e.g., diabetes, cancer), food consumption has again become the centre of attention. Consumers, marketers, policy-makers as well as governmental and civil organizations have been debating...
over the definition of healthy food and its standards. Considering that people may consume more food when it is presented as healthy (Finkelstein and Fishbach, 2010), these debates are timely and understandable. The current research explores how consumers, in interaction with other actors, establish the practices related to healthy food preparation and consumption.

We draw from a data set collected through a multi-sited netnography (4000 consumer posts) and 16 interviews with dieticians as well as consumers. The findings highlight a constant use of control strategies that involve food, the self, and external agents. Specifically, we find four strategies through which consumers pursue health, regulate their diet, and gain a sense of control over their well-being.

2. Food Consumption and Health

Research from the marketing field mostly focuses on food choice, amount of food intake, and how food consumption is influenced by contextual factors such as plate size, ads, packaging, ambience in the restaurant (e.g., colour, music), and meal companions (Chandon and Wansink, 2007; Wansink and Cheney, 2005). Other research explores the relation between participation in meal preparation processes and perception of food. These studies find that consumers positively evaluate a meal whose preparation they participated (Troye and Supphellen, 2012). On a more negative note, adults (Dohle, Rall, and Siegrist, 2014) and children (Van der Host, Ferrage, and Rytz, 2014) can eat more when they prepare the meals themselves. This argument is supported by other researchers who have shown that people perceive home-made meals (whether prepared by them or not) as healthier (Costa et al., 2007) and, therefore, likely to consume more of it (Finkelstein and Fishbach, 2010).

From a socio-cultural perspective, symbolic meanings of food have been the centre of attention for researchers. Food items and food preparation and consumption practices help consumers manifest and affirm their commitment to ancestral roots and group identities or facilitate their integration into a new culture (Beagan, Ristovski-Slijepevici, and Chapman, 2010; Knaizeva and Venkatesh, 2007; Wallendorf and Arnold, 1991). Food preparation techniques (e.g., boiling, fondue) and ability to appreciate and consume specific food items may distinguish consumers and social groups (Levi-Strauss, 1966). Particularly, eating out is a sign of taste and status, a form of entertainment (Warde and Martens, 2000), and a stage to perform social roles (Finkelstein, 1989). From this perspective, health concerns constitute one of the many constraints consumers face in their daily food consumption. That is, consumers negotiate multiple meanings of preparing food at home, buying processed food, or eating out in trying to regain control over their families’ and their own well-being and social as well as financial needs.

Food consumption has also been studied more critically. Choices related to food or food preparation practices can be ways for consumers to contest negative aspects of consumerism or broad political issues (Beagan et al., 2010; Press and Arnould, 2011; Sassatelli, 2006). For instance, Beagan et al. (2010) show that for most consumers, who define themselves as committed to eating healthily, this practice is part of a broader concern for ethical consumption. Similarly, abstinance from specific food items helps consumers achieve a healthier lifestyle as well as resist consumer myths and authorities they don’t trust (Kristensen, Boye, and Askegaard, 2011).

Natural food is viewed as more authentic than fast food and processed alternatives (Levy, 1981). In addition, food preparation practices, especially cooking “from scratch,” is defined as a form of craft through which consumers resist the impersonalizing and standardizing effects of the marketplace (Moisio, Arnould, and Price, 2004; Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard, and Kristensen, 2011).

Thus consumers, through various food consumption practices, restore their autonomy on others’ and their own lives amidst the issues that are normally out of their control. Our research aims to further explore this topic by focusing on consumers’ practices of cooking and eating healthily.

3. Methods

This study uses a two-step research methodology. First, a multi-sited netnography (Kozinets, 2010), on four websites (discusscooking, cookingbites, SparkPeople, eggheadforum) consisting a total of 4000 consumer posts, was conducted. These sites were chosen due to their high circulation rate and diversity of the posts on the topic. Then, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 dieticians and six consumers, who declared an interest in healthy eating and/or cooking. Some informants had, at one point of their lives, sought help from dieticians in order to regulate their eating habits. The interviews with consumers started with general questions about daily eating and meal preparation routines and moved onto more specific inquiries about healthy food, healthy eating, and food preparation. The interviews with dieticians revealed multiple discourses around healthy food consumption and processes of behavioural change. They also highlighted the tensions between “the official” notions of healthy food, and consumers’ perceptions and actual practices of food preparation and eating.

The data set was coded and analysed with research goals in mind; first separately, then altogether by comparing and contrasting within and between the texts from interviews and netnography. Data analysis followed an iterative process and was in constant dialogue with the literature. The initial data interpretation revealed emerging themes and new questions that guided further data collection and analysis until the saturation.

4. Findings

Our analyses revealed four strategies through which consumers eat healthily and, ultimately, gain control over their bodies and lives: 1) relocating the locus of control to external actors (e.g., dietician, application), 2) shifting the focus away from food, 3) planning in advance, and 4) cooking to control food intake and content.

4.1. Relocating the locus of control

In a world where people occasionally feel out of control of their own body, well-being, and even their future, some consumers paradoxically find it necessary to temporarily relinquish control to regain autonomy over their life in the long term. Control is transferred to external parties such as dieticians and renowned experts or even to diet applications.

Going to a dietician, where consumers regularly write or talk about food, brings subconscious thought and behaviours to the surface, helping consumers to reflect on these. It forms a type of control first by creating a fear for “…what will the doctor say when s/he sees what I have eaten?” Then, it makes consumers think about what or how much to eat and, as such, helps them control their urges in daily life or in social gatherings.

The idea of a dietician frequently activates a control mechanism that keeps consumers in check by provoking feelings of fear, anticipation, and anxiety:

Pauline: It (seeing a dietician) motivates you, well, you know, when you do not have the willpower. Someone to continuously watch over you, follow you…and you pay, you know, it motivates… cause the fear of not showing any improvements in the next appointment, I mean, it makes you, you know, go…
Pauline’s narrative illustrates how some consumers willingly submit to a regimen of discipline and punishment (e.g., reducing the amount of some food items) to compensate for their lack of internal control. Yet, dieticians’ main goal is to gradually re-establish, in the long term, consumers’ autonomy and positive perceptions over their diet, body, and health.

As dietician Haley explains “our aim is to teach them the ways to a healthy life, healthy food…make sure they can maintain this throughout their lives…it’s really not about dieting.” Yet, this educative process fails when consumers resist dieticians’ authority. Such resistance is specifically prominent among children and teenage patients as well as when the person goes to the dietician without her own will.

4.2. Shifting the focus from eating
Consumers can also regain some control over their diet - hence their health and well-being - by forming a more functional relation with food:

Alice: Before, food was priority, a culture. Now the logic is to eat as little as possible. …I don’t eat unless hungry, I avoid occasions to eat...

While keeping food out of the focus of their lives comes naturally to some consumers, others may need external motivation and more time. As dietician Haley highlights, food is dangerous when people use it as a crutch to deal with their problems or as a goal to reach. Dieticians can be help patients to keep food at bay and, as such, to exert more control on their consumption.

When consumers give up unhealthy food or try to shift their focus from eating, they usually need other activities to broaden their horizons and branch out into other aspects of life. In some cases, consumers replace eating with activities that further destroy their self-control such as smoking or extreme shopping. However, many find healthier alternatives such as exercising:

Amy: I can feel an ornery streak coming my way today. I am already thinking about Oreo’s. I gotta get outside and do more walking.

4.3. Planning in advance
Healthy eating and cooking are associated with a great deal of planning in advance. Especially when dieting, consumers, usually with the help of their dieticians or applications, calculate the necessary daily food intake and plan what to eat in each meal. We observe different types of planning activities such as preparing and taking healthy snacks to business meetings so as not to miss meal times or developing strategic menu alternatives for vacations. Thus, planning activities “re-contextualize” eating in specific consumption situations like vacations (Ostberg, 2003) and help consumers negotiate their urges and requirements of their diet.

Planning is not limited to consumers who are following a strict diet but a part of a daily routine for those who want to eat healthy. For instance, Bella, a housewife responsible for preparing meals at home, synchronizes her shopping and cooking activities:

Bella: I go to farmer’s market and walk around a few times to find good stuff, you know…if I bought spinach I would cook it first, potatoes, cabbage, they can wait… Cabbage, like, changes its taste if you keep it long because of sulphur…according to the vegetable and their expiration time, I plan what to cook, buy...

Consumers also cook in advance to increase the availability of healthy meals. This way, when consumers are exhausted and tired, rather than ordering unhealthy meals, they can eat home-made food. Planning and cooking in advance also enables portion control. When consumers cook, they divide the large batch into smaller portion sizes and store in single-serving containers. This enables self-control over consumption later on.

Planning meals in advance and/or cooking in batches enhance efficiency and, hence, leaves more “me” time as Nathalie states: “once you cook it its good for 3 months so you can send more ME time.” The extra time can be used to attend to one’s own needs and indirectly exercise more autonomy on other aspects of life.

Furthermore, cooking in large batches and freezing in single-use portions creates a sense of readiness and control (or an illusion of it) for what’s to come. Through food preparation, one is able to deal with the hardships of daily life – the challenges that the environment or oneself has created. From such readiness and knowledge of being prepared in the best possible way emerges a sense of self-confidence, control, and security:

Oddman: Most of the time I also try to make some dinners ahead that I can freeze and reheat. It’s just nice to come home and know that I don’t have to start from scratch.

Stacy: I find the more organized my food is (and how clean my house is, for some reason!) the better I do with weight loss!

Paradoxically, for some consumers, existence of food in the fridge creates an adverse effect, tempting them to consume food in large quantities. Such loss of control can be frustrating and lead consumers to invent new tactics such as preparing only specific things in advance for convenience:

Amanda: I don’t find that cooking larger portions of meat ahead works for me, because I tend to go back and grab another portion if it’s there. The only proteins I keep readily available are boiled eggs, small cheese portions, and nuts.

4.4 Cooking as a form of control
As previous research indicates, our data also reveals that cooking provides higher control over the ingredients and the process. However, a complementary explanation that emerges from our dataset is that the effort one invests into preparing a meal makes the consumers more committed to the food produced and, consequently, to a dietary regime based on health concerns. The dietician interviews also indicate that among their patients, those who cook and prepare their meals at home have a higher success rate and are better at adapting to their diet for longer terms:

Dietician Marvin: …those who prepare their meals are more committed to their diets…it’s controlling what you eat…. they regard it (their diet) as “my own labor, like hardwork.”

Cooking can also lead to a healthier diet by enhancing consumers’ awareness of what goes into a meal and, consequently, their appreciation of the activity. Consumers describe this as a form of education, during which they not only enhance their cooking skills but also “train their taste buds to appreciate healthy food”.

5. Discussion and Implications
Food items and practices associated with it can become focal to our lives by strengthening our relation with our environment and contextualizing our experiences (Borgmann, 2000). Building on this...
view, this study extends the debates that consumers try to establish a sense of control by moderating their food consumption when they feel powerless in other domains of life (Rezek and Leary, 1991). Indeed, attesting to Bauman (2012), we found the pursuit of health—in our case, healthy eating—to be full of uncertainties and a source of anxiety for consumers. Such uncertainty and anxiety is nurtured both by the simultaneous existence of multiple views—and choosing which to follow, integrate or ignore—and by the quick changes in the discourses surrounding health and food. While these emotions may lead some consumers to reject the official notions of health, the strategies of control delineated above help consumers navigate those dynamic discourses. Hence, while the pursuit of healthy eating can add to the feelings of stress, distrust, and confusion it can also enhance consumers’ sense of control over their lives and hope for their future wellbeing.

Our findings have significant implications for researchers, managers, and policy makers. We observed that high levels of planning may have negative consequences and should be done in moderation to prevent cognitive overload. Furthermore, when consumers give up unhealthy food or try to shift their focus from eating, they usually need other activities to broaden their horizons. Moreover, our analyses hint at tensions between dieticians and consumers as the latter tries to form a balance between submission and autonomy. Future research could focus on such tensions as well as their resolutions to reveal new forms of value co-creation in service environments.

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It Happens Because I’m Watching It: The Effect of Observing an Uncertain Event on Probability Estimation
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Many of decisions that people make deal with assessing the probabilities of uncertain events. For example, people estimate the chance of rain, the odds of their favorite team winning the Super Bowl, or the chances of a company’s stock price increasing. Subsequently, people form preferences and make decisions based on their judgments of subjective probabilities. Because of the prevalence and importance of probability estimation, a large body of research has investigated different factors that can influence probability judgments.

The findings show that people have biases in estimating the subjective probabilities of uncertain events. These biases can lead individuals to either overestimate or underestimate the subjective probabilities. Examples of these biases include anchoring, availability, and representativeness (Tversky and Kahneman 1974). Moreover, it has been shown that illusion of control is a bias that can lead individuals to overestimate the subjective probabilities (Langer 1975; Hamerman and Johar 2013). For instance, as a result of an illusory sense of control, people make larger bets when they roll the dice themselves (Langer 1975), are less likely to trade their lottery ticket when they choose (vs. are given) the ticket numbers (Langer 1975), and prefer higher speeds as a driver versus a passenger (McKenna 1993).

In this research, we investigate whether observing the occurrence of an uncertain event affects probability estimation of that event. We hypothesize that people overestimate the likelihood of a positive outcome happening when they observe (vs. do not observe) the uncertain event unfolding in front of them. For a similar reason, we expect that individuals underestimate the chances of a negative outcome happening when they observe the occurrence of the event. We rule out alternative explanations (such as involvement and wishful thinking) and show that the results are attributed to individuals’ illusion of control. That is, when people observe (vs. do not observe) the occurrence of an event, they have the illusion that they can control the outcome of the event in their own favor. This illusory sense of control leads to a biased estimate of subjective probabilities. We provide support for our hypotheses in four studies.

Study 1 tested the hypothesis that consumers overestimate the likelihood of a positive outcome happening (and similarly, underestimate the chances of a negative outcome occurring) when they observe the uncertain event unfolding in front of them. One hundred and thirty two students participated in the study for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition in a 2 (valence: positive vs. negative) × 2 (watching: yes vs. no) between subjects design. Participants were instructed to imagine a scenario in which they had made a bet with a friend that their favorite football team would win (not lose) the upcoming game. The scenario added that the game would start in a few hours. Participants in the watching condition imagined that at the time of the game, they would be at home and would watch the game live on TV. Participants in the not watching condition imagined that at the time of the game, they would not be at home and would not watch the game live on TV. Participants indicated the likelihood that their team would win (lose) the game and therefore they would win (lose) the bet (1 = extremely unlikely; 7 = extremely likely), as well as the chances that their team would win the game (on a 0-100 probability scale). Four participants were excluded from the analysis since they failed to answer an attention check question.

An ANOVA on the likelihood of winning the game as the dependent variable and valence and watching as factors revealed a main effect of valence (F(1, 124) = 10.09, p < .001). Participants indicated higher likelihoods for the occurrence of the outcome when we asked them about chances of winning (M = 5.02) versus chances of losing (M = 3.63). This finding is in line with prior research on optimistic bias, which argues that people are optimistic in making probability judgments of future events (Chambers, Windschitl, & Suls 2003; Weinstein 1989). More importantly, the main effect of valence was qualified by a significant interaction between watching and valence (F(1,124) = 0.02). Simple contrasts show that there was an effect of watching for the positive valence (M_{watching live} = 5.32 vs. M_{not watching live} = 4.70, t(59) = 2.35, p = 0.02), as well as an effect of watching for the negative valence (M_{watching live} = 3.30 vs. M_{not watching live} = 3.94, t(59) = 2.185, p = .03). Similarly, an ANOVA on the chances of winning the game (on a 0-100 probability scale) as the dependent variable, and watching and valence as factors revealed a main effect of valence (F(1, 124) = 51.57, p < .001). Participants indicated that the likelihood of the occurrence of the outcome was higher when we asked them about the chances of their team winning (M = 60.36) versus chances of their team losing (M = 42.31). More importantly, there was a significant interaction between watching and valence (F(1,124) = 5.63, p = .02). Simple contrasts reveal that there was a directional (although not statistically significant) effect of watching for the positive valence (M_{watching live} = 62.00 vs. M_{not watching live} = 58.67, t(59) = .97, p = .34), and a significant effect of watching for the negative valence (M_{watching live} = 37.94 vs. M_{not watching live} = 46.56, t(59) = 2.37, p = .02). These findings provide support for the hypothesis that individuals who observe (vs. do not observe) the occurrence of an event make biased estimates regarding the likelihood of the occurrence of an outcome in their own favor.

Experiment 2 was designed to rule out a semantic anchoring explanation (related to the use of words “will” or “will not” in the first experiment). Seventy two (42 men) participants recruited from MTurk were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions: watching vs. not watching. A scenario similar to study 1 was used. Participants in both conditions were asked to imagine that their favorite football team was going to play in an important game the next night at 6pm. The description told participants in the watching (not watching) condition that they were going to watch the game live on TV (do some pre-planned activities). To prevent semantic anchoring, no positive or negative words (will or won’t) were used. At the end, we asked participants to indicate their opinions on the chances of their team winning the game on a 0-100 scale. Six participants were excluded from the analysis since they failed to imagine the scenario correctly according to an attention check question. As expected, participants assigned significantly higher probabilities to their team winning the game in the watching condition (M = 60.42, SD = 15.11) compared to the not watching condition (M = 52.31, SD = 21.13, t(64) = 1.72, one-tailed p < 0.05).

The objectives of experiment 3 were two-fold: (1) to demonstrate the robustness of our effect with a behavioral manipulation, and (2) to rule out some alternative explanations. The study used a
single factor (watching: live vs. recorded) between participants design. Eighty six students from a major Midwestern university participated in the study for course credit. Participants in both conditions participated in a card game in which the researcher had ten random cards from the deck. The ten cards consisted of different numbers and suits. The participants were told that the researcher would randomly select one of the cards. If the researcher selected a heart, the participant would win and if the researcher selected a card with another suit, the participant would lose the game. Participants in the live condition were told that they would be watching the game unfold in front of their eyes, while participants in the recorded condition were told that they would watch a previously recorded video of the game. After watching the demonstration of the game, participants were asked about the likelihood that they thought they would win the game (1 = extremely unlikely, 7 = extremely likely).

Results show that participants in the live condition indicated higher likelihood to win compared to participants in the recorded condition (M1 = 3.24 vs. M2 = 2.71, t(84) = 1.69, one-tailed p < .05). Moreover, results indicated that there was no significant difference in the level of wishful thinking (M1 = 2.89 vs. M2 = 3.08; t(84) = -.79; p = .43), involvement (M1 = 3.30 vs. M2 = 3.39; t(84) = -.27; p = .79), interest (M1 = 3.24 vs. M2 = 2.92; t(84) = .91; p = .37), positive affect (M1 = 2.45 vs. M2 = 2.57, t(84) = -.09; p = .93), and negative affect (M1 = 1.34 vs. M2 = 1.49, t(84) = -1.26, p = .21) across the two conditions.

In experiment 4, we sought to gain process evidence for the effect of watching on individual’s estimation of the likelihood of an event’s outcome. One hundred and twenty participants (72 men, Mage = 34.2) recruited from MTurk were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: watching vs. not watching. In both conditions, participants were instructed to imagine that they would be playing in a game in which winning entitled choosing a blue ball from an urn that contained some blue and some red balls. The scenario added that the game was going to be held in an auditorium and an independent, trustworthy person would pick a ball for each participant. All participants for whom a blue ball was chosen would win and all participants for whom a red ball was chosen would lose. In the watching (not watching) condition, participants were told that they would see (would not be present to see) the game in the auditorium. Next, participants indicated their probability estimate of winning the game on a 1 (very low probability) to 7 (very high probability) scale. Then they responded to a 3-item illusion of control measure (adapted wording from Langens 2007), and the 20-item Desirability of Control Scale (Burger and Cooper 1979). Finally, to rule out an alternative explanation, participants indicated their level of wishful thinking (“To what extent do you wish to win this game?”) on a 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely) scale.

One-way ANOVA revealed that participants in the watching (vs. not watching) condition reported higher expectations of winning the game (M1 = 4.03 vs. M2 = 3.53; F(1, 118) = 6.33, p = .01) as well as higher levels of illusion of control (M1 = 2.95 vs. M2 = 2.24; F(1, 118) = 4.72, p < .05). Importantly, a bootstrapping analysis (with 10,000 samples) indicated that the illusion of control emerged as a significant mediator in the relationship between watching and probability estimate (illusion of control: indirect effect = .21, 95% CI: .04 to .46). As expected, the effect of watching on wishful thinking did not reach the conventional level of significance (M1 = 4.13 vs. M2 = 3.86; F(1, 118) = 2.80, p = .10). When enterprising wishful thinking as the mediator in a bootstrap analysis (10,000 samples), the results indicated no significant indirect effect of watching through wishful thinking upon expectations of winning the game (wishful thinking: indirect effect = .04, 95% CI: -.01 to .19). In addition, when entering both the illusion of control and wishful thinking as simultaneous mediators with 10,000 bootstrap samples (model 4; Hayes 2013), only the illusion of control emerged as a significant mediator in the relationship between watching and probability estimate (illusion of control: indirect effect = .20, 95% CI: .04 to .46; wishful thinking: indirect effect = .02, 95% CI: -.03 to .13). Finally, a moderated mediation analysis with 10,000 bootstrap samples (model 8; Hayes 2013) revealed that the illusion of control significantly mediates the relationship between watching and probability estimate at moderate (indirect effect = .19, 95% CI: .03 to .44) and high (indirect effect = .34, 95% CI: .08 to .71), but not low (indirect effect = .04, 95% CI: -.19 to .28) levels of desire for control. The same pattern of results remained when we included wishful thinking as a covariate in the model. Thus, watching the game unfold significantly increased the expectation of winning due to a heightened illusion of control, but only for those individuals who have a moderate or high need to possess a sense of control in their lives.

Taken together, the findings of this paper suggest that the mere observation of an uncertain event increases the subjective probability of the occurrence of a desirable outcome. In addition, the illusion of control emerges as the psychological process underlying this effect. This research adds to the two streams of research on subjective probability judgements and illusion of control by identifying a novel situational variable (the mere observation of an event) that increases the illusionary perception of control and leads to a biased subjective probability estimate. Marketers can use the findings of this research by providing consumers with the opportunity to observe the occurrence of uncertain events (for example gambling or stock market). This would lead individuals to overestimate the probability of a desirable outcome and therefore engage in more risk taking behavior. Public policy officials can inform individuals about the downstream consequences of watching uncertain events (such as gambling) on overestimating the likelihood of a desirable outcome and consequently engaging in excessive risky behavior.

REFERENCES


AUTHENTICITY UNDER THREAT: WHEN SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS NEED TO GO BEYOND PASSION
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Recent research has pointed out the emergence of new online actors, “social media influencers” or SMIs (Etter et al. forthcoming). SMIs are defined as “people who possess greater than average potential to influence others due to such attributes as frequency of communication, personal persuasiveness or size of—and centrality to—a social network.” With the growing success of many SMIs, companies are intensifying their investment in “word-of-mouth marketing” or WOMM (Kozinets et al. 2010). One of the reasons brands partner with SMIs is that they are considered trustworthy and “one of the few forms of real, authentic communication” (Scott 2015, 295). However, sometimes collaborating with brands may question this authenticity as SMIs’ inner desires to focus on products they are passionate about are challenged by commercial opportunities to showcase brands that they would not ordinary like. Despite growing research on influencers and acknowledged pressure of pursuing financial gains, past research has overlooked the challenges to remain authentic when collaborating with brands. As such, this research focuses on the question: What are the strategies of SMIs to maintain authenticity while they are under commercial pressure?

SMIs often start as non-professional contributors who share their daily life and respond to fan comments (Colliander and Erlandsson 2015). However, over time SMIs become professionals with a mass audience of followers and gain competence in generating sophisticated content such as creation of stories, videos, visuals, etc. (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2013). In turn, SMIs leverage their online influence to partner with brands and negotiate with sponsors. Their credibility might then be questioned as the persuasive effect of their messages is often attributed to their perceived noncommercial nature contrasting with branded advertisements. Recent research started to investigate bloggers’ authenticity under commercial pressure (Savignac, Parmentier, and Marcoux 2012), but the analysis considered solely online self-presentation without considering how influencers communicate about brands, products, and collaborations.

Authenticity is recognized in the marketing literature as an important attribute, as prior research suggests that consumers increasingly desire authenticity in the products and brands they consume (Chronis and Hampton 2008). One particular notion of authenticity has been gaining acceptance, which revolves on whether an individual or brand expresses their true self (Guidry Moulard, Raggio, and Folse 2016). In this body of research, authenticity is linked to the distinction between intrinsic motivations and extrinsic motivations. Holt (2002, 83) notes, “to be authentic, brands must be disinterested; they must be perceived as invented and disseminated by parties without an instrumental economic agenda, by people who are intrinsically motivated by their inherent value”.

We chose the context of fashion, beauty and lifestyle, as it is one of the most successful and visible domains of digital production (Duffy and Hund 2015). We analyze posts from 49 influencers participating in 9 brand campaigns that employed multiple SMIs simultaneously. These observations are complemented with 27 interviews with SMIs varying in audience size to understand “behind the scene” goals pursued to project this authenticity.

From the posts about the campaign, we identified main topics, perspective towards the campaign and rapport with ones’ experience. The analysis allowed for identification of 2 distinct patterns for expressing authenticity under commercial pressure: 1) expressing inner self and being passionate even when involved in a collaboration; 2) proving what is said, reflects the truth about the partnership, the influencer or the products promoted.

Interviews confirm that SMIs manage authenticity both through communicating passion and giving a true report of reality. We label these two potentially complementary strategies as: passionate authenticity and/or informational authenticity.

The notion of passionate authenticity has been established in the previous literature (Guidry Moulard et al. 2016) but we identify a new form of authenticity, which is about being consistent with the facts and not lying, that we name informational authenticity. It refers to the degree to which what is claimed is consistent with reality about the commercial partnership with the brand, the SMIs and the products. These two strategies are sometimes considered as an optimal goal, rather than a systematic rule of conduct. Also, SMI often seem to use them sequentially. SMIs start out of genuine passion but, with growing recognition, they are tempted to accept partnership with brands they are not passionate about. Reflecting on the tension between their inner passions and financial gains, SMIs then implement a strategy of informational authenticity and communicate more transparent information to their audience.

Informational authenticity may have links to Grayson and Martinec indexical authenticity “when an object is believed to be ‘the original’ or ‘the real thing’” (2004, 297) and “it has the spatio-temporal link that is claimed” (2004, 298). However, authors focus on objects as indexically authentic while we show how it applies to individuals. Informational authenticity can be also associated with the notions of having integrity and being professionally ethical. Mo-hart et al. (2015) suggest that one component of brand authenticity is integrity. We complement their research by adding the notion of sincerity in what is claimed. Napoli et al. (2014) identify a related notion of sincerity, as one component of brand authenticity, but do not offer a definition of their sincerity concept.

Our findings should also help SMIs manage their authenticity under threat as it suggest that they can either use Passion or Information. SMIs should be cautious to report the reality of the partnership and the product in their WOMM contents. Similarly, they should keep producing noncommercial messages about brands they are really passionate about. In the same vein, managers should be attentive to let SMIs selects products in order to increase enthusiasm for the brand and minimize constraints to give room for personalized communication aligned with SMI’s style and opinions.

REFERENCES


WeChat Brands: Communal Interaction and Brand Publicity in Chinese Social Media
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Extant research on communal consumption has previously focused on how brands facilitate communal interaction and the expression of collective identity (Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould 2009) to recently how brands also enhance publicity, visibility, and other forms of sociality (e.g., Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016; Kozinets et al. 2010; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013). This stream of work suggests a changing focus from a brand’s “linking value” to its “publicity value”, and argues that consumer assemblies are motivated not only by the desire for interaction but also by the desire for visibility and publicity. The essential issue is how varied communication forms shape communication content and communal practices (Kozinets et al. 2010). In this paper, we examine a hybrid form of sociality that conceptually lies between communal interaction and brand publicity.

The context of our study is China’s dominant social media platform, WeChat. With more than 846 million monthly active users, WeChat has dominated Chinese social media space since its launch on January 21st 2011. It successfully integrates a variety of social media functions offered only separately by other Western platforms, most of which are not available for Chinese consumers (e.g., Twitter/Facebook/Instagram). WeChat allows users to do instant message, make video-calls, share experiences, pay bills, play games, shop, blog, book hotels and flights, and even to call a taxi. This integrated social media hybrid provides a unique opportunity to examine how technology shapes consumption and how social media form shapes its content (see Kozinets, Patterson, and Ashman 2017).

In this study, we focused on a particular function, WeChat Blog or Public Account. WeChat bloggers create various content including food, health, fashion, travel etc. WeChat blogs often have a large devoted audience, whose comments are routinely integrated by bloggers to create more engaging commercial content. Although everyone can leave a comment, only comments selected by the blogger will be publicly displayed. Filtered comments and the original blog become integrated and contribute to the development of a personal brand but not necessarily a community.

We used netnography (Kozinets 2015) and in-depth interviews (McCracken 1988) to collect data. Online fieldwork focused on WeChat blogs and reader comments. As a WeChat blogger with over 20,000 followers and several brand collaborations to date, the first author also kept notes of her experiences and interactions on WeChat. 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 popular bloggers from various fields and 10 marketers who used WeChat public account for promotions in China. Our analysis took an iterative approach moving between data and theory (Spiggle 1994; Kozinets 2015).

Our findings suggest that WeChat brands represent a markedly different form of sociality to the brand community or brand public discussed in previous studies. WeChat blogs discourage interaction among users and attention is carefully directed toward the communication content. Participants’ comments are not immediately displayed but are carefully filtered by bloggers. Promotion is an iterative process, in which the blogger generates a blog entry, elicit comments, then select and use the comments to construe new meanings that are consistent with the blog.

Previous research has noted consumers’ dislike of commercial messages on social media (Pashkevich et al. 2012) and has highlighted the commercial-communal tensions (e.g., Kozinets et al. 2010). However, we found that Chinese users appear more receptive toward commercial content. Although consumers may not necessarily reject or dis- tain commercial messages on blogs (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2013), motivations for positive responses are culturally embedded and may go beyond the notions of authenticity that has been offered as an explanation in extant research.

Within this “semi-closed” social media platform, utilizing reader comments is important in sustaining a successful WeChat brand. Four types of comments that illustrate the engagement of devoted readers are identified: loyalty and devotion, blog content extension, inquiries about promoted brands, and opposition to bloggers’ views. WeChat bloggers do not change their narrative style or blogger communicative character in their word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) promotions. Key bloggers strategically select and use comments to build credibility and authenticity, to express connection, to provide empathetic understanding, and to remove unwanted audience and guard their WeChat brand. All these differ from the previous notion of WOMM, in which bloggers adopt varied narrative strategies (e.g., evaluation, explanation, embracing, and endorsement) to justify their promotion of marketing message (Kozinets et al. 2010). We discuss the theoretical implications of our study for our understanding of communal consumption and brand publicity.

REFERENCES

What You Are Getting and What You Will Be Getting: Testing Whether Verb Tense Affects Intertemporal Choices
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Since the 19th century, philosophers, linguists and psychologists have wondered about the causal role of language on thought. Perhaps the best known version of this idea, often called the Whorfian hypothesis, is that differences in languages determine or at least influence differences in thought. In this view, the structure of a given language can facilitate some ways of thinking and impede others, leading some cognitions to be more accessible and therefore more prevalent among speakers of that language, in ways that are empirically testable (Hunt and Agnoli 1991). For example, differences in the way languages frame time in spatial terms (horizontally in English vs. vertically in Mandarin) would then lead to differences in how speakers of each language process visual demonstrations of time. This idea, while highly intuitive, has been quite controversial, and seemingly promising empirical demonstrations (Boroditsky 2001) have sometimes failed to prove robust (January and Kako 2006).

This paper tests the effect of linguistic form on decision making, specifically intertemporal choices. We build on Chen (2013), which distinguishes between languages that have strong vs. weak Future Time Reference (FTR) in their verb tense. Weak FTR languages are those which have the same verb forms for present and future events. For example, Finish uses the same linguistic form (on kylmää) to express present and future cold and merely changes the time term to convey “it is cold today” and “it will be cold tomorrow”. In contrast, English uses different verb tenses (is vs. will be) to convey this difference. Chen (2013) relates these linguistic differences to financial behaviors, and finds that speakers of weak FTR languages tend to have higher savings rates and are more likely to report a range of other far-sighted behaviors. This has been widely debated, with some studies finding additional evidence through other means (e.g., experiments with bilingual participants, Perez & Tavits 2017), while others have questioned the robustness of the finding.

In this paper, we investigate one way in which language might influence choice. We test whether in-context linguistic differences (i.e. the wording of choice options) shape intertemporal preferences, either due to priming or inferences.

We leverage an inherent ambiguity in verb use in some strong FTR languages, especially in English. While separate verb tenses do exist for present and future events, English speakers have the option of using the present form when describing a future event. For example, consider a person who is being informed that he or she will receive an amount of money in the future. This can be conveyed in multiple ways:

1. You get $5 in a week.
2. You are getting $5 in a week.
3. You would get $5 in a week.
4. You will get $5 in a week.
5. You will be getting $5 in a week.

The above sentences have the same meaning – the only difference is that (1) and (2) use the same form as if discussing the present, (3) uses a neutral form that does not imply a timing, while (4) and (5) use a form reserved for discussing the future.

Across six studies, we test the effect of verb tense framing of choice options on intertemporal preferences, varying the degree to which diagnostic cues are present in the decision context.

Study 1: Direct Inferences from Verb Tense

Online participants (N=222) read 10 scenarios in which two people were getting money, described using different tenses, and chose which person would be getting the money sooner. The verb tense had a substantial effect. For example, 85% of participants thought that “Bob gets $20” would happen earlier than “John would get $20”. Of the 10 comparisons, participants were significantly more likely to indicate that one of the options would be earlier than the other in all cases but one.

Based on a combined regression analysis, “gets” was the verb tense seen as occurring the earliest. Compared to the “gets” formulation, all the other verb tenses were seen as occurring later, to varying degrees: “is getting”, β=+.131; “will get”, β=+.310; “is going to get”, β=+.408; “would get”, β=+.501; all ps<.001.

Study 2: Within-Choice Verb Tense Framing

In the next study, we administered intertemporal choices to 112 participants. The survey flow was designed in a way such that every participant first got one set of four initial questions, using the “would get” verb tense.

Then every participant made a series of choices between sooner-smaller, later-larger options, specifying the (randomly determined) amount and time of delay. The verb tense of both the sooner-smaller and later-larger option were independently and systematically varied across questions. The final set of four final questions used the “would get” tense.

Choices of the later-larger option significantly depended only on the sooner smaller (β = -.04, p=.043) and later-larger amounts (β=.05, p=.017). Choices were not affected by the verb tense (all ps>.11). Controlling for income, order, interacting with education, gender and age did not change any of the results.

Study 3: Between-Subjects Verb Tense Framing

In the next study (N=259), we varied the tense of both choice options (present, neutral or future) between subjects in an initial round of eight choices. Participants chose between a sooner-smaller and later-larger option (with timing and amounts randomized). After the initial choices, each participant made eight more choices between options presented with neutral tense.

Choices of the later-larger option in the first set (with tense manipulated between subjects) were significantly dependent on only the sooner-smaller amount (β = -.07, p<.001), later-larger amount (β = .07, p<.001), and delay (β = .03, p=.003), but not verb tense (all ps>.24). Furthermore, choices in the second set (same in all conditions) were not affected by the verb tense used in the first set. Controlling for income, interacting with education, gender, age and collapsing across type did not change any of the results significantly.

Study 4: Benchmarking Verb Tense Framing

Thus far, we find no effect of verb tense framing. This is surprising, not only in light of the findings of Chen (2013), but in light of the strong inferences people drew from verb tense alone in Study 1. In this study (N=1460), we test whether this lack of a verb tense effect was explained by inattention or depended on question framing.

Each person made two intertemporal choices (present vs. future, and near future vs. distant future). We independently varied the tense
of each choice option, across subjects (present, future or no tense). We also varied whether the timing was presented as a date or delay (e.g., in 6 weeks vs. on September 2d), which has been found to affect choices in prior research (Read et al. 2005; LeBoeuf 2006). Lastly, we varied whether the choice options specified the non-payments (e.g., $30 today vs. $30 today and $0 in six weeks), which has also been shown to shift choice (the “hidden zero effect”; Magen, Dweck & Gross 2008; Read, Olivola & Hardisty 2016). In all, the study included 20 conditions in a 5(verb tense) x 2(date/delay) x 2(hidden zero) design.

Consistent with the prior literature on the date-delay effect, people were less patient when the delays were presented as weeks rather than dates (β= -.15, p<.001). Likewise, we replicated the hidden zero effect, with more patience when the hidden zeros were shown (β= .17, p<.001). Despite the strong sensitivity of the participants to these aspects of how choice options were communicated, we found no effects of verb tense (ps>.57). Furthermore, the null effect of verb tense was robust across the different ways of presenting the options tested (date vs. delay and hidden-zero present vs. absent).

Study 5: Vague Temporal Information

In all the studies thus far, we have used specific monetary amounts and specific delays. The lack of a verb tense effect could be due to redundancy—once people know the exact timing differences between the sooner-smaller and later-larger options, they are not sensitive to verb tense. In the next study (N=246), we test this possibility by using vague temporal cues (“soon”, “later”, “at some point after”) instead of specific timing information. Participants made a series of intertemporal choices, varying the timing words and verb tenses of the options.

While participants were sensitive to the vague temporal cues used to describe the options (all ps<.001), there were no significant effects of verb tense (ps>.14). Thus, even when participants had scope to make inferences about the timing, because they did not have precise information, the verb tense did not impact their choices.

Study 6: Vague Temporal Information

In the last study (N=184), we test the effect of verb tense in the most extreme case—the complete absence of any timing cues. Participants made a series of choices between two options, each specifying a dollar amount and varying in the verb tense. For example, a person might be asked to choose between “You get $19” and “You are going to get $21”. The amounts varied randomly between $19 and $21, and we tested all five verb tenses.

As in Study 1, the verb tense had a substantial effect when timing cues were entirely absent. For example, 71% of participants preferred an option framed as “You get” rather than an option framed as “You are going to get”, averaging across tested amounts. Of the 10 comparisons, participants’ choices revealed a significant preference for one framing over the other for all but one.

Based on a combined regression analysis, “You get” was the verb tense that made the option most likely to be chosen. Compared to the “You get” formulation, all the other verb tenses were less likely to be the chosen option, to varying degrees: “You are getting”, β=.09; “You will get”, β=.122; “You are going to get”, β=.225; “You would get”, β=.382; all ps<.001.

Discussion

Across six studies, we tested people’s inferences from verb tense and the effects of verb tense on different kinds of intertemporal choices. We find that people can make consistent inferences from verb tense, seeing events described in present as occurring sooner than events described in future tense or a neutral tense. However, when information about timing is present, we find no effect of verb tense on intertemporal choices. This lack of an effect of verb tense is estimated with high confidence, as the studies use large samples and we do find a strong and highly significant impact of other option framing effects identified in the prior literature. Furthermore, the lack of an effect of verb tense persists even when the available timing cues are vague and only convey incomplete information. We only find an effect of verb tense in the complete absence of any timing cues whatsoever.

Overall, we conclude that the underlying psychology of verb tense inference is right—people can and do use verb tense in a consistent manner as a cue for timing. However, in practice, the verb tense of the options is highly unlikely to shape preferences, contrary to at least some interpretations of the Whorfian hypothesis motivating Chen (2013), as some timing information is typically present in choice options.

REFERENCES

Pain of Payment and the Moral Tax: the Neural Basis of the Credit Card Effect

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When people shop while using credit cards, they generally tend to loosen their restraints on spending relative to using cash. One reason as to why people may spend more when using credit cards is that the payment method may blunt the negative subjective feeling people experience when giving up hard earned dollars. In other words, credit cards may diminish the pain of payment relative to using cash.

Yet, little evidence has been offered in support of this mechanism, in part due to methodological limitations. Only a few attempts to measure differences in the pain of payment between payment methods have been reported in the literature (Shah et al. 2015; Thomas, Desai, and Seenivasan 2011). While results from these experimental studies are consistent with the pain of paying hypothesis, the self-reported measures of pain of payment pose interpretive challenges. Because previous research has established that paying with credit card leads people to place less attention on cost attributes (Chatterjee and Rose 2012) and that paying with credit impair recall of cost information (Soman 2001), higher self-reported displeasure of paying in cash conditions may simply reflect the relative ease with which negative cost information came to mind rather than the actual pain of paying associated with the transaction. We applied fMRI methods to directly observe changes in neural activity during the purchase decision and thus overcome the many limitations inherent in self-report measurements.

To investigate how payment methods influence these neural mechanisms involved in making purchase decisions, we scanned human subjects (n = 27) using fMRI while they viewed products and made shopping decisions. The shopping task was designed to simulate a retail shopping experience where participants browsed through different products. We first collected a database of over 22,000 top selling products on Amazon.com, hierarchically organized into categories. Prior to entering the scanner participants indicated the departments they were most interested in shopping within. For each participant, half of the products shown were randomly determined to be available with credit card only while half were available with cash only. Participants browsed products in sequence, and for each item they were asked whether they were interested in purchasing it. If so, the product was added to the participant’s shopping basket, and if not, no additions were made to the basket. After participants indicated whether or not they wanted to buy, they were shown a confirmation page and then signed off on their decision. At the end of the study, participants were asked to pay out-of-pocket using the specified payment method for one randomly selected trial.

We examined how neural activation in each a priori determined region of interest (ROI) differed between purchase and non-purchase decisions. ROI anatomical coordinates were chosen using meta-analytical studies (Bartra, McGuire, and Kable 2013; Kelly et al. 2012). When participants were shopping with credit, we observed that their purchase decisions were distinguished from non-purchase decisions by activity in reward networks, including the striatum and ventro-medial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC). When participants were making purchase decisions using cash, we observed a price-dependent pattern of activity distinguishing purchase trials from non-purchase trials. Under low prices, purchase decisions were associated with heightened activity in the striatum and VMPFC. Purchases of high-price items when using cash were more strongly associated with lowered right anterior insula cortex (rAIC) activity.

These findings imply that credit cards change the evaluative criteria consumers use when making a purchase decision. Consumers may be asking simply “do I like it?” rather than stopping to question “is it worth it?” when they decide whether or not to buy (Karmarkar, Shiv, and Knutson 2015). In addition, we found that shopping with credit did not lead to exaggerated deactivation in the rAIC, inconsistent with the idea that credit cards lower the pain experienced during a transaction. Instead, credit cards appeared to generally facilitate greater reward sensitivity, rendering consumers less sensitive to price information. Overall, our findings advance theoretical accounts of the mechanisms by which payment methods influence spending behavior.

REFERENCES

I Don’t Care if You’re Committed, But “We” Do: How Group Brand Connections Affect Access-Based Brand Extension Evaluations

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Analysts expect the sharing economy’s revenue potential to reach $300B by 2025 (Geron 2013; Price Waterhouse Cooper 2015). To leverage this growing trend, many firms have begun to extend their brands into sharing spaces by introducing brand extensions that offer consumers access to, but not complete ownership of, their goods and services (i.e., access-based brand extensions). Examples include manufacturer-based car-sharing offerings (e.g., Ford2go; Baumeister, Scherer, and Wangenheim 2015) and online degree programs from physical universities (e.g., online MBA).

Among other factors (most notably, the perceived fit or similarity between the parent and the extended brand; Aaker and Keller 1990; Park, Milberg, and Lawson 1991), the success of brand extensions also depends on the nature of the consumer brand relationship. Not surprisingly, brand attachment has been linked to more favorable reactions to brand extensions (Fedorikhin, Park, and Thomson 2008; Kirmani, Sood, and Bridges 1999; Park and Kim 2001), even when the extension is unsuccessful (Cheng, White and Chaplin 2012, Swaminathan, Page and Gurhan-Canli 2007).

This research builds upon prior research, but offers two important points of departure. First, we theoretically differentiate access-based brand extensions (hereafter ABE) from traditional brand extensions (TBE) and, in so doing, highlight why the nature of consumers’ prior brand connections may differentially influence (and, specifically, lower) their evaluations of ABEs versus TBEs. Second, we examine the impact of group-brand connections (hereafter GBC). In so doing, we acknowledge that brands can be instrumental in helping consumers shape and reflect who they are as individuals (e.g., a savvy Apple owner), but also as members of important groups (e.g., a fiercely loyal member of the Chicago Cubs fan club). Indeed, a person’s group identities reflect a fundamental need to affiliate with others and are equally important to their self-concept as their individual identity (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995, Tajfel and Turner 1979). Yet, whereas much of the extant research focuses on consumer-brand attachments that are based on a brand’s perceived ability to shape and reflect consumers’ individual identities (e.g., self-brand connections (SBC); Escalas and Bettman 2005, Fournier 1988), relatively less is known about group-brand connections (GBC), those that are based on a brand’s perceived ability to facilitate and reflect a consumer’s identity as a member of a group (e.g., brand country-of-origin connections; Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000, Swaminathan, Page, and Gurhan-Canli 2007).

Using the sharing economy as our context, we theorize and find that when consumers believe that a brand is instrumental in reflecting or facilitating their connection with an important group (i.e., high GBC consumers), they are more likely to: a) negatively evaluate those who use that brand’s ABEs (hereafter “accessors”) based on commitment perceptions and b) rate ABEs less favorably than TBEs.

Theoretical Framework

We define an ABE as a type of brand extension in which a firm offers modified goods or services that limit the user’s ownership. Our conceptualization of ABEs includes offerings that either limit consumers’ ownership of the good entirely (e.g., short-term car rentals; Baumeister et al. 2015) or limit ownership of some integral product attribute (e.g., forgoing the on-campus experience when earning an online degree). Thus, whereas TBEs typically involve stretching the parent brand by introducing an innovation or extending into a new product category, ABEs extend the brand into a new business model in which consumers have access to, but not complete ownership of, their branded products or services. We argue that this distinction is associated with fundamental differences in user imagery (Keller 1993), or consumers’ beliefs about the typical user, of ABEs vs TBEs and, therefore, their evaluations of these extensions.

We propose that perceived commitment is the critical element of user imagery comparison between owners versus accessors. Commitment is commonly defined as the degree to which an individual views a relationship from a long-term perspective even when things are difficult (Ahlawalia, Burnkrant, and Ummna 2000; Drigotas and Rusbult 1992). Prior research has associated ownership with commitment to the owned object (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Palamar, Le, and Friedman 2012). Additional work found that consumers use perceived differences in commitment among other users to make overall evaluations (Love, Staton, and Rotman 2015; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Moreover, accessors in the sharing economy have acknowledged lower personal commitment toward objects that they access versus those that they own (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012).

Taken together, these findings suggest that commitment perceptions may comprise an unexplored, but important part of user imagery in brand extensions. Next, we discuss for whom commitment perceptions are most likely to matter.

From social identity theory, we know that the self can be conceptualized as composed of personal and group identities (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Just as material possessions can help owners express group identity (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995; Wallendorf and Arnold 1988), brands can also facilitate this expression. Thus, group-brand connection (GBC) is the extent to which a brand is used to express one’s social identity. Prior work suggests that GBC may influence attitudes when there is greater focus on relationships with others. For example, when others were made salient in participants’ construal of self (Markus and Kitayama 1991), Swaminathan and colleagues (2007) found that attitude change depended on GBC (e.g., brand country-of-origin), not SBC. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), people are more attentive and sensitive to the norms and expectations of the in-group when others are salient. In the current work, we suggest that the fundamental differences in user imagery make others more salient when evaluating ABEs and TBEs. Building on these findings, we expect observers’ GBC to determine the extent to which evaluations differ between ABEs and TBEs. Specifically, we expect high (vs. low) GBC consumers’ attitudes to reflect a concern with others’ adherence to group norms and expectations when a brand extension (i.e., an ABE) allows users to access the brand without commitment.

In summary, our prior arguments imply that attitudes toward accessors and owners should vary based on consumers’ GBC, such that high GBC consumers evaluate accessors (vs. owners) less favorably because of lower commitment perceptions. In contrast, low GBC consumers should be less sensitive to accessors’ commitment-norm violation and evaluate them similarly to owners. Prior work has found that user imagery influences extension evaluations (Desai and Keller 2002; Ferraro, Kirmani, and Matherly 2013; Keller 2003),
hence we expect commitment perceptions to mediate high GBC consumers’ ABE (vs. TBE) evaluations.

**Study 1**

204 adults (51% male, Mage = 36) were recruited from MTurk to participate in a brand extension type (TBE vs. ABE) × group-brand connection (measured) experiment for money. Participants indicated their GBC on three items (α = .88; Swaminathan et al. 2007) and their self-concept connection on two items (r = .86; Fournier 1994; Kleine et al. 1995). After the short survey, participants saw descriptions of one of two Chevrolet brand extensions. The ABE was a car-sharing program called Chevy2go and the TBE was a Chevrolet Bike. Participants evaluated the extension, the users’ perceived commitment, and general user imagery on 3-item, 7-point scales. Participants then completed a manipulation check measure, indicated their perceived similarity with the users (single item), and whether they currently owned a Chevrolet vehicle. We analyzed the data from the 172 non-owners to rule out ownership effects (Kirmani et al. 1999).

Note: We measure and control for perceived user similarity in this and all subsequent studies and manipulation checks were successful in all studies.

**Results**

A regression model that included brand extension type (dummy coded), GBC (mean-centered) and their interaction revealed a main effect of GBC that was qualified by the predicted extension type × GBC interaction (β = .26, se = .12, p = .03). Spotlight analysis revealed that when GBC to Chevy was 1SD above the mean, participants evaluated the ABE (M = 5.1) less favorably than the TBE (M = 5.7; β = -.61, se = .24, p = .01). In contrast, evaluations did not differ when GBC to Chevy was 1SD below the mean (M_{ABE} = 5.2, M_{TBE} = 5.1, p = .62). Notably, there were no significant effects when we used self-concept connection instead of GBC (t < 1, p = .35).

**Mediation analyses.** We tested whether commitment perceptions mediated evaluations when GBC was high (vs. low) using bias-corrected moderated mediation analysis (model 7, Hayes 2013). The results confirmed our predictions, revealing a significant indirect effect of commitment perceptions when GBC was high (β = -.21, Boot SE = .14, 95% CI: -.59, -.0092), but not when it was low (β = -.11, Boot SE = .10, 95% CI: -.30, .08). We also conducted a serial mediation analysis to confirm our expectation that commitment perceptions influence overall user imagery and ultimately extension evaluations. In support of our hypothesized process, our serial mediation was significant (β = -.09, Boot SE = .05, 95% CI: -.23, -.01). These results suggest that commitment perceptions are the critical aspect of general user imagery that mediates the accessor effect.

**Study 2: Priming Group Connection**

203 adults (Mage = 36) participated in a 2 (extension type: TBE vs. ABE) × 2 (GBC: high vs. low) between-subjects factorial design. Group connection was manipulated by adapting a procedure from prior brand country-of-origin and self-construal research (Brewer and Gardner 1996; Swaminathan et al. 2007). Participants in the high (low) GBC condition were asked to write about how they were similar to (different from) Chevrolet owners. A separate pretest with 50 adults confirmed the success of our manipulation (M_{high} = 4.0, M_{low} = 2.6, M_{control} = 2.7; F(2, 47) = 3.9, p < .05). After the priming procedure, the study continued as in Study 1.

**Results and Discussion**

We analyzed the data using a two-way ANCOVA. We found the predicted brand extension type × GBC interaction (F(1, 198) = 3.5, p = .06). Specifically, participants in the high GBC condition evaluated the ABE (M = 5.0) less favorably than the TBE (M = 5.5, p < .05). However, no differences emerged among participants in the low GBC condition (M_{ABE} = 5.5, M_{TBE} = 5.4, F < 1, ns).

The results from moderated mediation analysis again confirmed our predictions, revealing a significant indirect effect of commitment perceptions in the high GBC condition (β = -.13, Boot SE = .07, 95% CI: -.30, -.03), but not in the low condition (β = -.09, Boot SE = .07, 95% CI: -.29, .02). The serial mediation analysis also replicated prior results such that commitment perceptions influenced overall user imagery and ultimately extension evaluations (β = -.11, Boot SE = .05, 95% CI: -.21, -.03). Using a priming paradigm, this study replicated the findings obtained with the Chevrolet extensions in Study 1.

**Study 3: Ruling Out Fit Perceptions**

Study 3 was designed to replicate the accessor effect and examine the extent to which user imagery affects extension evaluations over and above fit perceptions. We operationalized GBC via brand country-of-origin, by sampling participants who owned two brands: Ford and Toyota. Pretest results confirmed that Ford (vs. Toyota) owners felt a higher brand country-of-origin connection.

114 Ford and Toyota owners completed the online survey for monetary compensation (M = 35). Participants were randomly assigned to an ABE or TBE condition. Participants in the ABE (TBE) conditions read about Ford2go (Ford Flex eBike) or Toyota2go (Toyota Prius Bike). Extensions and the users were evaluated as in Studies 1 & 2. Respondents also rated perceived fit between the extension and parent brand.

**Results**

We analyzed an extension type × GBC ANCOVA. Moreover, a significant effect of extension type was qualified by a group connection × extension type interaction (p < .01). Ford owners’ evaluations in the ABE (M = 4.0) were significantly lower than the TBE (M = 6.2, p < .001). In contrast, Toyota owners’ responses were statistically similar in both conditions (Ms = 5.7).

**Mediation analyses.** To reveal the unique effects of perceived commitment over fit, we simultaneously tested both potential mediators in a single model. Using the procedure developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008), we bootstrapped the indirect effects of brand extension type on evaluation through both mediators. Taken together as a set, fit and commitment perception did mediate the link between extension type and evaluations (β = -.41, 95% CI: -.76, -.07). However, the specific indirect effects indicated that only perceived commitment was a unique mediator (β = -.48, 95% CI: -.76, -.24); fit with the parent brand did not contribute to the indirect effect above and beyond perceived commitment (β = .07, 95% CI: -.04, .24). The results from moderated mediation analysis again confirmed our predictions, revealing a significant indirect effect of commitment perceptions when group connection was high (Ford owners; β = -.10, 95% CI: -.5, -.56), but not low (Toyota owners; β = -.28, 95% CI: -.65, -.08). Finally, results from the serial mediation analysis were again significant (β = -.22, Boot SE = .10, 95% CI: -.47, -.08), supporting our conceptualization.

**Study 4: Ruling Out Self-Implications**

Prior work has found that out-groups influence consumer behavior through self-presentation concerns (Escalas and Bettman 2005; White and Dahl 2006, 2007). However, we proposed that when consumers have a GBC, relatively less focus is placed on preserving self-identity. Thus, we expect the accessor effect to persist even when consumers have the opportunity to repair their self-concept (e.g., self-affirm). We tested this proposition in Study 4. We used university affiliation to manipulate GBC. 193 undergradu-
ates (42% female) participated in a 2 (brand extension type: ABE vs. TBE) x 2 (GBC: high vs. low) x 2 (self-affirmation: present vs. absent) between-subjects experiment. We found a significant brand extension type x GBC interaction that was not further moderated by self-affirmation (F < 1, p > .65). These findings demonstrate the robustness of the accessor effect and rule out self-identity threat as alternative mechanism for the accessor effect.

Summary
This research provides a framework for understanding when and which consumers’ brand evaluations will be differentially sensitive to (and adversely affected by) the perceived commitment of other brand users. Compared to TBE users, ABE users are perceived to be less committed to the brands they access, and this lack of commitment is associated with lower user and brand extension evaluations for consumers with a high (vs. low) GBC. These effects occur over and above those associated with brand extension fit or self-identity threat. Results provide insights into important boundary conditions of consumers’ brand attachments.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Corporate crises constitute a severe threat to a company’s reputation and performance by causing negative customer emotions and reactions (Coombs 2007; McDonald, Sparks, and Glendon 2010). Hence, a major goal of corporate crisis communication is to protect an organization’s reputation and avert financial damage (Utz, Schultz, and Glocka 2013). Corporate apologies have been identified as an effective strategy to mitigate the negative consequences of a crisis (Coombs and Holladay 2008; Robbennolt 2003). Interestingly, the expression of negative emotions like sadness appears to be an injunctive norm for apologies (Cialdini 2003). However, it is unclear how consumers process and react to such negative emotions. The socio-psychological process of emotional contagion (EC) supposes that individuals can “catch” the emotions of others (Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson 1994). Based on the notions of the feelings-as-information theory (Schwarz 1990), consumers might rely on transferred negative emotions as information causing them to make valence-congruent evaluations. To date, there is a deficiency in literature on the possible consequences of EC, particularly with regard to negative emotions. The present study addresses this research gap by investigating EC in corporate apologies in a social media context. In doing so, we additionally consider the role of potential influencing factors (i.e., the authenticity of displayed emotions and susceptibility to EC). To this end, we conduct an online experiment and an eye tracking experiment.

Experiment one examines the effects of (authentic) negative emotions expressed in corporate apologies on consumers’ sadness and willingness to forgive. Overall, 194 participants (59% female, Msex = 27.1) were randomly assigned to a 2 (extent of negative emotion: low, high) × 2 (extent of authenticity: low, high) between-subjects design. We manipulated the extent of negative emotion by the number of affective cues such as the word “saddened” (one vs. seven negative affective cues) and the authenticity of negative emotions by the use of emoticons (none vs. two emoticons). Participants first viewed a newspaper report on a fictive corporate crisis that was identified via a pretest. Consumers’ sadness was measured at three points in time: T0 (before corporate crisis), T1 (after corporate crisis), and T2 (after corporate apology). Additionally, participants were asked to indicate their willingness to forgive the company and answered manipulation checks. Overall, consumers’ sadness increased after reading about the crisis (T1). The analysis revealed a significant change in participants’ sadness from T1 to T2. The extent of emotion, authenticity, and susceptibility show significant effects on the change in sadness from T1 to T2. The results of a mediation analysis further indicate that the effect of the extent of expressed negative emotions on customers’ willingness to forgive is fully mediated by customer sadness after reading the apology (T2). The extent of negative emotions in the apology positively affected participants’ sadness, which in turn, negatively influenced their willingness to forgive the company. In contrast to susceptibility, authenticity did not significantly moderate the contagion of negative emotions.

Experiment two uses physiological measures (i.e., pupillometry) to investigate negative EC in a company’s Facebook apology. Pupil size is endogenously affected by emotion and cognition (e.g., Bradley et al. 2008, Fox 2015). Specifically, the pupil diameter is assumed to vary depending on the extent of (negative) emotions (i.e., the number of affective cues). Cognitive processing was manipulated by syntactic complexity which causes the disruption of smooth processing (Gordon, Hendrick and Johnson 2001; Davison et al. 1980) and higher processing costs (Gibson 1998). Overall, 30 participants (70% male, Msex = 22.4) were randomly assigned to a 3 (extent of negative emotion: low, medium, high) × 2 (syntactic complexity: low, high) experimental within-subjects design. Participants first saw a newspaper cover illustrating the crisis for nine seconds followed by a fixation cross. They were then presented with the corresponding Facebook apology which varied in the extent of negative emotions and syntactic complexity. The timeline analysis of the pupil size data indicates a similar pattern for most apologies. There is an initial increase in pupil size, followed by a pupil constriction, followed by a steep pupil dilation. The final dilation initiates later for apologies with a higher complexity and higher extent of emotions. This is in line with participants’ dwell time, the time participants’ eyes spend on the Facebook apology, which increased with complexity and partly with emotion. The final pupil dilation seems to be in accordance with a proposed delayed pupillary response to emotions. For further analyses, we considered three points in time: 1) data in second two as here the initial peak occurred, 2) data in second 13 as here the final dilation for low complexity apologies and the lowest point for high complexity apologies occurred, 3) data in second 20 as here the final peak had already been reached in all groups. At second two, there was a significant interaction effect for emotion and complexity on pupil size change. Similarly, at second 13, the analysis revealed a significant interaction of emotion and complexity. At second 20, pupil change did not significantly differ across the apologies.

The present research shows that negative emotions expressed in corporate apologies in a social media setting can be contagious. While apologies largely reduce sadness triggered by the crisis, this reduction varies depending on the extent of negative emotions communicated and consumers’ susceptibility to EC. Interestingly, the effect of the extent of negative emotion on consumers’ willingness to forgive is fully mediated by participants’ sadness. Authenticity did not significantly moderate the contagion process. Using physiological measures of emotions, the second experiment provides an innovative approach to investigate EC and validate the findings of experiment one. This research illustrates that affective cues suffice for companies to transfer emotions to consumers online and to thereby influence consumers’ willingness to forgive. While a corporate apology can mitigate the negative emotions of consumers in a social media environment, managers must pay attention to the extent of negative emotions communicated in a corporate apology since the contagion of negative emotions can attenuate consumers’ willingness to forgive the company.

REFERENCES


Are Dark and Frightening Story Worlds Inspirational? 
An Analysis of the Narrative Persuasion Process
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The rising tide of media broadcasts, misinformation, public persuasion knowledge and the extreme polarization of opinions, as challenges of the information age, heighten the need for an effective social marketing. Against the background of the striving for entertainment (Singhal & Rogers, 2002), narratives become increasingly important to open human eyes and minds across various areas of social and health problems (Slater, 2002; Hinyard & Kreuter, 2012). Narratives are "(...) a way of organizing spatial and temporal data into a cause-effect chain of events with a beginning, middle, and end that embodies a judgement about the nature of the events as well as demonstrates how it is possible to know, and hence to narrate, the events" (Branigan, 1992) and meet higher audience acceptance than overtly persuasive argument-based messages (Dal Cin et al., 2004). Scholars increasingly try to explain the mysterious background of narrative persuasion by using the phenomenon of perceptual illusion that a mediated experience is not mediated (nonmediation, Lombard & Ditton, 1997). Transportation, as a central element of nonmediation, is defined by Green and Brock as "a convergent process, where all of the person’s mental systems and capacities become focused on the events occurring in the narrative" (Green et al., 2003). It seems to be particularly crucial, since this mental process regulates the subsequent phase of the narrative persuasion procedure, capturing the readers’ discovery of the deeper story message and its projection into their individual future (e.g., Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010). The most important subsequent intermediary, in this context, can be summarized as reflection, which involves cognitions and emotions evoked by the narrative, as well as reflections about the reader and the world external to the reader (Hamby, 2014). Nevertheless, there are only a limited number of studies available analyzing the driving forces that increase transportation, reflection and set the narrative persuasion procedure in motion (Appel & Malečkar, 2012; Hamby, 2014).

In this respect, research suggests the power of threatening and creepy content in narratives. Findings in the field of fear appeals, traditional persuasion (e.g., Dillard & Anderson, 2004; Cauberger et al., 2009) and narratives (e.g., McQueen et al., 2011; Nabi, 2015; Bartsch et al., 2014) particularly provide evidence for the power of dark stimulating emotions, which may lead to the journey into a narrative world, representing the secret key to the inspiration mechanism of narratives, which has never been analyzed before. Therefore, we attempt to uncover the capability and the workflow of fear-inducing stories to arouse story-related reflections. Thereby, we contribute to the existing findings by addressing four important issues. First, we reassess the debate towards the relevance of fear in relation to a) fear appeals (Tannenbaum et al., 2015) and in relation to b) reflective cognitions (Bartsch et al., 2014). Second, the paper furthers the effort of Green and Brock (Green et al., 2003) to understand the emergence of transportation. Third, we broaden the knowledge regarding the steps in the narrative persuasion process (Appel & Malečkar, 2012) and recover transportation as an intermediate process between story reception and reflection (Hamby et al., 2014). Finally, we add to the discussion regarding the role of personality traits in the persuasion process (Weibel et al., 2010; Bartsch et al., 2010; Zwarun & Hall, 2012; Green et al., 2008).

Narrative Persuasion Process
In comparison to argument and data-based evidence, narratives are completely different communication vehicles. This implies distinct ways of mental processing, including distinct moderators and mediators (Slater & Rouner, 2002).

While dual-process models, normally applied in the context of traditional argument-based messages, deal with the elaboration likelihood, narratives concentrate on image sequences. Moreover, there is no need to separate between a central and a peripheral route of mental processing, since the cognitive and affective stimuli of narratives are simultaneously processed (Slater & Rouner, 2002). If a compelling story succeeds to completely absorb the individual’s cognitive resources, the audience immerses into the story and feels present in the imagined world. Thus, no capacity for counterarguments is available (Hofer, 2013). In this matter, considerable attention has been paid to the concept of transportation, which is very similar to presence (Lombard & Ditton, 1997) but includes also the engaging “journey” into the story world (Kim & Biocca, 1997). Green and Brock (Green et al., 2003) argue in the Transportation-Imagery-Model that distance to the real world increases by being mentally drawn into a narrative world such that story claims are no longer called into question. Thus, after the immersion into the story world, the audience is more prone to support the story-consistent beliefs due to the emotional experience and the missing cognitive resources. In this respect, far-reaching effects on emotions, self or other-centered cognitions (Dunlop et al., 2010; Escalas, 2007; Banerjee & Greene, 2012, Green & Brock, 2000) and behavior (van Laer et al., 2012) were identified.

Overall, there is evidence that transportation is a promising precondition of narrative persuasion. However, little is known on how the transition between reception and persuasion proceeds and which key determinants beside transportation join in the process (Appel & Malečkar, 2012). Cognitive and emotional post-story-message evaluations, which can be described as upstream processes of change in attitude and behavior (Dunlop et al., 2010; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010) are important intermediaries. They can also be summarized as the phenomenon of reflection, resembling Oatley’s (1999) idea of the reader’s and storyteller’s meeting of minds. Hamby (2014) similarly defines reflection as “...a process related to integrating elements encountered in the story world into one’s understanding of the real world”. Whereas transportation corresponds to the immersion into the presence in the story world, the secondary process of reflection covers the “return trip to the real world”. As Hamby (2014) suggests, reflection involves three types of successive opinion-forming evaluations, including cognitive, emotional responding and reflections about the reader’s self and the reader’s social surrounding.

Overall, reflection was found to be a very central mechanism in the persuasion process, subsequent to the experience of transportation (Hamby, 2014). It is, however, still an open issue regarding how the causal chain of transportation and reflection is activated. Recent research in this context explored the power of emotionally charged media experiences to stimulate reflective thoughts directly (Bartsch et al., 2014). But research also reflects signs of an indirect pathway, since scary story contents were uncovered to be incredibly absorbing (Hoffner & Levine, 2005), fascinate the audience through the sensation of fear (Sparks & Sparks, 2000) paired with inspiration.
(Merchant et al., 2010). As the following discoveries of fear appeals and associated works demonstrate, fear is a very effective device in provoking deep message processing and message acceptance - potentially in terms of narrative persuasion.

**Fear Appeal Research**

Initial research on fear appeals primarily shed light on the role of fear for persuasion (Janis, 1967; Mc Guire, 1968). In contrast to anxiety, fear represents a short-term reaction towards an identifiable stimulus (Sutton, 1982) and is explained as “(...) a negatively valenced emotion, accompanied by a high level of arousal” (Witte & Allen, 2000).

In contrast to the previous models (Janis, 1967; McGuire, 1968), the central role of fear dwindled in successive models and was gradually replaced by danger and fear control appraisals (Witte, 1992). But the decisiveness of fear in terms of the effectivity of fear appeals on persuasion outcomes is still an ongoing debate (Dillard et al., 2016). Inspired by drive theories, recent research highlights the major importance of fear in the persuasion process (Dillard et al., 2016) and supports the direct and linear link between fear and persuasion-related outcomes (Dillard & Anderson, 2004; Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2004). Besides the direct impact channel, there is also evidence for an indirect mechanism (Cauberghe et al., 2009), running through elements mirroring the phenomenon of transportation recovered in narrative persuasion research (e.g. Keller & Block, 1996; LaTour & Rotfeld, 1997, Tanner et al., 1991; LaTour & Rotfeld, 1997; Panić et al., 2011).

Packaged in an entertaining tale, fear-inducing storytelling seems to be a suitable stage to transfer compelling visions in terms of educational work and social marketing. Therefore, we suggest that the identified indirect and direct power of fear identified by persuasion research might be recovered and applied in the field of narrative communication, especially in the area of transportation and subsequent evaluations like reflection.

**Direct and Indirect Pathways to Reflection**

For two reasons stories are very favorable to set the receivers into an absorbing reflection mode. Stories firstly provide a high entertainment value for the receiver (Green et al., 2004). Secondly, narratives are unconsciously educationally valuable (Hoffner & Levine, 2005; Kniveton, 1978). Both characteristics of narratives, which demonstrate important preconditions of narrative persuasion in terms of transportation and reflection, are especially valid for fear-inducing stories. Since frightening stories include unforeseeable, new, surprising, sensational and destructive contents (Allen & Greenberger, 1978), which address life beyond social rules (McCauley, 1998) they are very arousing and suspenseful for us, as long as we feel safe (Nell, 2002). Thereby, these contents are very entertaining. Alongside their role regarding entertainment, emotional arousal and pleasurable suspense represent core components of transportation, as research has disclosed, and increase the receiver’s emotional engagement to follow the storyline (McQueen et al., 2011). These insights reveal more strongly the direct impact of fear-inducing content on transportation as well as reflection.

Second, threatening stories offer the opportunity to address controversial issues that are avoided in everyday life (Moyer-Gusé, 2008; Sparks & Sparks, 2000). This explains the educational value of that kind of story influencing the audience to become transported, resulting in reflection (Hamby, 2014; Hamby et al., 2014). Therefore, we suspect that fear, which can be enjoyable in terms of the experience of a frightening narrative, while feeling safe (Nell, 2002), might be a vitalizing avenue to enhance entertainment-educational effects (Nabi, 2015; Bartsch et al., 2014) by increasing transportation and reflection. Thus, we predict that:

**Hypothesis 1:** Higher levels of fear evoked by a narrative will result in a higher level of transportation.

**Hypothesis 2:** Higher levels of transportation will result in a higher level of reflection.

Literature reviews alert that negative emotions like fear may affect information processing negatively, which occur particularly at higher levels of arousal (Lang, 2000; Sanbonmatsu, 1988). But this observation also suggests that arousing stories provoke the receiver to become “lost in the story”, weakening the processing of real world information but strengthening the focus on the narrative. Due to the equivalence to transportation, we conclude that this subsequent process makes the aroused receiver enter the phase of reflection (Hamby et al., 2014). Hence, we assume:

**Hypothesis 3:** Transportation mediates the impact of fear on reflection.

According to the aforementioned findings of persuasion research, we additionally suppose that activating fear might be an important immediate driver of reflection and narrative persuasion. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 4:** Higher levels of fear evoked by the narrative will result in a higher level of reflection.

Previous research has shown the link between specific personality traits and transportation, as well as persuasive outcomes (Weibel et al., 2010; Bartsch et al., 2010; Zwarun & Hall, 2012; Green et al., 2008). Hence, we also controlled for extroversion, neuroticism, openness for experiences, conscientiousness, agreeableness and need for cognition.

**Study 1**

Particularly in the field of the meat industry and the heightened consumption of food produced by factory farming, consumer education in adulthood regarding the dangerous consequences for human health and animal welfare is needed (Chemnitz & Becheva, 2014; Stehfest et al., 2009; Hughner et al. 2007). Thus, our study concentrates on the capability and the procedure of fear-inducing narratives to make consumers reflect on those issues to promote better consumption decisions.

180 respondents (132 females; mean age: 30.44 years, SD: 10.574) participated in the online and paper-based quasi-experimental survey voluntarily, anonymously and individually. After the participants were shortly briefed about the topic of factory farming, the participants were invited to carefully read a narrative and to answer some questions regarding their feelings (fear) and their mental processes during and after story reception (transportation and reflection). In our survey, we utilized an adapted translation of the experimental text material *Murder at the Mall* (provided by Appel & Richter, 2010, originally used in Green & Brock, 2000). Modelled after selected episodes of a well-known German TV crime series (*Tatort*, 2014), we inserted the issue of the consumption of meat produced by factory farming in the initial version of the scary narrative (due to the German speaking sample, this method seems to be reasonable). In conjunction with this issue, we embedded argumentation lines towards the environmental and personal threats of factory farming (animal welfare and personal health status), as well as educational
handling recommendations. An online-performed Delphi-interview (12 experts) served to correct misleading and disturbing story passages (c.f. narrative description in the appendix).

Multi-item measures extracted from peer-reviewed studies were used for the operationalization of the variables (cf. appendix).

**Results**

This study aims to analyze whether transportation fully or partially mediates the relationship between fear and reflection. To validate the effects, we include the covariates of need for cognition, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience (Hayes, 2013). The results of the analysis of linear regression revealed that fear significantly provokes transportation ($\beta = 0.351$, SE = 0.039, $p < 0.01$), providing support for H 1. Additionally, we find a significant impact of the covariate extroversion on transportation ($\beta = 0.094$, SE = 0.037, $p < 0.05$). In line with our expectations, we observe that a higher level of transportation results in significantly higher levels of reflection ($\beta = 0.589$, SE = 0.097, $p < 0.01$) (H 2). Moreover, we find significant positive effects of the covariates emotional stability ($\beta = 0.099$, SE = 0.047, $p < 0.05$) and openness to experience ($\beta = 0.116$, SE = 0.068, $p < 0.1$), as well as negative effects of agreeableness ($\beta = -0.169$, SE = 0.079, $p < 0.05$) and conscientiousness ($\beta = -0.104$, SE = 0.059, $p < 0.01$). We applied the bootstrapping method proposed by Preacher & Hayes (2004) using Hayes’s PROCESS macro (2012) in order to analyze the mediation effect. The computation of the bias corrected 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effects was based on 10,000 bootstrap samples (Hayes, 2013). The results disclosed that the impact of narratively induced fear on reflection is mediated by transportation ($\beta = 0.207$ SE = 0.048, 95% CI = .122 to 0.310) (H3). Beyond the indirect effect, we observe fear as a significant direct predictor of reflection ($\beta = 0.220$, SE = 0.061, $p < 0.01$) (H4), providing evidence for a partial mediation. The results of the total effect model revealed a total impact of fear on reflection ($\beta = 0.428$, SE = 0.055, $p < 0.01$) (c.f. appendix).

**Study 2**

In order to validate the findings of Study 1, Study 2 aims to analyze the proposed effects in the context of a narrative dealing with a more serious fear (e.g. the consequences of a life-threatening disease) solely on human-based reflections. More precisely, in Study 2, we explore the effects on reflections associated with blood cancer prevention and social motivations to donate to leukemia patients. 186 respondents (131 females; mean age: 27.90 years, SD: 9.066) attended the online and paper-based survey. Except for the contextual changes into a health-related narrative addressing the issue of leukemia prevention and support (similar to an episode of Tatort, 2013), we applied the same procedure as in Study 1 (c.f. appendix).

**Results**

The linear regression analysis reveals our first hypothesis that fear affects transportation ($\beta = 0.321$, SE = 0.038, $p < 0.01$). A positive effect of extroversion ($\beta = 0.099$, SE = 0.0359, $p < 0.01$) and a negative effect of emotional stability ($\beta = -0.064$, SE = 0.037, $p < 0.1$) on transportation is also found. Moreover, transportation is a significant predictor for reflection ($\beta = 0.403$ SE = 0.091, $p < 0.1$) (H 2). Negative effects of emotional stability are also again obtained ($\beta = -0.078$, SE =0.045, $p <0.1$). Mediation analysis again suggests a significant indirect effect of fear on reflection, providing support for the mediating role of transportation ($\beta = 0.123$ SE = 0.031, 95% CI = .077 to 0.199) (H 3). Beside the indirect effect, we also find the direct effect of fear on reflection, suggesting a partial mediation as proposed in H4 ($\beta = 0.251$, SE = 0.055, $p<0.01$). In summary, we find a significant total effect of fear on reflection ($\beta = 0.380$, SE = 0.048, $p<0.01$).

**General Discussion**

As in Study 1, the supposed steps in the narrative persuasion process reemerge: half of the fear effect operates through transportation, which is again identified to be an important upstream process of reflection. Besides these factors, a minor part of the narrative effect might be attributed to specific personality characteristics (Weibel et al., 2010; Bartsch et al., 2010; Zwarun & Hall, 2012; Green et al. 2008), as both studies reflect. These findings, implying the power of fear-provoking narratives to vitalize the persuasion process, show that insights of fear appeal research (Dillard et al. 2016; Dillard & Anderson, 2004; Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2004) and related study fields assuming an indirect relationship (Cauberghe et al., 2009; Keller & Block, 1996; LaTour & Rotfeld, 1997) might also be valid in the field of narrative persuasion. Furthermore, we find that fear-inducing stories provoke transportation, which contributes to the understanding of the emergence of transportation. Consistent with the literature, we again demonstrate the significance of transportation toward evoking persuasion-related outcomes (e.g., Green et al., 2003; Murphy et al., 2011).

Furthermore, our study could respond to the recent call to research (Appel & Malečkar, 2012; Hambry, 2014). Both studies provide evidence for the supposed and partially uncovered sequence of elements in the persuasion process. As previously supposed (Nabi, 2015; Bartsch et al., 2014; McQueen et al., 2011; Moyer-Gusé, 2008; Sparks & Sparks, 2000), fear is identified to be a crucial emotional arousal, which directly initiates transportation and successively evokes reflection. We therefore strongly recommend practitioners to predominately use fear as a stimuli in narratives, which directly or subsequent to the compelling process of transportation promises that readers transform the narratively simulated experience into cognitions and emotions, which may have suggestive impact on their own lives.

Overall, the outcomes also demonstrate that further work needs to be done in order to identify relevant emotional factors introducing transportation, as well as reflection, and in particular the causal chain of transportation and reflection as well as other valuable upstream mechanisms of narrative persuasion outcomes (e.g., reception of stories transmitted by other media channels, purely experimental setting, and measurement of covariates).

**REFERENCES**


$100 a month or $1,200 a year: Impact of Regulatory Focus on the Evaluation of Temporally Framed Attributes
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers often encounter benefits and costs which recur over time framed at different levels of aggregation. For example, a weight loss program may advertise either in an aggregate (“Lose 10 pounds in 10 weeks”) or a disaggregate (“Lose 1 pound per week over 10 weeks”) frame. In using this strategy, marketers hope that consumers will utilize the largeness of the numeric expression as a heuristic for making magnitude judgments. Indeed, some research suggests that this may be the case. An aggregate frame makes the consumers perceive the benefit or cost to be higher in magnitude leading to a greater weightage being assigned during evaluation and choice (Burson, Larrick, and Lynch, 2009; Goldstein, Hershfield, and Benartzi, 2016; Gourville 1998). However, not much is known about the way in which consumer characteristics may impact the evaluation of such frames. Further, research is needed on means to reduce consumers’ reliance on this erroneous heuristic. In this research, we aim to accomplish these objectives by examining how consumers’ goal pursuit strategies affect the evaluation of such frames.

In any decision process, one of the two primary goals of a human being, the need for advancement and that for security (Bowlby, 1969), may be salient. Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) posits that these goals lead to two distinct motivational states in a consumer – a promotion and a prevention focus, respectively. We contend that temporal framing of attributes will affect the evaluation of only promotion focused (but not prevention focused) consumers. We base our predictions on the distinct information processing strategies elicited by these regulatory goals (Forster and Higgins, 2005; Lee, Aaker, and Gardner, 2010; Pham and Chang, 2010). Promotion focused consumers, who pay greater attention to the most salient aspect of any information, may be easily swayed by the largeness of the numeric expression in an aggregate frame. However, prevention focused consumers, who pay attention to all aspects of any information, may be immune to the effect of temporal reframing.

In Study 1 (N = 152), we primed regulatory focus using an anagram task (Jain et al., 2007). Next, participants in the aggregate (disaggregate) condition, read that their salary post graduation was “$36,000 a year” (“$3,000 a month”). A two-way ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect, F(1,148)=7.0, p=.01. Promotion focused participants evaluated the salary more positively in the aggregate condition (Mageaggregate=4.84, Mdisaggregate=4.29, F(1,148)=5.39, p=.02). No such difference emerged for prevention focused participants (Mageaggregate=4.40, Mdisaggregate=4.73, F(1,148)=2.02, p=.16).

Study 2 (N = 148) examined a downstream effect. We primed regulatory focus using a goals task (Li et al., 2011). Next, in the aggregate (disaggregate) condition, participants read that they had a job offer which paid $42,000 a year ($3,500 a month). Participants intention to join a health club where the cost was framed was $1,560 ($65 a month) for 2 years membership. They also indicated their magnitude perception of the cost. Promotion focused participants indicated a greater intention to join when they viewed the price in disaggregate (Mageaggregate=3.81) as compared to the aggregate frame (Mageaggregate=2.04, F(1,177) = 23.55, p < .0001). This effect was only marginally significant for prevention focused participants (Mageaggregate=2.70, Mdisaggregate = 3.5, F(1,177) = 3.64, p = .06). More importantly, as in the previous study, moderated mediation analysis revealed an indirect effect of magnitude perception. This indirect effect was significant only in the promotion focus condition (B = -1.35, SE= .80, 95% CI [-2.18, -.59]). However, the frame did not affect the magnitude evaluation of amount for prevention focused participants (B = 0, SE=.80, 95% CI [-.79,.74])

Finally, in Study 5, we examined costs. After a priming task similar to Study 2, female participants (N = 182) indicated their intention to join a health club where the cost was framed as $1,560 ($65 a month) for 2 years membership. They also indicated their magnitude perception of the cost. Promotion focused participants indicated a greater intention to join when they viewed the price in disaggregate (Mageaggregate=3.81) as compared to the aggregate frame (Mageaggregate=2.04, F(1,177) = 23.55, p < .0001). This effect was only marginally significant for prevention focused participants (Mageaggregate=2.70, Mdisaggregate = 3.5, F(1,177) = 3.64, p = .06). More importantly, as in the previous study, moderated mediation analysis revealed an indirect effect of magnitude perception. This indirect effect was significant only in the promotion focus condition (B = -1.35, SE= .80, 95% CI [-2.18, -.59]) and not significant in the prevention focus condition (B = -.22, SE = .30, 95% CI [-.82, .37]).

Across five studies, spanning multiple domains and different operationalization of regulatory focus, we show that promotion focused consumers evaluate an aggregate frame more extremely as compared to a disaggregate frame. However, no such difference in evaluation based on frame emerged for prevention focused consumers. This research contributes to the area of temporal framing and numerosity heuristic by introducing an important moderator, the decision makers’ regulatory focus. Future research may explore other factors which may affect the perception of such frames such as processing styles and cross cultural differences.

REFERENCES


**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Henderson and Cote (1998) highlight the importance of active brand logo designs (those that give the impression of motion) for increasing consumer interest. One approach to creating an active brand logo is through the inclusion of a human figure in motion, for example, *Johnnie Walker* (walking figure), *Interflora* (running figure), or *Air Jordan* (jumping figure). Drawing on Newtonian principles in physics, we employ a ‘dynamics’ in classical human mechanics lens to examine active brand logo effects through the causes of motion in human movement (i.e., force). Scientific research has demonstrated that when a force is applied in the opposite direction of a human figure in motion (e.g., gravitational force when running up a hill) the figure is exerting greater work (e.g., Zatsiorsky 2002). Cues to hard work align with perceptions of brand competence (Aaker 1997), which increases brand attitude and behavioral intentions (Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer 2013). As such, we propose that a dynamic brand logo featuring human work (motion along with a force), results in more positive brand-based attitudes and behavioral judgments than a kinematic logo featuring less work (motion without a force applied).

Study 1 demonstrates that a dynamic brand logo (i.e., greater work exerted due to the inclusion of force) results in more positive brand attitude and purchase intention than a kinematic brand logo (i.e., less work exerted in a logo with only motion and no force applied). In Study 2, we demonstrate that the indirect effect of brand dynamism on brand attitude is explained through our developed brand energy construct, not by brand engagement, which previous research suggests. We also empirically reveal the bounds of our brand work-energy effect in Study 3. Specifically, the results provide evidence to suggest that the effectiveness of brand logo dynamism (work exerted through applied force) on perceptions of brand energy is attenuated when positive work is undertaken (thrust force in the direction of motion).

**Active Dynamic Brand Logos**

Active brand logo designs are those that "give the impression of motion" (Henderson and Cote 1998, p. 17). To date, only one study has examined active brand logos and their effects on brand engagement and attitude (Cian et al. 2014). Cian’s et al. (2014) study focuses only on the use of motion in brand logos, which they term dynamic. However, we argue that their study examines brand logos from a kinematic perspective. Kinematics is the study of motion without regard for the cause (Beggs 1983). We, on the other hand, take the physics perspective of dynamics, which is the study of forces that produce motion (Beggs 1983).

When force is applied to a human in motion, both the force and the human are doing work (Zatsiorsky 2002). A human moving against a force expends greater work (negative force; Zatsiorsky 2002). For example, when walking uphill the increasing incline and negative gravitational push force results in positive work on behalf of the body in motion (as they must compensate by doing the work themselves; Margaria 1968). We argue that a dynamic brand logo (depicting a human figure in motion), with a force applied in the opposite direction to the human figure in motion (negative force), creates the perception of greater work, whereas a kinematic brand logo, with no force applied, creates less perceived work. Based on research that finds evidence to suggest that hard working brands are perceived to be reliable and competent (Aaker 1997), and result in positive attitude towards the brand and willingness to buy the brand (Aaker, Vohs, and McGilner 2010; Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer 2013), we suggest that dynamic brand logos (negative force) will enhance consumer attitudinal and behavioral judgments. Formally, our hypothesis is:

**Hypothesis 1:** Dynamic (kinematic) brand logos will result in heightened (reduced) a) brand attitude and b) purchase intention.

**Brand Work-Energy**

According to the work-energy principle, the work done by a force on a particle equals the change in the particle’s kinetic energy (Young and Freedman 2008). When walking uphill, the negative gravitational push force results in the body undertaking greater work, which results in an increase in the energy level of the body in order to accomplish the work (Margaria 1968). As such, we argue that the dynamic brand logo phenomenon manifests due to a brand work-energy effect, whereby dynamic brand logos influence attitudinal and behavioral judgments via perceptions of brand energy.

**Brand Energy and Brand Engagement**

Research demonstrates that active brand logos result in more positive brand attitudes due to brand engagement, whereby motion in the logo encourages consumers to play with the image in their minds (Cian et al. 2014). We argue, however, that the differential effect of kinematic versus dynamic brand logos on attitudinal and behavioral judgments is not driven by brand engagement. Both kinematic and dynamic brand logos include movement and should both equally result in brand engagement. Conversely, we propose a brand work-energy effect, whereby perceptions of brand energy result from active dynamic brand logos, which include force and, as a result, greater work, resulting in more positive brand attitudes and purchase intentions. We expect that the effect of dynamic brand logos on attitudinal and behavioral judgments will manifest through brand energy not via brand engagement. As such, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 2:** The indirect effect of dynamic brand logos on a) brand attitude and b) purchase intention will manifest via brand energy not brand engagement.

**Brand Dynamism and Force**

Whilst a force applied in the opposite direction of motion results in positive work and, subsequently, greater energy exerted, a force applied in the direction of motion results in negative work and less energy expended (Margaria 1968). For example, when a thrust force (e.g., air propulsion) is applied in the direction of motion, the force assists human motion and, therefore, results in less work exerted by the human. We argue that a brand logo depicting a thrust force (air propulsion) and drag force (air resistance) will have differential effects on consumer attitudinal and behavioral judgments. We expect that a thrust force, which signifies less work, will result in attenuation of the brand work-energy effect, reducing perceptions of the brand’s energy, and subsequently diluting brand attitudes and purchase intentions. We, therefore, propose:
Hypothesis 3: Thrust (drag) dynamic brand logos will result in reduced (heightened) brand energy and subsequent a) brand attitude and b) purchase intention.

Study 1

A sample of two hundred members of the Australian general public (90 male, 110 female; \(M_{\text{Age}} = 42.88, SD_{\text{Age}} = 16.07\)) were recruited through an Australian research panel company. A between subjects design was employed, with participants randomly allocated to one of the two experimental conditions: kinematic logo (less gravitational force, \(n = 100\)) or dynamic logo (greater gravitational force, \(n = 100\)).

First, participants were shown a logo for the fictitious brand, Onik. The logo was presented either horizontally (kinematic; \(0^\circ\) inclination) or inclined (dynamic; \(45^\circ\) inclination). Next, employing measures drawn from Mitchell and Olsen (1981), participants were asked to rate their attitude towards the brand (Cronbach \(\alpha = .937\)) and their intention to purchase the brand (Cronbach \(\alpha = .916\)) and the perceived energy of the brand (Cronbach \(\alpha = .933\)). Next, participants reported how engaging the brand logo included a figure and the depiction of motion ("How much motion is shown in the logo for this company?" none at all/a lot) and motion ("How much motion is shown in the logo for this company?" none at all/a lot) depicted in the logo, and report simple demographic information.

Manipulation Check

A significant main effect was observed for brand logo work (\(F (1, 198) = 2.19, p < .001, \eta^2 = .01\)) and brand logo motion (\(F (1, 198) = 2.19, p < .001, \eta^2 = .01\)). As intended, the brand logo depicting tension force was perceived as portraying significantly more work (\(M_{\text{work}} = 4.68, SD_{\text{work}} = 1.51\)) when compared to the no tension force brand logo (\(M_{\text{work}} = 3.68, SD_{\text{work}} = 1.48\)), with no difference in perceived motion observed (tension force: \(M_{\text{motion}} = 4.12, SD_{\text{motion}} = 1.42\); no tension force: \(M_{\text{motion}} = 4.40, SD_{\text{motion}} = 1.13\)).

Results

Effect of Brand Logo Dynamism on Attitude towards the Brand and Purchase Intention.

An ANOVA model was estimated with attitude towards the brand and purchase intention included separately as dependent variables. Results showed that brand logo dynamism has a significant effect on both brand attitude (\(F (1, 198) = 23.95, p < .001, \eta^2 = .108\)) and purchase intention (\(F (1, 198) = 12.25, p < .001, \eta^2 = .061\)). Participants who viewed the dynamic brand logo reported a more positive attitude towards the brand and greater purchase intention (\(M_{\text{Brand}} = 4.89, SD_{\text{Brand}} = .89; M_{\text{purchase}} = 4.47, SD_{\text{purchase}} = .88\)) when compared to those who viewed the kinematic brand logo (\(M_{\text{Brand}} = 4.27, SD_{\text{Brand}} = .90; M_{\text{purchase}} = 3.97, SD_{\text{purchase}} = 1.07\)), supporting Hypothesis 1.

Study 3

A sample of two hundred and fifteen members of the Australian general public (101 male, 114 female; \(M_{\text{Age}} = 42.27, SD_{\text{Age}} = 15.18\)) were recruited through an Australian research panel company. A between subjects design was employed, with participants randomly allocated to one of the two experimental conditions: dynamic thrust logo (propulsion air force, \(n = 107\)) or dynamic drag logo (air resistance force, \(n = 108\)).

First, participants were shown a dynamic logo for the fictitious brand, Vixen. The brand logos included a figure and the depiction of air blowing either behind the figure (thrust force) or towards the figure (drag force). Participants then rated their attitude towards the brand (Cronbach \(\alpha = .955\)), their intention to purchase the brand (Cronbach \(\alpha = .916\)) and the perceived energy of the brand (Cronbach \(\alpha = .917\)). Finally, participants were asked to report the degree of motion and work depicted in the logo, and report simple demographic information.

Manipulation Check

A significant main effect was not observed for brand logo work (\(F (1, 213) = 2.00, p < .158, \eta^2 = .009\); thrust: \(M_{\text{work}} = 4.93, SD_{\text{work}} = 1.45\); drag: \(M_{\text{work}} = 4.69, SD_{\text{work}} = 1.00\)). As intended, a significant main effect was observed for brand logo work (\(F (1, 213) = 41.17, p < .001, \eta^2 = .162\)). Results show that the dynamic drag logo was perceived as portraying significantly more work (\(M_{\text{work}} = 4.63, SD_{\text{work}} = 1.17\)) when compared to the dynamic thrust brand logo (\(M_{\text{work}} = 3.50, SD_{\text{work}} = 1.40\)).
Results

Mediating Role of Brand Engagement and Brand Energy on Attitude towards the Brand and Purchase Intention

Results ($n=10000$, Model 4, Preacher et al. 2007) show that brand logo dynamism is a positive and significant predictor of brand energy and brand energy is positive and significant predictor of attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. Results demonstrate that exposure to a dynamic drag force (dynamic thrust force) brand logo results in stronger (weaker) perceptions of brand energy, with heightened brand energy increasing attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. As the 95% bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect of brand logo dynamism on both brand attitude ($\beta = .52$, $95\% \text{ CI} = .36$ to $.73$) and purchase intention ($\beta = .50$, $95\% \text{ CI} = .33$ to $.72$) did not include zero, a significant mediating effect is demonstrated, supporting Hypothesis 3.

General Discussion

We introduce brand energy, a construct distinguishable from brand engagement and one that can be influenced by work depicted through force and motion in an active brand logo (i.e., gravitational force, tension force, and air resistance force). The results of our studies provide evidence to suggest that force and motion in a dynamic brand logo heightens perceptions of brand energy by increasing perceived work, which we term the brand work-energy effect. We also propose and demonstrate that dynamic brand logos enhance brand attitudes and behavioral judgments. We show that the indirect effect of dynamic brand logos on brand attitudinal and behavioral judgments are significant via perceived brand energy not via brand engagement (as proposed as tested by Cian et al. 2014). We postulate that the motion in a kinematic brand logo results in more perceived brand energy as compared to a static brand logo with no motion. It is, therefore, possible that the effects observed by Cian et al. (2014) can be explained by our brand work-energy effect. Future research is needed in order to test this assertion.

This research is not without limitations. Our stimuli comprise of unknown brands. While we would expect the observed effect to hold within a real brand context, a comparison of the effect of work in brand logos for known brands (e.g., Wella (air resistance force), or Coach (tension force)) is needed to assess the rigor of the brand work-energy effect.

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Special Memories Require Special Protection
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Research has found that memories of special experiences (e.g., vacations, weddings) can be viewed as assets because of their importance for self-definition (Elster and Loewenstein 1992), and consumers often protect such memories in order to safeguard them from contamination by avoiding repetitions of the experience (Zauber, Ratner, and Kim 2009). For example, it was found that following a special resort vacation with friends, participants did not want to return the resort for a work conference.

Our research aims to expand the memory protection literature in three specific ways. One, we suggest that consumers do not avoid all repetitions of special experiences, but only avoid non-special repetitions. We argue that consumers avoid repeating a special experience under ordinary, but not special circumstances (e.g. will not return to the resort for a work trip but will return for an anniversary trip). In other words, the type of interference cue (special versus non-special) moderates memory protection such that only non-special cues trigger memory protection.

Two, we explore the process underlying memory protection and find contamination of a special memory by a non-special cue is perceived as a self-concept threat, leading consumers to avoid this type of contamination. Memories of special experiences are more important for self-definition than are memories of non-special experiences, thus special memories are strongly linked to the self-concept (Belk 1988). We suggest that contaminating a special memory with a non-special cue devalues the memory (by making it seem less special), and consequently devalues the self, by making the individual feel as though they are less special. This threat to the self-concept triggers the desire to protect the memory and results in avoidance of repeating the experience.

Third, we expand current theorizing on how memories can be contaminated by documenting that marketing communications can be perceived as non-special cues, and make the advertised brand seem less special, thereby making an individual consumer’s own personal experience seem less special. This reduction in the specialness has significant negative downstream implications for brand attitudes (less special = less favorable attitudes). These are especially intriguing findings since they suggest that memory contamination and protection may be far more pervasive than originally envisioned, and also because they point to a specialness-contamination tradeoff for marketers.

Study 1 was conducted with 28 participants recruited via an online sample. Participants described a special dinner they had experienced and then rated their likelihood of going back to the same restaurant for another special versus ordinary occasion and likelihood of going back with a different person if it was for a special versus ordinary occasion.

A repeated measures analysis revealed that participants were more likely to return to the restaurant when the follow-up experience was special ($M_{special} = 6.00$) than when it was ordinary ($M_{ordinary} = 4.82$; $F(1,27) = 12.49, p<.01$). Further, even when going back with a different person, participants were more likely to return when the follow-up experience was special ($M_{special} = 5.29$) than when it was ordinary ($M_{ordinary} = 4.54$; $F(1,27) = 6.72, p<.05$).

Study 2 utilized a 2x2 (initial: special vs. non-special) design in which the initial (follow up) experience was a between (within) subjects factor. 141 undergraduates imagined going to dinner for a special or ordinary occasion and then rated their likelihood of going back to the restaurant for another special versus ordinary dinner.

An ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the specialness of the initial and follow-up experiences on willingness to return to the restaurant ($F(1,139) = 56.84, p<.001$). Following a special experience, participants were more likely to return when the follow-up experience was special ($M_{special} = 6.52$) than when it was ordinary ($M_{ordinary} = 5.68$; $F(1,70) = 66.60, p<.001$).

Study 3 utilized a 2 (initial: special vs. non-special) x 2 (experience: special versus non-special) between-subjects design. 192 undergraduate students imagined going out to dinner for either a special or ordinary occasion and were told they had worn a new item of clothing that was described to them. Participants then imagined a follow-up scenario (special vs. non-special) at which they again wore the clothing item and then reported attitudes toward the item.

An ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the initial and follow-up conditions ($F(1,111) = 6.71, p<.01$). Following a special experience, attitudes were more positive when subsequently worn to another special event ($M_{initial_special_followup_special} = 6.11$) than an ordinary ($M_{initial_special_followup_ordinary} = 5.18$; $F(1,113) = 9.36, p<.01$).

Study 4 used an online sample of 192 participants and utilized a 2x2 (initial: special vs. non-special) x 2 (follow-up: special vs. non-special) between-subjects design. The initial and follow-up scenarios were similar to those used in study 3. In order to explore the underlying process, participants reported perceptions of a self-concept threat after reading the follow-up scenario.

An ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the initial condition and the follow-up condition on perceptions of self-concept threat ($F(1,188) = 4.38, p<.05$) and on evaluations of the restaurant ($F(1,188) = 2.74, p=.10$). Participants in the non-special follow-up condition felt more threatened ($M_{initial_special_followup_non-special} = 4.59$) than those in the special follow-up condition ($M_{initial_special_followup_special} = 5.15$; $F(1,188) = 4.16, p<.05$) and evaluated Firefly more positively ($M_{initial_special_followup_special} = 5.83$) than those in the non-special follow-up condition ($M_{initial_special_followup_non-special} = 5.19$; $F(1,188) = 10.17, p<.01$). Mediation analysis using the PROCESS SPSS macro (Model 7; Preacher and Hayes 2004) with specialness of the follow-up as the IV, the initial condition as the moderator, threat as the mediator, and satisfaction as the DV provided support for moderated mediation (95% CI=.0123 to .2830).

Study 5 utilized a 2x2 (initial: special vs. non-special) x 2 (control vs. ad) between-subjects design. 135 undergraduates imagined either a special or ordinary dinner, and were then either shown an ad for the restaurant before filling out the dependent measures or taken directly to the dependent measures (control condition). The main dependent measures were perceptions of how special the dinner was and evaluations of the restaurant.

An ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the initial experience and marketing communication on specialness perceptions ($F(1,131) = 3.82, p<.05$) and attitudes ($F(1,131) = 4.41, p<.05$). Following a special experience, participants in the control condition perceived their experience as more special ($M_{special} = 6.28$) than those who had viewed an ad ($M_{ad} = 5.63$; $F(1,131) = 6.52, p<.05$), and had more positive attitudes ($M_{special} = 6.36$) than those who viewed the ad ($M_{ad} = 5.74$; $F(1,131) = 7.49, p<.01$).
REFERENCES
People with low self-regulatory resources have been shown to be more likely to yield to temptation and to buy impulsively (e.g., Vohs & Faber, 2007). Hence, we expect that their purchase intentions towards products advertised within the media content will be higher. Therefore, we expect the following:

**Hypothesis 3:** High levels of autonomy when media multitasking will lead to lower self-regulatory resources when media multitasking frequency is higher (versus lower) and consequently to higher purchase intentions for the advertised brand.

To investigate the role of motivation versus ability, the autonomy with which respondents could allocate their attention between two media tasks was manipulated in our two studies. In one condition they could freely switch their attention (as internally motivated) across two media streams (television and internet), whereas in the other condition respondents were forced to switch their attention guided by the sign of the researcher (motivation to switch no longer plays a role). If a motivational aspect is indeed at play, then HMMs should experience stronger cognitive deficits compared to LMMs when attention switching is internally driven.

For the first study (N = 85, 69% women, Mage = 21.93), we conducted a between subjects factorial design with three conditions (sequential, multitasking under low autonomy over attention allocation and multitasking under high autonomy over attention allocation). This study tested the moderating impact of autonomy over attention allocation on the effect of media multitasking frequency on self-regulatory resources in a very controlled multitasking setting. The moderation was tested by model 1 of the process macro of Hayes (2013; 5,000 bootstraps; 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals). The interaction term was statistically significant indicating that the effect of media multitasking frequency on self-regulatory resources changes across different levels of autonomy, $B = 14.29, SE = 5.94, t(48) = 2.41, p = .02$. This analysis shows us that only under conditions of high autonomy, thus when motivation is at play, HMMs needed more time to complete the Stroop Task compared to LMMs. Under low autonomy conditions, so when only ability is expected to be at play, no significant difference between HMMs and LMMs in Stroop performance and thus self-regulatory resources could be found.

The aim of study II study (N = 91, 56% women, Mage = 22.64) was to replicate the findings of study I in a more naturalistic media multitasking environment and to test the implications of self-regulatory differences for advertising effectiveness. Therefore, the same between subjects factorial design as in study I was conducted. The results of study II reveal that the interaction term stays statistically significant within a more naturalistic media multitasking setting, $B = 1.36, SE = .44, t(5) = 3.09, p = .003$. A thereferent conducted spotlight analysis, confirmed the findings of study I, showing that the effect of media multitasking frequency on self-regulatory resources was only significant under conditions of high autonomy, thus when motivation was at play. Further on, a moderated mediation analysis (Hayes,
2013, Model 8, 5,000 bootstraps; 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals), \( ab = .266, SE = .18, 95\% LLCI = .013, 95\% ULCI = .752 \), revealed that the effect of media multitasking frequency on purchase intentions was mediated by self-regulatory resources depending on the level of autonomy. When autonomy was high, we found a significant positive indirect effect of media multitasking frequency on purchase intentions through self-regulatory resources. On the contrary, when autonomy was low, this indirect effect was eliminated.

Summarized, our data suggests that HMMs are more depleted than LMMs under conditions of high autonomy over attention allocation, most likely because of lower motivation to exert attentional control. This proposition is further supported by the finding that, under conditions of low autonomy of attention allocation, HMMs were equally depleted compared to LMMs. The results also supported the assumption that the fewer self-regulatory resources for HMMs under conditions of high autonomy impaired their ability to resist persuasive attempts.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In 2013, hundreds died when a clothing factory in Bangladesh collapsed, provoking an international outcry over unsafe working conditions and meager wages in the developing world. Companies like Nike, H&M, Gap, and Disney have been heavily criticized for employing low-wage labor, and have often abandoned these factories in response. For instance, Nike “decided to reduce [their] Bangladesh footprint” as a result of these concerns (Powell 2014). But does banning these labor practices actually help disadvantaged workers?

People in the developing world often elect to work under conditions that are morally outrageous to those in the developed world, such as low wages, long hours, and poor safety conditions. The increasing prevalence of outsourced production has spurred varied forms of resistance from ethically minded consumers, including boycotts of exploitative companies and petitions to improve wages and standards in labor exchanges. Though the desire to improve the lives of disadvantaged people in developing countries is nearly universal, many advocates warn that anti-sweatshop initiatives might harm the very people they mean to help by threatening the existence of their best or only available opportunities, leaving them with even worse alternatives (Kristof 2009; Powell and Skarbek 2006). In other words, “bad jobs at bad wages are better than no jobs at all” (Krugman 1997).

This article investigates how consumers in the developed world react to exploitative labor practices that are beneficial to the disadvantaged. We suggest that the moral outrage provoked by exploitation can divert consumers’ attention away from the benefits of exploitative practices for disadvantaged workers. This has downstream consequences for consumer behavior in the first world (e.g., intentions to engage with exploitative companies) and the persistence of disadvantage in third world (e.g., support for policies that might eliminate opportunities to earn).

Moral Outrage and Beneficial Exploitation

An exchange can be called exploitative when one party takes advantage of its position to obtain most of the value created through the exchange. However, the imbalance between the benefits obtained by the two parties is unrelated to whether the exchange is harmful or mutually beneficial (Wertheimer and Zwolinski 2016). In other words, the consequences for the disadvantaged party are crucial: are they worse off or better off than they were before the exchange? When parties are not coerced but voluntarily opt into a labor exchange, this signals that the relatively disadvantaged party still finds it better than the available alternatives. Disadvantaged workers often find earning by working under exploitive conditions far better than the other alternatives they face: either unemployment or working under even worse conditions. Because restricting the range of opportunities for a labor exchange (e.g., by demanding that companies pay higher wages) can impair the very existence of the exchange (e.g., by inducing companies to relocate), consumer resistance to exploitative practices can ultimately harm the disadvantaged (Powell and Zwolinski 2012, Zwolinski 2007). Because workers in the developing world lack better alternatives (Powell and Skarbek 2006), human rights campaigns in countries like Indonesia have resulted in massive unemployment and harmed disadvantaged workers (Harrison and Scorse 2010).

People’s attitudes towards sweatshops may not account for these consequences to the disadvantaged. Moral outrage over unfair or exploitative work conditions may drive consumers to reinstate fairness by punishing advantaged exploiters through boycotts or petitions to improve labor conditions through legislation (Garret 1987, Kozinets and Handelman 2004), but these actions may not actually promote the welfare of exploited workers (Darley and Pittman 2003). In other words, consumers’ moral outrage may lead them to neglect how exploited workers benefit from exploitative exchanges and thereby neglect their voluntary, mutually beneficial nature (cf., Baron, Bazerman and Shonk 2006; Bazerman, Magliozi and Neale 1985; Caplan 2007). This paper examines whether moral concern for the disadvantaged can make consumers insensitive to the benefits of exploitation for the disadvantaged.

Six studies investigate how consumers in the developed world react to exploitative labor practices that benefit the disadvantaged. We show that consumers do not consistently view low-wage employment as a means to benefit those most in need (Study 1A-1B). Providing materially irrelevant information about the wages of more privileged workers (Study 2A) or executives (Study 2B) provokes moral outrage and greater resistance to exploitative labor that benefits disadvantaged workers. On the contrary, directing consumers’ attention to the alternatives faced by disadvantaged workers reduces resistance (Study 3A-3B). Our studies were conducted with US residents through Amazon Mechanical Turk, using between-subjects designs with a target sample size of 100 participants per condition. All study materials are available here: https://tinyurl.com/sweatshopappendix.

Study 1A: Employment Decisions are Less Need-Based Than Donations

Study 1A (N = 201) tested whether consumers view employment as a means of helping the disadvantaged by comparing this decision to an otherwise equivalent donation decision. Respondents read about a wealthy businessman planning to allocate resources to either a developed country (the US) or a fictional developing country (Sangala), where the same amount could have 20 times more impact due to a lower cost of living. We manipulated whether the resources to allocate were monetary donations or employment opportunities. Participants indicated whether the businessman should allocate resources to people in the US or Sangala. When allocation was framed as a donation, 71% of participants felt it was appropriate to allocate resources to Sangala, but this percentage decreased to 48% when the decision was framed as employment ($\chi^2(1) = 11.11, p < .001$). Participants were thus less prone to allocate employment opportunities to those most in need, indicating that many do not view employment as a means to create social welfare.

For participants in this study, choosing not to allocate resources to a third-world country entailed benefiting their home country. We conducted Study 1B to examine whether these results depend on participants’ preferences for allocating resources to their home country.
Study 1B: Insensitivity to Need is Robust to Home-Country Preferences

Study 1B (N = 202) compared donation and employment decisions using the same scenario and cost-of-living information as Study 1A but used a fictional developed country, Norland, in place of the US. To disentangle participants’ own preferences for allocation from beliefs about what would strategically benefit the businessman, we reworded our dependent variable question as “How would you like the businessman to allocate his money?”

When framed as a donation decision, 94% of respondents favored allocating resources to Sangala, indicating a nearly unanimous desire to help the most disadvantaged. However, only 78% wanted the businessman to employ Sangalians, a significant difference (χ²(1) = 10.99, p < .001). The shift in allocations relative to Study 1A indicates the presence of home-country effects in both conditions in Study 1A. However, these effects cannot explain the difference between conditions.

These two studies suggest that consumers do not consistently view employment opportunities as resources to benefit those most in need. Studies 2A and 2B investigated how the salience of workers’ disadvantage relative to others affects consumers’ resistance to exploitation and appreciation of its benefits.

Study 2A: Salient Worker Disadvantage Increases Resistance

Study 2A (N = 202) used a sweatshop scenario in which a clothing company from Norland opened a factory in Sangala and improved its financial performance through reduced labor costs. We tested whether consumer resistance to exploitative labor conditions depends on their disadvantage relative to workers in first-world countries. Participants in the control condition only learned that workers in the Sangalian factory “make the equivalent of $1200 per year, on average.” In the disadvantageous comparison condition, participants also read about the company’s Norlandian factory where workers “make the equivalent of $24,000, on average.”

We measured consumer resistance using seven items to capture purchase avoidance intentions (e.g., “I would rather buy from a Domino’s competitor than from Domino’s”; “I would support a boycott of Domino’s products”) and policy judgments (“Domino’s factory in Sangala should be closed”). In accordance with our conceptualization of beneficial exploitation, we also measured moral outrage towards the company and perceived benefits for disadvantaged workers (i.e., whether the factory leaves them worse off or better off) to explain these effects.

Making this wage disparity salient made participants significantly more resistant (M = 4.54 vs. 3.97, p = .005). This effect was explained by both increased moral outrage at the company’s practices (indirect effect = 0.59, SE = .14, 95% CI [0.33, 0.88]) and though decreased perceptions that the factory benefited Sangalian workers (indirect effect = 0.10, SE = .06, 95% CI [0.02, 0.23]). Study 2B sought to conceptually replicate these findings by providing a comparison that was arguably even less relevant: the salary gap between exploited workers and the company CEO.

Study 2B: Salient CEO-Worker Disparity Increases Resistance

Study 2B (N = 204) used the same scenario, design, and measures as Study 2A. In the disparity condition, however, participants read that thanks to the company’s performance, the CEO’s income “increased to $12,000,000 from $6,000,000 in the previous year.”

Conceptually replicating Study 2A, considering the disparity between parties significantly increased consumer resistance (M = 4.33 vs. 3.73, p = .007). This effect was mediated by moral outrage (indirect effect = 0.35, SE = .15, 95% CI [0.08, 0.68]) and by decreased perceptions of benefits for disadvantaged Sangalians (indirect effect = 0.10, SE = .05, 95% CI [0.01, 0.23]).

Though the salaries of workers in Norland or the company CEO are irrelevant to judgments about whether exploitative labor opportunities leave Sangalians better off than the alternatives, these findings show that highlighting the relative disadvantage of Sangalians can reduce consideration of their welfare. Since the benefits of exploitative exchange depend on its superiority to available alternatives, Study 3A examined if prompting this alternate comparison could reduce resistance.

Study 3A: Prompting Consideration of Alternatives Reduces Consumer Resistance

In Study 3A (N = 205), we examined whether resistance to exploitation is attenuated when consumers are prompted to consider the alternatives faced by disadvantaged workers. We used the same scenario and measures as in Study 2A-2B. Across two conditions, we noted that although conditions and wages in the factory were much worse than those in the company’s Norlandian factories, these jobs were in great demand among the Sangalians. In the treatment condition we prompted respondents to consider the alternatives to factory labor available to Sangalians, including unemployment or employment under even worse conditions.

Relative to the control condition, considering Sangalians’ alternatives reduced resistance (M = 4.87 vs. 4.34, t(203) = 2.36, p = .019). Though participants were outraged at the company across conditions, the prompt reduced consumer resistance by increasing participants’ appreciation of the benefits for Sangalians (indirect effect = -.195, SE = .069, 95% CI [-.343, -.068]).

These findings further support the notion that people naturally neglect to consider how disadvantaged workers can benefit from exploitative practices. But is it really the case that people neglect to consider disadvantaged workers in particular, rather than counterfactual scenarios in general? Study 3B tested this possibility.

Study 3B: Consumers Focus on Advantageed Parties and Neglect the Disadvantaged

To assess whether consumers neglect to consider disadvantaged parties in particular, Study 3B (N = 307) included a third condition with a separate prompt. In particular, we prompted respondents to consider the alternatives faced by either the disadvantaged parties (Sangalian workers) or an advantaged party (the clothing company CEO, who would earn less without operating the factory). We also directly asked people how much they focused on the advantaged versus disadvantaged party when reporting their resistance to the company. These prompts significantly affected consumer resistance (F(2, 304) = 8.97, p < .001). Compared to the control condition, considering the alternatives faced by the Sangalians significantly reduced resistance (M = 5.02 vs. 4.21, p < .001), an effect that was mediated by greater perceived benefits for Sangalians (indirect effect = .40, SE = .140, 95% CI [.11, .66]) and reduced outrage at the company (indirect effect = .15, SE = .051, 95% CI [.07, .29]). In contrast, considering the alternatives faced by the CEO had no effect on consumer resistance (M = 5.02 vs. 4.79, p = .245).

Compared to the control condition, considering Sangalian workers also reduced focus on Domino’s CEO (M = 3.56 vs. 2.88, p = .009), while prompting consideration of the CEO had no effect (M = 3.56 vs. 3.44, p = .647). Together, these findings indicate that consumers may naturally focus on punishing advantageed parties when
evaluating unfair labor practices, but focus less on the welfare of disadvantaged parties.

**General Discussion**

We live in a world of limited and imperfectly distributed resources. Despite the unprecedented prosperity enjoyed by many in the developed world, about a tenth of the world’s population still lives in extreme poverty. Though sympathy and moral concern for the disadvantaged is nearly universal, prosocial efforts are often misguided. For instance, people fail to allocate donations to the most effective charities (Berman et al. 2015), and humanitarian aid in response to natural disasters depends more on the number of fatalities than on the number of people in need (Evangelidis and Van den Bergh 2013).

Our results show that people might fail to benefit the disadvantaged because of their moral concerns. By the standards of the developed world, work conditions and wages in the developing world are outrageously poor. In light of the advantages of other parties (e.g., workers in developed countries and company executives), consumers are right to label these labor practices as unfair and exploitative. However, unfair or not, banning these exchanges may eliminate workers’ only means of remedying their disadvantage. Just as sympathy for those in need may lead to suboptimal allocations of charitable resources (Loewenstein and Small 2007; Small 2010), moral outrage over the poor conditions and inequalities faced by disadvantaged populations may thus harm them more.

These findings join recent warnings that moral concerns often restrict the acceptability of the solutions we consider to create social welfare (Bloom 2016). People often view profit-seeking as fundamentally incompatible with societal good, regarding those who personally benefit from charitable behaviors as worse than those who do nothing to help others (Newman and Cain 2014). Restrictions on these exchanges may have steep societal costs. For instance, moral objections to exchanging organs may be costing hundreds of lives every day (Roth 2007), and keeping for-profit firms from participating in charitable enterprises may dramatically reduce charitable funds available to those in need (Pallotta 2008). However, our findings suggest that the costs of moral outrage can be mitigated. Considering workers’ (lack of) alternatives increases consumers’ support for employment in the developing countries and increases their appreciation of the benefits of these exploitative exchanges despite their persistent moral concerns (cf., Newman and Cain 2014).

Though helping the disadvantaged is an admirable goal, doing so effectively may require confronting realities that are shocking to first-world consumers yet obvious to third-world workers themselves. Hence, workers’ own choices, and the enormous unmet demand for more sweatshop jobs (Kristof 2009; Powell and Zwolinski 2012), may reflect better awareness of these realities. Where no perfect solutions are likely to appear, even deeply flawed, imperfect solutions may merit consideration. Solving persistent social problems like global poverty may require us to use all the tools at our disposal.

**REFERENCES**


Consuming the Streets: Story of a Street Peddler
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Informal retailers are described as “dealers whose shops consist solely of portable stalls or modified vehicles, whose cachement areas are determined by whatever market circuits the vendor choses to travel, whose income may or may not be reported accurately to tax authorities” (Sherry, 2001). Street vendors contribute to the overall economic activity, to sustaining themselves as well as their dependents, to the expansion of the range of places and times where goods and services are provided. They are also seen as manifestations of a peaceful and informal revolution of hard-working poor people against a regulatory state promoting the interests of big businesses. Informal commerce has become a lifesaving income opportunity for the unemployed in many countries. As an alternative consumption space in informal commerce, street peddlers provide an immediate service to passers by either using creative product presentations or social performances such as street cries or demonstrations. Individual accounts of street vendors have been a neglected area in consumption research and this study will try to invite the reader to take a glimpse into the life of a street vendor to introduce the reader to the behind-the-scenes of the informal market retailing, consumption. The article aims to make a contribution to the marketplaces cultures domain (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) and provides a case study of a vendor in Istanbul to demonstrate the interactions between the buyers and seller as well as map his consumption space in terms of human interaction, space allocation and advertising practices.

Literature suggests that peddling has developed in Turkey as a result of internal migration from rural areas especially in the last 30 years (Akgeyik, Yavuz, Ersoz, Ozdemir, & Senocak, 2004). As internal rural-urban migrants are unable to find formal employment in urban settings, they are inclined to work informally as street peddlers. Peddling has turned into a social reality characterizing the income dimension of a certain lifestyle (p.20). One of the most striking qualities of informal commerce jobs is the fact that these jobs are found hastily and as means of income, not as a career step. People who are involved in informal sector jobs in Istanbul are mainly interested in finding a source of income for themselves and their families. Without the fixed costs of taxes, store rent, electricity or water bills, street peddlers are able to offer lower priced yet lower quality products or services compared to their formal settled competitors. In the Turkish context, lower priced products satisfy the demands of many low-income consumers. As the internal migration continues from rural to urban areas resulting in low-income consumer masses, demand for street peddling sector increases. Thus, street peddling and informal commerce are guaranteed to be long lasting (Baştaymaz, 1999, p.3) in Istanbul. Another factor supporting street peddling in urban areas is the fact that establishing a formal business is a costly and a long procedural process. Starting a business by completing the legal procedures creates significant limitations for low-income people and it becomes a discouraging construct for individual entrepreneurs. As a result, those who want to be producers or sellers with their individual initiative opt for the easiest way, namely street peddling (Akgeyik, Yavuz, Ersoz, Ozdemir, & Senocak, 2004, p.52). In times of economic crises, major businesses and stores opt for using peddlers as subcontractors in order to ride out fiscal crises with minimal loss. The peddlers involved in such an alliance either share the profits with businesses or are used as wholesale buyers (Yıldız, 2008). The customer-seller relationship has become an important factor in peddling. The hundreds of thousands of people working as street peddlers virtually create a new employment culture (Akgeyik, Yavuz, Ersoz, Ozdemir, & Senocak, 2004, p.50). This study utilizes qualitative methods of participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews with the peddler, introducing the reader to behind the scenes. The study focuses on a single peddler, Xalo, in Istanbul, Turkey to whom I had access to, thus developing this research into a case study mapping his consumption space in terms of human interaction, space allocation and advertising practices.

Findings include fluidity of the consumption place, competitive yet cooperative behavior between sellers and lack of social performance in advertising practices. Nakaniš’s (1990) argument on segmentation based on mutually beneficial interpersonal relationships and uncompetitive markets in the informal sector finds support in this study. As Price and Arnould (1999) suggest, friendships among competitors are characterized by intimacy, loyalty and social support. As a retail service, peddling depends highly on product presentation. Without the formal marketing developments such as packaging, advertising or promotion, peddlers in the informal sector are forced to find creative solutions for presentation of products they sell through street shows (Akbulut, 2009) in Istanbul. Thus, it is possible to see peddlers who do not use performances or other means of unSophisticated advertising solutions to sell their products. Similar to the young man selling flashlight batteries in Ankara mentioned in Uysal’s (1968) research, Xalo does not use street cries or performances when he sells his products. None of the peddlers on the street use street cries, street shows or other means of social performance contrary to what Akbulut (2009) suggests. The findings support Varman and Costa (2009) that vendors do not try to steal each others’ customers by “calling out”. As important yet neglected actors of commerce in many developing and developed countries, peddlers create an innovative and convenient new geography of consumption. Street cars that peddlers sell their products on can be thought of as a fluid yet enduring consumption space where consumers can find items of interest. In this context, space should be thought of as socially produced as Lefebvre’s space involving the production of social relations and new forms of spatialities (Mansvelt, 2005). As creators of such fluid consumption spaces, this study intended to invite the reader to take a glimpse into the life of a street vendor and introduce the reader to the behind-the-scenes of the informal market retailing and consumption.

REFERENCES


EXTEDNTED ABSTRACT

In recent times, the reduction of waste and the practice of recycling have become two major topics in the societal debate. While the issue of garbage disposal has been affecting the Western World for the past decades, the global scenario has recently exacerbated due to the increased consumption volume (and related waste) of developing nations. In the past, scholars and policy makers have tried to educate as well as incentivize practices like recycling to avoid land-fill stocks and create new objects from past used materials (Reid, 1990). Such products have been commercialized more and more by big brands (i.e. Adidas and Levi’s) and by famous fashion designers (i.e. Stella McCartney).

While more academic literature has focused on drivers for consumers motivations to engage in recycling activities (Trudel, Argo, and Medel 2016), there has been little research investigating consumers’ underlying psychological factors to favour recycled products over standard ones (Mobley, Painter, Untch, and Unnava 1998). In this study we address this issue by experimentally testing consumer evaluation and intention to adopt recycled products through an implicit theory – or mind-sets- framework on.

Implicit theories are beliefs individuals have about the human characteristics (Dweck, 1999). Some individuals maintain a fixed mind-set (or entity theory), believing that human traits—such as intelligence, personality, and morality—are relatively fixed. According to this mind-set, characteristics are stable and there is not much that can be changed about them (Dweck, 1999). Conversely, people with a growth mind-set (or incremental theory), believe that people can substantially modify their characteristics and that these characteristics are malleable. Learning and experience can in fact foster development and change even basic traits of a person together with its behaviour. In other words, incremental theorists suggest that those who strive to change an aspect of their nature can do so. Implicit theories also shape the way people think about effort (Grant and Dweck, 2003). As entity theorists believe traits are innate and unchangeable, they also tend also minimize role of effort. Achievements are in fact based on traits rather than experience and learning. In contrast, incremental theorists view effort as an important element of human nature as it allows to improve and develop, realizing their greater potential. Indeed, if things come too easily, it means they are staying in their comfort zone and not realizing their full potential. Transferring these views in the domain of recycled products, these kind of items are usually manufactured through a sometimes complicated and highly effortful process, bringing for example a plastic water bottle to become fabric for a t-shirt or a pair of trousers. We therefore believe that individuals behaving an incremental theory will be showing a higher intention to purchase a recycled (vs. non-recycled) product when they perceive the manufacturer to have put a high amount of effort to create the object. Hence, we hypothesize that perceived effort in creating the product mediates the relationship between product type and purchase intention, and that this effect is stronger when an individual is an incremental theorists.

In a set of three experiments we test the effect of implicit theories to consumers’ intention to adopt recycled products. In the first experiment we asked participants to evaluate their intention to purchase a standard product or one made from recycled plastic, measuring their implicit theory type. The results showed a significant higher purchase intention for incremental theorists, (i.e. individuals who believe traits are malleable and can change) than for entity theorists (who instead believe traits are fixed and unchangeable). In a second laboratory experiment we manipulated implicit theories product type (recycled vs. non-recycled) measuring individuals’ level of appreciation through a single category implicit association test. We found out that incremental theorists preferred the recycled product more than entity theorists. In our third experiment we found how this effect is mediated by consumers’ perception of the effort invested by the company to create the product. Specifically, the role played by the effort invested by the company in creating the recycled product mediated the effect on the type of product (recycled vs. non-recycled) on consumers’ intention to purchase it. This result was stronger in the case on individuals in the incremental condition than in the entity condition.

Taken together, the results of these studies contribute to the literature on implicit theory by investigating another area in consumer psychology (intention to adopt recycled products) so far unexplored, responding to the call for more research made by John and Park (2016). On a managerial point of view, this study suggests how highlighting the effort spent by a company in creating the product (for example by mentioning the hard work done by their R&D department before the official launch) can attract consumer (especially incremental theorists) to intend to buy the product. Some limitations of this study (i.e. testing the effect on more product categories or ways to make recycled products more appealing to entity theorists) can be investigated by future research.

REFERENCES
Putting on a Show or Showing My True Self?  
Exploring Consumers’ Desire to Signal Accurate versus Enhanced Identities

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research has shown that consumers use self-enhancing products to compensate for negative self-views, especially in the domain of public consumption (e.g., Berger and Heath 2007; Rucker and Galinsky 2008; Escalas and Bettman 2005; White and Dahl 2006). For instance, Rucker and Galinsky found that powerless individuals are more likely to consume status-related products than those who feel powerful (Rucker and Galinsky 2008). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that consumers are also concerned with signaling accurate self-view information to others, even when these self-views are negative. For instance, the People of Walmart website features low socioeconomic status individuals who seem to intentionally wear unflattering clothes, hairdos, and makeup.

Our research attempts to reconcile prior findings that consumers acquire and display products to be seen favorably with the notion that consumers sometimes want products that accurately signal how they see themselves. We posit that competing motives of self-verification and self-enhancement drive differing consumption responses. In particular, while self-enhancement theory asserts that people are primarily motivated to be seen favorably (Sedikides 1993), self-verification theory argues that people are motivated to be known and understood by others, even in the domain of negative self-views. Drawing on recent research showing that self-verification versus self-verification motives can be situationally activated (Kraus and Chen 2009), we demonstrate that an active self-verification motive leads consumers to prefer public products that accurately reflect an underlying self-view. In contrast, activating a self-enhancement motive dampens this effect, as negative self-view consumers no longer desire accurate identity products.

In study 1, we sought evidence that situational activation of a self-verification (vs. self-enhancement) motive could influence consumers’ preferences for a negative identity product. We conducted a 2 (motive: self-verification vs. self-enhancement, between) × (appearance-esteem, continuous) design. Based on findings that people are motivated to self-verify (vs. self-enhance) when around socially close (vs. socially distant) others (Kraus and Chen 2009; Swann, De La Ronde, and Hixon 1994), we asked participants in the self-verification condition to write about a significant other (e.g., close friend or family member) and participants in the self-enhancement condition to write about a loose acquaintance. Next, in a supposedly unrelated study, we asked participants to rate their likelihood of purchasing a graphic t-shirt with the tagline “Too Ugly for L.A.” We found a significant motive × appearance-esteem interaction (b = -.38, t(245) = -2.02, p = .04). Importantly, when people wrote about a close other, activating a self-verification motive, lower appearance-esteem increased preference for the “ugly” t-shirt (b = -.28, t(245) = -2.06, p = .04). In contrast, when people wrote about a distant other, activating a self-enhancement motive, this effect was dampened (ns). An additional spotlight contrast showed that low appearance-esteem participants were marginally less likely to purchase the shirt in the self-enhancement (vs. self-verification condition (b = .54, t(245) = 1.91, p < .06).

In study 2, we replicated this basic finding, but in a different self-view domain and a different product class. We conducted a 2 (motive) × (chronic power, continuous) design. Participants completed the social distance manipulation from study 1 and indicated their preference between a Lexus (high status) and a Kia (low status) branded car. We found a significant motive × power interaction (b = -4.47, t(339) = -2.61, p < .01). Among participants who wrote about a close other (self-verification condition), lower power increased preference for the Kia over the Lexus (b = -4.55, t(339) = -3.71, p < .001). In contrast, among participants who wrote about a distant other (self-enhancement condition), lower power did not increase preference for the Kia (ns). An additional spotlight contrast showed that this dampening was driven by low power participants decreased preference for the Kia in the self-enhancement condition (b = 23.13, t(339) = 2.92, p < .01).

In study 3, we sought to replicate our prior findings using a different situational activation of motive. We ran a 2 (motive) × (power) design. We asked participants to read a Forbes Magazine article entitled “Should You Be Yourself in a Job Interview?” In the self-verification condition, the article argued that interviewees should share accurate information about themselves during the job interview (“…candidates should do all they can to emphasize their true selves, even if means acknowledging their weaknesses…”). In the self-enhancement condition, the article argued that interviewees should only share highly positive information about themselves during the job interview (“…candidates should do all they can to emphasize the positive aspects of themselves, while downplaying the negatives…”). Afterwards, participants again indicated their preference between Lexus and Kia. The motive × power interaction was significant (b = -4.68, t(352) = -2.00, p < .05). When we activated a self-verification motive, lower power increase preference for Kia over Lexus (b = -4.37, t(352) = -2.79, p < .01). In contrast, when we activated a self-enhancement motive, power did not affect preference (ns). Further, a spotlight contrast showed that low power participants exhibited a decreased preference for Kia in the self-enhancement (vs. self-verification) condition (stats).

In study 4, we sought a boundary condition regarding when situational activation of a self-verification motive (via a social distance manipulation) would not increase preference for product signaling an accurate self-view. We predicted that participants with high (vs. low) fear-of-negative-feedback (Watson and Friend 1969) would be less likely to prefer products that signaled an accurate self-view because negative self-view participants with high fear-of-negative-feedback would exhibit a decreased preference of the Kia over the Lexus. We ran a 2 (motive) × (fear of negative evaluation) × (power) design. There was a significant motive × fear of negative evaluation × power interaction (b = 8.02, t(180) = 2.25, p < .03). Consistent with predictions, among participants with a low fear of negative evaluation, when we activated a self-verification motive, the power coefficient was negative and significant, such that lower (vs. higher) power increased points allocated to Kia over Lexus (b = -10.27, t(180) = -3.07, p = .003). Among participants with a high fear of negative evaluation, the effect of a self-verification motive on preference was fully attenuated (b = -3.29, t(180) = -.89, ns).
Introduction

“Dressed like this, in the ugliest clothes I could muster, I set off for the estate where Anne Lisbet lived...[The] filthy, ugly clothes I was wearing, the drooping head, all of this was for her benefit, so that she would understand.” (Knougaard 2009)

In the above passage, the character who has been feeling sorry for himself for some time, responds to his girlfriend’s apparent obliviousness by wearing the most unattractive clothing he can find. Indeed, it often appears that consumers acquire and display products to accurately signal something about themselves to others, even if that signal is negative. For instance, people who suffer from depression or low self-esteem may accurately signal how they feel about themselves by wearing clothes and listening to music associated with negative subcultural identities (Sedgwick 2013). However, it also contradicts the popular notion that consumers primarily purchase products in order to signal positive information about themselves to others (e.g. Berger and Heath 2007; Rucker and Galinsky 2008; Escalas and Bettman 2005; White and Dahl 2006). What accounts for this behavior?

Our research investigates this question by building on the theory of self-verification (Swann 1983). According to self-verification theory, people seek to be known and understood by others in a manner that is consistent with their self-views, even when these views are negative. We demonstrate that situational activation of a self-verification (vs. self-enhancement) motive lead consumers to prefer public consumption that signals accurate (vs. enhanced) self-view information to others.

We make several contributions to the literature. First, we provide a more nuanced understanding of consumer signaling behavior by focusing on a counterintuitive implication of self-verification theory: that consumers sometimes want to publically signal accurate, and even negative self-views, rather than only positive self-views. Furthermore, we contribute to the self-verification literature itself. While studies in this area have largely focused on how self-verification motives drive feedback preferences and partner selection behavior (Swann, Rentfrow, and Guinn 2003), little research to date has explored whether these motives influence how people signal information about themselves to others, for example through their consumption choices. Finally, we demonstrate two boundary conditions of self-verification by showing that the effects of these motives disappear when consumers consider using a product privately (vs. publicly), as well as when consumers have a high (vs. low) fear of negative social evaluation.

Competing Motives: Self-Enhancement Versus Self-Verification

According to self-enhancement theory, people strive to create to maintain a positive self-view (Sedikides 1993). The motive to self-enhance often leads people to misrepresent their actual traits and abilities. For example, people tend to have exaggerated perceptions of their control over outcomes (Taylor and Brown 1988). Based on the plethora of evidence that people want to achieve a positive self-image, several scholars have argued that self-enhancement is a universal human motivation (e.g. Taylor and Brown 1988; Sedikides 1993). Self-enhancement motives can increase consumer preferences for products that signal highly positive information about the self (Belk 1988; Berger and Health 2007; 2008; Escalas and Bettman 2005). For instance, people engage in conspicuous consumption of luxury products in order to signal social status and power (Rucker and Galinsky 2008; 2009; Vehlen 1899), attract mates and deter rivals (Griskevicius et al. 2007), and maintain or enhance self-esteem (Sivanathan and Pettit 2010). Not only do self-enhancement motives lead consumers to choose products that signal positive information about themselves, they also lead them to avoid products associated with negative or undesirable information. For instance, men eschew products that signal feminine traits (White and Dahl 2006). Consumers also strive to use products that signal unique and differentiated social identities in order to avoid being seen as “conformists” (Beger and Heath 2007).

In contrast, proponents of self-verification theory (Swann 1983) have argued that people are not singularly motivated by self-enhancement motives. Instead, people also have a fundamental desire to be known and understood by others, even in domains of self-perceived flaws and shortcomings. For instance, people prefer interaction partners who give them accurate, as opposed to overly favorable, evaluations of their skills and abilities in several domains (e.g. physical attractiveness, intelligence, and athletic ability), even when these self-views are negative (Hixon and Swann 1993; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 1992; Swann, Pelham, and Krull 1989; Swann et al. 1990; Swann et al. 1992). Furthermore, people who view themselves negatively prefer feedback that validates negative feelings, as opposed to feedback that positively reframes what they are experiencing (Marigold et al. 2014).

Previous research exploring why people sometimes prioritize self-verification over self-enhancement lends insight into how this motive can affect consumer signaling behavior. People self-verify because receiving social confirmation of a self-view provides them with a sense of coherence about their world and themselves (Swann et al. 2003). Even negative self-views may serve as important sources of self-knowledge that must be maintained, not enhanced. Based on this notion, using products that signal accurate self-view information should be a particularly effective method for maintaining self-coherence, as these products provide consumers with an increased sense of assurance that others see them in the same way that they see themselves, without having to explicitly engage in social interactions or elicit direct interpersonal feedback (Oyserman 2009). Based on these ideas, we propose that the situational activation of a self-verification (vs. self-enhancement) motive will cause consumers to prefer products that signal accurate (vs. enhanced) self-view information, even when these views are negative.

For comparison purposes, we consider the relevant baseline condition to be one where consumers have a self-enhancement motive (Baumeister 1989; Kraus and Chen 2009; Sedikides 1993), as prior research has found that people are more practiced at making positive social impressions (Farrow et al. 2015; Swann et al. 1990). We expect that among consumers with an active self-enhancement motive, underlying self-views will not influence product preferences, because all individuals in these conditions will be more concerned with acquiring a product that signals positive (vs. accurate) information about themselves.

Hypothesis 1: There will be an interactive effect of self-view and motive on product preference. Consumers with a self-verification motive will prefer products that are consistent with their self-view, such that consumers with a more negative self-view will exhibit higher evaluations and preference for products that signal negative (vs. positive) information. Among participants with an active self-enhancement motive, no such relationship will exist.
Of note, we do not predict a pattern that is entirely consistent with compensatory self-enhancement, which occurs when individuals with a negative self-view are more motivated to self-enhance than individuals with a positive self-view (see Mandel et al. forthcoming for a review). In the current research, we investigate how self-verification versus self-enhancement motives influence consumption responses to chronic self-views, which are stable views developed over an individual’s lifetime (Ehrlinger and Dunning 2003). As a result, in our studies, participants do not experience the type of self-threat that creates a temporary self-discrepancy, which can in turn lead to compensatory consumption.

Fear-of-Negative-Evaluation as a Boundary Condition

How might this signaling behavior change among consumers who are averse to negative social evaluations? Individuals with high social anxiety are particularly sensitive to the social evaluations of others (Clark and Wells 1995; Rapee and Heimberg 1997). As a result, socially anxious individuals tend to exaggerate the importance of even mildly negative social feedback (Stopa and Clark 2001), leading them to try to avoid negative social evaluations (Wells 1995). Drawing on these findings, we predict that fear of negative social evaluation will dampen the effect of a self-verification motive on the product preference. More specifically, among consumers with a higher fear of negative social evaluation, we expect that fear to outweigh any concerns for self-verification, leading those with both positive and negative self-views to prefer products that signaled enhanced self-view information. In contrast, we expect to replicate our effect of self-verification motives predicted in H1 among individuals with low fear of negative social evaluation.

Hypothesis 2: Among consumers with low fear of negative evaluation, activating a self-verification motive will lead consumers to prefer products that are consistent with their self-view. Among consumers with a high fear of negative evaluation, activating a self-verification motive will not lead consumers to prefer products that are consistent with a self-view.

We tested our hypotheses across four studies. In studies 1–3, we examined whether different situational activations of a self-verification motive led consumers with negative self-views to prefer products that signaled accurate information about themselves. In study 4, we explored a fear-of-negative evaluation as a boundary condition of this effect.

Study 1 – This was a 2 (motive: self-verification vs. self-enhancement, between) × (appearance-esteem, continuous) design. Participants completed a 6-item appearance-esteem scale (Heatherton and Polivy 1991). Next, based on past research finding that people are motivated to self-verify among socially close (vs. socially distant) others (Swann et al. 1994), we situationally activated a self-verification motive by asking participants to write 3-4 sentences about a socially other: “Please write 3-4 sentences about a person whom you have known for a long time...” In the self-enhancement condition, participants wrote about a loose acquaintance: “Please write 3-4 sentences about a person whom you have not known for a long time and do not currently know well...”. Afterwards, we gave participants a supposedly unrelated study asking them to evaluate a graphic t-shirt. We asked participants to rate their likelihood of purchasing a t-shirt with the tagline “Too Ugly for L.A.” written on the front. We found a significant motive × appearance-esteem interaction (b = -.38, t(245) = -2.02, p = .04) (see figure 1). Importantly, when people wrote about a close other, activating a self-verification motive, lower appearance-esteem increased preference for the “ugly” t-shirt (b = -.28, t(245) = -2.06, p = .04). In contrast, when people wrote about a distant other, activating a self-enhancement motive, this effect was dampened (ns). An additional spotlight contrast showed that low appearance-esteem participants were less likely to purchase the shirt in the self-enhancement (vs. self-verification) condition (b = .54, t(245) = 1.91, p < .05).

Study 2 - This was a 2 (motive, between) × (self-esteem, continuous) design. Participants completed an 10-item scale of self-esteem (Rosenberg 1965). Next, we asked participants to write about a socially close (vs. distant) other, similar to study 1. Afterwards, participants completed a supposedly unrelated study where they viewed an advertisement featuring a picture of a Kia (low status) and a Lexus (high status) brand car (Mandel et al. 2006). Afterwards, we asked participants to indicate their preference by allocating a total of 100 points between the two cars, with a higher number indicating a stronger preference for the Kia. The motive × power interaction coefficient was significant (b = -4.47, t(339) = -2.61, p < .01). When participants wrote about a close other, activating a self-verification motive, lower power increased preference for the Kia over the Lexus (b = -4.55, t(339) = -3.71, p < .001). In contrast, when participants wrote about a distant other, activating a self-enhancement motive, lower power did not increase preference for the Kia (ns). An additional spotlight contrast showed that low power participants had a decreased preference for the Kia in the self-enhancement (vs. self-verification) condition (b = 23.13, t(339) = 2.92, p < .01).

Study 3 – We ran a 2 (motive, between) × (power, continuous) design. Participants completed the 8-item scale of chronic power. Next, we activated motive using a different situational manipulation. Specifically, we asked participants to read a Forbes Magazine article entitled “Should You Be Yourself in a Job Interview?” In the self-verification condition, the article argued that interviewees should share accurate information about themselves during the job interview (“...candidates should do all they can to emphasize their true selves, even if means acknowledging their weaknesses…”). In the self-enhancement condition, the article argued that interviewees should only share highly positive information about themselves during the job interview (“...candidates should do all they can to emphasize the positive aspects of themselves, while downplaying the negatives...”). Afterwards, participants allocated 100 points to indicate their preference between Kia and Lexus, similar to study 2. The motive × power interaction coefficient was significant (b = -4.68, t(352) = -2.00, p < .05). When we situationally activated a self-verification motive, the power coefficient was negative and significant, such that lower (vs. higher) power increased the number of points allocated Kia over Lexus (b = -4.37, t(352) = -2.79, p < .01), indicating a desire for the product that accurately signaled participants’ power self-view. In contrast, when we activated a self-enhancement motive, the power did not affect the points allocation (b = .31, t(352) = 1.8, ns).

Study 4 – This study was a 2 (motive: self-verification vs. control) × continuous (fear of negative evaluation) × (power) design meant to test H3. Participants competed the power scale and Watson and Friend’s (1969) Brief Fear-of-Negative-Evaluation Scale. Next, we activated a self-verification motive by asking participants to write about a close other (Kraus and Chen 2009). Participants in the control condition wrote about a neutral topic. We then asked participants to indicate their preference between Kia and Lexus using the point allocation task, similar to study 1. Replicating our previous findings, there was a significant two-way motive × power interaction coefficient (b = -7.18, t(180) = -1.95, p = .05) (H1). More important, and consistent with hypothesis 2, this effect was qualified by a
significant motive × fear of negative evaluation × power interaction (b = 8.02, t(180) = 2.25, p < .03). We further examined the motive × power interaction at one standard deviation above and below mean fear of negative evaluation. Consistent with predictions, among participants with a low fear of negative evaluation, when we activated a self-verification motive, the power coefficient was negative and significant, such that lower (vs. higher) power increased points allocated to Kia over Lexus (b = 10.27, t(180) = -3.07, p = .003). In contrast, in the control condition power did not affect points allocation (b = 4.93, t(180) = 1.34, p = .18). Also consistent with predictions, among participants with a high fear of negative evaluation, the effect of a self-verification motive on preference was fully attenuated, such that power did not affect points allocation (b = -3.29, t(180) = -3.29, ns).

In sum, our research offers one possible explanation for reconciling when consumers prefer products that signal something accurate about themselves versus products that signal something favorable. Specifically, we find that situational activation of a self-verification (vs. self-enhancement) motive (such as when people think about a socially close other) can increase preference for products accurately reflect a self-view, even when that view is negative.

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Trendy or Timeless? The Effect of Need for Uniqueness and Pressure on Choice

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers seeking uniqueness prefer unique, scarce (Snyder and Fromkin 1980), and innovative products (Lynn and Harris 1997) over common ones. However, these consumers frequently choose between products that provide equal degrees of uniqueness, for either longer (timeless products), or shorter (trendy products) time. Moreover, unique products (either timeless or trendy) are often available for limited time or quantity (Cialdini and Garde 1987; Lynn 1991), potentially putting consumers under some pressure when choosing them. How do need for uniqueness (NFU) and pressure interact to affect the choice between timeless and trendy products?

With the exception of extreme pressure (Baumeister 1984), motivated individuals that decide under high pressure focus more on evaluating its most relevant dimensions (Wright 1974). High-NFU consumers are motivated when choosing unique products (Snyder 1977), and duration of uniqueness is an important dimension in such choices (Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001). Thus, when unique product choices only differ in their duration benefits, high-NFU consumers under pressure may focus on the duration of uniqueness, being more likely to choose timeless products, which provide greater duration benefits.

However, when motivated individuals decide under low pressure, they neglect relevant dimensions of decisions (Ben Zur & Breznitz 1981; Latham & Locke 1975). Instead, they might make intuitive inferences (Chaiken 1980; Kahneman & Frederick 2002; Sloman 1996). Trendy products might appear as more unique (Thompson and Haytko 1997; Simmel 1957) than timeless ones. Thus, although trendy products do not necessarily differ in their degree of uniqueness from timeless ones, they may still be perceived as more unique in direct comparisons (Epley and Gilovich 2006). This “trendy is unique” inference, developed when trendy and timeless products are directly compared, might be used by high-NFU consumers under low pressure. Thus, high-NFU consumers under low pressure could be more likely to choose trendy products.

The pilot field-study involved 31 unique products sales professionals, and 56 members of a business school’s luxury-club. Participants predicted the choice of a high-NFU consumer that should decide “immediately” (high pressure) or “now or later” (low pressure), between a timeless and a trendy product. Neither professionals, nor luxury-club members predicted different choice shares between the high and low pressure conditions, showing that our results are novel to unique product professionals and consumers.

In Study 1, participants had to choose between two pre-tested dress-shirts. The timeless shirt was intentionally superior in several dimensions, including uniqueness duration. Two hundred eighteen participants were assigned to either the high (vs. low) pressure condition, had 40 (vs. 60) seconds to choose, and were told that this time was “just enough” (vs. “enough”). In reality, both times were enough, based on the pre-test. Participants completed the NFU scale (Snyder 1977).

Results revealed significant effects of NFU, pressure, and their interaction on choice. Specifically, high-NFU (but not low-NFU) participants tended to choose the timeless (vs. trendy) product under high (vs. low) pressure. These results suggest that high-NFU participants under low pressure might be guided by inferences made when comparing both products, neglecting the duration benefits of timeless products. Choices of low-NFU participants were not affected by pressure. This study suggests that even with a superior timeless product, high-NFU consumers might rely on “trendy is unique” inferences under low pressure, and choose the trendy product.

Study 2 confirmed our predictions in a consequential choice, using different product category, and operationalizations of NFU and pressure. We pre-tested two bags in individual and comparative evaluation settings. When evaluated individually, the only difference was that the timeless bag had higher perceived duration of uniqueness. When evaluated comparatively, this advantage persisted, but the trendy bag was perceived as more unique.

One hundred sixty-seven female participants were assigned to either the low or high pressure condition. Everyone had 80 seconds to choose. However, participants in the high (vs. low) time pressure condition were told that “most people take about 120 (vs. 80) seconds” to decide (Briely and Aaker 2006). Participants completed the Consumer’s NFU scale (CNFU; Tian et al. 2001).

Results showed significant effects of CNFU, and of the interaction between CNFU and pressure on choice. High-CNFU participants were more likely to choose the timeless (vs. trendy) product under high (vs. low) pressure. Low-CNFU participants’ choice was unaffected by pressure. Thus, choices of high-CNFU individuals under high pressure comply with the uniqueness duration advantage of timeless products, but under low pressure choices seem to be influenced by “trendy is unique” inferences.

Study 3 supports our theoretical mechanism using different operationalizations of NFU and pressure, and directly measuring participants’ evaluation thoughts. 312 female participants were assigned to a 2 (uniqueness vs. homogeneity prime; Maimaran and Wheeler 2008) x 2 pressure (high vs. low product availability) between-participants design. Participants made the same choice as in study 2, being primed with uniqueness or homogeneity, and considering both products under high or low availability. Then, they wrote the thoughts they had while choosing. Two independent coders coded the first two thoughts of each participant (Higgins 1996; Petty and Cacioppo 1981) as duration vs. non-duration related. As predicted, mediation analyses showed a significant interaction of pressure and uniqueness on the number of duration-related thoughts, and a significant effect of the number of duration-related thoughts on choice. Conditional indirect effects for the uniqueness priming (but not for homogeneity priming) was significant. Participants primed with uniqueness listed more duration-related thoughts under high (vs. low) pressure. Subsequently, these thoughts made more likely the choice of timeless products.

We demonstrated that NFU and pressure jointly affect the choice of timeless versus trendy products, through reliance on different information. Theoretically, we establish uniqueness as a multidimensional construct, with its duration as one important dimension. We also find that pressure during choices may lead to beneficial effects, depending on its degree and on individuals’ motivations. Managerially, companies should carefully use pressure depending on whether they want to promote timeless or trendy products. Finally, timeless products satisfy consumers’ uniqueness needs for longer, and thus save resources. Therefore, shoppers seeking uniqueness may want to shop under pressure (e.g., right before shops close) to gear choices towards timeless products.
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Buying a house is perhaps the most important financial decision that households face. For most American homeowners, housing is the most valuable asset in their balance sheet. Many factors influence the housing decision, making it a complex and difficult task to many potential homebuyers. In addition, there are limited opportunities to learn from taking a mortgage. As a result, households are often uncertain about their housing decisions. When people are uncertain about a choice, they draw upon cues to help them arrive at a decision (Slovic 1995; Payne et al. 1999). These cues that people use are sometimes difficult to justify normatively. Previous research has shown that indeed housing decisions might be based in market inefficiencies (Brunnermeier and Julliard 2008; Case and Shiller 1988; Genesove and Mayer 2001; Simonsohn and Loewenstein 2006).

In this paper, we show that potential homebuyers compare the monthly rental payment (R) and the monthly installment of a mortgage at a fixed rate (M) on two equivalent houses when deciding to buy a house. Consumers are more likely to buy a house if the mortgage monthly installment is lower than the monthly rental payment.

In the first study, we manipulate the size of the difference between the monthly installment and the monthly rental payment by changing the maturity of the mortgage. We observe that people are more likely to buy the house in the longer maturity condition such that the monthly installment is lower than the monthly rental payment.

In the second study, participants answer eight scenarios, four in which the monthly mortgage installment is lower than the monthly rental payment and another four in which the opposite holds. The order of the questions is randomly assigned. Results are consistent with the mortgage illusion effect and they cannot be explained by monthly budget constraints. Participants become more likely to buy only when the mortgage installment becomes lower than the rental payment and not in the other conditions. This indicates that the effect is not caused by a desire to pay less but by a desire to pay less than rent.

We run another four experiments that aim to check the robustness of our results. In experiment 3, we narrow the gap between the monthly rental payment and the monthly mortgage installment to 5 dollars and yet find that people are more likely to buy when the monthly mortgage installment is lower than the monthly rental payment. Experiment 4 adds a condition in which the monthly rental payment is the same as the monthly mortgage installment in order to elicit the baseline preference of participants. We observe that people are indeed more likely to switch from buying to renting around the threshold, when the monthly mortgage installment M is equal to the monthly rental payment R. Experiment 5 measures several potential individual biases that could be related to the mortgage illusion. Only the immediacy bias and the long-term discount factor significantly correlate with the mortgage illusion, i.e., more impatient individuals are more likely to incur the mortgage illusion. We also observe that the mortgage illusion is lower among stock investors, full-time students, and married individuals. Experiment 6 shows that a financial education intervention is not effective at reducing the mortgage illusion effect.

We also observe the mortgage illusion in the field using the data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). The PSID provides on the dollar amount panelists pay monthly for rent or for their mortgage between 1993 and 2013. We identified 2,943 panelists that bought a house in the period of the panel (i.e., between 1993 and 2013) and used to rent before the house purchase. M-R, the difference between the first monthly mortgage installment and the last monthly rental payment. Panelists’ M-R concentrates around zero, which is consistent with the mortgage illusion effect. These results suggest that panelists seem to use a threshold for the monthly mortgage installment that is around the monthly rental payment they used to pay. Of course, there are many confounding factors in the PSID analysis, which preclude us to identify the mortgage illusion effect. One of the contributions of our paper is to identify it by running experiments in a controlled environment.

Decisions depend on a comparison of potential outcomes with a reference point, which are constructed narrowly (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Reference points can be based on past outcomes or some aspiration level. For instance, people betting on horses would really like to break even for a given day and end up making longer shots at the end of the day (McGlothin 1956). Similarly, cab drivers are highly motivated to achieve a targeted daily income and end up going home too early in a particularly profitable day (Camerer, Babcock, Loewenstein, and Thaler 1997). Along the same vein, homebuyers use the monthly rental payment as a reference point to decide whether to buy a house – and fail to consider that these expenses are part of a longer stream of payments.

The mortgage illusion is also consistent with anchoring, i.e., the fact that people’s estimates can be affected by a highly accessible number. For instance, when uncertain about the price of a product, people anchor to a certain reference number and adjust very little from that initial number. The adjustment is often insufficient because people stop when they are no longer certain that they should adjust further. Movers arriving from a more expensive city end up renting pricier apartments than those arriving from cheaper cities (Simonsohn and Loewenstein 2006), which is consistent with anchoring to their original city’s house prices.

These biases arise because of cognitive limitations. When individuals struggle to find an answer to a decision problem and substitute the solution to a related simple problem (Kahneman and Frederick 2002). Rather than employing a discounted cash flow analysis, homebuyers resort to the simpler mortgage illusion when deciding whether to buy a house. Households who follow the mortgage illusion might end up defaulting on mortgages, worsening their balance sheets and their employment prospects.

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Rightist Resistance To The Market
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In comparison with most social sciences (Blee and Creasap 2010; Diamond 1995; Lo 1982; Warnick 1982), there is little to no marketing scholarship about rightist resistance (Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Peñaloza and Price 1993; Roux 2007). This paper presents three potential conflicts between rightist ideologies and the market. It then discusses four avenues for future research.

The consumer research on resistance articulates two main paradigms (Izberk-Bilgin 2010). The Critical Theory based on the critique of social structures founded on capitalist ideology (Hetric and Lozada 1994; Murray and Ozanne 1991). Building on Marxism, it understands resistance to the market within a general framework of mass revolution aiming to the destruction of capitalism and its subjugation by socialism. The postmodernist perspective considers that it is not possible to escape from the market (Kozinets 2002). It understands resistance at an individual level, using the codes of the market and re-interprets its symbols (De Certeau 1990; Holt 2002; Roux 2007). While they differ in their theoretical and political approach, both share the same emancipatory perspective and overlooks those behaviors resisting the market in order to exclude, perpetuate or increase inequalities (Lo, 1982). A body of research looks at nationalism and religiosity (Izberk-Bilgin 2008; Russel, Russel, and Neijens 2011; Sandikci and Ekici 2009; Varman and Belk 2009) but it does not question the resistance to the market as a liberal institution, and overlooks Western countries. The tacit assumption that consumers sharing rightist values are unlikely to engage in resistance against the market overlooks the diversity of rightist thoughts, and the current right-wing criticism of mainstream conservative parties in Europe and in the United States (Hawley 2016).

While one branch of conservatism accepts liberal economic doctrine against socialism, another remains opposed to both social and economic liberalism (Meyer 1964). The former are also labelled conservative and the latter right-wing (Blee and Creasap 2010). Three common characteristics oppose the market and the consumer culture. First, rightist individuals tend to be patriotic and nationalistic (Femia 2012; Huntington 1957) while the market is global (Levitt 1983) and consumer culture promotes a global consumption ethos (Ger and Belk 1996). Second, conservative favor traditions and are skeptical towards modernity and progress (Femia 2012) while the market builds on novelty (Fiske 1989; Twitchell 2000). Finally, rightists tend to put the social order before the individual rights (Scruton, 1980) while the market and the consumer culture emphasize individualism (Behr 2010). In short, there are potential conflicts between rightist beliefs in the national ethos, traditions and limited individual freedom; and the market’s institutions of a global consumer, search for continuous novelty, and promotion of individualism.

In order to facilitate further research on rightist resistance to the market, we integrate conservative and right-wing values with the existing paradigms. We distinguish four approaches varying in term of intensity (radical or moderate) and ideological orientation (restoration of emancipation). The critical and postmodernist approaches detailed above share an emancipatory orientation, whereas the new approaches are based on restoration of tradition. The right-wing approach is the radical form of conservative consumer resistance to the market aiming to replace capitalism by a traditional economic system. They conceive market resistance as a part of a wider political project aiming at changing society. The conservative approach is a moderated rightist resistance to the market. Through their consumption choices, consumers express their conservative values: resistance to innovations, alien or immoral brands characterizes their consumption.

We identify four main avenues for future research. The first direction relates to the rightist groups and their targets. Social scientists point to several existing rightist movements, some of them inviting to boycott companies (e.g. The Tea Party, the Alt-right…). Sociologists mention but overlook their opposition and mobilizations against alcohol, pornography, gambling, condoms and other birth control (Blee and Creasap 2010; Lo 1982). Consumer researchers could contribute to these efforts by focusing on their discourses and actions towards consumption practices and their influence on other consumers. The second direction relates to the individuals, either members of rightist groups, or performing individual conservative resistance. A first line of inquiry could look at the negotiation between their beliefs and interests. It would be interesting to investigate which particular brands or products they oppose and focus on the motivations (religious, xenophobic…). As more extreme right-wing wish to replace the liberal capitalist society by another system (Hawley, 2016), how would be the market in their ideal alternative social structure in comparison from Murray and Ozanne’s (1991)? A third direction is methodological. Rightist movements are usually less visible because they directly target decision makers (Diamond 1995; Lo 1982). They are sometimes skeptical about academics’ intentions (Blee and Creasap 2010). Sociologists suggest using secondary sources and discuss the possibility of covert research (Blee and Creasap 2010). Are consumer research’s methods compatible with such constraints? A fourth and last direction is theoretical. Rightist movements are usually considered countermovement as they define themselves in opposition with another movement (Gross, Medvetz, and Russel 2011; Warnick 1982). The theoretical framework of movement-countermovement interactions (C-MC, Meyer and Staggenborg 1996) offers promising research perspective in resistance to the market. While much existing research focuses on the actions of the resistant movement against the market as an institution, this framework looks at the interactions between: a resistant movement, a countermovement, a regulator, and market actors.

In sum, this article contributes to social sciences’ research on the influence of the new right in Western societies. It also invites reconsidering the emancipatory potential of the market. Existing research widely discusses the alienating power of the capitalist market, in line with the ideological panorama of the late 1980s and 1990s. However, in comparison with recent right-wing cultural and electoral offensives, the market appears as an institution promoting openness, progress, and individual freedom.

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Non-Participants and Brands’ Communication of Co-Creational Efforts: A Matter of Trust

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Today, more and more firms develop customer empowerment strategies (CES) to empower their customers in ideation or selection of new product developments (Fuchs and Schreier 2011). Research in that field has mostly focused so far on customers actively participating to CES. Another influential and bigger group might be studied: the brand audience as a whole, not participating to the initiatives. Labelling innovation as being designed/selected by consumers may have a positive impact on brand evaluations (Fuchs and Schreier 2011). Yet, marketers must know that communicating their co-creational efforts is not always positive. There might be only one step for the audience to interpret the message as another brand marketing means aiming at improving, overly and unduly, perceived customer orientation.

With this research, we examine effectiveness conditions of CES-communication to the non-participants. More specifically, we highlight reasons for non-participants to be sceptical. We here suggest that brand trust is a central concept after exposure to CES-communication, especially in the current context of greater suspicion toward brands. If the ultimate objective of marketing is to create and nurture a long-term relationship between consumers and companies, trust constitutes the main ingredient of this relationship (Morgan and Hunt 1994).

First, we empirically show the importance for non-participants to publicly see the brand feedback on participant’ submitted ideas and to be transparent in the process, which is counterintuitive. Second, our study enhances understanding of how trust influences non-participants’ brand relationship. We examine that influence on both fictive and well-known brands.

Our first hypothesis postulates that a message highlighting that a brand gave feedback and was transparent all along the process will improve non-participants’ perceived empowerment (H1). We first draw on the vicarious empowerment non-participants can feel when they see other customers participating in innovation challenges, even if they did not participate themselves (Dahl, Fuchs, and Schreier 2014). Then, the co-creation literature reports participants’ need to feel that the brand listens to their ideas; transparency and feedback are the key elements they request. If the organization fails to be transparent about the rules, to listen and to give feedback, participants quickly become irritated (Ind, Iglesias, and Schultz 2013).

Perceived empowerment helps foster brand trust (Füller et al. 2009), if participants are simultaneously provided with the needed resources (Tzafrrir, Baruch, and Dolan 2004). Fostering trust may be hard in case of information asymmetry. Decreasing information asymmetry may result in increased trust. Thus, one way brands can make their customers trust them is to give them the necessary information (Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub 2003), namely here feedback and transparency. If non-participants may vicariously feel empowerment (Dahl et al. 2014), we hypothesize (H2) that feedback and transparency in CES-communication will foster non-participants’ trust in the empowering brand through the indirect and positive influence of perceived empowerment.

Trust is reassessed over time, through assessment of previous encounters (Mayer and Davis 1999). Therefore, in case of low initial brand trust, non-participants might also perceive lower empowerment from the brand (H3).

We find support for our hypotheses H1 and H2 in Study 1. Participants (n=213) were randomly shown three new product development scenarios for a fictive brand: empowerment with feedback/transparency, empowerment without feedback/transparency, no empowerment. Perceived empowerment (α=0.941) and brand trust (α=0.910) were measured on seven-item existing scales. Results support H1: non-participants significantly perceive higher empowerment in the condition with empowerment and feedback/transparency (M empowerment=4.99) than in both other conditions (M empowerment=3.96, pfeedback<0.001 and MCONTROL empowerment=3.68, pfeedback<0.001). Yet, there is no difference in perceived empowerment between the control condition and the empowerment condition with no feedback/transparency (p=0.52). Regarding H2 and using Hayes macro (2013, PROCESS Model 4), with 5000 bootstrap and percentile confidence interval estimates, we confirm the mediating role of perceived empowerment in the relation between CES and brand trust. Yet, only when comparing the empowerment with feedback/transparency condition to control condition. Non-participants start developing brand trust via the stronger empowerment perceived only when a brand publicly gives feedback and cues transparency.

In a second study, we manipulate brand perceived reliability, using well-known high-rotation food brands: famous with low reliability expected (BLoR), famous with higher reliability intended (BHiR) and existing but unknown brand, with neutral perceived reliability intended (BNeR). First, each randomly allocated respondent saw one of the three brand logos. After a few questions about it, he/she receives the treatment. We used identical online press lay-outs for all groups, with brand name and brand picture as sole differences. Content informed about a brand’s customer empowerment strategy and included feedback and transparency cues. Initial brand trust (α=0.883) and perceived empowerment (α=0.915) were again measured on 7-item existing scales.

Main effects on perceived empowerment are significant: F(2,2374)=17.87 (p<0.001). BLoR mean is significantly lower than each other two means (p<0.001); there is no significant differences between BHiR and BNeR (p=1.00). After finding a significant interaction between brand and initial trust on perceived empowerment, we run a floodlight analysis using Johnson-Neyman technique. For individuals with initial brand trust inferior to 4.03 (p=0.05), the effect of the brand on perceived empowerment is significant and negative: individuals perceive lower empowerment from the famous food brand with low reliability than for the famous brand with higher reliability. This effect is not significant for individuals with a brand trust greater than 4.03. 70.8% of the respondents have moderator value below that significance threshold and 29.2% of respondents above. These results support H3.

This research offers noteworthy theoretical insights and practical implications. First, we contribute to a still scarce literature and show the importance of non-participants’ trust toward the empowering brands. We imply that initiating and communicating customer empowerment may help foster brand trust, if the brand publicly shows they gave feedback and observed transparency all along the process. Our last result, suggesting that initial brand trust modulates empowerment, allow us alert managers that communicating CES to non-participants may not be a good strategy if they suspect issues with their brand audience’s trust in their integrity. These empirical
findings are limited in several ways though that delineate promising areas for future research though.

REFERENCES
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

There is widespread scientific consensus regarding the need to urgently reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Cook et al. 2016), and investigate interventions to do so. Attempts to modify behavior typically presume that consumers recognize the connection between their behaviors and the consequences for energy use and GHG emissions. However, there is a growing body of research demonstrating that consumers are often unaware or misinformed (Larrick and Soll 2008). For example, Attari et al. (2010) found that people had a rudimentary understanding of the relative energy use of different appliances and activities. Across four studies, we investigated people’s understanding of energy consumption and GHG emissions for another important domain of daily activity: Food. Research suggests that the food system accounts for 19%–29% of global GHG emissions (Vermeulen, Campbell, and Ingram 2012). Therefore, diet change through carbon labels may be an effective strategy to help combat climate change. Encouragingly, research that has looked into carbon labelling of food has shown modest impacts (Vancay et al. 2011). However, these labels have been criticised as being difficult to quickly interpret (Gadema and Oglethorpe 2011). Therefore, the design of an effective carbon label remains an important public policy goal.

We predicted that consumers are generally unaware of the energy required to produce food, and also the greenhouse emissions produced by food. Urbanites and suburbanites lack direct awareness of all the elements in the modern agricultural system. To the extent that they hold images of the system, the images are likely relatively simple and incomplete. As a result, we expect that many consumers may be unaware of much relevant information; for example, that cattle released methane, a gas that is 28-to-36 times more potent than CO2.

In Study 1a, 514 participants were sampled to be broadly representative of the US population. Each participant estimated the GHG emissions from producing and transporting a serving of 19 foods and from the one hour use of 18 appliances. In Study 1b, we conducted a similar survey with another 518 participants who estimated energy use for all of the items. In both studies participants were provided with reference information for a 100-W incandescent bulb used for one hour. We found, for both foods and appliances, that estimates increased with actual levels, but remained significantly lower than the true values. Supporting these observations were the results of a number of mixed-effect regression models for foods and appliances in which we regressed logged estimated onto actual values testing for both linear and quadratic relationships. Importantly, the lines of best fit for GHG emissions and energy consumed were shifted downward for foods compared to appliances. In other words, the average estimate was lower – and hence, relatively less accurate – for foods.

In Study 2, we tested the role of knowledge and information processing as an underlying cause for underestimation. In this study, we manipulated the degree to which 606 American participants thought about the food production system before estimating the amount of energy consumed in the production and transport of a serving of different foods. Compared to two control groups (no instructions, or “think carefully”), those who either generated their own intuitive description of the food production process or examined a diagram of the food production process gave more accurate estimates of energy use. Although all foods were underestimated in all groups, the results suggested that a lack of knowledge and salience of production process at the time of judgment and choice were key contributors to the underestimation effect observed in Study 1.

In Study 3, we designed a carbon label to address the knowledge and salience issues revealed in Study 2, and tested whether it nudged consumers to prefer lower carbon footprint foods. We asked 215 American participants to choose a hypothetical lunch, including one main, two sides, one drink, and two snacks, from a menu. Menu items varied in terms of their carbon footprint. Compared to controls, participants presented with a menu featuring carbon labels chose meals with significantly lower carbon footprints. Environmental attitudes moderated this effect such that when carbon labels were displayed, those with stronger pro-environmental attitudes tended to select meals with lower carbon footprints.

In sum, and consistent with prior research, we found that people tend to underestimate the energy consumed by the use of a range of common appliances (Gadema and Oglethorpe 2011). Similarly, people underestimate the GHG emissions from the use of those common appliances. Our primary contribution is to show that the same is true for food: people tend to underestimate the energy consumed and the GHG emissions associated with the production of a range of foods. Importantly, this ignorance can be reduced using a basic informational intervention.

Importantly, the reduction in average carbon footprint came almost entirely from those who held pro-environmental attitudes. Therefore, it appears that, when making food choices, pro-environmental consumers often fail to take their own values into account, or are unable to do so without additional information. A carbon label may therefore serve as a decision signpost: reminding consumers of their values and then directing them to options most consistent with those values (Ungemach et al. 2017).

The current research has key implications for public policy aimed at nudging people toward more pro-environmental behavior. Some companies have already trialed carbon footprint labels, namely Tesco in the UK. This initial attempt failed – in a large part because customers found the labelling difficult to understand (Lucas and Clark 2012). We suggest that governments should support the development of an optional comparative carbon label for food that translates carbon footprint information into an easy-to-understand unit, such as “light bulb equivalent”. Governments could also devise public education campaigns designed to increase awareness of the most carbon footprint heavy foods, namely beef and lamb.

REFERENCES

Consumer Underestimation of Energy Use and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Associated with Food


The Unexpected Consequences of Beautiful Products:  
Sacredness, Awe and Forgiveness

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

We extend the literature on beauty in consumer behavior by examining the degree to which ordinary, but beautiful, products can evoke perceptions of sacredness and feelings of awe relative to functional alternatives. Importantly, we find that such perceptions of sacredness and awe increase consumers’ propensity to forgive a company transgression.

Past literature on aesthetically pleasing, beautiful products has demonstrated that they lead to more favorable attitudes, higher purchase intentions and increased willingness to pay (Bloch et al., 2003); they can reaffirm a consumer’s sense of self, core values and qualities (Townsend and Sood, 2012); and when chosen for their hedonic rather than functional benefits, can lead to downstream emotional responses of either cheerfulness and excitement, or guilt and anxiety (Chitturi et al., 2007). We extend existing research by examining how beautiful products (versus ordinary exemplars of the same product category) evoke perceptions of sacredness and the discrete emotion of awe, while also identifying a novel downstream consequence associated with those feelings, specifically the heightened willingness to forgive a company transgression.

Beautiful products can create appraisals of sacredness, being perceived as inherently non-ordinary, special and unique (Clark, 1986; Mick and Demoss, 1990; Belk et al., 1989), even if they are humble, everyday objects (Morris, 1948). Prior literature has demonstrated that products deemed to be sacred are revered (Eliade, 1959), spark an emotional attachment (Mol, 1976), and are believed to possess infinite or transcendental significance (Tetlock et al, 2000; Samper and Schwartz, 2013). These perceptions of transcendence in turn lead to feelings of awe.

Awe is a positive, self-transcendent emotion associated with feelings of wonder, astonishment and surprise, elicited by experiences such as exceptional beauty and exemplary human actions or abilities (Haidt, 2003; Shiotia et al. 2007). Feelings of awe produce a sense of a “diminished self,” wherein one perceives the world as vaster than oneself and one’s usual frame of reference, and facilitate religiosity and a propensity for spiritual behaviors (Keltner and Haidt, 2003; Schneider, 2009; Van Cappellen and Saroglu, 2012). Awe seems to evoke one’s best self, with individuals who feel awe being more likely to donate time (Rudd et al, 2012), engage in ethical decision making and act according to prosocial values (Piff et al., 2015). Consistent with this diminishment of the self and this orientation toward generosity, we expect that when consumers feel awe in response to beautiful products, they will be more likely to forgive any transgressions or flaws associated with the products.

Past literature on brand transgressions has examined factors that influence a consumer’s willingness to forgive a company following a transgression. These include consumer-brand relationships in terms of attachment (Fedorikhin et al., 2008), commitment (Ahlulwalia et al., 2000), self-relevance (Johnson et al., 2011) and the strength of the relationship (Aaker et al., 2004), such that the more attached, self-relevant and strong the consumer-brand relationship, the less likely are consumers to forgive a company transgression; trust in the company (Chung and Beverland, 2006; Xie and Peng, 2009); customer expectations about the firm’s capability to manage the transgression (Dawar and Pillutla, 2000; Chandrashekaran et al., 2007); individual’s self-construal (Sinha and Lu, 2016) and transgression type (higher forgiveness for product, but not ethical, transgressions; Trump, 2014).

In four studies, we find that beautiful products are perceived as sacred, unique, special and divinely influenced, and that these perceptions evoke feelings of awe. Importantly, we find that these perceptions of sacredness and feelings of awe lead consumers to be more forgiving of transgressions associated with beautiful products.

Study 1: Beautiful Products lead to Perceptions of Sacredness and Feelings of Awe

In study 1, lab participants (N=192) were randomly assigned to describe a recent experience with a product that was extraordinarily beautiful or functional. Then, participants reported which emotions (e.g., awe, amazement, astonishment, love, excitement) described a recent experience with a product that was extraordinarily beautiful or functional. Then, participants reported which emotions (e.g., awe, amazement, astonishment, love, excitement) described a recent experience with a product that was extraordinarily beautiful or functional. Then, participants reported which emotions (e.g., awe, amazement, astonishment, love, excitement) described a recent experience with a product that was extraordinarily beautiful or functional. Finally, participants evaluated the extent to which they perceived the product as being sacred, special, unique, and divinely influenced (which we collapsed into a Sacredness index, M=73). Results show that participants in the “beautiful” condition felt more awe (M=4.72; M=3.85; F(1, 290)=11.53, p=.001) and perceived more vastness (M=2.77; M=2.27; F(1, 190)=8.34, p=.004) than participants in the functional condition. In addition, participants who described a “beautiful” product saw it as more Sacred (M=3.41; M=2.78; F(1, 190)=11.427, p=.001). A mediation analysis (Preacher and Hayes, 2004, 2008; Process Model 4, 10,000 bootstrap samples) found that beautiful products increased perceptions of awe via sacredness (95% bias-corrected confidence interval did not include zero: .157-689).

Study 2: Ruling Out the Effect of Other Positive Experiences on Sacredness and Awe

In study 2, we sought to replicate the findings from Study 1 with a more controlled stimulus, while also ruling out the possibility that any positive experience related to the product (such as receiving a surprise coupon) could be responsible for evoking feelings of sacredness and awe. Given that participants in Study 1 mostly recalled beautiful food and beverage products (cappuccinos, cakes, cupcakes and chocolates), in Study 2, we chose cappuccinos as the stimuli. Participants (N=202) from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (beautiful, regular and surprise) where they were shown photos and asked to imagine consuming either a beautiful or ordinary cappuccino; participants in the surprise condition saw the same ordinary cappuccino but were told they received a surprise $1 coupon for their next visit. Participants then reported which emotions they felt when they received the cappuccino (e.g., awe), how sacred they believed it to be (four-item index) and how much they were willing to pay for it. Results show that participants in the beautiful cappuccino condition felt more awe (M=4.52; M=2.50; F(2, 199)=20.460, p<.001) than consumers receiving either a regular or surprise-coupon cappuccino, and that they perceived it as more sacred (M=2.74; M=1.83; M=2.33; F(2, 199)=20.460, p<.001) than consumers receiving either a regular or surprise-coupon cappuccino, and that they perceived it as more sacred (M=2.74; M=1.83; M=2.33; F(2, 199)=20.460, p<.001) than consumers receiving either a regular or surprise-coupon cappuccino.
Findings provide initial evidence for our proposed conceptual model, with bootstrap samples demonstrating this was the case, as the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval for both high and low effort beautiful cupcakes relative to the high effort regular cupcake did not include zero (BHE vs RHE: [.004; .119]; BLE vs RHE: [.052; .402]).

**Discussion**

Previous literature has identified perceptions of sacredness and feelings of awe as responses to exceptional beauty. Sacredness and awe, in turn, engender prosocial behavior and a willingness to forgive. Across four studies, we extend this literature, demonstrating that mundane, everyday products can be beautiful, and that such beauty leads consumers to judge those goods as sacred and to feel a sense of awe in response to them. These perceptions of sacredness and feelings of awe lead consumers to be more forgiving of flaws and errors associated with the products. Future research should expand the effect of beauty on sacredness, awe, and forgiveness by testing across different, non-food product categories (watches, fitness trackers, vases, etc.), and perhaps by testing whether where the flaw occurs matters. Perhaps consumers are differentially forgiving products, even when those products are in mundane categories such as cupcakes and cappuccinos, and show that these evoked feelings of awe have important downstream consequences for consumer-firm relationships.
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I Am a Fashionista and I (think) I Know It: 
The Role of Fashion Knowledge in Preferences for Counterfeits

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Is counterfeiting good or bad for the imitated brand? Luxury counterfeiting is overwhelmingly believed to have a negative effect on the original brand, decreasing its perceived prestige and exclusivity (e.g., Commuri, 2009; Dubois and Paternault, 1995). Yet, potential positive effects of counterfeiting have also emerged, demonstrating that the status of the original brand may actually be enhanced by the availability of luxury counterfeits (Nia and Zaickowsky, 2000; Romani, Gistri and Pace, 2012). In a pilot study we conducted at the lab (N = 58) we asked participants if they had ever seen a product they owned in a counterfeit version and, in yes, how that made them feel. Interestingly, the sample was pretty split – while negative emotions were still predominant (65.5%, describing feelings like anger, frustration, annoyance and being upset), 35.5% of participants actually felt positively about it, with predominant feelings being flattery, excitement, interest and humor. In this article, we contribute to this debate by looking at consumers’ level of fashion knowledge, both objective and subjective, as a factor influencing reactions to counterfeiting in a systematic way. In addition, we also demonstrate the mediating role of flattery and the moderating role of ownership of the real brand.

The impact of prior knowledge on consumers’ information processing and product evaluations has been widely established in the literature. Whether referred to as knowledge, familiarity, expertise, or experience (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987), prior knowledge has been defined as what an individual knows and remembers about a product. Prior knowledge influences consumers’ perceptions of product quality (Rao and Monroe, 1988) and price (Monroe, 1973); brand extension evaluations (Keller and Aaker, 1992); it differentiates responses to hedonic vs. functional products (Park and Moon, 2003); and, it interacts with advertising effectiveness (Chandy et al., 2001).

In this research, we specifically look at the influence of consumer’s fashion knowledge, both subjective and objective, on preference for counterfeits. The former, which we refer to as Stated Fashion Knowledge (SKF), is a subjective level of knowledge expressing consumers’ self-perceptions as savvy in fashion and luxury goods; the latter, which we refer to as Revealed Fashion Knowledge (RFK), is an objective level of knowledge expressing how much a consumer actually knows about fashion and luxury goods. Moving forward, we will refer to fashion knowledge as being either stated or revealed.

Across four studies, we demonstrate how consumers’ knowledge of fashion and luxury goods, whether stated or revealed, is predictive of different reactions to counterfeit goods. Specifically, we find that when consumers have low fashion-knowledge, they will be the most favorable towards product counterfeiting. In addition, and in line with prior research highlighting the role of mimicry and pride in consumption (White and Argo, 2011; Bellezza and Keinan, 2014), we demonstrate that the positive reactions to counterfeiting by low-fashion-knowledge consumers are mediated by feelings of flattery for being imitated. Interestingly, the effect of knowledge on favorable predispositions towards counterfeits is moderated by ownership, such that owners of the real product whose fashion knowledge is low are the most favorable towards counterfeits. Presumably, owners who do not know much about fashion feel flattered by others wanting to imitate them. This finding is consistent with prior research on the upsides of mimicry and non-core users seen as brand tourists (White and Argo, 2011; Bellezza and Keinan, 2014).

In the studies that follow, we either measured consumers’ stated fashion knowledge, that is self-perceptions as savvy in fashion and luxury goods (“How knowledgeable do you feel about fashion and high end luxury goods?”), or we measured consumers’ revealed fashion knowledge. To develop a reliable measure for this second construct, we followed prior knowledge measure developments and manipulations from the literature (Wood and Lynch, 2002; Hong and Sternthal, 2010). We used four existing multiple choice questions regarding the luxury and fashion goods industry (Bellezza and Berger, 2017) and created a battery of 12 others ranging from very easy (e.g., Q: “What do the letters CK stand for on a bottle of perfume?” A: Calvin Klein) to very hard (e.g., Q: “Which brand is known for its intrecciato technique?” A: Bottega Veneta). Lab participants (N = 203) answered all 16 questions in random order. Based on the results, we selected the four hardest questions and used them as a measure of revealed fashion and luxury goods knowledge in the subsequent studies.

In Study 1, we wanted to establish the link between knowledge and differential reactions to counterfeit goods. Participants in the lab (N = 353) first completed the 1-item stated fashion knowledge measure. Next, they read a description of either Louis Vuitton (females) or Rolex (males), while looking at a picture of a signature product from the brand (Speedy Louis Vuitton handbag or Oyster Perpetual Rolex watch) and writing their thoughts as they imagined owning it. All participants then saw an image of a stand with various counterfeit handbags/watches of different brands, among which was their handbag/watch. Finally, we asked their overall reaction (like/dislike) to the counterfeit handbag/watch (Bellezza and Keinan, 2014), and their intention to spread positive word-of-mouth regarding the counterfeit product (Cheema and Kaikati, 2010). Results demonstrated that low fashion-knowledge participants had a more positive reaction to the counterfeit product (F(1, 351) = 17.10, p < .001) and were more likely to spread positive word-of-mouth about the counterfeit product (F(1, 351) = 5.70, p = .017) relative to participants whose fashion knowledge was high.

In Study 2, we sought to replicate the effects from Study 1 but this time manipulating consumers’ stated fashion knowledge while also examining two other dependent variables.

Pretest. We wrote and pretested six articles, two about the fashion industry that would serve as our fashion-knowledge manipulation (history of the Louis Vuitton brand and history of the Rolex brand) and four about other topics, unrelated to fashion, to identify the best controls (history of Eataly, the gourmet Italian food shop; history of Bansky, the British unknown street artist; history of Tesla, the innovative motor company; and, history of Birchbox, the innovative make-up delivery company). Participants from Mechanical Turk (N = 59) read a short excerpt from each article and told us how appealing they thought the topic was, how interesting they thought it was alongside their intention to read the article in its entirety. Results confirmed our choice for the fashion manipulations, as Louis Vuitton and Rolex had the highest and most similar appeal (Appealing: M_{LV} = 4.85 vs. M_{Rolex} = 4.79, t(57) = -.16, NS; Intention to Read Entire Article: M_{LV} = 5.12 vs. M_{Rolex} = 4.73, t(57) = -.90, NS; Interesting: M_{LV} = 4.96 vs. M_{Rolex} = 4.33, t(57) = -1.53, NS). In terms of the control...
conditions, the Eataly and Banksy articles ranked highest for females and males respectively, and were not significantly different from the Louis Vuitton and Rolex articles, so we chose them for the main study (Appealing: $M_{Eataly} = 4.96$ vs. $M_{Rolex} = 4.45$; Intention to Read Entire Article: $M_{Eataly} = 5.08$ vs. $M_{Rolex} = 4.45$; Interesting: $M_{Eataly} = 5.15$ vs. $M_{Rolex} = 4.48$).

Main Study: Participants in the lab ($N = 160$) were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, fashion-knowledge vs. control. Based on their gender (female/male), respondents read the article either about Louis Vuitton/Rolex (fashion-knowledge condition), or about Eataly/Banksy (control condition). They then completed a manipulation check in which they reported how knowledgeable they felt about the topic covered in the article they had just read and our stated fashion knowledge measure. Afterwards, they saw the same handbag/watch scenario as in Study 1 and the same counterfeit products’ stand before reporting their reaction to their brand being counterfeit and assessing the impact of the counterfeit on the reputation of the original brand. As expected, results showed how, across genders and conditions, there were no differences in terms of topic knowledge ($M_{LV/Rolex} = 4.55$ vs. $M_{Eataly/Banksy} = 4.51$, $F(1, 158) = .06$, NS), while participants who read the LV/Rolex articles perceived themselves as more knowledgeable about fashion than participants who read the Eataly/Banksy articles ($M_{LV/Rolex} = 3.14$ vs. $M_{Eataly/Banksy} = 2.31$, $F(1, 158) = 20.18$, $p < .001$). Given that the fashion knowledge manipulation and measure were highly correlated ($r = .337$, $p < .001$), we used the Z-score of the fashion knowledge measure for the subsequent analyses as in Study 1. Replicating the results from Study 1, again we found that participants who fashioned knowledge was low had a more positive reaction to the counterfeit ($F(1, 158) = 8.82$, $p = .003$) and believed the counterfeit will have a more positive impact on the brand reputation ($F(1, 158) = 6.60$, $p = .015$) relative to participants whose fashion knowledge was high.

These first two studies put forth evidence that indeed consumers’ stated fashion knowledge, whether self-reported or manipulated, influences how consumers perceive and react to counterfeit goods. In Study 3, we sought to replicate these findings on preference for counterfeit products with a measure of revealed fashion knowledge, while also looking at the moderating role of ownership of the original brand. To ensure we would recruit a sufficient number of real owners of luxury goods, we recruited 197 wealthy participants from Qualtrics (80% female; all very high income). First, respondents completed the self-reported fashion knowledge measure. They then responded to the four hard fashion knowledge questions (tallied as a continuous variable 0-4, which we Z-scored) to measure revealed fashion knowledge. Next, participants who were luxury owners were asked to describe an owned luxury product (either a luxury leather good, luxury sunglasses, or a luxury watch) and subsequently read a counterfeiting scenario about the specific product and brand they previously mentioned. Non-owners simply read a general counterfeiting scenario about either counterfeit leather goods, sunglasses, or watches. Finally, we asked participants about their overall reaction (like/dislike) to the counterfeit product, whether their own or a generic. Results again showed how participants whose revealed fashion knowledge was low liked the counterfeit more ($F(1, 195) = 25.53$, $p < .001$) relative to individuals whose revealed fashion knowledge was high. Interestingly, we found a significant interaction between revealed knowledge and ownership on liking/disliking the counterfeit ($F(1, 193) = 4.87$, $p = .028$; Johnson-Neyman point: -.494, area of significance is below), such that owners whose revealed fashion knowledge was low liked counterfeit products more relative not only to high knowledge owners, but also relative to low knowledge non-owners.

Finally, in Study 4 we sought to replicate the moderating effect of ownership while also establishing process evidence. Participants from Mechanical Turk ($N = 421$) first completed the four hard fashion knowledge questions (tallied as a continuous variable 0-4, which we Z-scored) to measure revealed fashion knowledge. They then saw the same Louis Vuitton handbag/Rolex watch scenario as in studies 1 and 2, and the same counterfeit products stand before reporting their overall reaction (like/dislike) to the counterfeit product, their reaction to the brand being counterfeited, the impact of the counterfeit on the original brand and their likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth regarding the counterfeit. In addition, we also measured their reaction when seeing the counterfeit version of their product by having them complete a battery of emotions (e.g., guilty, proud, ashamed, embarrassed) among which was our target emotion of “flattery” which we measured through five items (flattered, admired, worshipped, glorified, inspired) and collapsed into a Flattery Index ($a = .90$). Through a full factorial model with fashion knowledge and ownership we found the predicted significant interactions between objective knowledge and ownership on liking/disliking the counterfeit ($F(1, 417) = 6.46$, $p = .011$), reaction to the counterfeit ($F(1, 417) = 6.34$, $p = .012$), the impact of the counterfeit on the original brand’s reputation ($F(1, 417) = 8.12$, $p = .005$), their likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth ($F(1, 417) = 13.65$, $p < .001$), and how flattered they felt by the counterfeit ($F(1, 417) = 4.52$, $p = .034$), such that low knowledge owners always felt more positively about and more flattered by the counterfeit relative to both high knowledge owners and low knowledge non-owners. A moderated mediation analysis (Preacher and Hayes, 2008) tested whether low knowledge individuals liked the counterfeits more via flattery, and whether ownership played a moderating role. Results (Process Model 8, 10,000 bootstrap samples) demonstrated how flattery mediated the effect of revealed fashion knowledge on all the dependent variables. Specifically, low fashion knowledge individuals liked the counterfeits more, but only when they owned the original (on like/dislike–Index of Moderated Mediation: [-.272; -.014]; Indirect effect for owners: [-.979; -.192]).

Previous literature has identified the negative and sometimes positive effects of counterfeit luxury goods on individuals. We extend this work by demonstrating how knowledge of fashion and luxury goods plays a key role in consumers’ preference for counterfeits. Specifically, the lower consumers’ knowledge, the higher consumers’ liking and predispositions towards counterfeits, even more so if they are owners of the original, because they feel flattered. In addition to contributing to the literature on luxury and counterfeit goods, this research also has interesting managerial implications, suggesting how counterfeiting may not be as detrimental as both researchers and practitioners believe. While low fashion-knowledge consumers have a more positive reaction to counterfeits, high fashion-knowledge consumers, who are the primary target for luxury brands, know the value of the original and are overall less prone to counterfeit goods.

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The Price is Right: Perceptions of Control Influence How Consumers Use Price In Judging Product Quality

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In the current research, we investigate whether feelings of control—the sense that one can make positive things happen in one’s life and avoid negative things—influences how much individuals rely on price to judge product quality. More specifically, we reason that price will have a greater impact on quality judgments when individuals’ personal control is threatened. A set of four studies offers convergent evidence for this central thesis. Further, we demonstrate an underlying psychological mechanism of the effect. Specifically, we find that in a state of low control, people become more susceptible to normative social influence. Given that price-quality judgments are often deemed to be normative, people in low control are more likely to increase their reliance on price in judging quality.

As a first step, we argue that when individuals’ feelings of control are low, they become more susceptible to normative social influence. While no existing research offers direct empirical evidence for this claim, related research points to its plausibility. For example, Terror Management Theory (TMT: Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon 1986) has shown that individuals who were reminded of death—which is perhaps the most fundamental obstacle to one’s ability to control the environment (Becker, 1973)—are more likely to endorse socially approved standards in judgment and decision making (Norenzayan, 2006). Research on social exclusion also provides support for the idea that low control should increase the susceptibility to normative social influence. For instance, Williams, Cheung, and Choi (2000) found that social exclusion in an online ball tossing game leads people to be more likely to follow the majority’s wrong opinion on a simple perception question than those socially included.

We further propose that this elevated susceptibility to normative social influence will result in greater reliance on price when judging product quality. We argue that this happens because people perceive that using price in judging quality is a social norm that is popularly practiced by other people. Consumer researchers have documented that people interpret high price as a cue for high quality (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Cronley et al. 2005). People who are susceptible to social influence tend to rely on others’ opinions in judging quality (Martin, Wentzel, and Tomczak 2008). In sum, this research suggests that in the absence of other signals or information, a reliance on price in the judgment of quality is what consumers have learned to be a socially accepted, normative approach to decision-making.

Taken together, we propose that low control heightens susceptibility to normative social influence, which in turn, increases reliance on price when making quality judgments. Four studies support our propositions.

Study 1 investigated the role of feelings of control on price-quality inferences. The study employed a 3 x 2 (control: low vs. high vs. neutral) x 2 (price: expensive vs. cheap) between subjects design. Participants in the high (low) control condition were asked to recall something positive that happened (not) because of something they did (Kay et al. 2008). The use of a positive memory enabled us to manipulate control while holding mood constant. Those in the neutral condition wrote about “a movie or television show that you saw and enjoyed in the past few months”. Next, participants judged a burger whose price was presented as either $18 for the expensive condition or $5 for the cheap condition. As predicted, the results showed that lowering control indeed increased the reliance of price in quality judgments (as opposed to high feelings of control dampening reliance on price).

Study 2 supported the proposed process by showing that merely describing the use of price in judging product quality as normative or not moderates the effect. The results revealed that low control enhanced reliance on price when reliance on price was described as popular and socially acceptable. Communicating the non-normative aspect of using price, however, decreased individuals’ reliance on price.

Study 3 examined whether uncertainty, lack of confidence in judgment, or desire for clarity could explain the effect. None of the variables was significant as a mediator.

Lastly, Study 4 documented that control moderates the downstream effect of price on actual quality experience. People in a low state of control rated an indulging food product as better when it was presented as expensive rather than as cheap. Such difference was not found among people in the high control condition.

In demonstrating the basic relationship between control and price reliance, this research makes several theoretical contributions. First, it extends the price literature by identifying a unique motivational driver for consumers’ reliance on price in judging product quality. In addition, this research offers a new perspective on why consumers rely on price. We suggest that the social aspects of price have been understudied and propose that relying on price-quality inferences can feel like the popular, socially accepted course of action.

This research also contributes to the personal control literature. Our research offers new insight into this area by providing the first investigation into how control influences perceptions around pricing. Further, our documentation of the underlying mechanism of susceptibility to normative social influence is novel; no systematic investigation has addressed the impact of personal control on susceptibility to social influence. By providing empirical evidence of the impact of control on the susceptibility to social influence, this research creates an opportunity to explore various implications of control on consumers’ social behaviors.

REFERENCES


Can Sexy Images Drag You Down? How Gender and Self-construal Impact Subsequent Indulgent Consumption

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The cliché “Sex Sells” is apparently held in high esteem by advertisers who rely on the use of the sexy images as a marketing strategy not only in commercial marketing (e.g., Chang and Tseng 2013; Sengupta and Dahl 2008) but also in social marketing (Reichert, Heckler, and Jackson 2001). A majority of research on the use of sexy images has focused on its impacts on advertising persuasion, ignoring the consumers’ subsequent behaviors following exposures to sexy images.

In the current research, we argue that exposure to sexy images is more likely to evoke indulgent consumption/choice in a subsequent context (when compared with exposure to neutral imagery). Furthermore, we are interested in boundary conditions that could amplify or dampen the priming effects of sexy images on subsequent indulgent consumption. One potential moderator is gender differences. Gender is an important sub-cultural influence on sexual norms (Lopez and George 1995). The other proposed moderator is self-construal. Two types of self-construal, independent and interdependent, distinguish how the self is viewed in relation to others (Singelis 1994).

Nevertheless, we propose that interdependent self-construal may enhance indulgent consumption for women (compared with women with independent self-construal). Priming interdependent self-construal may make one to think collectively and place more on subjective norms (Ybarra and Trafimow 1998). Women show equivalent sexual arousal when the gender norms do not condemn erotica enjoyment (Lopez and George 1995). They are also more responsive to sexy images with romantic love. Since interdependent self-construal is consistent with how female self-regulatory goals, such interdependence will allow women to activate pleasure seeking after exposure to sexy images. Therefore, self-construal could play a dual role when gender differences are considered: independent self-construal enhances males’ indulgent consumption while interdependent self-construal increases females’ indulgent consumption after exposures to sexy images.

In Study 1, empirical data of 2016 World Auto Expo was analyzed. As a sex cue, show girls evoke impulsivity and should be appropriate to promote cars for indulgent purpose (e.g., shorts car). We expected that companies were more likely to use show girls for indigent-based cars. The show girl data were assessed through inquiries for the brand managers. Using show girl(s) or not served as the dependent variable. The main independent variable was car for indulgence based on two judges who were blind to research purposes. Engine displacement, county of origin, and the marque edition were also considered as independent variables. The results based on the binary logistic regression supported a positive relationship between sex cue and indulgence.

In Study 2, both gender and self-construal were considered as moderators. A 2 (sex cue: sex vs. neutral) X 2 (participant gender: men vs. women) X 2 (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent) between-subjects design was employed. Self-construal was first measured by a 24-item self-construal scale of Singelis (1994). Participants were then watched four videos either sexy or neutral (Van den Bergh et al. 2008). Chocolates (separated package with equal weight and size) were provided for them as appreciation and they could eat as much as the liked. Chocolate consumption served as the dependent variable. The regression using Model 3 in the PROCESS macro (Hayes 2013) showed a three-way interaction. For men with an independent self-construal, those in the sex cue condition ate more chocolates than the counterparts in the neutral condition. No such difference was found for men with an interdependent self-construal. On the other hand, women with interdependent self-construal in the sex cue condition ate more chocolates than the counterparts in the neutral condition. Similar chocolate consumption was found on women with independent self-construal regardless of the sex cue.

In Study 3, two sex cues were classified. A 2 (sex cue: gratuitous sex vs. romantic love) X 2 (participant gender: men vs. women) X 2 (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent) full-factorial design was conducted. Self-construal was manipulated through movie synopsis with a poster (independent self-construal: Iron Man; interdependent self-construal: Avengers). Participants were then invited to evaluate ten perfume ads (with gratuitous sex or romantic love). Gratuitous sex was presented through the image with a sexually charged close up of a partially clothed men and women passionately embracing each other. Romantic love was manipulated through a pair of wedding rings and a slogan to express their commitment. After participants completed the above measures, they chose one of two tickets to the forthcoming auto expo as a thank-you gift. Sports car and hybrid car exhibition represented indulgent and non-indulgent choice, respectively, which served as the dependent measure. We used slopes analyses (Aiken and West 1991) after the three-way interaction was found. The results indicated that men were more likely to choose an indulgent choice when independent-self was primed. Such effects were stronger when the sex cue contained gratuitous sex. In contrast, women with interdependent-self were more likely to choose an indulgent choice when using romantic love in sex cues.

The current research makes several contributions. First, this research contributes to the sex literature by a) demonstrating subsequent indulgent consumption after sexy image exposure, and b) identifying the boundary conditions in which this effect might occur. Second, this investigation also contributes to the reward-processing literature, which has received recent attention, by demonstrating that motivational mindsets such as sex can have unique effects on consumer choice. Third, it shows that different sexy images may have the dual impacts of both decreasing and increasing indulgent consumption, depending on individual differences in gender and self-construal.

This research points to some interesting directions for future studies. First, it is worth to explore how other typology the sexy images (explicit vs. implicit) (Chang and Tseng 2013) and the level of nudity in sexy images may influence subsequent indulgent consumption. Second, since evolution-based theories suggest gender differences on mating motivations (Malamuth 1996; Symons 1979; Saad 2004), future research may manipulate mating motivation through a priming task to replicate the results found in the current study. Third, since exposures to sexy images may produce a generalized motivation to seek rewarding outcomes and immediate gratification, it is then possible that people become more likely to eat unhealthy foods, procrastinate, and engage in aggression.
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Does Bigger Equal Better? How Product-Model Size Ratio and Brand’s Social Role Impact Ad Effectiveness
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
This research examines how advertisers can use the size contrast between product and model images (SCPM) to maximize ad effectiveness. Size (big or small) can be an important metaphor and it shapes perceptions of the significance of social stimuli (Landau et al. 2010). Early studies showed that both children (Bruner and Goodman 1947) and adults (Bruner and Postman 1948) perceive socially significant symbols as physically larger than neutral symbols. People commonly talk about an increase in significance of importance as physical largeness or expansion (“This is a big problem, and it is only going to grow;” Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Despite its prevalence in our daily life, such the metaphor in advertising remains unexplored.

Before this project, we conducted a content analysis with 1325 ads from popular magazines with various product categories. The results indicated a positive correlation between SCPM ratio and product price ($r=.12$, $p<.01$): advertisers tended to exaggerate their product images (bigger than the model image) among high-priced products. The observations lead us to propose that SCPM may increase perceptions of power and bring about a sense of the product’s worth.

Furthermore, we are interested in the boundary conditions of using SCPM. Brand’s social role (BSR) is proposed as a moderator. Consumers tend to treat a brand as a human being (Aaker 1997; Aggarwal and McGill 2012), and interact with the brands in ways similar to interpersonal relationship partners (Aggarwal 2004; Fournier 1998; Swaminathan, Page, and Gurhan-Canli 2007). Two BSRs are distinguished based on brand’s social role: leader-like vs. friend-like brand. When a brand positions itself as a leader to its customers, consumers consider it superior to other brands in the same product category. Slogans such as “there is no substitute” (Porsche) and “the king of beers” (Budweiser) are two examples. On the other hand, when consumers perceive the brand as a friend, they feel sincere and trustworthy (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004). Mutually shared concerns exist between the friend-like brand and its customers (Aggarwal 2004). For instance, Coca-Cola’s slogan “the best friend thirst ever had” describes the friend-like relationship between the brand and its consumers.

We propose that processing fluency as the underlying mechanism behind the phenomena above. Fluency is defined as the ease with which new information can be processed (Alter and Oppenheimer 2009; Reber, Schwarz, and Winkielman 2004). The right match between SCPM and BSR is expected to improve processing fluency, which enhances ad effectiveness.

In Study 1, we tested the interaction effect between SCPM and BSR. A 2 (SCPM: large vs. small) x 2 (BSR: leader-like vs. friend-like) between-subjects design was conducted. Chocolates were chosen as the test product category. Godiva and Kinder Bueno were chosen to represent for leader- and friend-like brands. Each participant was presented with one ad selected from the pool of four (i.e., two SCPM for each of the two BSRs). The different SCPM were created. In the large (small) SCPM condition, the size of chocolate (model) image is twice bigger than that of the model (chocolate). In the leader-like (friend-like) brand condition, a capital letter G (K) was placed on the chocolate image with the logo of Godiva (Kinder Bueno) shown in the ad. Each ad was A5 size. After ad viewing, two dependent variables were assessed: attitudes toward the brand and purchase intentions. The results showed that when facing the leader-like brand, participants in the large SCPM condition showed more favorable attitudes toward the brand and stronger purchase intention than the counterparts in the small SCPM condition. Opposite results were found with participants facing the friend-like brand, participants in the small SCPM condition showed more favorable attitudes toward the brand and stronger purchase intention than those in the large SCPM condition.

In Study 2, we had three objectives: to replicate the results of Study 1 with a different manipulation for BSR, to rule out the effects of product type, and to explore the possible mechanism underlying the predicted effect: processing fluency. A 2 (SCPM: large vs. small) x 2 (BSR: leader-like vs. friend-like) x 2 (product type: hedonic vs. utilitarian) between-subjects design was conducted. Since gender differences play an important role in product perceptions, only female participants were recruited. They were first asked to read a magazine article regarding a brand and then asked to view a forthcoming ad. Participants were presented with a brief description of a leader-like (friend-like) brand with a fictitious brand “Mirabelle” designed to prime the brand’s social role. The second section was the ads differing on SCPM and product type. The ad materials were identical as those used in Study 1. Perfume and cleanser were chosen to represent as hedonic and utilitarian products. The different ratios between product and model image sizes were created. After the ad was read, purchase intention was assessed. The results was consistent with those in Study 1. We then conducted mediated moderation analysis (Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010) and confirmed that the processing fluency mediated the effects of SCPM and BSR on purchase intention.

This research contributes to the literature on power in consumer behavior. Previous research has shown that power can be manipulated by the copy embedded in an ad (Rucker, Dubois, and Galinsky 2011). The current research is the first to illustrate that power can be primed through a larger product image (compared with a model image) in an ad. The current work offers rich managerial implications. Advertisers may benefit from taking power difference into consideration and arranging a larger size of the product image (compared with the model image) when promoting a leader-like brand. However, the findings from this work also lend a cautionary note: the strategy of a larger size of product image may not work when the brand is perceived as a friend to consumers. The current investigation provides guidance for brand managers in how to frame the brand’s social role in their brand positioning strategies. Brand managers should work closely with ad designers and be judicious in image placement in advertising strategy.

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Unbearable Lightness of Shaky Inferences: When Misused Product Inference is Detrimental to Verified Product Hypotheses
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers often face consumption choices that involve deciding between two competing hypotheses supported by evidence that vary in terms of levels of certainty (i.e., the supporting evidence could be either missing, inferred, or observed). Understanding how consumers integrate multiple pieces of evidence varying in levels of certainty helps marketers develop better arguments for products. Previous research has presented mixed findings regarding the roles of inferred versus observed evidence in consumers’ judgment and decision making. On the one hand, preference for certainty suggests that a hypothesis with fully observed evidence should be favored over a hypothesis with one piece of observed evidence and one piece of missing evidence. This is supported by research showing that people favor explanations making fewer (vs. greater) number of predictions (e.g., Sussman, Khemlani and Oppenheimer 2014, Khemlani, Sussman and Oppenheimer 2011) and that consumers prefer brands which signal lower uncertainty (e.g., Muthukrishnan 1995). On the other hand, consumers evaluate products as a function of inferences they make (e.g., Dick, Chakravarti and Biehal 1990), which could lead them to become less sensitive to higher levels of uncertainty about the evidence at hand (Gunasti and Ross Jr. 2009). In addition, it has been shown that spontaneous inference making increases information utilization but only when the inference is diagnostic (e.g., Kardes, Posavac and Cronley 2004).

Our research is the first attempt to directly test how inferred evidence influences the value of observed evidence in hypothesis testing when two hypotheses are pitted against each other. Specifically, we investigate an under-studied pattern of hypothesis-testing bias in which consumers misuse inferences made about the missing evidence supporting only one hypothesis ("to-be-verified hypothesis" henceforth) to evaluate the validity of a competing hypothesis, which is fully verified by observed evidence ("verified hypothesis" henceforth). We label this phenomenon the "spillover of inferences effect". We propose that consumers may more heavily rely on inferred than observed evidence when inferred evidence is biasedly perceived to be more diagnostic than observed evidence.

Study 1 established that consumers devalue the observed evidence supporting the verified hypotheses and judge the probability of validity across two hypotheses as a function of the extent to which the inferred evidence favors the to-be-verified hypothesis. In a 4 base-rate (i.e., base rate as 5-14%, 15-24%, 76-85%, 86-95%; between-subject) X 4 scenario replicates (within-subject) mixed design, participants were presented two hypotheses which compete with each other. Participants were asked to judge the validity of these two hypotheses on a 11-point trade-off scale in the end of the study. In each of the four scenarios (wine regions, telephoto zoom lens, virus, and product malfunction), one hypothesis was fully supported by the observed evidence whereas the other hypothesis was only partially supported by one piece of observed evidence because the other piece of evidence could not be observed at the time. However, the base rate of occurrence of that piece of missing evidence in the population of interest was provided. The analysis yielded a main effect of base rate, with participants reporting a statistically significant change in preference from the verified hypothesis to the to-be-verified hypothesis as the base-rate for the missing piece of evidence increased ($F(3, 130) = 38.98, p < .000$).

Study 2 directly tested whether inferences made about the missing evidence for only to-be-verified hypothesis influences the extent to which participants are willing to support or falsify the competing verified hypothesis. The design was a 2 base-rate (i.e., base rate as 30% vs. 70%) X 2 hypothesis conditions (i.e., focus on the verified hypothesis vs. the to-be-verified hypothesis) between-subjects design. We predict that we will replicate the effect in study 1 regardless of which focal hypothesis consumers hold to evaluate evidence. Study 2 allows us to 1) rule out the alternative explanation that the effect documented in study 1 was a result of attention shifted toward the to-be-verified hypothesis and 2) directly show that consumers use the information perceived to be diagnostic (i.e., base rate of the missing evidence) to evaluate the verified hypothesis. We recoded the 11-point measure ratings by centering ratings around 0. Therefore, a rating of zero indicates no preference for either of hypotheses; positive scores (between 0 and 5) indicate preference for the to-be-verified hypothesis and negative scores (between 0 and -5) indicate preference for the verified hypothesis. The analysis revealed that participants who were explicitly instructed to evaluate evidence against the verified hypothesis which was not associated with the missing evidence still used base rate of the missing evidence to judge the validity of this hypothesis ($M_{low\; base\; rate} = -1.333$ vs. $M_{high\; base\; rate} = .318, p < .000$). In support of the null effect of hypothesis focus, the preference rating for the hypotheses was not a function of the interaction between the base-rate factor and the hypothesis-focus factor ($F(1, 202) = .656, NS$).

Study 3 explored when might consumers misuse high base rates favoring only the to-be-verified hypothesis in detriment of the verified hypothesis. We predict that when the missing evidence does not accommodate a broader scope of evidence in the context, the spillover of inferences effect should be offset. This was a single factor scope of evidence (i.e., the missing evidence accommodates a broader scope of evidence vs. not) between-subject design with three levels. In the first and third conditions, the missing evidence accommodated a broader scope of evidence whereas in the second condition, the missing evidence did not. The results supported our prediction that when both hypotheses required equal scope of evidence, the spillover of inferences effect was offset ($M_{with\; scope\; discrepancy\; condition1} = .655; M_{with\; scope\; discrepancy\; condition2} = -.1828; M_{with\; scope\; discrepancy\; condition3} = .688, p = .000$).

Our research investigated and empirically showed a puzzling situation in which consumers prefer a product hypothesis supported by inferred evidence over a competing hypothesis supported by fully observed evidence. We further identified the underlying process – the spillover of inferences effect and showed when the effect was offset.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Industry-wide product-harm crises (hereafter called “industry-wide crises”) are well-publicized instances of corporate misconduct permeating an industry and causing potential or real product harm. Severe industry-wide crises can exert a catastrophic impact on the affected industry by eroding consumer trust (Cleeren, Dekimpe, & Helsen, 2008; Feng, Keller, Wu, & Xu, 2014; Knight, Gao, Garrett, & Deans, 2008). We have studied the 2008 Chinese milk melamine contamination in which 22 dairy firms were reportedly involved. In this crisis, consumers’ confidence and trust in the Chinese dairy industry was shaken to its core (Qiao, Guo, & Klein, 2012). Most recently, another major industry-wide crisis occurred in Brazil: more than 30 Brazilian meat manufacturers were reported to indulge in unhygienic and illegal practices, causing concerns in export markets and a loss of trust in the safety of meat exported from Brazil. Previous research on product-harm crises mostly focuses on trust erosion in individual firms rather than in entire industries (Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Klein & Dawar, 2004). Industry-wide crises differ from individual firm crises because they are attributable to institutional factors such as deficient regulation, weak quality control, and poorly defined industry norms (Gao & Knight, 2007; Gao, Knight, Zhang, Mather, & Tan, 2012). The present paper contributes to the product-harm crisis literature by investigating the nature of these institutional factors in connection with consumers’ perceptions, judgment, and trust erosion. We seek insights from institutional theory to better understand this connection.

Institutional theory emphasizes the importance of legitimacy in understanding individuals’ responses toward an institutional system and the entities within it (Finch, Deephouse, & Varella, 2015; Suchman, 1995; Tost, 2011). The concept of legitimacy has not gained sufficient attention in the product-harm crisis literature. Two significant remaining gaps still are presented here: (1) Very few studies investigate consumer legitimacy judgment regarding an industry. It is still unclear how consumers judge an industry as legitimate or non-legitimate based on its institutional frameworks. (2) There is a lack of any theoretical explanation with associated empirical support for the role of legitimacy judgment in consumers’ psychological reactions during an industry-wide crisis. It is unclear whether consumer legitimacy judgment of the affected industry can influence consumer trust in the industry. Against this background, this study investigates how consumers make legitimacy judgment of an industry and whether consumer legitimacy judgment plays a critical role in the erosion of industry trust occurring during an industry-wide crisis.

We define consumer legitimacy judgment (CLJ) as consumers’ judgment of an industry’s actions based on the desirability, properness, and appropriateness in the institutional environment. We hypothesize that CLJ plays a central role in the erosion of consumer broad-scope trust during an industry-wide crisis.

We conducted four studies to understand the mechanism of legitimacy judgment. The first three studies used the Chinese dairy industry as the research context because it is perceived as having institutional deficiencies by Chinese consumers (Gao & Knight, 2007; Knight et al., 2008). We used parents of school children as our sample frame because they are frequent decision-makers and purchasers of food for households and share concerns about food safety (Qiao et al., 2012). Study 1 constructs and validates the CLJ scales by referring to literature, experts, consumer interviews, and a sample of 311 participants. Study 2 examines the mediation effect of CLJ on the relationship between perception of normalization of misconduct and industry trust with a sample of 284 participants. The results indicate that, once consumers perceive stimuli signifying an industry-wide crisis, they tend to engage in legitimacy judgment and this judgment has a significant impact on their trust in the industry. Study 3 validates the CLJ mediation model by assessing whether the information signaling that a crisis is industry-wide serves as the boundary condition for the full mediation effect. We obtained usable responses from 323 participants from the sample frame. The results indicate that consumers rely on an effortful and systematic approach during an industry-wide crisis and rather engage in a conservative and automatic approach during a non-industry-wide crisis. Study 4 (n=132) replicates the CLJ mediation model in the setting of the soymilk industry in China which has a low base-rate of crises, in order to investigate the role of base-rate on the CLJ effect. The results indicate that a high base rate of crises strengthens the tendency of engaging in legitimacy judgment and weakens the reliance on pre-existing perceptions.

This paper contributes to the consumer research literature by combining institutional and psychological perspectives to evaluate legitimacy judgment process and the erosion of industry trust. The paper suggests that monitoring consumers’ perceptions of the industry with regard to the focal scandals and base rates and taking appropriate measures to influence consumer legitimacy judgment process are prescriptions for reducing the erosion of industry trust during a crisis.

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Consumer Trust Erosion During an Industry-Wide Crisis:
The Central Role of Legitimacy Judgment
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In this paper, we demonstrate that there is a perceptual correlation between brightness and inter-item hierarchy. Specifically, we suggest that darker (lighter) color is related to higher (lower) hierarchy. We posit that this association emerges in response to a deep-seated human urge to structure the stimuli they are confronted with. Without sorting the multitude of external cues into coherent units that provide meaning, the world will be more chaotic and unsettling than what most people find comfortable. Relying on the brightness-hierarchy congruency therefore emerges as a handy solution to organize this chaos into a predictable, orderly pattern.

Five studies confirmed this hypothesis. In Study 1 (n=142 undergraduates), participants were first asked to select the most important attribute while purchasing a fabric detergent: scent or brand. Across two conditions, the font color was darker for one of the attributes and lighter for the other. Results revealed that participants were significantly more likely to prefer an attribute when it was presented in a darker typeface (M[dark]= 64.3% vs. M[light]= 36.1%, β = -1.158, Wald = 10.96, p =.001, OR=0.314).

If color lightness corresponds with product hierarchy, we expect that product bundles where the primary product is darker and the secondary complementary product is lighter will benefit from this congruency effect. The next study examines this proposition. Specifically, study 2 (n=81 undergraduates) tested the effect of color lightness on perceived hierarchy in evaluating product bundles. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (primary product package: dark vs. light) × 2 (primary product package: dark vs. light) design, where they were asked to evaluate the product bundle on various dimensions (Batra and Ahtola 1988) 8-item attitude scale, α=0.93). ANOVA results revealed non-significant main effects for both products’ color lightness (All F’s <1). However, as expected, the interaction between the two independent variables was significant (F (1, 80) = 6.595, p =.012). Specifically, the dark-colored detergent paired with light-colored softener induced more positive product evaluation (M=86.93; SD=9.6) than any of the other three paired bundles.

Study 3 (n=97 undergraduates) reinforced our proposition by replicating the results of study 2 in a different product setting: shampoo and conditioner. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (primary product package: dark vs. light) × 2 (secondary product package: dark vs. light) design, where they were asked to evaluate the product bundle using a 6-item attitude scale (α=0.84). ANOVA results revealed non-significant main effects for both products’ color lightness (All F’s <1). However again the interaction between the two independent variables was significant (F (1, 96) = 8.411, p =.005). Specifically, the dark-colored shampoo paired with light-colored conditioner induced more positive product evaluation (M=3.5; SD=0.83) than any of the other three paired bundles.

Previously, it has been suggested that color congruency effects may result from automatic processing (Spence and Deroy 2013). To investigate this proposition, we measured response times in all the three studies described above. Lower response latencies have been strongly associated with automaticity and heuristic-use in decision making (De Neys 2006). None of the studies found any relationship between response time and color-congruent behavior (All F’s <1). In the next two studies, we explore a possible motivational underpinning of this effect. In Studies 4 and 5, we examined the moderating effect of personal-need-for-structure on the color hierarchy correspondence we tested in the first three studies. Consumers differ in their desire for control and structure, and aversion to information ambiguity, a trait referred to as the ‘personal need for structure’ (PNS) (Neuberg and Newsom 1993). Stimuli incongruence can be construed as a type of information ambiguity which will be aversive to consumers with high-PNS (Rompay, Pruyn, and Tieke 2009). Therefore, we expect that people high in PNS will display greater preference for a categorization which is consistent with their perceptual hierarchy.

In study 4, all participants (n=216 mTurk workers) were shown 16 different sets of stimuli. Each set included a higher hierarchy and a lower hierarchy item (e.g. Entrée-Appetizer). Here, we define perceptual hierarchy as a system or organization in which items, animate or inanimate, are ranked vertically according to status, authority or some other dimension. Participants were asked to categorize each item into a darker or lighter colored basket as they saw fit. To generalize our findings for a wide variety of colors, we employed five different color types. Also, the presentation order of the 16 item sets was randomized across participants. In addition, all participants also answered the 12-item PNS scale (Neuberg and Newsom 1993). Analysis revealed that 76% of the categorizations were congruent, where the higher hierarchy item was tagged with the darker color basket. This was significantly higher than what would be expected by chance (50%) (Binomial Test, p=0.0001). Also, measured PNS was correlated to choice congruency (r=+0.196, p=0.004) confirming our moderation hypothesis.

Study 5 replicated the results of study 4 by creating real life scenario-based questions. In each scenario, participants (n=216 mTurk workers) were asked to choose the most suitable products (darker vs. lighter) for two different people or item (higher versus. lower hierarchy). Rest of the procedure was identical as previous study. Results showed that 82% of the choices were congruent, as expected, in that people chose a darker-colored item/product for a higher hierarchical person/item and chose a lighter-colored item/product for a lower hierarchical person/item (Binomial Test, p=0.0001). Also, measured PNS was correlated to choice congruency (r=+0.130, p=0.056) reconfirming our moderation hypothesis.

General Discussion

We investigated how consumers relate color lightness with inter-item hierarchy. Five studies provide converging evidence that consumers associate higher (lower) hierarchy items to darker (lighter) colors. In the domain of complementary products, those bundles where the primary product is darker and the secondary product is lighter are more preferred than any other bundle configuration. We also demonstrated that a consumer’s “need for structure” motivation moderates this preference.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Obesity and Sensitivity of Food Perceptions and Preferences to Marketing Actions

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We first measured the effects of food stereotypes. Existing research has shown that people tend to categorize food as “good” or “bad” based on stereotypes, regardless of the actual size of the portion, and that these stereotypes strongly influence food perceptions and preferences (Oakes 2005; Rozin, Ashmore, and Markwith 1996). We selected “surprising” pairs of foods where the stereotypically “good” food actually contains more calories than the stereotypically “bad” food (e.g., a can of Minute Maid pure orange juice, worth 152 calories, vs. a can of regular Coke, worth 140 calories). Overall, we replicated both the “health halo” and the “health horn” effects (Chandon 2013; Chandon and Wansink 2007), participants tended to underestimate calories in “good” foods and overestimate calories in “bad” foods. At t1 (before surgery), obese patients stereotyped foods significantly more than control participants, although their stereotyping tended to decrease 3 months after surgery, and significantly 1 year after.

We also measured size labeling effects. While food vendors are free to label the size of their portions however they want (e.g. “small”, “medium”, “large”), past research has shown that size labeling can exert a normative influence on consumers’ portion choice and consumption (Aydınoğlu and Krishna 2011). We tested labeling effects within-subject with a scenario that asked participants to choose portions of fries that vary only in “size labels”, but not in actual size. At t1 (before surgery), obese patients were significantly more influenced by size labeling than control participants, but again, they became significantly less influenced 3 months after and 1 year after surgery.

We finally measured assortment effects. Past research has shown that the range of portion sizes available at a food vendor exerts a normative influence on portion choice (Sharpe, Staelin, and Huber 2008); for instance adding a small size or a large size will shift which size will be considered normal, influencing food intake. In a scenario-based task, we found that before surgery, obese patients were directionally more influenced by assortment effects compared with control participants, but that this influence tended decrease 3 months after surgery, and significantly 1 year after.

Obviously, the most interesting comparisons is between the responses of the obese participants before and after weight-loss surgery. If we had found no effect of bariatric surgery, this would have suggested that the higher sensitivity to marketing actions of obese participants is likely driven by personality or other stable individual differences, and thus that the drastic weight loss typically caused by bariatric surgery is not mediated by sensitivity to marketing actions. However, we found that weight-loss surgery made obese people less responsive to marketing actions. This provides the first demonstration that weight-loss interventions, such as bariatric surgery, can influence food perceptions, preferences, and choice. It also suggests that differences in response to marketing actions might be one of the reasons for the higher BMI of the obese group.

The environment—and particularly the actions of food marketers—strongly influences the perception of food, which then impacts preferences and eating behavior (Chandon and Wansink 2012). Marketing claims (e.g., “good for you” claims, brand positioning), the size and shape of food packages, their labeling (“medium” or “large”) and the range of sizes on the menu all influence food consumption and the perception of food quality (“tasty,” “healthy”) and quantity.

Research on how food marketing influences food perception and preferences has important limitations. First, almost all existing studies have been conducted with lean, healthy, educated, and young people rather than with obese people who are most at risk. This is an important concern because research suggests that obese people have become insensitive to internal satiation signals (Bartoshuk et al. 2006; Yeomans, Blundell, and Leshem 2004) and to reward signals in the brain (Volkow, Wang, and Baler 2011). The second limitation is the lack of studies examining the effects of the most effective weight-loss remedy for obese people—bariatric surgery—and how it interacts with the effects of the marketing environment. About 200,000 Americans undergo weight-loss surgery (gastric bypass or banding) each year. Yet, only a handful of studies show that weight-loss surgery influences not only food intake, but also food preferences, hunger, and taste acuity (Behary and Miras 2015; Scruggs, Buflington, and Cowan 1994). More generally, no research has, to date, examined how medical interventions like weight-loss surgery influence people’s sensitivity to marketing actions when it comes to food perception and preferences.

The goal of this project is to examine the interplay of biological and psychological factors driving eating behavior before and after weight-loss surgery. Our hypothesis is that the drastic psychological and biological changes (e.g., the composition of the gut microbiota and the levels of metabolic gut hormones) caused by bariatric surgery reduce the impact of marketing factors on food perceptions and preferences.

The main study was conducted with the collaboration of the University Hospital of Pitié-Salpêtrière in Paris. During five years we collected data on a sample of 73 obese French female patients scheduled for gastric bypass surgery or surgical banding, and 40 lean French females (for the control group). The obese participants belonged to a clinical study conducted by the Institute of Cardiometabolism And Nutrition (ICAN). The obese patients were tested three times: one month before, 3 months after, and 12 months after the surgery. The control group was tested twice, separated by a period of 3 to 6 months in order to verify that the responses were stable over time. The control group was matched with the obese group on socio-demographic variables (age and employment). However, the obese sample had lower levels of education and income. Our analyses focused on the 46 obese patients and 32 control subjects who participated in at least two experimental sessions. The responses of the subjects who dropped the study after the first session were never significantly different from the responses the subjects who continued the study.
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Sensory or Nutrition Menu Labeling?
A Field Experiment in Aligning Public Health and Restaurant Business Goals
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Americans now spend more on foods prepared away from home than on foods prepared at home (ERS 2016), and meals are considerably larger in restaurants than at home (Lachat et al. 2012). This has led health authorities to mandate calorie labeling on restaurant menus, hoping that it will lead patrons to make healthier choices.

However, the evidence on the effects of menu labeling on demand is mixed. In a recent meta-analysis (Long et al. 2015), calorie labeling alone was found to lead to a small (18 kcal) but statistically significant reduction in the calories ordered or purchased per meal. In addition, the restaurant industry has fought aggressively against menu labeling, officially because of their compliance costs, but presumably also for fear that it hurts customer value (Nestle 2011; Tavernise 2015).

Because of the necessity for the food industry to balance health requirements and customer satisfaction (Nestle 2011; Tavernise 2015), some researchers have explored pleasure-based approaches to promoting healthier eating. In particular, Cornil and Chandon (2016) argued that focusing on the sensory experience of eating could lead consumers to choose, prefer, and pay more for smaller food portions because it reminds them that the overall hedonic appreciation of a dish peaks with moderate food portions. However, it is unknown whether such an approach can be effective with paying restaurant customers over the course of an entire meal, especially when the marginal cost of food is low or nil.

In order to address this question, we designed a field experiment in a restaurant comparing the effects of a “sensory labeling menu” (with vivid sensory descriptions of the foods), a “nutrition labeling menu” (with information on calories and fat), and a control menu on eating behaviors and on the perceived value of the meal. We find that sensory menus can reduce food intake while increasing customer value, whereas nutrition labeling decreases both food intake and customer value. Our research also contributes to the understanding of restaurant customer value by studying mediating factors (food intake, eating pace, sensory expectations) and moderating factors (companionship) that cannot easily be measured in laboratory settings.

The study took place at the restaurant of a culinary school in France; patrons were invited to an all-you-can-order “small plate” meal where they could order as many portions of starter, main course, and dessert as they wanted, at a fixed price of 15 euros. The prix fixe feature was chosen to provide the most conservative test of the effects, since consumers had no incentive to save money by eating less. The dishes were identical for all customers (gnocchi salad, mini-Shepherd pies, lemon tartlets) and the menus were manipulated between-subject. We tested three menus over nine different lunch services, counterbalancing the time of the service across three different mid-week days. The “control menu” had simple descriptions of the food items. The “nutrition labeling menu” used the same descriptions but added information about both calorie and fat content. The “sensory labeling menu” used vivid sensory descriptions and an invitation to use the five senses to appreciate the meal. After the customers had finished consulting the menu, the waiter presented a sample plate displaying one “portion” of each dish and let the patrons indicate the number of portions they desired for each dish. The patrons were brought each dish successively (with their desired number of portions). Before they started eating, the patrons were asked on an electronic tablet how much sensory pleasure they anticipated. At the end of the meal we inferred the amount of food consumed from the leftovers. We measured post-meal hunger as well as customer value by asking the customers to estimate what would be a “fair price” for the meal they had. Several high-definition hidden cameras were filming the patrons throughout the lunch; we measured how much time each person spent eating, and computed an index of “slow eating” by dividing the time spent eating by the number of consumed calories.

After exclusion of 8 customers who did not follow the instructions or did not answer the questions, 98 customers were included in the analyses (Mean age=54; 53% Female).

Compared with the control condition, customers in the “nutrition labeling menu” condition ordered and ate less food, ate at a slower rate, and derived less customer value from their meal. Mediation analyses showed that the nutrition menu decreased customer value because it made consumers eat less.

Compared with the control condition, customers in the “sensory labeling condition” also ordered and ate less food and ate at a slower rate. However, their sensory expectations improved, and they derived more customer value from their meal. Mediation analyses showed that the sensory menu increased customer value despite making consumers eat less, because it increased pleasure anticipation and decreased the pace of eating, suggesting that customers were “savoring” their meal.

Additional analyses also suggested that the effects of sensory menus and nutrition menus were stronger when more people ate together.

In conclusion, starting in May 2017, all US restaurants with at least 20 locations must comply with the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and provide calorie information on menus and nutrient information if there is a nutrition claim (e.g., fat content if the food is described as “low fat”). Our field experiment suggests that such policy may be effective in decreasing food intake, but that it may hurt customer value. We provide evidence that another solution is possible: “sensory labeling menus” should also decrease calorie intake while increasing customer value at the same time.

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Don’t Count Calorie Labeling Out: Calorie Counts on the Left Side of Menu Items Lead to Lower Calorie Food Choices

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Government-mandated calorie information on menus and menu boards has been one of the United States government’s favorite tools for combatting the obesity epidemic in the United States (FDA 2016). Indeed, as part of the Affordable Care Act, all chain restaurants nationwide will have to provide calorie information on their menus by May 2018 (FDA 2017). However, the key question remains of whether providing calorie information actually reduces the number of calories that people order, and, if they do, by how much. This question has been the subject of extensive research across multiple disciplines, including marketing, economics, psychology, and public health, and, in general, this abundance of studies has found either a small effect or no effect of calorie counts (see Kiszko et al. 2014 for a review). Accordingly, these findings have led some to call calorie labeling a policy “failure” (Carroll 2015; Singal 2015).

In the present research, we suggest a new account for why calorie information may often have little effect in terms of leading consumers to make lower calorie food choices and, based on this account, propose a trivially simple intervention to increase the effectiveness of calorie information. Specifically, we suggest that one reason calorie information is typically ineffective is because it is currently typically displayed to the right of food items on menus. Although traditional economic thought would suggest that the order in which information is processed should have no impact on decision making (Frank and Bernanke 2008), we suggest that the positioning of calorie information on menus and menu boards (and, as a result, the order in which information is processed) has a significant effect on consumers’ food choices. Thus, our key hypothesis in this research is that displaying calorie information to the left of food items will lead to significantly lower calorie orders than displaying calorie information to the right of food items.

According to information processing theory, information encountered earlier is given greater weight than information encountered later (Anderson and Jacobson 1965; Asch 1946; Hammond et al. 1998; Lee et al. 2006; Nisbett and Ross 1980). Given that Americans read from left-to-right, when calorie information is to the right of menu items, as is typically the case, it is only processed after consumers have already processed the food item’s name. As a result, the food item’s name is likely given substantially greater weight than the calorie information when making the food choice. This is especially troubling in light of recent research which has found that a food item’s name cues consideration of the food’s taste before its health (Sullivan et al. 2015). Accordingly, even if the calorie information is considered later in the decision process, initial taste information has already been given considerable weight. Thus, the calorie information has a limited effect on consumers’ food orders, which is what has been found in the numerous studies that have examined the effect of calorie information on consumers’ food choices (see Kiszko et al. 2014 for a review). Thus, we propose that simply moving calorie information to the left of menu items will greatly increase its effect on consumers’ food orders. In particular, calorie information to the left (vs. right) of menu items may lead to lower calorie food orders because consumers will view the calorie information earlier, which will lead them to place greater weight on the calorie information.

We tested our main hypothesis—that positioning calorie information to the left (vs. right) of menu items leads to significantly lower calorie food choices in three studies. In Study 1, which was conducted at a casual chain restaurant, customers ordered from a menu with either no calorie information, calorie information to the left of the menu items, or calorie information to the right of the menu items. As predicted, consumers who ordered from a menu with calorie information to the left of the menu items ordered significantly fewer calories than consumers who ordered from a menu with either calorie information to the right of the menu items or no calorie information at all. There was no significant difference in terms of calories ordered between the no calories and right calories conditions.

In Study 2, the goal was to try to determine why calorie information to the left (vs. right) leads to lower calorie food orders. Repeating Study 1, we found that consumers ordered significantly fewer calories when the calorie information was to the left of the menu items (vs. to the right or not present at all). More importantly, though, we found support for a serial mediation model. Specifically, when calorie information is to the left (vs. right) of menu items, consumers view it earlier, and the earlier they view the calorie information, the more weight they place on the calorie information when deciding what to order, which leads them to order lower calorie meals.

In Study 3, we tested for a boundary condition of our effect. Specifically, calorie information to the left (vs. right) is only processed earlier because Americans read from left-to-right. Thus, if the effect is truly driven by the order in which information is processed (rather than, say, the physical position of the calorie information on the menu), we should find that the effect is reversed for consumers who read from right-to-left. Accordingly, Study 3 was conducted with Hebrew-speaking Israelis, who read from right-to-left. As predicted, the effect completely reversed for this sample, with consumers ordering significantly fewer calories when the calorie information was to the right of the menu items (vs. to the left or not present at all). Thus, it may be premature to call calorie labeling a “failed” policy. Instead, it appears that one reason calorie information has been ineffective is because it is typically displayed to the right of menu items. Accordingly, going forward, it should be required for calorie information to be positioned to the left of menu items, as this appears to greatly increase its positive effect on consumers’ food orders.

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Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 45) / 577


**How Consumption Experience Valence and Perceived Assortment Size Interact to Shape Word-of-Mouth Sharing**

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**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

One dimension of word-of-mouth (WOM) that has received ample attention due to its impact in shaping the success or downfall of products is information valence. Following separate investigations of factors encouraging either positive or negative WOM (PWOM or NWOM) in isolation, recent work turned to examine how socio-psychological factors affected the sharing of PWOM and NWOM (De Angelis et al., 2012; Dubois, Bonezzi, and De Angelis, 2016).

This study turns to another key aspect of a consumption experience by examining the extent to which a consumer had access to choices at the time of purchase. We propose that the size of the assortment consumers choose from can shape their tendency to share their positive versus negative experiences. Specifically, we hypothesize that when consumers have access to a larger assortment, they experience higher feelings of control and proactiveness. As a result, they are likely to share positive experiences but less likely to share negative experiences. This hypothesis is rooted in the idea that a consumer experiences increasing feelings of control over her decision-making process as the size of the assortment she chooses from increases (e.g., Inesi et al. 2011). Thus, larger (vs. smaller) assortments elicit an internal attribution process whereby a consumer tends to increasingly attribute the outcome of her decision-making to her actions (Weiner 1985). Because attributing outcomes to themselves triggers feelings of pride (or lack thereof; Smith and Lazarus 1993; Tracy and Robins 2007), we propose that perceived assortment size interacts with consumer experience valence to shape feelings of pride. In turn, we expect that consumers’ likelihood to share their positive versus negative experiences will be a function of their feelings of pride. In particular, we posit that consumers having a positive experience might feel increasingly proud as assortment size increases, whereas those having a negative experience might feel decreasingly proud as assortment size increases. Consequently, consumers will be more (less) likely to engage in WOM as assortment size increases when having positive (negative) consumption experiences.

Experiment 1 aimed to provide initial evidence for the basic effect. One hundred thirty-two respondents were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions (positive vs. negative experience) whereby they recalled and described either a positive or a negative experience by a consumer with a product or service. Perceived assortment size was assessed by asking respondents to indicate how many options were available during their choice process (1 = I did not have any other option, 4 = I had many other options). In addition, we assessed WOM likelihood by asking respondents how likely they would be to share their experience with other people if they felt distant from (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very unlikely). Results revealed a significant interaction between consumption experience valence and perceived assortment size (b = .40, t = 2.68, p = .01). First, consumers’ likelihood to share positive experiences increased as perceived assortment size increased (b = .44, t = 2.04, p = .04). Second and in contrast, consumers’ likelihood to share negative experiences decreased as perceived assortment size increased (b = -.37, t = -1.75, p = .08).

Experiment 2a (101 respondents) aimed to provide evidence that the shift in consumers’ likelihood to share positive and negative experiences stems from the asymmetry in feelings of control associated with choosing from smaller versus larger assortments. The procedure was identical to Experiment 1, except we asked respondents to what extent they felt that the outcome of the experience described was due to factors within or outside their control (1 = it was definitely due to factor outside my control, 7 = it was definitely due to factor within my control). First, replicating the initial experiment, we found the predicted interaction (b = .15, t = 1.82, p = .07). Then, novel to this experiment, results of a moderated mediation model with perceived assortment size as independent variable, feelings of control as the mediator, experience valence as the moderator and WOM likelihood as the dependent variable revealed that the effect of perceived assortment size on feelings of control was positive and significant (b = .26, t = 2.46, p = .02). Importantly, consistent with Experiment 2a, results revealed that the effect of assortment size on feelings of control was positive and significant (b = .62, t = 5.78, p < .001), while the regression predicting WOM likelihood from feelings of control, experience valence and their interaction revealed a significant interaction between feelings of control and experience valence (b = .20, t = 2.53, p = .01), suggesting that higher levels of feelings of control, compared to lower levels, triggered higher WOM likelihood for positive experiences but lower WOM likelihood for negative experiences.

Experiment 2b (199 respondents) differed from Experiment 2a because we manipulated assortment size. Replicating Experiment 1, we again found the predicted interaction (b = .28, t = 2.39, p = .02). Importantly, consistent with Experiment 2a, results revealed that the effect of assortment size on feelings of control was positive and significant (b = .62, t = 5.78, p < .001), while the regression predicting WOM likelihood from feelings of control, experience valence and their interaction revealed a significant interaction between feelings of control and experience valence (b = .25, t = 3.56, p < .01).

Finally, Experiment 3 (132 respondents), tested whether trait-level pride (Tracy and Robins 2007) interacted with perceived assortment size and experience valence to affect WOM likelihood. Results showed a significant three-way interaction effect (b = .09, t = 2.07, p = .04). Additionally, simple slope analysis (Aiken and West 1991) revealed that at mean and high levels of pride the interaction of perceived assortment size and experience valence was positive and significant (b\text{base} = .16, t = 2.10, p = .04; b\text{high} = .32, t = 3.17, p < .01), while it was not significant at low levels of pride (b\text{low} = -.01, t = -.02, ns). These results suggest that the basic effect shown in Experiment 1 occurs for consumers with higher rather than lower levels of dispositional pride.

Overall, this research advances knowledge of when individuals are more likely to share positive versus negative WOM by testing the role of the size of the assortment at the time of purchase in shaping feelings of pride and ultimately guiding what information consumers are likely to share.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Intrusive advertisements started to gain academic attention in the 1960s, when Bauer and Greyer (1968) indicated that commercials are a cause of consumer discomfort. In recent years, especially since the 2000s, related studies have proliferated in accordance with the popularization of the internet. Studies have examined a variety of online contexts, such as unwanted e-mails (Morimoto & Chang, 2006, 2009; Chang et al., 2013), pop-ups (Edwards et al.), online games (Hernandez et al., 2004) and streaming advertisements (Logan, 2012; Abrantes, 2015). Parallel to this academic attention, companies’ investments in digital advertisements reveal the increasing interest in the managerial environment. Indeed, a 2013 forecast published by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (iAb) that notes that in 2017, $60 billion will be invested in internet ads. Additionally, Li et al. (2002) published a study in the Journal of Advertising proposing a method that could measure intrusive advertisements, which further increased the popularity of this topic. Although the proliferation of studies has provided a scope for better understanding the phenomenon, it has also produced conflicting results given the different methodologies used. For example, the irritation construct is described in some intrusive advertisement studies as a positive force (Edwards et al., 2002) and in others as a neutral force (Hernandez et al. Al., 2004). Similarly, the attitude construct has been found to be positive (Morimoto & Chang, 2009), negative (Abrantes, 2015) and neutral (Hérault, 2013). In this context, this research aimed to contribute by developing a meta-analysis. The use of this methodology could lead to definitive conclusions about the investigated subject across different contexts and methodologies (Green, 2005). Meta-analyses allow researchers to eliminate conflicting results found by eliminating the possible biases of studies and to generate more precise estimations of the effect size (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). To that end, we searched seven databases: EBSCO, ProQuest, Taylor & Francis, Emerald, Science Direct, JSTOR and Google Scholar. The data collected from these databases were coded by two senior researchers. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was the metric selected for this meta-analysis. The correlations of the studies were adjusted by the sample size and scale reliability, as suggested by Hunter and Schmidt (2004). In addition, to evaluate the moderating effects, a regression analysis was performed. Our search initially produced 382 studies published and not published in journals. After the first analysis, 30 studies were used in the data analysis. The results revealed some important findings: First, of the four antecedents identified (relevant information, congruence, entertainment, and frequency), two—relevant information and entertainment—presented significant and negative relations with intrusive advertisements. Thus, the theories and the results indicated that the intrusiveness of an advertisement can be mitigated through integration of the main findings related to the antecedents and consequent constructs of intrusive advertisements applied in the online context. Therefore, it provides considerable generalization, defining what is considered valid and not valid and what is known and unknown about the subject. Fifth, in the managerial area, the results could be applied to reduce the effects of intrusiveness. In this research, the results indicated that advertising messages should be geared towards informative and entertaining content. In this way, the need for segmentation policies is reinforced to direct the messages to the targeted public. Otherwise, the brand relationship may be depreciated by negative feelings evoked by the intrusiveness, such as irritation, avoidance, attitude and negative buying intention.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Although the discrepancy between consumers’ privacy concerns and subsequent disclosure behavior has been well-established in previous work (Acquisti et al. 2015; Kokolakis 2015), much remains to be learned about how consumers weigh benefits and costs of sharing personal information in privacy-sensitive situations (Kokolakis 2015; Martin & Murphy 2016). In the current work we propose an updated view on privacy calculus theory, and test the notion that disclosure decisions are driven by the interaction of psychological distance of costs and benefits of disclosure and diverging mindsets under attitudinal and behavioral conditions of preference formation.

Across four studies, we demonstrate that preference formation depends on congruency between one’s mindset in a specific condition of preference construction and the psychological distance of benefits and costs of disclosure.

In study 1 we test whether perceived temporal and hypothetical distance differs between self-reported benefits and costs of disclosure. We exposed 115 participants to three binary disclosure choice tasks they are likely to encounter on a regular basis in daily life (accepting cookies, social login, sharing app usage data). For each situation, participants were first asked to generate as many potential consequences as possible of choosing the high disclosure option, then to indicate hypothetical and temporal distance of the generated consequences, and finally to indicate for each listed consequence the extent to which they perceived it as pro/con of the high disclosure option. Results demonstrated that across situations self-reported prof of disclosure were perceived as less temporally ($F(1,852.20) = 44.81, p < .001$) and hypothetically ($F(1,845.03) = 24.70, p < .001$) than cons.

In study 2 we tested how different stages in preference formation are associated with different mindsets by exposing 75 participants to either an attitudinal or behavioral preference formation condition, after which we measured their mindset using the behavioral identification form (Vallacher & Wegner 1989). Results showed that attitudinal measures of privacy preferences evoke a more abstract mindset than behavioral measures ($M_{abstract} = 16.86, SD = 4.21; M_{behavioral} = 14.03, SD = 5.16; F(1,74) = 6.73, p < .05$).

In study 3 we tested whether mindset affects behavioral disclosure decisions in an online setting. The mindset of 161 participants was manipulated using a goal elaboration task (Fujita et al. 2006), after which their disclosure behavior on a website was tracked. Results revealed that participants in the abstract mindset condition were less likely to choose the high disclosure options than participants in the concrete mindset condition in three subsequent situations of increasing privacy intrusiveness (cookie acceptance: 72.0% vs. 93.9%, $\chi^2(1) = 8.33, p < .01$; social login: 70.0% vs. 53.8%, $\chi^2(1) = 4.62, p < .05$; sharing phone data: 18.0% vs. 2.0%, $\chi^2(1) = 7.11, p < .01$).

In study 4 we investigated whether the effect of mindset on privacy preferences is dependent on the psychological distance of the consequences. We manipulated the mindset of 115 participants using a category/exemplar task (Fujita et al. 2006), before exposing them to a description of a usage based insurance (UBI) program of a fictional car insurance company, in which users’ driving behavior is tracked via their smartphone during six months of the one year contract in exchange for a 20% discount during the other six months.

As our manipulation of consequence distance, we varied whether the discount preceded the tracking of driving behavior or vice versa. If preference formation indeed depends on congruency between mindset and psychological distance of benefits and costs of disclosure, under concrete mindset conditions people should be more inclined to disclose their personal data when the benefits are close and costs are distant, whereas under abstract mindset conditions, inclination to self-disclose should be larger (smaller) when benefits of disclosure are distant (close) and costs are close (distant). Results showed a significant interaction effect of mindset and distance on inclination to sign up for the program ($F(1,109) = 6.63, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$).

Simple effect tests showed that participants in the concrete mindset conditions were more inclined to sign up when benefits were immediate ($M_{benefit} = 3.41, SD = .23; M_{distance} = 2.68, SD = .21; F(1,109) = 5.58, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$). Moreover, when costs preceded benefits, inclination to sign up was higher under abstract mindset conditions than under concrete mindset conditions ($M_{benefit} = 3.43, SD = .23; M_{concrete} = 2.68, SD = .21; F(1,109) = 5.69, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$).

Together, these findings enhance our understanding of how consumers weigh benefits and costs of sharing personal information in privacy sensitive situations. By providing a novel explanation for the privacy paradox, we answer calls from several scholars for more research on the privacy paradox and the factors that drive privacy preferences and behavior (Martin & Murphy 2016; Peltier et al. 2009). In a time were privacy has become a currency that consumers can exchange for free access to web content, personalized services or discounts (Motivalli et al. 2014), understanding what drives consumers’ “willingness to pay” is paramount.

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Reason-Product (In)compatibility:
Affective and Cognitive Factors in Consumer Reasoning
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Previous literature has suggested that consumers who reason about their choices make less satisfying decisions. This effect is a function of consumers making choices based on their reasons rather than based on their preferences (e.g. Wilson & Schooler, 1991; Wilson et al., 1993). We argue that this view is incomplete. While prior work largely characterizes reasons solely as rational and cognitive arguments, we posit that reasons often also take the form of arguments based in affective factors. By introducing this distinction between “cognition-based reasons” (grounded in rational evaluations) and “affect-based reasons” (grounded in feelings and emotions, not to be confused with the mere experience of affect), we illustrate that reasoning is not detrimental as a rule. Instead, post-choice satisfaction depends on whether the reasons being generated are “compatible” with the product category in question. If consumers generate reasons that align with the preference basis of a product category (i.e., cognition-based reasons in utilitarian categories or affect-based reasons in hedonic categories), then consumers will tend to choose products that align well with their preferences. In other words, unlike in previous findings where reasoning leads to the selection of less satisfying options, the use of compatible reasoning will lead consumers to choose the same types of options (and therefore be equally satisfied) as if they had simply chosen on the basis of their preferences. Only when reasoning is “incompatible” with the product category (i.e., cognition-based reasons in hedonic categories or affect-based reasons in utilitarian categories) do consumers’ choices skew toward less satisfying options. We argue that past literature has largely focused on cases of incompatibility to conclude that reasoning leads to lower satisfaction, specifically the case of cognition-based reasoning in hedonic categories, such as strawberry jams (Wilson & Schooler, 1991) or decorative wall posters (Wilson et al., 1993).

Our first goal was to validate the claim that consumers can and do reason on the basis of both cognition and affect. Therefore, 202 participants on Amazon Mechanical Turk were asked to identify an actual purchase they had recently made, and then to explain the considerations that informed their choices. Next, they self-coded their responses according to a set of 14 criteria (drawn from the literature) that mapped onto cognition-based reasoning strategies, affect-based reasoning strategies, and distracter decision-making strategies. These self-codes were submitted to a factor analysis resulting in a two-factor solution which corresponded with our dichotomy of cognition-based reasons (eigenvalue=1.298) and affect-based reasons (eigenvalue=1.065). The results provide evidence that consumers can and do use both forms of reasoning when making a decision.

To test whether (in)compatibility has consequences for consumer satisfaction, we ran an experimental study using a paradigm similar to Wilson et al. (1993) in which participants chose between four decorative posters. As consumers generally perceive this product category as hedonic, we predicted that the use of cognition-based reasons would replicate past findings that reasoning leads to lower satisfaction, while the use of affect-based reasons would not reduce satisfaction. In order to observe how changes in choice behavior drive this effect, the posters were pretested such that two were seen as having relatively greater utilitarian appeal (e.g., maps of the world) and two were seen as having relatively greater hedonic appeal (e.g., artistic images of the world). We divided 180 Mechanical Turk participants into three conditions: in the “cognition-based reasoning” condition, participants were asked to report their thoughts about choosing or not choosing each of the four posters; in the “affect-based reasoning” condition, they reported their feelings toward choosing or not choosing each poster; and in the “control” condition, they simply examined the products without providing any reasons. Consistent with our hypothesis, cognition-based reasoning lead to lower satisfaction than no reasoning (b = -0.94, p < .01), but there was no difference in satisfaction when participants instead reasoned on the basis of affect (b = -0.53, NS). This satisfaction result was mirrored in participants’ choice behavior: there was no difference between the affect-based and control conditions (b = -0.05, NS), but participants asked to generate cognition-based reasons were significantly more likely to choose the relatively utilitarian posters compared to both the control and affect-based conditions (b = 0.12, p < .05). This change in choice behavior was found to mediate the effect of reasoning on satisfaction (bias corrected 95% CI [-0.024, -0.004]). These findings were then replicated with 150 in-lab participants using a greater variety of hedonic products and a paradigm in which participants could win the items they chose, thus increasing the incentive compatibility of the study.

Whereas the first experimental study and its replication looked only at hedonic products, this next study aimed to test the full Reason-Product (In)compatibility model using a product category that was framed as either utilitarian or hedonic. We presented 298 Mechanical Turk participants with a choice between two smoothies, a “healthy” option and a “tasty” option. These smoothies were then framed as either “healthy snacks” (utilitarian) or “deserts” (hedonic). Participants were divided into the same three reasoning conditions as before. Coding the results to look at compatibility (cognition-based/utilitarian and affect-based/hedonic) versus incompatibility (cognition-based/hedonic and affect-based/utilitarian), we find that satisfaction was no different from control under compatibility across both framing conditions (b = 0.36, NS) but significantly reduced under incompatibility (b = -2.14, p < .05). As before, these effects were driven by changes in choice behavior: a moderated mediation revealed that, under the utilitarian frame, affect-based reasons increased choice of the tasty option, which drove down satisfaction (bias corrected 95% CI [-0.411, -0.101]); while under the hedonic frame, cognition-based reasons increased choice of the healthy option, which drove down satisfaction (bias corrected 90% CI [0.006, 0.186]).

These results support the claim that reasoning does not lead to lower choice satisfaction as a rule, but as a function of incompatibility between reason types and product categories. The results have implications for literatures that looks at deliberative or reason-based decision processes, as well as for marketers and salespeople aiming to maximize customer satisfaction for products that call for careful pre-purchase consideration.

REFERENCES


Psychological Consequences of Exposure to Variability
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Greater variability is one of the defining features of the 21st century. In addition to warmer temperatures, greater variability in temperature and precipitation is one of the defining features of the climate change that the world is currently experiencing (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007). For example, the frequency of extreme temperature and precipitation events that are two, three or even five standard deviations beyond the long-term mean is predicted to exponentially increase over the 21st century (Counou & Robinson, 2013; Hansen, Sato, & Ruedy, 2012; Palmer & Räisänen, 2002). Increased variability is not just restricted to climate change. The variance in average monthly crude oil prices, which consumers experience at the gas station, has increased more than six-fold in the most recent decade compared to the previous decade (Energy Information Administration, 2016). The coefficient of variation, or risk per unit return, of the US S&P500 stock index has been consistently increasing in the last 50 years (S&P, 2015) (note 1). Increased variability is an example of silent transformations (Jullien, 2011), processes that take place over long time spans and that go mostly unnoticed until their effects become visible.

What are some of the key impacts of increased variability? In the physical world, in times of high variability, any single negative event, however small, has the potential to severely disrupt the system (McNeil & Matear, 2008). As stated in an article on the Devonian extinction, “During … chaotic times, any harmful events would be more disruptive than they would be in ‘normal’ periods” (Baramiuk, 2015).

Why would greater variability influence people’s psychological functioning? We suggest that lay people would generalize the above idea from the natural science domain to the social domain, believing that in times of high variability, any harmful event or behavior can be more disruptive to society than during times of low variability. In the social context, harmful behaviors are typically referred to as unethical behaviors, “behavior that has a harmful effect upon others and is either illegal or morally unacceptable to the larger community” (Brass, Butterfield, & Skaggs, 1998; Jones, 1991). We predicted that if people share the intuition that any harmful event can pose a greater threat to the social order under times of high variability, then people would judge others who act unethically more harshly during times of high variability rather than low variability. One might also propose the alternative hypothesis that in times of high variability, people might think that a wider range of behaviors are acceptable, and thus become less punitive. We test these two competing hypotheses in the present research. Given the increasingly punitive attitudes of citizens (Kury, 1999; Roberts & Hough, 2000) and increasingly punitive criminal justice systems (Pratt, Brown, & Brown, 2005; Western, 2006) in major industrialized countries in recent decades, the question of whether there is a link between variability and punitive attitudes is of both scientific and practical importance.

We theorize that the objective variability in weather, prices, and other domains would influence individuals through a subjective sense of variability. To assess the causal impact of perceived variability on behavior, we experimentally manipulate both represented and experienced variability using different methods, such as (1) showing people data drawn from distributions with the same mean but with high vs. low variance (Experiment 1), (2) giving people the appearance of high vs. low variability by altering the scale of the vertical axis in graphical data representations (Experiments 2 and 6), and (3) leading people to experience outcomes with high vs. low standard deviation of successive differences (Experiments 3 to 5). We test whether these manipulations of perceived variability have similar effects on individuals’ punitive judgments, using diverse methods, such as scenarios (Experiments 1 to 4), economic games (Experiment 5), and support for the death penalty (Experiment 6).

Inspired by the recent prolonged droughts in the western half of the US (Ingram & Malamud-Roam, 2013), Experiment 1 tested whether people exposed to high variability in temperature would be more willing to punish a person who violates mandatory water restrictions during drought than people exposed to low variability in temperature. Participants were presented with a line graph purportedly depicting the average annual temperature across the US over the past thirty years. To manipulate perceived variability, we exposed participants to data that were generated from two different normal distributions, both with the same mean (52.9°F) but different variances (1.8°F in the low variability condition and 5.7°F in the high variability condition). Participants were asked to rate how variable they thought the temperature of the US was over the past thirty years (7-point scale ranging from Not at all to Extremely). A manipulation check confirmed that participants in the high variability condition rated the temperature to be more variable (M ± SD: 4.76 ± 1.19) than those in the low variability condition (3.17 ± 1.34) [t(183) = 3.19, p < .001, d = 1.25]. Participants were then asked to imagine that they were residents of a small island, which depended entirely on rainfall to supply its water needs. Participants were informed that due to a severe drought, the government has imposed mandatory water restrictions, but they witnessed their neighbor watering the lawn and washing the car. Participants were asked to rate how willing they were to report their neighbor to the police, the extent to which their neighbor should be punished, and how bad their neighbor’s behavior was (7-point scale ranging from Not at all to Extremely; α = .78). Consistent with our predictions, participants in the high variability condition were more willing to punish their neighbor (M ± SD: 4.61 ± 1.27) than those in the low variability condition (4.01 ± 1.28) [t(183) = 3.19, p = .002, d = .47].

The goal of Experiment 2 was to test whether high variability in one domain would make people more willing to punish unethical behavior in general. Participants were presented with a line graph of the actual US dollar to Euro average quarterly exchange rate over the past ten years. Then participants were thereafter presented with four scenarios in which people engaged in unethical behaviors that were unrelated to exchange rates, such as cheating, committing tax fraud, stealing money, and appropriating others’ belongings (adapted from Sharma, Mazar, Alter, & Ariely, 2014). Participants in the high variability condition indicated that the unethical behaviors should be punished more harshly (M ± SD: 5.45 ± .86) than those in the low variability condition (4.84 ± .99) [t(192) = 4.59, p < .001, d = .66].

To dissociate variability from uncertainty, Experiment 3 manipulated perceived variability while keeping uncertainty constant. Participants were asked to play 10 trials of a dice rolling game on the computer. Each dice roll was equally unpredictable—the dice could land on any one of its six sides. We manipulated the perceived variability of realized dice rolls by altering the standard deviation of successive deviations (SDSD). In the low variability conditions, subsequent dice rolls were close to previous rolls (i.e., 1, 2, 1, 2, 3,
4, 6, 5, 5, 6; SDSD = 0.96) whereas in the high variability condition, subsequent dice rolls were far away from previous rolls (i.e., 1, 6, 2, 5, 1, 5, 3, 6, 2; SDSD = 3.56). The actual dice rolls were identical across condition—they were just arranged differently to manipulate perceived variability. In an external manipulation check with 199 participants, this manipulation disentangled perceived variability from perceived uncertainty. We then presented participants with 3 scenarios about people engaging in unethical behavior (adapted from Gino, Shu, & Bazerman, 2010; Sharma, Mazar, Alter, & Ariely, 2014). As predicted, participants in the high variability condition punished the unethical behaviors more harshly (M ± SD: 5.80 ± .80) than those in the low variability condition (5.38 ± 1.00) [t(189) = 3.25, p = .001, d = .47].

Experiment 4 tested whether non-graphical representations of variability have similar effects as graphical representations. Participants were asked to play the dice rolling game as in Experiment 3 but with two changes: participants did not receive the feedback about whether they had accurately predicted the outcome of each dice roll; and on each trial, half the participants were presented with the outcomes of the current and past rolls depicted in a graph, whereas the other half were presented with the outcomes depicted in a table. A main effect of the variability indicated that participants in the high variability condition punished the unethical behaviors more harshly (M ± SD: 5.77 ± .71) than those in the low variability condition (5.57 ± .74) [F(1, 200) = 4.00, p = .047, d = .28]. There was neither a main effect of representation format [F(1, 200) = .11, p = .745, d = .05], nor an interaction between representation format and variability [F(1, 200) = .10, p = .750]. Thus, Experiment 4 showed that the manner in which high vs. low variability is depicted—whether in a graphical format or a tabular format—does not matter. High variability makes people more punitive in either case.

The first goal of Experiment 5 was to test whether exposure to high variability influences people’s behavior, and particularly, whether it makes people more willing to punish others even at a financial cost to themselves. Second, we tested whether merely experienced variability, which is not with any accompanying graphs or tables, would be sufficient to make people more punitive. Third, we tested whether high variability does not merely increase punitive-ness but instead make people more likely to take action, no matter if it is punishing bad behavior or rewarding good behavior. The study used a 2 (variability: high vs. low) X 2 (response type: punish self-serving behavior vs. reward altruistic behavior) mixed design, with variability manipulated as a between-participant factor and punish vs. reward trials manipulated as a within-participant factor. We used the same dice rolling manipulation in Experiment 4 but this time, did not depict the dice rolls in a graph or a table—participants simply experienced dice rolls with high vs. low standard deviation of successive differences. Participants were then asked to play a three-person strategic game with three roles: the Decider, the Receiver, and the Judge (adapted from Peysakhovich, Nowak, & Rand, 2014; Rand, 2012). The Decider received 10 bonus points and decided whether to keep all 10 points for themselves and give 0 points to the Receiver (i.e., acted in a self-serving manner), or to give 5 points to the Receiver and keep 5 points for themselves (i.e., acted altruistically). The Receiver has no choice but to accept what the Decider gives them. The Judge received 20 bonus points and was informed about the Decider’s decision. If the Decider acted in a self-serving manner, the Judge could choose whether or not to give up 5 of their points to punish the Decider, who would receive a deduction of 10 points to end up with nothing. If the Decider acted altruistically, the Judge could choose whether or not to give up 5 of their points to reward the Decider, who would receive 10 additional points to end up with a total of 15 points. Participants were informed that they would receive their cumulative points in the form of a bonus, with 10 points being equivalent to one cent. Unbeknownst to them, all participants were “randomly” assigned to the role of a Judge. They played 20 rounds, in which the Decider acted egotistically in 10 rounds and altruistically in 10 rounds. The number of times that the Judge chose to punish or reward the Decider served as our behavioral dependent measure. We separately analyzed egotistical and altruistic trials because of large mean differences in the dependent variable base rate for punish trials (M ± SD: 5.56 ± 4.03) and reward trials (7.01 ± 3.72). The dependent measure was participants’ choice on each trial (0 = not to punish, 1 = to punish), and the predictor was experimental condition (0 = low variability, 1 = high variability). As predicted, participants in the high variability condition (M ± SD: 5.79 ± 3.94) punished the Decider’s self-serving decisions more than those in the low variability condition (5.32 ± 4.12), B = .84, 95% CI [.04, 1.64], SE = .41, odds ratio = 4.26, z = 2.06, p = .039. Another hierarchical logistic regression on the 10 altruistic trials revealed that the Judge did not reward the Decider’s altruistic decisions more in the high variability condition (M ± SD: 7.18 ± 3.63) compared to the low variability condition (6.85 ± 3.80), B = -.36, 95% CI [-.59, 1.30], SE = .48, odds ratio = .54, z = .74, p = .461.

We tested the underline mechanism of perceived social threat in Experiment 6, using 4 items such as “Our society faces more threats right now than it has faced in the past decade”. We then measured participants’ support for the death penalty using 5 items (from Tam, Au, & Leung, 2008). Finally, we measured perceived control. A test of indirect effect using Preacher and Hayes’s (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) PROCESS Model 4 with 5000 bootstrap resamples revealed a significant indirect effect of variability on death penalty approval through perceived societal threat (B = .12, boot SE = .05, 95% CI = [.03, .23], z = 2.44, p = .015). Importantly, the variability manipulation did not influence participants’ perceived control (M ± SD: 4.76 ± 1.34 in high variability condition vs. 4.56 ± 1.48 in low variability condition) [t(522) = 1.61, p = .11, d = .14], and the indirect effect of variability on support for death penalty through perceived societal threat remained significant even when perceived control was added as a covariate, B = .12, boot SE = .05, 95% CI = [.03, .23], z = 2.40, p = .016.

Six experiments provided evidence for one psychological consequence of exposure to high variability—greater punitiveness. Experiment 1 found that participants exposed to a graph depicting high rather than low variability in temperature were subsequently more willing to punish a neighbor who wasted water despite water restrictions. Experiment 2 found that participants exposed to a graph depicting high rather than low variability in currency exchange rates were more willing to punish individuals who committed unethical acts. Experiments 3 to 5 manipulated experienced variability by presenting participants with successive dice rolls with high vs. low standard deviation of successive differences. Those exposed to high variability were more willing to punish wrongdoers in scenarios, and to punish those who acted in a self-serving manner in experimental games, even at a cost to themselves. However, high variability did not increase the rate with which people rewarded altruistic behavior. Finally, Experiment 6 identified the underlying mechanism—people exposed to high rather than low variability in precipitation perceived the society as being more threatened, and were therefore more willing to support the death penalty.

Increased variability is one of the defining features of the 21st century, yet a silent transformation whose effects would gradually unravel over time. The current research presents the first steps at
identifying how this increased variability would influence people psychologically.

REFERENCES


Consumer Value Co-creation in Frontline Healthcare Services
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumer value co-creation is in the forefront of healthcare research and considered vital to a person’s overall health outcomes and wellbeing (McCull-Kennedy et al. 2012; Sweeney et al. 2015). Despite this, little is known about “the process of value creation, when it starts, what it includes and when it ends” (Grönroos 2011, 282). This is surprising, given the growing body of literature focusing on consumer value co-creation in services (Ostrom et al. 2015), product-design and new product development (Schreier, Fuchs and Siller 2012), and healthcare (Danaher and Gallan 2016).

Previous research has uncovered important health co-creation factors that occur prior, during and beyond service interactions (Anderson and Ostrom 2015) however, there is a paucity of research on the process of value co-creation. While conceptually value co-creation is considered “an ongoing, iterative, and continuous process extending well beyond individual transactions” (Vargo and Lusch 2012, 4) there is little empirical evidence to support this. Therefore, this research explores the dynamics of the interaction between the consumer and the service encounters, within Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) healthcare services, to shed light on the actual process of value co-creation and its outcomes. The primary goal of this research is to explore how CAM consumers co-create value with their CAM healthcare providers to enhance their wellbeing and achieve specific health outcomes.

This research contributes to the growing body of research on healthcare service marketing, from a consumer’s perspective, in three important ways. First, we contribute to the stream of literature on frontline interactive service encounters (Rafaeli et al. 2017), by developing a conceptual framework of consumer value co-creation, that provides new and important insights into how consumers co-create value. Second, we contribute to the stream of literature on consumer value co-creation service experience (McCull-Kennedy et al. 2015) by uncovering new factors (i.e., consumers’ approach) of consumer co-creation that interrelate with previously suggested aspects (practice styles). Finally, our research has important implications for healthcare service practice that can ultimately contribute to enhancing peoples’ quality of life (Danaher and Gallan 2016).

The research adopted a novel three phase semi-longitudinal multiple method case study research strategy using in-depth interviews and a simplified version of the Zaltman Elicitation Technique (ZMET). Sixteen consumers, 4 male and 12 females ranging from 24 – 77 years, who used CAM healthcare services on a regular basis, participated in the semi-longitudinal study. The first phase included a face-to-face interview with each of the participants which explored the participants’ experiences of CAM and where emergent themes on consumer value co-creation surfaced. The second phase involved the participants collecting or taking photographs of images that represent their experiences of CAM. These pictures and images were then discussed in a second interview utilising five of the ZMET steps (Coulter and Zaltman 1995) including storytelling, missed images, sorting task, most representative image and summary image. The third phase involved an interview that explored the process of the participant’s CAM health service experience as well as gather feedback on initial analysis from the first two phases. The three phase process allowed us to explore value co-creation over time and enabled methodological rigour by using multiple methods over multiple time periods which provided dependable data (Woodside 2010).

We propose a consumer value co-creation framework that demonstrates the value co-creation process in a service context. Fundamentally we confirm that the process is ongoing, iterative, and continuous with no absolute defined beginning or end (Vargo and Lusch 2012). We also show that consumer value co-creation occurs prior, during and beyond the service interaction (Anderson and Ostrom 2015). Importantly this research explains the dynamics of the consumer value co-creation process and how consumers co-create value in frontline services, such as CAM healthcare.

Our findings show three ways that CAM consumers co-create value including: 1) consumer healthcare approach, 2) consumer value co-creation practice styles, and 3) consumer value co-creation activities. Firstly, three consumer healthcare approaches were identified and include: 1) Reactive – consumer has a results outlook; 2) Proactive – consumer has a preventative outlook; 3) Integrative – consumer has a wellness outlook. Interestingly a proactive and integrative approach resulted in enhanced wellbeing. Secondly, three consumer value co-creation practice styles preferred by CAM consumers were identified and include: 1) Advisory – practitioner is perceived as the expert; 2) Consultative – practitioner-client relationship is perceived as collaborative; and 3) Partnership – practitioner-client relationship is perceived as relatively equal with mutual respect. Thirdly, 12 consumer value co-creation activities that consumers engage in to co-create value were identified. The activities include five within practice (e.g. co-operation with practitioner, co-producing treatment plans) and seven outside practice consumer value co-creation activities (e.g. compliance, changing lifestyle factors, building personal knowledge). Engagement in these activities was found to have a positive impact on the health outcomes and wellbeing of the CAM consumer (Sweeney et al. 2015). Importantly, our findings show that a CAM consumers’ healthcare approach appears to be influenced by the consumer value co-creation practice styles and consumer value co-creation activities engaged in. In fact, we found evidence that a CAM consumer can transition from one healthcare approach to another. This transition is facilitated by the practice style of the practitioner and the consumer value co-creation activities the consumer engages in.

Our findings have important implications for healthcare practice. A positive service experience with healthcare providers has the potential to contribute to an individual’s health outcomes and wellbeing (Sweeney et al. 2015). Healthcare providers and practitioners should consider the practice style/s they adopt and the potential role they have in facilitating a consumer’s healthcare approach and encouraging health promoting consumer value co-creation activities. Consultative and partnership practice styles tend to produce better health outcomes for consumers because they foster client-centred, cooperative and collaborative relationships that are educational and empowering. However, more empirical research is required to generalise these findings. Consumer value co-creation is important to understand in all healthcare settings (Zainuddin et al. 2013); therefore further research is required to extend our understanding of the consumer value co-creation process found in this study in a variety of healthcare services, and ultimately other service contexts.
REFERENCES
Tasteful Work: The Emergence of an Aesthetic Category
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

EDM is a music category that encompasses a number of different music styles, from tropical house to big room house (Magnetic 2015). Yoga is another example of a category composed of different yoga styles, such as Dharma, Power, and Hot yoga (Ertimur and Coskun-Balli 2015). The context of this study, the aesthetic category of luxury streetwear, similarly encompasses a number of distinct styles, from street goth to goth ninja. Tastefully practicing the styles lumped in these categories requires an understanding of different teleaffective structures—i.e. the set of acceptable ends, orders, uses, and emotions (Schatzki 2002)—that governs the practice of taste (Arsel and Bean 2013) for each style. Yet, these different music styles are lumped together under the same category label. We have yet to understand how such a lumping happens, and what are the implications for our understanding of category emergence.

In this brief article, I make the following theoretical contributions: First, I argue that an aesthetic category is constituted of what I term “distinct-yet-related” taste regimes. These regimes are distinct as they are orchestrated by different teleaffective structures, but related as they share a number of objects, doings, and meanings. Second, I propose four types of institutional work—circumscribing, bridging, curation, and support—that lead to the lumping of distinct-yet-related taste regimes under the same aesthetic category.

Studying how categories emerge is important as categories are structuring devices that help orchestrate markets and direct market actors’ perception, attention, and efforts (Verge and Wry 2014). When actors evaluate music artists, yoga studios, and fashion products, they refer to these categories as a basis for their evaluation (Zuckerman 1999). I draw from institutional theory and a practice-based approach to taste, to explain how this happens.

Taste is central to this research in two ways: first, it is a well-known boundary-making mechanism which is important because actors use such “conceptual distinctions... to categorize objects, people, practices” (Lamont and Molnár 2002, 168). Consequently, examining new teleaffective arrangements should offer cues about the emergence of boundaries associated with these. Second, taste is at the center of the evaluation of products in aesthetic markets (Entwistle 2009; Khaire 2014). I use Arsel and Bean’s (2013) practice-based conceptualization of taste. Arsel and Bean (2013, 900) theorize that the practice of taste is orchestrated by taste regimes, “discursively constructed normative systems that orchestrate the aesthetics of practice in a culture of consumption.” I take as a starting theoretical point that in markets driven by taste, the (cultural) codes on which the understanding of categories relies (Glynn and Navis 2013) are tightly linked with the objects, doings, and meanings that are orchestrated by such normative systems.

I combine this practice-based conceptualization of taste with the concept of institutional work. Institutional work are the actions that create, maintain or disrupt the practices, understandings, and rules sustaining markets (Dolbec and Fischer 2015, based on Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). The types of institutional work I introduce are part of the everyday routines of actors in the fashion market. The accumulation of actions resulting from these four types of institutional work from a multitude of actors leads over time to the emergence of a category. I now introduce the context of this study and briefly describe my methodology.

Method

Luxury streetwear is part of the contemporary menswear market. This novel market category emerged in the mid-to-late 2000s, is used by numerous legitimate publications (such as Elle, Business of Fashion, WWD, and Esquire), has redefined menswear (Johnson 2015) and led major high fashion brands towards “a steady move into the streetwear market” (Reeve 2012). Albeit the translation of streetwear elements to the realm of high end fashion is nothing new, ‘luxury streetwear’ as a category that is covered by critics, catered to by designers, for which there is a wide consumer interest, and which has a strong influence on the development of menswear is novel (Johnson 2015).

I used a multi-method, longitudinal data collection approach, combining 16 in-depth semi-structured interviews, a netography of two online forums, the forums’ archives (representing 89 threads and 190 003 posts), the archives of related fashion forums (720 posts in 30 threads), as well as archival data in the form of magazines and newspaper articles (590 articles), as well as material from category actors such as blog posts (115 pages).

My findings emerged from an iterative process moving back-and-forth between data collection, data analysis, and theorization (Spiggle 1994). As my work progressed, I started to focus on the emergence of the luxury streetwear category. I coded each type of data in light of my emergent findings to answer my research questions, using an institutional approach to categorization as my enabling theory.

Institutional Work and the Creation of New Aesthetic Market Categories

Albeit space restriction precludes a thorough analysis of this. The perceived lack of differences between these two looks for regime outsiders serves well to illustrate the distinct-yet-related aspect of these regimes. Although similar to regime outsiders, these two looks showcase the following differences for regime insiders. On the left, we have a consumer wearing a number of brands orchestrated by the goth ninja regime, mostly Rick Owens (the jacket, shorts, and sneakers). On the right, we have a consumer wearing a mixture of high fashion brands associated with the street goth regime such as Pyrex (the shorts), streetwear brand such as Supreme (the hoodie) and mainstream sportswear brands such as Nike (the sneakers). Although divergent, both of these looks highlight similar objects, such as the heavy reliance on the color black and drop-crotch shorts, as well as doings, such as the use of leggings underneath the shorts. Next, I show how four types of institutional work lead to the lumping of distinct-yet-related taste regimes under the same aesthetic category.

Circumscribing Work

Circumscribing work represents the efforts of actors that leads to the lumping of distinct-yet-related taste regimes under the same category. First, some of the media and market-knowledge generating firms lack a proper understanding of the specificities of each regimes and as a result lump them as one of the same, thereby subsuming the regimes’ differences and facilitating the creation of the category. PR executives Ella Dror and Ashley Smith, who represent some luxury streetwear brands, emphasize this point when they mention that “different ‘areas’ [of fashion]... are sometimes lazily grouped together jointly ... within fashion media” although there is “there’s an important distinction to make between” them (Johnson 2015).
For example, Esquire magazine (Deleon 2015) introduce “17 luxury sneakers brands” and presents the Adidas Y-3 ‘Qasa’ sneakers with a description mentioning “goth ninja [as] the go-to descriptor of all things dark, designer, and drapery”, while the shoe is mentioned only 10 times during the last 10 years on the web forum at the center of this taste regime, but is part of adjacent regimes (health goth and street goth). The representation of these objects and some doings as being part of the same category to less informed consumers.

A second insight is that some of these actors who are well-aware of the differences between these distinct taste regimes willingly decide to simplify their complexities and differences and choose to group them as a whole to facilitate their news narrative. For example, Jon Caramanica (2015), of the New York Times “Critical Shopper” column, clumps together brands such as Givenchy, Raf Simons, Rick Owens, and Hood by Air, to explain how “the gulf between luxury fashion and street wear has largely disappeared.” For consumers, constantly seeing these brands grouped together by knowledgeable critics and showcased with pictures of highly similar outfits can orient their sensemaking efforts towards grouping these elements as part of one and the same. Together, these two processes lead to the conflation of multiple distinct regimes that might look the same to regime outsiders into a single category. I next explain three types of institutional work that facilitate circumscribing work and lead to the emergence of an aesthetic category.

**Bridging Work**

Bridging work refers to the bridging of two or more existing market categories by products or market actors. It has been recognized that category hybridization is often the starting point of a category (e.g. Jensen 2010). The name of the novel category under study, ‘luxury streetwear’, emphasizes this hybridization between luxury menswear and streetwear.

In my context, Rick Owens, and especially his “Dunks” shoes, represents an early example of such bridging work. Released in 2008, these shoes have become a staple of the closet of multiple regimes under the ‘luxury streetwear’ category. Pictured in Figure 1, they exemplify well bridging work: they are at the junction of the sportswear, streetwear, and high-end menswear categories. The sportswear influences are present as the shoe was intended as his “own parody combining Puma, Nike, and Adidas motifs” (Owens in Wallace 2015). The proximity was such that Nike sued Rick Owens (Wallace 2015). The streetwear influences are found within the Rick Owens aesthetic language, with machine-wash leathers, “elegant… goth…street” (Colapinto 2008) which at the start of his career was “real popular with rockers” (Courtney Love in Colapinto 2008). Finally, these shoes are well-embedded within high-end fashion as they were, according the fashion director at Barneys, “perfectly Barneys [and] appeals to a luxury customer” (Colapinto 2008). Following the emergence of the luxury streetwear category, Rick Owens became “fashion’s most imitated designer” (La Ferla 2009).

Bridging work also contributes to the category’s evolution by facilitating its expansion and encouraging the solidification of the links between elements of distinct-yet-related regimes. An example of this is the collaborations between designers and accessible fashion brands. Through collaborations, brands and designers come together and propose products that fit within the emergent aesthetic category. These collaborations are intended to target non-regime-specific consumers, such as “the Adidas consumer” (Mellery-Pratt 2015), rather than regime insiders, extending the reach of the emerging category. Examples abound: Rick Owens and Adidas, Undercover and Nike (under “Nike Giakosu”), and Louis Vuitton and Supreme. These collaborative efforts infuse an emerging category with new products, serve as a mechanism for established but outsider producers to enter the emergent category, and extend the reach of the category.

**Curation Work**

Curation work entails the selection and interpretation of elements of regimes as well as their representation through discourses and images. This facilitates the creation of linkages between elements of distinct-yet-related taste regimes and signals to a non-regime-specific audience that the elements of these regimes belong to the same aesthetic category. Examples of this are found in lookbooks and editorials of retailers, which both represent objects of distinct-yet-related regimes together and provide scripts for “grooming rituals” (McCracken 1986). This curation also happens through the brands and designers a retailer chooses to sell. Retailers that span a number of regimes help in bringing these regimes together by offering a selection of brands that span the regimes of an emerging category. For example, SSENSE, a “store and e-store’s menswear [which] buy is focused on ... luxury streetwear” (BOF 2015), distributes brands that are elements of the goth ninja regime such as Ann Demeulemeester and Rick Owens, and brands that are elements of the street goth regime such as YEEEZY, Hood by Air, and Off-White. They also represent them together, visually fostering linkages between these regimes. Lastly, I discuss support work and how these facilitates the establishment of convergent elements and sensemaking efforts from external audiences.

**Support Work**

Support work represents the everyday efforts of actors towards the offer of knowledge and advice around elements of a regime and the tasteful performance of the taste regime. Support work is not equal for all objects, doings, and meanings and acts as an indicator of the centrality of these elements within a regime, allowing actors from the media and market-knowledge generating firms to make sense of emerging regimes more easily. An example of this is the amount of attention given to certain brands cited and talked about on regime-centric web forums. How over time the online conversations crystallized four brands which were the most important ones for the regime.

When major publications such as the New York Times cover the emergence of the ‘luxury streetwear’ category, they leverage what is the most accessible elements of a regime which then become central key elements of the emerging aesthetic category. For example, an article in GQ mentions that “Demeulemeester’s dark designs have a diehard cult following, especially amongst fashion heads who lean towards the Internet-dubbed “goth ninja” aesthetic” (Deleon 2013). Other consumer-driven content pieces use the most-mentioned brands of these web forums as well as the pictures posted on these online communities. For example, the “Goth Ninja RPG Strategy Guide Part I” thread on the widely forum Reddit took “most of the pictures … from the Stylezeitgeist WAYWT thread” (examples (GarvinCadalence).

**Discussion: Categories and Market-Level Changes**

Research on markets either has assumed that marketers worked towards the creation of whole markets, as exemplified by the following quotes of articles within that research stream: “brand-mediation market creation process” (Giesler 2012, 56) and “the emergence of a new market within the motorcycle industry” (Martin and Schouten 2014, 855), or has yet to conceptually distinguish between markets and categories. Yet, in the luxury streetwear case, and although the emergence of an aesthetic category in the fashion market led to the constitution of novel designer and retailer identities as well as the
creation of a number of consumption communities and specialized media outlets, the fashion market has mostly continued its evolution following its existing logics, norms, rules, conventions, logistical infrastructure, required technical skills and competencies, pricing mechanism, and competitive space (see Martin and Schouten 2014). More, the set of institutional actors, institutional logics, types of institutional work, and institutional boundaries stayed relatively unaffected (see Dolbec and Fischer 2015). In short, based on existing conceptualizations of markets in the literature (Dolbec and Fischer 2015; Martin and Schouten 2014), a new market was not created. A new market category was. Exploring developments in markets through the lens of market categories not only offers a perspective that addresses changes in markets that are more frequent (vs. the creation of whole new markets), it also opens the door to new research perspectives.

REFERENCES


Alcohol Consumption and Risk-Taking Behavior: An Analysis of 17-Year Data on Fatal Traffic Accidents
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Fatal traffic accidents have affected over 1.5 million people in the US during the past 17 years. Among those affected, 653,355 people have ultimately lost their lives. Police and media reports frequently mention alcohol as the leading cause of fatal traffic accidents. Indeed, academic research has found that car drivers who consumed alcohol before driving were more likely to be injured in car crashes (Connor, Norton, Ameratunga, and Jackson 2004). This result is hardly surprising as drivers who consume alcohol and then drive are more likely to exhibit impaired driving performance (e.g., Weiler et al. 2000). In this paper I demonstrate that, beyond its detrimental effect on driving performance, alcohol consumption is associated with increased risk-taking behavior as evidenced by lower restraint use rates among both drivers and occupants of vehicles.

Prior academic research supports the conjecture that alcohol consumption can increase risk-taking behavior. Lab studies have shown that experimental manipulations of alcohol consumption increase people’s propensity to seek risky monetary gains (Lane, Cherik, Pietras, and Tcheremissine 2004), as well as their willingness to enter high-risk situations during a driving simulation (Burian, Liguori, and Robinson 2002). Alcohol consumption can increase risk-taking behavior because it reduces people’s expectations about potential negative outcomes (Fromme, Katz, and D’Amico 1997).

Further, alcohol consumption has been shown to have a detrimental effect on people’s attentional processing of threat-related cues (Curtin, Patrick, Lang, Ciccioppo, and Birbaumer 2001). In turn, impairments in attention to the threat cue can inhibit fear response. Finally, alcohol consumption inflates positive self-perceptions and increases overconfidence (Schweitzer and Gomberg 2001; Schweitzer and Kerr 2000; Steele and Josephs 1990). Prior research has found that people tend to report positively biased self-evaluations on traits they deem important after consuming alcohol (Banaji and Steele 1989). In the context of transportation, another example of risk-taking behavior beyond dangerous operation of the motor vehicle by its driver is restraint omission by the driver and occupants of the vehicle.

Therefore, based on the aforementioned research, assuming that alcohol consumption reduces people’s expectations about potential negative outcomes (such as a potential traffic accident), I hypothesized that both the driver and occupants of a vehicle will be less likely to be restrained after consuming alcohol. I empirically tested my hypothesis in a large dataset of fatal traffic accidents that occurred in the US between January 1, 1999 and December 31, 2015. I derived individual-level data about victims of fatal traffic accidents from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) of the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA). The dataset comprised the following variables: age, race, and type (i.e., driver, occupant, pedestrian, or pedalcyclist) of the person, as well as whether the person was using a restraint (i.e., seat belt or helmet), whether the person was tested for alcohol (including the result of the test), and whether the person was killed.

First, I regressed whether the individual died in the traffic accident on the result of his or her alcohol test. Not surprisingly, a larger percentage of people that tested positive for alcohol died compared to the percentage of people that tested negative. Importantly, I regressed whether the individual was using a restraint on the result of his or her alcohol test and found a significant effect of alcohol consumption. While the majority of victims that tested negative for alcohol were using a restraint, less than a third of the victims that tested positive were restrained. Note that all effects remain highly significant when controlling for the age, race, and type of the victim. Importantly, the relationship between alcohol and restraint use is significant for both drivers and occupants of the vehicle, as well as for people of all ages and races.

I further tested whether restraint use mediated the effect of alcohol consumption on the victim’s probability of dying. I found that the effect of alcohol on the victim’s probability of dying was significantly mediated by restraint use. Interestingly, my analysis shows that restraint use accounts for a large part of the effect of alcohol consumption on traffic fatalities. This result suggests that alcohol consumption is responsible for traffic fatalities not only due to its adverse effect on driving performance, but also because inebriated individuals are less likely to use a restraint. However, it is important to note that the current data do not permit any inferences about causality. Nevertheless, the experimental research discussed in the introduction suggests that alcohol consumption may account for at least part of the variance in restraint use.

In conclusion, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), excessive alcohol consumption led to approximately 88,000 deaths and 2.5 million years of potential life lost each year in the US from 2006-2010, shortening the lives of dead victims by an average of 30 years (see also Stahre, Roeber, Kanny, Brewer, and Zhang 2014). Moreover, excessive alcohol consumption was responsible for 1 in 10 deaths among working-age adults aged 20-64 years, while the economic costs of excessive drinking in 2010 were estimated at $249 billion, or $2.05 a drink (Sacks, Gonzales, Bouchery, Tomedi, and Brewer 2015). Finally, alcohol consumption is the world’s third-largest risk factor for loss of years to disease and disability ranking higher than unsafe water and sanitation, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and tobacco use (Sridhar 2012; World Health Organization 2011). Until today, public health campaigns have predominantly focused on preventing traffic fatalities by persuading drivers to refrain from getting behind the wheel after consuming alcohol. My data suggest that public health campaigns should inform not only drivers—but also occupants—of vehicles about the relationship between alcohol and risk-taking. Raising awareness about the relationship between alcohol consumption, restraint use, and traffic fatalities is necessary in order to minimize future casualties.

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Changing Brand Attitudes Using Relevant Affective Cues: An Investigation of Relational Processing in Evaluative Conditioning

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Evaluative conditioning (EC) refers to a change of evaluations toward a conditioned stimulus (CS) due to its repeated pairings with an unconditioned stimulus (US). In marketing research and practices, EC has elicited great interests because it can serve as an effective approach to changing consumer preferences. For example, pairing a brand with celebrity endorsers or pleasant images can build consumers’ positive attitudes toward the brand (Gibson 2008; Kim, Allen, and Kardes 1996; Sweldens, Van Osselaer, and Janiszewski 2010). Pairing unhealthy products with disgusting images can reduce consumers’ choice of those products (Hollands, Prestwich, and Marteau 2011; Shaw et al. 2016). Despite the rich demonstration of EC effects in both the psychology and marketing literatures, there are still questions regarding the mental processes responsible for EC (Hofmann et al. 2010). One dominant account is a simple associative process, according to which EC effects result from automatic formation of associative links between the CS and the US or between the CS and the feeling elicited by the US. As a result, the CS acquires a similar evaluation as the US. In contrast, some recent studies suggest that the mechanism for EC may be more complicated than an associative process because experimentally provided information about the relation between CSs and USs can influence EC (Hu, Gawronski, and Balas 2017; Zanon et al. 2014).

This suggests that if the CSs and USs have a plausible conceptual relation (e.g., “CS causes US”), EC effects should be more pronounced in implicit attitudes toward the CS, compared to when such relations are absent. We compare the impact of USs matched in valence and intensity but varying in relational plausibility to the CS. On the associational view, EC effects should be similar irrespective of relational plausibility, but the relational view predicts that EC effects will be substantially stronger when the US has a plausible relation with the CS.

In study 1, we used a 3 (USs: plausible, implausible, control) × 2 (product type: sweet foods, liquors) between-subject design. The evaluation targets were novel, fictitious brands of sweet foods or liquors. CSs were images showing brand logos with products offered by the brands. In the EC procedure, CSs were paired with either obesity, car accident, or blank (control) images. Obesity (car accident) images were plausible USs for sweet foods (liquors). The two types of USs were pretested as equivalent in their negativity. We measured implicit attitudes toward the brand using the affective misattribution procedure (AMP) and the brief implicit association test (BIAT). We used USs, product type and their interactions to predict implicit attitudes toward the brands. The results on both AMP and BIAT were more consistent with the relational (versus associational) model: implicit attitudes toward the brand were significantly lower for the plausible than implausible US group or the control group. And there was no significant difference between the implausible US group and the control group in their implicit attitudes toward the brand. Product type did not moderate these results. Thus, the results of study 1 indicate that EC effects occur only when the USs have plausible relations with the CSs.

In study 2, we aimed to replicate study 1 while seeking conditions where the classic EC effect, which reflects the associational view, would occur. We found that the classic EC effect occurred when evaluation targets were more perceptually ambiguous (e.g., when brand logos consisted only of abstract images). In this case, implicit attitudes toward the brands were lowered to a similar extent by both plausible and implausible negative USs. But when people’s initial perceptions toward the CS were relatively clear (e.g., when brand logos included concrete product images), implicit attitudes were significantly influenced only by the plausible USs, thus replicating the results in study 1.

Overall, the above findings indicate that EC may involve both associational and relational processes, and one process can dominate over the other depending on people’s initial perceptions toward the CS. When the initial perceptions are not clear, the implicit attitudes toward the CS would be mainly influenced through the associational process. When the initial perceptions are relatively clear, the implicit attitudes toward the CS would be changed primarily through the relational process. For marketing practices, our findings suggest that when consumers have little knowledge toward a brand (e.g., foreign brands, newly launched brands), EC can effectively shape consumers’ implicit attitudes toward the brand irrespective of the conceptual relations between the brand and the USs employed in advertising messages. But in some cases, consumers may already have some knowledge toward a brand (e.g., local brands, existing brands), and they know what types of products the brand offers. In those cases, it would be more effective to use conceptually relevant USs to change consumers’ implicit attitudes toward the brand.

REFERENCES

The Rise of the Impulsive Shopper: The Case of the Amazon Dash Button
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
When completing a purchase decision, consumers are no longer limited to the traditional journey across the marketing funnel stages of awareness, consideration, evaluation, and action. Indeed, technological disruptions, such as the Amazon Dash buttons that allow customers to remotely order a given product by the mere press of a button (Hockett 2015), are removing key stages of the consumer journey, forgoing the consumer selection phase and forcing his/her loyalty to a given retailer or brand.

Technological disruptions to the consumer journey have not yet been discussed in the marketing literature. The case of the Amazon Dash buttons will be utilized to develop a further understanding of the changes in consumer decision making and consumer impulsive purchase behavior resulting from their usage.

Conceptual Framework
The Effects of Tech Disruptions on Retailers and Shoppers
Consumer impulsiveness is an individual's sudden desire or urge to purchase an item in an immediate, spontaneous manner; this is generally bought on by physical closeness to the product or the promise of prompt satisfaction and gratification (Arens and Rust 2012). Perceived service value is a consumer's expectation that a given product's usage allows him/her to achieve benefits that are believed to be of value to the user (Boksberger and Melsen 2011). Accordingly, the researchers hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: The higher the shopper's perceived service value of Amazon Dash button, the higher his/her purchase impulsiveness.

When the consumer perceives that the value of the service he/she is receiving from the retailer is congruent to his/her personal needs, this establishes an affective bond of love and commitment to the retailer (Sabir and Nazrul 2014; Ramadan and Farah 2017). Nevertheless, consumer love is based on a retailer’s efforts not only to satisfy the consumers' needs, but to also provide them with additional values and benefits that induce affective responses (Hye-Young et al. 2008). Consequently, the researchers posit the following:

Hypothesis 2: The higher the shopper's perceived service value of Amazon Dash button, the higher his/her retailer love.

The Effects of Consumers' Affective Feelings Towards Retailers on Shopping Impulsiveness
Consumer impulsiveness has also been found to be a direct result of retailer love (Mishra et al. 2014). The emotions of attachment towards the retailers tend to arouse a positive, affective response in consumers that in turn has a significant impact on impulsive purchasing tendencies (Mishra et al. 2014). In fact, consumers are more likely to purchase and utilize Dash buttons if they feel an affective feeling to Amazon. Consequently, the researchers hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: The higher the shopper's retailer love, the higher his/her shopping impulsiveness.

The Effects of Consumer Self-Control on Shopping Impulsiveness
An important factor in determining a consumer’s likelihood to buy products through the Amazon Dash button is his/her individual spending self-control. Accordingly, a decrease in self-control leads to an increase in a consumer’s likelihood to purchase products and services impulsively (Sharma et al. 2014). Subsequently, the researchers hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4: The higher the shopper's perceived consumer self-control, the lower his/her purchase impulsiveness.

Based on the above discussion, this study proposes a conceptual framework that identifies the main triggers for consumer impulsive purchases relative to three specific elements, namely: (1) the perceived service value of Dash button, (2) retailer’s love and affective commitment, as well as (3) consumer spending self-control.

Research Methodology
A survey was devised including multi-item scales adopted from the literature to measure the interrelationships between the aforementioned constructs. The empirical data was collected in the US through a web survey distributed and completed by 630 Amazon prime users of the Dash Button. The data was analyzed using SPSS 24 and LISREL 8.8.

Discussion of the Findings and Implications
The findings showed all linkages to be significant. The estimation of the model shows a good fit. As hypothesized, perceived service value had a direct impact on impulsiveness and retailer’s love. Retailer’s love had also a significant positive effect on impulsiveness, while consumer self-control had -as expected- a significant negative effect on impulsiveness.

The empirical findings of this study show the scale at which technological advances such as the Amazon Dash button would affect consumers’ buying patterns and their expected effect on the traditional consumer journey. With its Dash button technology, Amazon will make it very difficult for shoppers using it to consider new brands. As the technological disruption’s perceived value increases for consumers in regards to value and convenience, these shoppers are expected to have higher affective feelings towards the retailer, and hence to potentially become more impulsive in their buying behavior. While shoppers’ spending self-control will be the main inhibitor on the impulsiveness attribute, the consumer journey in its different stages and touch points appears to be fundamentally altered with the adoption of these buttons. Ultimately, the dash button is expected to increase the relative cost of searching for other brands and retailers as it promotes brand and store (Amazon) loyalty. The dash button is expected to have a long-term service value and hence may become a necessity in certain product categories.

Conclusion
This study enhanced the understanding of the alterations brought to the consumer’s journey in light of the newest technological disruptions, specifically the Amazon Dash Button and contributed to the development of theories related to consumer impulsive behavior in online environments. This study is yet not free from limitations as it...
utilizes data only from Amazon Prime users based in the US market. Future research could focus on consumer impulsiveness with regards to various product categories and to other types of tech disruptions. It could also be conducted in other markets.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Prior research has shown that narrative transportation (i.e., immersion into a story) can be an important factor in persuasion by reducing the connection to one’s own beliefs and attitudes toward the focal content of the story (Green 2004). Common to many models of transportation-driven persuasion is the idea that narrative transportation generates greater affective response that in turn influences persuasion (Escalas 2004; Green and Brock 2000). While most persuasive narratives attempt to generate positive affect through transportation, one domain that relies on narratives to help facilitate persuasion is that of fear appeals, where the negative consequences of certain behaviors are portrayed through narratives that can elicit very strong negative emotions, such as fear.

In this research we propose that, whereas current transportation models show affective response as an outcome of narrative transportation and a driver of persuasion, narratives that rely on fear may follow a different route to persuasion. Specifically, we propose that the experience of fear arousal results in an alternative relationship between transportation and affect such that the affect can help drive narrative transportation. We predict that this happens because fear arousal will lead to a general state of increased vigilance (Nielsen, Shapiro, and Mason 2010; Pratto and John 1991) that in turn drives increased processing of the narrative, leading to higher transportation (Nielsen and Escalas 2010). We further propose that the fear-induced narrative transportation will facilitate non-affective drivers of persuasion, such as reduced counterarguing. We explore this proposal across three studies.

Overview of studies. In all studies, participants saw narrative ads in the form of storyboards (Escalas 2004, Nielsen and Escalas 2010) aimed at curbing distracted driving. Depending on the condition, these narratives were either neutral or fear evoking and were always followed by a measure of narrative transportation (Green and Brock 2000).

In study 1, participants were randomly assigned to either a fearful writing task or a neutral writing task. A pretest confirmed that the fear writing task significantly increased ratings on a fear arousal scale (Keller and Block 1996) compared to a control. Following the writing prime, all participants saw the storyboard for a neutral Public Service Announcement (PSA) titled “It Can Wait”. Following the fear writing task, participants then filled out the same narrative transportation scale used in previous studies, a version of the fear arousal scale used in the pretest for study 1 (Keller and Block 1996), a scale to measure counterarguing (Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, and Byrne 2007), and a persuasion measure. Results confirmed that participants who viewed the fearful version of the PSA indicated increased fear arousal ($M_{Neutral} = 2.28, M_{Fearful} = 2.38, F(1, 233) = 3.92, p < .05$), transportation ($M_{Neutral} = 5.63, M_{Fearful} = 6.25, F(1, 233) = 13.48, p < .001$), and persuasion ($M_{Neutral} = 5.41, M_{Fearful} = 6.59, F(1, 233) = 32.60, p < .001$). We then tested whether the direct effect of fear arousal on counterarguing ($\beta = .232, t = -3.64, p < .001$) was mediated by transportation (PROCESS model 4, Hayes 2009). We found a direct effect of fear arousal on transportation ($\beta = 1.59, t = 4.70, p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.19, 1.99]), while the direct effect of fear arousal on counterarguing was no longer significant when transportation was included as a mediator ($\beta = -.249, t = -1.05, p = .29, 95% CI = [-.72, .22]$).

In the present research, we seek to better understand fear arousal’s effects on narrative persuasion. We accomplished this by presenting an unrelated fear manipulation prior to exposure to a neutral narrative and showing a causal effect of incidental fear arousal on transportation (study 1). We replicate this effect through manipulation of fear within the PSA itself (studies 2 and 3). Finally, we showed that fear arousal affects persuasion through narrative transportation by reducing overall counterarguing against the communication’s message. Current transportation models would not predict that transportation is driven by affect generated by the narrative. Researchers should take the potential for this two-way relationship into account when developing their models moving forward.

REFERENCES


Behavioral Disinhibition: A Unitary Framework to Account for Self-Licensing and Consistency Effects in Goal Accessibility and Consumer Choice

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The concept of licensing—the tendency to select an effortless, or indulging option after considering or choosing a healthy, effortful, sustainable, or responsible option—has seen a surge of research interest in consumer behavior. Strikingly, research on its opposing concept of consistency—the subsequent tendency to select a similarly healthy or sustainable option after considering or choosing an initial healthy or sustainable option—has not kept pace and is surprisingly scarce in our field. Moreover, there is—to our knowledge—as yet no unitary explanatory framework that can simultaneously account for both consumer licensing and consistency effects. The present research aims to take a first step to fill that void. By examining the role of one underlying psychological construct and framework that may account for both licensing and consistency in judgment and choice, and can shed light on the underlying process driving those effects—behavioral disinhibition (Carver and White 1994; Fennis et al. 2015; Hirsch et al. 2011). In three studies, we examined how (chronic) differences in such disinhibition affect reward sensitivity, accessibility of health vs. enjoyment-related goals and the actual display of licensing vs. consistency in choice following consideration of a healthy food option.

We build on the dual goal activation notion recently forwarded in health research to understand dieting behavior (Stroebe et al. 2013). More in particular, this research has shown that exposure to tempting, palatable foods, may trigger not one, but two distinct, sometimes conflicting goals, i.e., an enjoyment and a health goal. The inherent incompatibility between both goals will induce a “tug-of-war” between the two, resulting in shielding of the goal that will remain active, at the expense of the subordinated goal that becomes inactive (Stroebe et al. 2013). Extending this research, we propose that, similar to palatable foods, exposure to healthy food items may similarly activate both a health goal and/or an enjoyment goal and in addition, the goal that “wins” the resulting “tug-of-war” between the two incompatible goals, will not only remain salient but will also directly determine the downstream consequences of such activation—licensing when the enjoyment goal remains active, consistency when the health goal dominates.

Moreover, we propose behavioral disinhibition (Hirsch et al. 2011)–an unrestrained, approach oriented, reward-sensitive state, associated with lower levels of impulse control–as a key construct that will determine which type of goal will remain active and consequently, when the ensuing downstream behavioral consequence will be licensing or consistency. We hypothesize that higher (lower) disinhibition levels will increase accessibility of an enjoyment (health) goal, which will consequently foster licensing (consistency) in consumer choice.

In a series of three studies we tested our hypotheses. Study 1 focused on a core premise underlying our reasoning: the notion that behavioral disinhibition would spur an increased tendency for unrestrained, appetitive behavior, i.e., a tendency for immediate reward seeking. Study 2 built on these results and examined the extent to which the type of goal activation following exposure to a health-related food cue is a function of individual differences in behavioral disinhibition and so tests the notion that for consumers high in behavioral disinhibition, the accessibility of an enjoyment goal will increase, while for consumers low in disinhibition, exposure to the same food cue will increase the accessibility of a health goal. Finally, extending Study 1 and Study 2, the third study directly tests the notion that behavioral disinhibition drives both licensing and consistency following exposure to a health-related food cue in a consumer choice setting. Study 1 used a correlational design where participants engaged in a reward-seeking task (the Balloon Analogue Risk Task, BART, Lejuez et al. 2002) and we measured individual differences in behavioral disinhibition using the seven items capturing behavioral inhibition from the measure developed by Carver and White (1994).

Studies 2 and 3 used a largely similar experimental design with exposure to a healthy vs. neutral food cue as a between-subject factor and chronic differences in behavioral disinhibition as a measured individual difference variable. Study 2 measured accessibility of a health vs. enjoyment-related goal (using a word-stem completion task, cf. Bargh et al. 1996), while Study 3 assessed actual consumer choice of indulging products following exposure to the type of food item as key dependent variables.

Study 1 found evidence that higher levels of behavioral disinhibition indeed predicted increased reward sensitivity as measured by BART performance. Study 2 assessed a direct implication of this disinhibition-driven reward sensitivity for goal accessibility. This study showed that exposure to a healthy food option is indeed capable of activating not only a health, but also an enjoyment goal and demonstrated that the accessibility of the enjoyment goal was indeed more pronounced for consumers high, as opposed to low in behavioral disinhibition, while the accessibility of the health goal proved to be more pronounced for consumers low, as opposed to high in disinhibition. Finally, extending Study 1 and Study 2, the third study directly tested the notion that behavioral disinhibition drives both licensing and consistency following exposure to a health-related food cue in a consumer choice setting. This study showed that exposure to the same health-related food cue promoted increased indulgence, a licensing effect, when behavioral disinhibition was high and its opposite, health-related decision making—a consistency effect—when disinhibition was low.

Together, the present studies extend earlier findings on licensing and consistency effects, and provide a more integrative account of their occurrence. In so doing, we bridge the gap between the—sometimes separate and conflicting—findings on such effects in fields such as moral reasoning, health behavior and consumer behavior.

REFERENCES


The “Weight” of Product Claims and Vertical Location: Health Goes up and Taste Goes Down
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Healthy food products are generally perceived to be lower in calories and less filling than unhealthy food products, and the source of such inferences is usually based on specific stereotypes about the product category (Oakes 2005) and the content of food product labels and claims (Gravel et al. 2012).

The perceived lightness or heaviness of foods has further downstream consequences in the design of packages and ads. Recent literature demonstrates that, by visually manipulating the “heaviness” of various package design elements, one can alter consumers’ inferences about the product. For example, a food presented in a heavier container is perceived to be more satiating and dense than when presented in a lighter container (Piqueras-Fiszman and Spence 2012). Furthermore, Karnal et al. (2016) shows that a change in the visual weight of colors and typeface affects consumers’ healthfulness perception. Products that are assigned lighter (as opposed to heavier) colors and typeface are perceived as healthier. In a similar fashion, the location of different elements on the package can also influence perceived heaviness/lightness of the product. If the context matches the location – “light” locations for healthy products and “heavy” locations for unhealthy products - consumers’ evaluations are enhanced (Deng and Kahn 2009).

As healthy foods (as opposed to unhealthy foods) are perceived to be lighter, and lighter objects (as opposed to heavier objects) are associated with a higher vertical location, we propose that descriptors of light and healthy foods will be preferred at the top, whereas descriptors of heavy and unhealthy foods will be preferred at the bottom (H1). Furthermore, drawing on the notions of semantic match (or congruency) and processing fluency (Schwarz 2004) we next argue that, in a marketing context, a match between the content of the verbal claim (healthy versus unhealthy) and vertical location (top versus bottom) will elicit more positive consumer responses. Following this rationale, we posit that a match (vs. mismatch) between vertical location (top vs. bottom) and the content of the verbal claim (healthy vs. unhealthy) will produce more (vs. less) positive consumer responses (H2).

In Study 1, a classification task was used in which respondents were asked to place five pairs of two words (healthy versus unhealthy) in a top or in a bottom. The pairs of words used were: healthy foods-unhealthy foods, salad-burger, light-heavy, lean-fat, empty-full. Our results provide initial evidence that individuals tend to associate healthy concepts with a top location and unhealthy concepts with a bottom location (H1). Specifically, respondents in this study consistently and more frequently placed at the top words relating to health, supporting the claim that the metaphor of lightness and heaviness of healthy and unhealthy foods manifests in the perceptual vertical space. For an overview of the studies and main results.

Drawing on this initial finding, in Study 2, we investigate whether these effects can be verified in a marketing context by alternating the location (top and bottom) of two food product claims (health and taste) on food packaging. The claims used for this study were “your daily dose of health” and “your daily dose of taste” respectively. The product used was a fictional smoothie brand. Our results suggest that a claim denoting healthy attributes will elicit more favorable evaluations (pack attitude and anticipated product satisfaction) when placed at the top of the package. Conversely, a claim denoting unhealthy attributes (taste) will elicit more favorable evaluations when placed at the bottom of the package (H2).

In Study 3 we test the replicability of these effects in a different marketing context (ads) and with two product categories that vary in their degree of healthfulness – apples and muffins. The claims used for this study were “your healthy choice” and “your tasty choice”. As in Study 2, verbal claims conveying product attributes related to health elicit more positive consumer responses when placed at the top compared to the bottom, whereas verbal claims designating unhealthy food attributes (e.g., taste) elicit more positive consumer responses when placed at the bottom compared to the top. Furthermore, these effects seem to be consistent across food product categories varying in their degree of healthfulness.

As outlined and demonstrated in the first three studies, if the content of the claim describes healthy attributes of food products, it is more effective if located at the top of the package (as opposed to the bottom). Contrary to this, the results from the Study 4, employing a content analysis of food packages, suggest that, in practice, most health-related claims are located at the bottom of the package. This finding highlights the need for more research-driven managerial decision-making. Although at the outset it might seem like an inconsequential design decision, the location of the claims seems to be an important driver of product evaluation and possibly even choice.

The findings of this paper are in line with recent literature demonstrating that, by manipulating the heaviness of various design elements, one can alter consumer inferences such as perceived food satiety, density and healthfulness (Karnal et al. 2016; Piqueras-Fiszman and Spence 2012) and have potential implications both for marketing practitioners (in brand positioning and communication) and for policy makers that try to nudge consumers into making healthier food choices.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Brands can be perceived as anthropomorphic entities, leading consumers to attribute humanlike minds to them (Kervyn, et al. 2012; Aggarwal and McGill 2007, 2012). Previous marketing research has focused on firm-level benefits of brand and product anthropomorphism. However, thus far, marketing research has not considered whether there might be negative societal outcomes of seeing brands as humanlike.

In general, enhanced mind attribution represents increased accuracy, because seeing other minds is a motivated process (e.g., Kidd and Castañó 2013; Waytz et al. 2010). Individuals often decrease mind attribution to outgroup members, which is associated with social ills such as dehumanization and racial discrimination (Haslam 2006; Gray et al. 2012). However, not all increases in mind attribution represent increased accuracy. In this work, we argue that social media interaction with brands may lead consumers to attribute minds to brands. We further theorize that attributing minds to mindless agents may decrease understanding of other people’s mental states.

Viewing social media content is likely to increase mind attribution to the entities who post such content, whether human or brand. Prior work has shown that reading narrative fiction increases mind perception abilities because it requires more effortful determination of others’ mental states than does reading nonfiction (Kidd and Castañó 2013). Furthermore, a motivation to connect with another person—likely the intention of most individuals in social media contexts—enhances mind attribution to the person (Pickett, Gardner and Knowles 2004; Waytz et al. 2010).

Competing predictions can be made regarding outcomes of undue mind attribution. On one hand, effortfully attributing minds to mindless targets might improve mind perception in humans, much like exercising a muscle strengthens it. However, we posit the opposite: mind attribution to brands will decrease mind perception in other people. First, seeing a mind where none exists may temporarily distort individuals’ sense of what constitutes a human mind. This may make it more difficult to identify or understand a human mind. Second, because it is more difficult to imagine the type and contents of a non-human (vs. human) mind, individuals who do so may subsequently feel less confident about their mind perception abilities (Bem 1972; Ross, Lepper, and Hubbard 1975). Three experiments test our hypotheses.

Sixty-three undergraduate students completed experiment 1. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: an identical Facebook post that was shared by the Cheetos brand or by a person. In a control condition, 26 participants described their favorite college course. Next, participants completed 6 items from the cognitive empathy scale (Jolliffe and Farrington 2006). As predicted, cognitive empathy was lowest among individuals who thought about the brand’s mental states, compared to individuals who thought about a person’s mental states or the control condition (both p’s<.05). Differences between the person and control conditions were not statistically significant (p>.99), likely because both recollection and mind perception of other human minds are fairly effortless and common cognitive processes.

Experiment 2 tests whether using hashtags (e.g., #IloveGap) in social media posts to brands results in decreased self-reported cognitive empathy (Jolliffe and Farrington 2006). We first established that using a hashtag in a comment to a brand increases mind attribution to the brand. This is likely because hashtags serve as a meta-commentary on a written statement (e.g., “It’s Monday! So excited! #sarcasm”; Wikipedia 2017) and require consideration of how perceivers will interpret both the message and the commentary. In a pre-test, 25 Mturk participants were assigned to write a message about the Gap using a hashtag, either directed to the Gap or to a friend. Mind attribution to the brand was measured using 3 items standard in the literature (Ward et al. 2013). Individuals who directed a hashtag to the Gap (a friend) rated it as having more (less) mind (p<.01). In the main study, we used the same hashtag paradigm and measured understanding of other minds with 3 items from the Jolliffe and Farrington (2006) cognitive empathy scale (N=82). As predicted, individuals who used a hashtag when commenting to the brand (a friend) reported less (more) cognitive empathy (p<.05). Thus, social media interactions with brands can depress individuals’ ability to understand the minds of other humans.

In experiment 3, 83 Mturk participants read information about the shoe brand Naturalizer. In one condition, the information was presented as if it appeared in the brand’s Twitter feed; in the other condition it was presented in list form. Next, participants rated the extent to which the brand possessed a mind before completing 10 RMET items. We controlled for prior experience with the brand and Twitter. As predicted, individuals in the Twitter condition attributed more mind to the brand compared to those in the list condition (p<.05). They also performed worse on the RMET (p<.001). Mind attribution mediates the hypothesized relationship (Zhao et al. 2010). The mean indirect and direct effects are negative and significant (95% bootstrap confidence intervals exclude zero). Thus, even reading about a brand in social media settings can increase mind attribution to the brand, which leads to poorer ability to understand others’ emotional states. This experiment rules out the alternative explanation that our result is due to participants’ level of knowledge about the social media platform or the brand.

In this work, we present evidence that social media interaction with brands can incorrectly heighten mind attribution to the brand, harming individuals’ ability to understand the mental states of other people. Both decreased empathy for others and decreased performance on the RMET indicate that consumers who attribute a mind to a mindless agent subsequently struggle to understand agents that do possess a mind. This finding contributes to the extant research in marketing on brand anthropomorphism, which has not previously examined societal outcomes. Furthermore, as mind attribution to brands may occur outside consumers’ conscious awareness, this finding should be communicated to the public. Finally, motivations such as a need for control over one’s environment and loneliness can enhance mind attribution to mindless agents (Waytz et al. 2010). Thus, the potential for ill effects due to mind attribution to mindless brands may extend beyond social media interactions.

REFERENCES
Pathogen Fear and the Familiar
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In June of 2009, the World Health Organization declared H1N1 – the swine flu, a pandemic. Despite being a relatively innocuous illness, the announcement caused mass hysteria around the world. Schools closed for weeks, governments slaughtered pigs in masses, hand sanitizer was out of stock on major store shelves, and websites selling respirator masks crashed from an overwhelming increase in traffic (Bolduan 2009; CBS News 2009). What this highlights is how powerful the emotional response elicited by the presence of disease-causing illness can be with regard to behavior. While the swine flu is a particularly salient example of this effect, consumers often incidentally find themselves in the presence of small reminders of illness. For instance, a commuter sneezes on a train, a friend complains of a sore throat, or a partner comes home with a chesty cough. Unlike H1N1, these instances are unlikely to lead to hysteria, but they may nevertheless have a systematic and consequential impact on consumption patterns.

But what might these differences look like? One reason why pathogen presence might systematically change consumption behavior is because of the emotions it elicits, namely disgust and fear. Disgust is an adaptive evolutionary mechanism that operates toward avoiding disease-causing pathogens (e.g. Rozin, Haidt and McCueley 2008; Tybur et al. 2012). As a result, feeling disgust leads to a tendency toward expelling in service of removing things that cause illness from one’s environment (Lerner and Keltner 2000; Tybur, Liemberman and Griskevicius 2009). Given this tendency toward expulsion, consumers are less likely to make a purchase at all, and value the goods they do buy less when they are feeling disgusted (Galoni and Noseworthy 2015; Lerner, Small and Loewenstein 2004; Morales and Fitzsimons 2007). Similarly, fear motivates vigilance and avoidance in service of mitigating risk and defending against threat (Lerner and Keltner 2001; Marks and Nesse 1994). Given these tendencies, consumers feeling fear are more likely to choose the safe, less risky option, and form stronger brand attachment with trusted brands when they are feeling afraid (Dunn and Hoegg 2014; Lee and Andrade 2011; Raghunathan and Pham 1999).

Taken together, we posit if the presence of pathogens leads to both a disgust and fear response, then in times of greater pathogen presence consumers should buy fewer products overall and asymmetrically reduce their consumption of non-familiar, more risky options. We examine these predictions using influenza data from Google Flu Trends and the Center for Disease Control, alongside scanner sales data from more than 35,000 retailers across the United States for the period January 2009 through December 2014. We form a weekly index of pathogen density within each state by weighting the actual presence of the flu with flu-related Google searches. We then match this weekly state-level pathogen density index with a weekly unit count of familiar and non-familiar products sold within the state.

Given the size of the scanner data, we limit our analysis of familiarity to one within-brand and one within-category comparison. For the within-brand comparison, we chose to examine OREOs, as it is a traditional national brand that is widely known and trusted by consumers, yet has a sufficiently diverse range of products to allow for differences in familiarity. We operationalize familiarity within the Oreo brand by examining attributes, wherein any product with additional information beyond being a traditionally flavored OREO is operationalized as non-familiar. Thus products included in the non-familiar category include new flavors of OREOs (e.g. Mint Chocolate, Cookie Dough) and OREOs with alternative formats to the original (e.g. Thins, Chocolate Covered). For the within-category comparison we examine canned soup. The benefit of this category is two-fold. First, the canned soup category serves as a quasi-manipulation check for our pathogen density index. Since soup is a soothing liquid high in electrolytes, people ought to buy it more often when they are sick; thus, sales should remain the same or even increase in times of increased pathogen presence. Second, the category has a natural familiarity distinction in that it has a strong, traditional national brand (Campbell’s) as well as many private label brands. We thus operationalize familiarity in this category by examining the asymmetric effect of pathogen density on Campbell’s sales versus private label sales.

We then subject the data to a multi-level mixed effects model controlling for baseline state differences, regional similarities, sales seasonality, and changes in reporting over time. Following from our predictions, the analysis revealed that unit sales of OREOs did indeed decrease in times of increased pathogen presence, 95% CI [-.22; -.04], whereas soup sales were not influenced but skewed positive, 95% CI [-.01; .07]. In line with the notion that the impact of the flu on sales should asymmetrically punish non-familiar products, we found a significant pathogen density × familiarity interaction for OREOs, 95% CI [-.12; -.08], and canned soup, 95% CI [-.28; -.25]. To account for concerns about inference making in multi-level frameworks, we also ran our model through a Markov chain Monte Carlo simulation with 5 chains consisting of 5,000 iterations to the same result. Indeed, in times of increased pathogen presence, consumers buy fewer OREOs, buy more soup, and are significantly more likely to choose the familiar over the non-familiar product.

The data analysis provides evidence for an asymmetric effect of pathogen presence on demand for familiar and non-familiar products. Indeed, the presence of illness seems to have systematic and meaningful differences in consumption patterns. This is both theoretically and practically relevant. Theoretically, the present research sheds light on the impact of pathogen presence on consumer decision-making and provides preliminary evidence that the emotional reaction to pathogen presence is a mixed emotion consisting of both disgust and fear responses. Likewise, the present research demonstrates the effectiveness of using big data as a tool for robustness in theory building and testing in consumer behavior. Using large, publicly accessible data, we demonstrate the practical, real-world impact of contagion and emotions that transcends the controlled white walls of the lab.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In a world where it is increasingly easy to deceive and be deceived, authenticity is becoming more important. Defined by Newman and Dhar (2014) as a judgment of “truth with respect to some valued property or dimension,” authenticity is an attribute that can strongly inform consumption decisions. For example, consumers can signal their own authentic selves by consuming products that are authentic to a shared underlying value (e.g. Kirmani 2009; Malär et al. 2011), and value cultural experiences on the basis of their authenticity (e.g. Chhabra 2005). Likewise, consumers are willing to pay more for authentic goods, and demonstrate increased brand loyalty toward firms behaving authentically (e.g. Newman and Dhar 2014; Spiggle, Nguyen and Caravella 2013). Because of this, the ability to portray an authentic brand image and offer authentic products are sources of value to firms.

However, little is known about how consumers make authenticity inferences for every-day goods. Recent research by Newman and Dhar (2014) sheds light on this process by arguing that the authenticity of mass-produced goods is largely influenced by their ability to come into physical contact with a valued source of brand essence. The researchers argue that physical contact with an original factory location creates a contagious transfer of essence and makes the product more authentically representative of the brand. This finding led the authors to make the claim that authenticity itself is contagious. However, much of the qualitative research on authenticity demonstrates product authenticity in the absence of contagion. For example, in the wine and beer industries, authenticity is centrally linked to “traditional production methods” (Beverland 2005; 2006). In their research on craft souvenirs, Littrell, Anderson and Brown (1993) identify “artisans’ production techniques” as a key contributor to tourist perceptions of authenticity. Likewise, in their research on the authenticity of restaurant food, Cohen and Avieli (2004) discuss the importance of consumer understandings about the “process of preparation” as an influence on perceptions of authenticity. This suggests that method of production - beyond location of production - is central to authenticity judgment. Likewise, there are feasibility concerns with the notion that contagious contact with an original manufacturing location is essential for product authenticity; it implies that a firm without access to an original manufacturing location is by its very nature less authentic than its counterpart with that access.

To address these practical concerns and integrate qualitative research on authenticity, we present a multi-process model wherein mass-produced branded products and services can gain authenticity from beliefs about a contagious transfer of essence through physical contact with a valued location, and from beliefs about essence engineering following instructions from a valued founder. Across three studies, we demonstrate that these processes are independent, function through distinct psychological mechanisms, and have downstream consequences on consumer choice and product valuation.

In study one, we independently manipulate both contagious essence via original manufacturing location and engineered essence via manufacturing process for Levi’s jeans in a 2 (Location: New vs. Original) by 2 (Process: Original vs. New) design. We then measure beliefs about essence, authenticity, and product valuation. Replicating Newman and Dhar (2014), results revealed a marginally significant main effect of location on judgments of authenticity ($p = .10$).

In conclusion, we present evidence for a multi-process model of authenticity via both the transfer of essence through physical contact and the engineering of essence through process. This model sheds light on the psychological process through which consumers make judgments about authenticity and has actionable consequences for marketing practitioners. Indeed, we demonstrate two psychologically distinct routes to authenticity judgments and show that products need not have to come into physical contact with a valued point of origin to become authentic in the minds of consumers.

REFERENCES


Redesigning the Market for Volunteers: A Donor Registry
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Volunteer markets, such as blood donations can suffer recurring periods of excess demand and excess supply, due to a lack of price signals and the altruistic motivations of their volunteers (Slonim, Wang and Garbarino, 2014). This paper designs and implements a Registry, that improves market coordination by exploiting the behavioral preferences of volunteers. Registries have been shown to be an effective coordination tools in other markets, such as kidneys replacements (Roth, Sonmez and Unver, 2004, 2007), bone marrow donation (Bergstrom, Garrett, Sheehan-Connor, 2009), and entry-level labor markets (Roth, 1984; Roth and Peranson, 1999). We find that Registry members are more responsive to donation solicitations and critical shortage solicitations than non-Registry members and that their increased responsiveness is more predictable, reducing the probability of both excess supply and demand. We also find evidence that the improvement of market outcomes when using the Registry to solicit donations is due to the positive self-selection into the Registry from altruism and desire for a commitment device, and no support for the improvement being due to ask avoidance.

In partnership with the Australian Red Cross Blood Service (Blood Service), we introduced a Blood Donor Registry throughout Australia using a large-scale field experiment that unfolded over two rounds using long-lapsed donors. Long-lapsed donors are donors who have given at least one successful whole blood donation, but have not donated in at least the past 24 months. Joining the registry involved agreeing to be in a database of people willing to donate when called when there was a shortage of their blood type. Donors invited to join the registry were told that they would only be called once or twice a year and only when there was a specific need for their blood type. The study involved two rounds; Round 1 manipulated whether the person was invited to join the registry or not, Round 2 (3-5 months later) involved either a standard shortage call to donate or a critical need shortage call (used when there is less than three weeks blood supply). In Round 1 (Invitation stage), over 13,000 eligible long-lapsed donors, were randomly assigned to one of five invitation conditions: 1) invited to join the registry only (Registry Only), 2) invited to join the registry and to donate now (Registry + Donation), 3) invited to donate now only (Donate Only), 4) no invitation to registry or donate but called in Round 2 when there was a shortage (Control 1), and 5) never invited or called (Control 2). The Round 2 donation request stage involve donation request calls 3-5 months later when a blood shortage was occurring. These request calls were only placed to those who had joined the registry in treatments 1 and 2, or answered the phone in treatment 3, or are in control 1. Looking at those who were reached in the Round 1 phone call, 73% of those in the registry conditions (treatments 1 and 2) joined the registry; suggesting it is a popular and appealing idea. We focus on donation behavior as the most important outcome, however, the full manuscript examines call answering and joining the registry as well.

First, we hypothesize that the Registry serves as a screening mechanism that identifies the more motivated lapsed donors. Hence when called to donate in a shortage, subjects who selected into the Registry from the Registry + Donation condition will be more likely to donate than subjects in the Donation Only condition, but that subjects who selected out of the Registry from the Registry + Donation condition will be less likely to donate than subjects in the Donation Only condition.

Second, we hypothesize that the Registry improves the coordination of supply, rather than only increasing the overall supply. In particular, Registry members are expected to be more responsive to solicitations than non-Registry members. We measure responsiveness in two ways: (1) Registry members are more likely to donate when solicited and, importantly, less likely to donate when not solicited; (2) Registry members donate more quickly after receiving the solicitation than non-Registry members.

Finally, exploring the behavioral mechanisms behind the Registry’s effectiveness we examine whether the Registry is effective due to the crowding-in of (1) pure altruists, (2) donors who need a commitment device or (3) donors who are engaging in ask avoidance behavior.

Pure altruism stem from a compassion to help others with no ulterior personal benefits while impure altruism stems from a “taste for giving,” such as status seeking and self- and social-image, often called ‘warm glow’ (Beker, 1974; Andreoni, 1989). This distinction is important since the Registry provides information to volunteers about the need for their blood donation, which affects the utility pure altruists obtain from making a donation, whereas impure altruists would not be influenced by this information since their utility from giving is independent of the need. If the Registry allows the self-selection of individuals with pure motives, Registry members should be more responsive to critical shortage calls (highest need), relative to standard calls, than non-Registry members.

The Registry provides a non-binding commitment device that increases the psychological costs of not donating when asked in the future. Commitment devices have successfully modified behavior in several contexts, including savings (Thaler and Benartzi, 2004; Ashraf, Karlan and Yin, 2006), health (Gine, Karlan and Zinman, 2010; Royer, Stehr and Sydnor, 2015) and monetary donations (Breman, 2011). The Registry represents a preference for a restricted choice set (Gul and Pesendorfer, 2001), where joining the Registry removes the option to “not donate” from future choice sets. This predicts that Registry members will increase their donation rates more than non-Registry members between Round 1 and Round 2. The Registry might also increase utility among donors who experience dis-utility from being solicited for a donation (Exley and Petrie, 2016). Since the Registry invitation promises to contact donors only once or twice per year (significantly less than the Blood Service solicits active donors), the Registry may encourage donors to return by limiting the number of calls you will receive, a form of ask avoidance (Andreoni, Rao and Trachtman, 2011; DellaVigna, List and Malmendier, 2012). The hypothesis is that there are a portion of long-lapsed donors who would donate if only they did not expect that the donation would lead to an increase in Blood Service solicitations. The Registry alleviates this dis-utility by promising to reduce the number of future “asks”, and hence should crowd-in donors who are choosing to stay long-lapsed in order to avoid future solicitations.

Round 1 Donation Behavior (Invitation stage, no current shortage): Consistent with Hypothesis 1 the Registry serves as a screening
mechanism: subjects who selected-in to the Registry (Registry + Donation) are 6 percentage points more likely to donate when asked in Round 1 than subjects in the Donation Only condition (p<.01), while subjects who selected-out of the Registry in Round 1 are 8 percentage points less likely to donate than subjects in the Donation Only condition (p<.05), a net difference of 14 percentage points.

Next, we address hypothesis 2 to show that Registry members are more responsive. An important part of coordinating the supply of whole blood is also to ensure that individuals only donate when they are needed. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, compared to Donation Only subjects, Registry members are 6 percentage points (p<.01) more likely to donate when solicited to donate in Round 1 (Registry + Donation) and 10 percentage points (p<.01) less likely to donate when not solicited to donate in Round 1 (Registry Only).

Round 2 Donation Behavior (Calls when shortage): Examining donation behavior in Round 2 where we will compare behavior of individuals who select into the Registry, with individuals in the Donation Only treatment who are being solicited for a donation for a second time and with individuals in Control 1 who are being contacted for the first time in conjunction with the experiment.

Of those who answered the phone in Round 2, we find that Registry members are 6 percentage points more likely to donate than Control 1 subjects, who have never been asked (p<.05) and 13 percentage points more likely to donate than Donation Only subjects who were asked a few months before (p<.05). This is consistent with H1, that the Registry helps identify those willing to donate.

Consistent with Hypothesis 2 that the Registry improves coordination, Registry members are significantly more responsive to the solicitation; they are 10 percentage points more likely to donate within 3 weeks of the solicitation than Donation Only subjects (p<.01). Supporting that they adjust their donation to suit the greater immediate need.

Examining why people select into the Registry we consider three behavioral theories: 1) selection on pure altruism; if a donor is long-lapsed because he stopped giving out of concern for whether his donation is needed, then the Registry may provide the necessary information about the urgent need for whole blood, which crowds-in the volunteers with pure altruism motives; 2) selection on a preference for commitment; if a donor is long-lapsed due to problems of self-control, then the Registry may provide the needed psychological commitment to crowd-in the long-lapsed volunteer; 3) selection on “solicitation dis-utility” whereby the Registry reduces volunteers’ expectations about future donation solicitations. If a donor is long-lapsed because of solicitation dis-utility and if the Registry promises to reduce future solicitations, then the Registry will crowd-in these long-lapsed volunteers.

Pure Altruists: Given that the Registry only calls a member if there is a need for their blood type, a registry call tells members there is a current need and a critical need call tells them there is less than three weeks supply. Knowing there is an active need should trigger pure altruist to be more willing to give and this effect should be strongest when the call is a critical needs call.

If donors with purer motives are self-selecting into the Registry because it tells them when their donation will be most needed, we would expect that not only would Registry members be more likely to give when called but that they would also be more responsive to a critical call than non-Registry members.

Looking at donors who were reached in Round 2, Registry members are 5 percentage points more likely to donate within 3 weeks than non-registry members (p<.05). And if the member receives a critical need call they are an additional 9 percentage points more likely to donate within 3 weeks than a Registry member who receives the standard solicitation (p<.05). Whereas non-Registry members who receive the critical call are no more likely to donate within 3 weeks than non-Registry members who received the standard solicitation (ns). Hence, the Registry not only generates a stronger response to standard need signal but an even larger response when the need is more critical, supporting the Registry successfully identifies more pure altruists.

Commitment Device: we next consider selection on a preference for commitment. If a donor is long-lapsed due to problems of self-control, then the Registry may provide the needed psychological commitment to crowd-in the long-lapsed volunteer. If people are using the Registry as a commitment device, we would expect 1) No difference in donation rate between Donation Only subjects in Round 1 and Round 2, since they are facing the same decision each time with no commitment device, and 2) an increase in donation rate in the Registry + Donation condition between Round 1 and Round 2, since in Round 1 these folks had no commitment device but in Round 2 their agreement to be a Registry member serves as a commitment device. These hypotheses imply that the rate of increase between the Round 1 and Round 2 donation rates should be larger for the Registry + Donation treatment than for the Donation Only treatment.

For those who answered the phone in Round 2, we find that Registry members increase donation rates by 19 percentage points, whereas non-Registry members increase their donation rates by 8 percentage points (p<.01), supporting that Registry members use the Registry as a commitment device.

Solicitation Dis-utility and Ask Avoidance: we next consider the possibility that people’s desire to limit the number of times they are asked for a donation is part of the Registry’s appeal. Active donors receive frequent solicitations from the Blood Service, while when a donor becomes long-lapsed the Blood Service significantly reduces the number of solicitations. If a long-lapsed donor makes another donation, he returns to the pool of active donors and starts receiving regular solicitations again. Registry members are told they will be contacted “only once or twice a year but never more than four times” in a year, hence the Registry allows people to be donors but with guaranteed limited solicitation.

A volunteer with multiple prior long-lapse experiences will have more accurate expectations about the number of solicitations he will receive than an individual who is long-lapsed for the first time. Our data shows that people with longer donation histories were significantly more likely to experience a second period of lapse. Which means that people with longer histories should expect fewer solicitations and hence be more responsive to the infrequent registry call. Conversely, recency bias suggests that first-time long-lapsed donors are more likely to believe that the number of solicitations during a long-lapse will be more similar to the number of solicitations as an active donor. Thus, they might well expect more frequent calls and hence be less responsive to the call they receive. Solicitation dis-utility implies, conditional on joining the Registry, volunteers with longer donation histories will be more likely to make a donation. The evidence of ask avoidance is not supported, in that the length of a Registry member’s donation history has no effect on the likelihood of donation when called (p>.10).

We find that the Registry is effective at improving market outcomes, increasing donation rates among long-lapsed donors, it does so by crowding-in volunteers with pure motives and volunteers who have a preference for commitment. We find no evidence consistent with the Registry appealing to volunteers who experience solicitation disutility. Given past evidence in support of solicitation disutility that contrasts with our lack of evidence (Andreoni et al., 2011; DellaVigna et al., 2012), future research exploring the boundaries...
of solicitation dis-utility is important. One potential reason for the different results may be that in our study we examine volunteer labor supply, whereas in previous work subjects were involved in a one-off monetary donation request. Although we introduce the Registry in the whole blood market, the Registry provides a general framework for managing voluntary labor markets. Because the supply of voluntary labor operates quite differently from traditional labor markets dictated by wages, we believe that identifying the behavioral mechanisms is an important contribution, providing useful insights into how to design future Registries or expand existing Registries.

REFERENCES

The Consumption Consequences of Couples Pooling Financial Resources
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

No consumer decision is an island. An individual’s relationships will shape their purchase decisions in numerous ways, particularly by those closest to them: their romantic partners. While past research has acknowledged that relationship partners can shape consumption, the conditions in which partners influence consumer choice, and the mechanisms by which this occurs, are surprisingly understudied (Cavanaugh 2016; Gorlin and Dhar 2012; Simpson, Griskevicius, and Rothman 2012). Existing research has demonstrated that couple members think about their partner when making decisions for joint consumption (Lerouge and Warlop 2006; Scheibehenne, Todd, and Mata 2011). However, even when making a purchase for single consumption, couple members must still consider the feelings and judgments of their partner when deciding what to spend their money on (Simpson et al. 2012).

We argue that an important moderator of the degree to which couple members consider their partner when making a purchase is the type of account from which they spend. Specifically, we hypothesize that couple members are more likely to consider whether their partner will judge their purchase when spending from a joint (vs. separate) bank account, because they feel a greater need to justify their purchase to their partner. Importantly, we suggest that this increased need for justification will make individuals more likely to spend their money on utilitarian products (which are easier to justify) rather than hedonic products, compared to couple members who spend from a separate account. In line with this underlying mechanism, we demonstrate that in situations where the need for justification is reduced, the effect of account type on spending patterns disappears.

S1: Real Spending Behavior

We partnered with a retail bank to collect over 160,000 transaction records from 396 customers who hold a joint or separate bank account with their partner. Our results show that individuals who hold a joint (vs. separate) bank account spend less money on hedonic products ($b = -4.89, 73.92, t = -2.96, Cl_{95%} = [-814.31, -164.82]) more specifically, over the course of 12 months, those with a joint account spent on average £490 less on hedonic purchases compared to those with a separate account.

We find similar results for utilitarian spending. Controlling for the same set of covariates, individuals who hold a joint (vs. separate) bank account spend more on utilitarian products ($b = 1129.25, t = 3.46, Cl_{95%} = [486.84, 1771.65]). More specifically, over the course of 12 months, joint account holders spent on average £1129 more on utilitarian purchases compared to those with a separate account. The effects remain significant when controlling for age, gender, income, and whether the person has children.

To address potential confounds, we moved to a controlled experimental setting. In studies 2-4, we recruited participants in committed romantic relationships and had them imagine that they hold a separate or joint account with their partner.

S2: Manipulating Perceptions of Separate and Joint Accounts

After the manipulation (separate vs. joint account), participants indicated their likelihood of purchasing hedonic and utilitarian products. Those with a separate account ($M = 3.13$) were more likely to purchase hedonic products than those with a joint account ($M = 2.65$) $F(1,118) = 4.07, p = .046$, and those with a joint account ($M = 5.12$) were more likely to purchase utilitarian products than those with a separate account ($M = 4.09$) $F(1,118) = 18.50, p < .001$.

S3: Mediating Role of Need for Justification

After the manipulation (separate vs. joint account), participants made choices between the same product framed in a utilitarian or hedonic manner (e.g., clothes for work or fun). Those with a joint (vs. a separate) account showed a greater preference for utilitarian products ($F(1,118) = 5.23, p = .024$). They also experienced a greater need to justify their purchases ($M = 4.61$ vs. $M = 3.69$), $F(1,118) = 10.29, p = .002$. Using a mediation analysis, we find that this increased need for justification explains joint account holder’s preference for utilitarian over hedonic products ($23, 5.57$).

S4: Moderating Role of Feeling Licensed to Indulge

After the manipulation (separate vs. joint account), participants imagined it was their birthday or an ordinary day. In the ordinary day condition (high need to justify), those with a joint account ($M = 2.96$) chose more utilitarian products than those with a separate account ($M = 1.89$), $t(204) = 4.96, p < .001$. While in the birthday condition (low need to justify), there was no difference in the number of utilitarian products chosen, $t(204) = .18, p = .86$.

S5: Field Study Using Real Product Choice

During a home football game, we recruited couple members at the student union who have access to both separate and joint bank accounts, and randomly assigned them to think about using one of these accounts (separate or joint) to make a purchase. They then indicated which one of two school-branded products they would like to purchase: a beer mug (hedonic) or a coffee mug (utilitarian). Those using their joint bank account card were more likely to choose the utilitarian product than those using their separate bank account card, $\chi^2 = 4.35, p = .037$.

Discussion

This research makes several theoretical contributions. Recent reviews suggest that despite the numerous ways in which close relationships with romantic partners shape consumption, the topic is surprisingly understudied (Cavanaugh 2016; Gorlin and Dhar 2012; Simpson et al. 2012). By examining the conditions in which couple members are more likely to consider how their partner will feel about a purchase, the current findings provide insight into this understudied area. Our work also contributes to an emerging stream of research on financial decision-making in couples. Previous work has focused on financial decisions made by couple members in tandem (Dzhogleva and Lamberton 2014; Olson and Rick 2015), or on joint consumption decisions made for both couple members to consume together (Etkin 2016). We build on this work by showing that how couples choose to manage their finances affects decisions made in the absence of their partner, and extends beyond products which both of them will consume to affect individual consumption preferences.

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612


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

While research has extensively explored religiosity’s influence on materialism (c.f., Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002; LaBarbera and Gurhan 1997; Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Wong 2005, 2009), there has yet to be an examination of how religiosity influences luxury consumption. Religious scripture often refers to living life simply, being content with what one has, giving up control to a higher power, and suppressing desires for buying goods and performing actions just for show (i.e., conspicuous consumption) (Hunt and Penwell 2008; Schmidt et al. 2014). These values are in direct opposition to those held by consumers in pursuit of heightened self-esteem through the consumption of luxury brands.

Thus, our research fulfills four purposes: (1) identifying the relationship among religiosity (both dimensions of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity) and luxury consumption, (2) understanding how moral emotions drive attitudes toward luxury consumption and associated morality perceptions (i.e., examining moral emotions as a mediator to the relationship between religiosity and luxury consumption), (3) testing the moderating influence of moral versus marketplace mindsets on luxury consumption attitudes, and (4) determining specific reasons for luxury consumption, as moderated by religiosity level.

Morality and Luxury Consumption

Luxury goods, are those which “confer prestige on their owners, apart from any functional utility” (Grossman and Shapiro 1988: 82). These goods are more likely to be purchased for their symbolic value than non-luxury products because of their ability to signal status and prestige (Dubois, Laurent, and Czellar 2001; Geiger-Oneto et al. 2013; Vigneron and Johnson 2004; Wilcox, Kim, and Sen 2009). In addition to symbolic value (i.e., conspicuousness value), Vigneron and Johnson (1999) identify four other sources of value that luxury goods provide their owners as compared to non-luxury goods: unique value, social value, emotional value, and quality.

In addition to providing these five sources of value, luxury products can also be a symbol for moral qualities (Barron 1999), which influence one’s moral self-image (Stellar and Willer 2014). Barron (1999) describes that consumers voice their morals with their wallets, such that they purchase or do not purchase goods (or an entire brand portfolio) given fit or dissimilarity with their morals. Thus, if luxury consumption is viewed as a moral (immoral) behavior, consumers “vote” with their wallets to purchase (or not purchase) the luxury good.

Religiosity & Luxury Consumption

Over 70% of consumers worldwide adhere to some sort of religious belief (Hunt and Penwell 2008). Additionally, explicit references to materialism as well as pride-based consumption and status consumption are made in religious scripture (Schmidt et al. 2014), which suggests that a consumer’s religious background provides insight into motives for and response to luxury consumption. Specifically, Western religious scripture advocates against materialism and pridelful consumption, with pride even being one of Catholicism’s seven deadly sins. Religion serves as one of the most enduring sources of core values for consumers, which influences consumption motives, even at a subconscious level (Mathras et al. 2016; Minton and Kahle 2014).

Moral Emotions as a Mediator

Haidt (2003) describes moral emotions as “those emotions that are linked to the interests or welfare either of society as a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agent” (p. 853). Moral emotions can reflect positive affect (e.g., awe, gratitude, compassion, love) or negative affect (e.g., guilt, shame, regret, remorse) (Haidt 2003). While positive affect can be experienced from improved self-esteem as consumers purchase items they feel reflect their personal identity well, it is possible that consumption of luxury goods could lead to negative affect as a result of post-purchase regret.

Such negative affect is emphasized across religious affiliations, with sin-associated consequences in Western religions and detachment from the self/cycles of rebirth in Eastern religions (Hunt and Penwell 2008; Schmidt et al. 2014). Given these relationships, and the prior theorizing on the relationship between religiosity and luxury consumption, it is expected that negative moral emotions, but not positive moral emotions, mediate the relationship between religiosity and evaluations of luxury products. Thus:

Hypothesis 1: Negative moral emotions mediate the relationship between religiosity and evaluative measures of luxury products.

Conspicuousness Value as a Mediator

Purchasing high-priced luxury goods, particularly for the purpose of advertising one’s status is likely to be considered indulgent consumption behavior. Previous research reveals that feelings of guilt and regret are common emotional consequences of indulgent consumption for some consumers (Keaveney, Huber, and Herrmann 2007; Ramanathan and Williams 2007). For example, religious consumers may view the purchase of luxury goods as being wasteful unless they are able to provide a sound justification for purchasing such goods (Schwarz and Xu 2011). Additionally, both Eastern and Western religious scripture discourages materialism and pridelful consumption, with pride being one of Catholicism’s seven deadly sins. (Hunt and Penwell 2008).

To reduce these negative emotions, religious consumers may justify the purchase of luxury goods by focusing on product quality, social benefits, or that they deserve a high-priced luxury good (emotional value). Therefore, while other motivations for purchasing luxury exist, the conspicuous value of luxury products to display one’s wealth, status and power is more likely to be linked to negative moral emotions than other reasons.

Hypothesis 2: Conspicuousness mediates the relationship between religiosity and negative moral emotions for luxury products.

Moral versus Marketplace Mindsets

A moral mindset represents thinking that is ethical, virtuous, and worthy, while a marketplace mindset focuses on economic attainment, a prosperous free-market, and commercial advancement. Research assessing moral mindsets, especially in comparison to marketplace mindsets, is very limited (Ben-Nun and Levitan 2011) and mostly examines direct effects of priming moral mindsets on general...
moral judgments (c.f., VanBavel et al. 2012; Wheatley and Haidt 2005).

Interestingly, emphasizing moral goals can reduce cognitive dissonance by reducing concern about overspending (i.e., attainment of moral goals) (Forster 2009), which is directly reflective of luxury consumption. Research also suggests such assessment of the future (e.g., with goals) serves as what they term a “moral regulatory function” where consumers use a projection tactic to imagine their future self in judging and deciding on current morally questionable behaviors (Klein, Lowrey, and Otnes 2015). Therefore, priming religious consumers that have specific, easily attainable moral goals should result in increased luxury consumption because of heightened awareness of one’s positive self-affection. In contrast, consumers that are less religious do not follow explicit moral guidelines and may instead indicate decreased luxury consumption desires after exposure to moral mindset primes given negative affect about one’s self.

Thus:

Hypothesis 3: Moral (marketplace) mindsets increase luxury evaluations for highly (less) religious consumers.

Study 1: Mediation Through Motives and Moral Emotions

This study identifies the role of negative moral emotions (H1) in the relationship between religiosity and luxury consumption. In addition, the role of conspicuousness as a reason for luxury consumption is explored (H2).

Method

Students (n=167, Mage = 21.0, 49% female) at a Mountain West university completed a survey which asked about their purchase intentions and moral affect for a luxury perfume, reasons for purchasing a luxury perfume, attitudes towards luxury branded products in general, and, lastly, religiosity.

Results

Mediation through Moral Emotions. First, simple mediation through moral emotions was tested. The relationship between the I/E religiosity interaction term and purchase intentions was mediated by negative moral emotions (CI: -.01, .15) but not positive moral emotions (CI: -.04, .07). Similarly, the relationship between the I/E religiosity interaction term and perceived morality of purchasing luxury perfume was mediated by negative moral emotions (CI: -.02, .04) but not positive moral emotions (CI: -.04, .04). Consumers that were high in both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity had the most negative moral emotions, while it was the consumers that were low in intrinsic and high in extrinsic religiosity (i.e., behaving religiously just for show) that experienced the least negative moral emotions.

Serial Mediation through Reasons and Negative Emotions. A series of regression models were used to determine if the I/E religiosity interaction term significantly influenced any of the five reasons for purchasing luxury products (perceived social value, conspicuousness, uniqueness, emotional value, quality). The I/E religiosity interaction term only significantly influenced reasoning to purchase luxury perfume because of its perceived conspicuousness (β = .70, p < .01). Given that conspicuousness was the only reason significantly influenced by the I/E religiosity interaction term, only this reason is explored further with serial mediation analyses using Hayes’ PROCESS macro (Model 6). Results show that the only significant serial mediation model is through conspicuousness reasoning as well as negative moral emotions. See Figure 1a for a complete a list of coefficients for all three dependent variables (purchase intentions, perceived morality and attitude towards luxury goods).

Study 2

This study seeks to replicate the findings of Study 1 in addition to examining moderation effects with mindset type – moral or marketplace (H3a). It is expected that religiosity is positively correlated with luxury consumption when consumers are primed with a moral mindset, but the opposite pattern of effects occurs when consumers are primed with a marketplace mindset.

Method

Respondents (n=142, Mage = 48.2, 54% female) were recruited online an panel. Respondents were randomly assigned to one condition of a 2 (mindset: moral, marketplace) between-subjects design. After exposure to condition, participants proceeded to indicate their purchase intentions and moral affect for two product categories: luxury perfume and luxury sunglasses. In addition, respondents were asked to evaluate reasons for purchasing a luxury good, attitudes towards luxury branded products in general, and, lastly, religiosity.

Independent Variables. To manipulate mindset, respondents completed a word unscrambling task that contained 10 scrambled words associated with either a morality or marketplace mindset. All other measures were identical to those used in study 1.

Results

Mediation through Moral Emotions. A series of hierarchical regression models were used to examine direct effects of religiosity and mindset as well as the interaction of these variables on the dependent variables. Analyses were run for luxury perfume first and then replicated with luxury sunglasses. The interaction of intrinsic religiosity and experimental condition (moral vs. market mindset) significantly influenced consumers’ intent to purchase a luxury perfume (β = -.19, p < .01), perceived morality of purchasing luxury perfume (β = -.18, p < .05), and attitude towards luxury products (β = -.17, p < .05). In addition, the interaction of extrinsic religiosity and experimental condition significantly influenced consumers’ intent to purchase a luxury perfume (β = -.23, p < .01), perceived morality of purchasing luxury perfume (β = -.19, p < .05), and attitude towards luxury products (β = -.22, p < .05). Because both types of religious orientation (intrinsic and extrinsic) were found to influence the dependent variables in a similar manner, a composite religiosity variable was created which combined both orientations. This new composite religiosity variable was used in all subsequent analyses.

Next, a mediational analysis was utilized which determined that the relationship between the religiosity x mindset interaction term on intent to purchase a luxury perfume was significantly mediated by negative moral emotions (CI: -.30, -.06) but not positive moral emotions (CI: -.07, .14). Consumers that are high in religiosity and primed with a moral mindset have the least negative moral emotions as a result of purchasing luxury perfume, while it is the consumers that are less religious and primed with a moral mindset (i.e., behaving religiously just for show) that experienced the most negative moral emotions.

Similarly, the relationship between the religiosity x mindset (moral vs. marketplace) interaction term and perceived morality of purchasing luxury perfume was also only mediated by negative moral emotions (CI: -.15, -.01). The influence of the religiosity x mindset interaction term on general attitudes toward luxury consumption was also only significantly mediated by negative moral emotions (CI: -.18, -.02). Identical results were found using luxury sunglasses as the product category.
Discussion

Similar to Study 1, negative moral emotions (but not positive) as well as luxury motives continue to mediate the relationship between religiosity and luxury consumption evaluations. Also, in support of H3, mindset type (moral vs. marketplace) interacts with religiosity to influence negative moral emotions and luxury product evaluations. As expected, highly religious consumers that are primed with a moral (marketplace) mindset report lower (higher) negative affect and, accordingly, have higher (lower) evaluations of luxury products. The opposite pattern of effects occurs for less religious consumers.

General Discussion

This research provides a novel perspective on luxury consumption in showing that moral emotions are a driving factor in evaluations of luxury products, and consumers’ religiosity influences these emotions. First, the relationship among religiosity and luxury consumption evaluations was explored to find that consumers high in both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity had the poorest evaluations. The highest luxury product evaluations came from consumers low in intrinsic but high in extrinsic religiosity (i.e., partaking in religiosity mostly just for show). Second, mediation through moral emotions revealed that negative (but not positive) moral emotions influenced luxury consumption evaluations (inclusive of perceptions of luxury consumption being a moral issue). Third, the moderating influence of moral/marketplace mindset was explored, to show that, interestingly, moral mindsets produced fewer negative moral emotions and more positive evaluations of luxury products for consumers high in religiosity.

Of particular interest for theory is the counterintuitive finding that a moral mindset actually improves evaluation of what some would consider an immoral behavior (luxury consumption). Previous research has found that beliefs regarding consumption that originate from religious scripture should result in religious consumers having more negative moral emotions toward luxury consumption (Westaby 2005). However, the opposite was found in our studies – priming a moral mindset leads to fewer negative moral emotions and more positive evaluations of luxury products. In terms of theory, our findings suggest the presence of a moral halo effect, such that priming a moral mindset makes religious consumers feel better about themselves and this halo then transfers to evaluation of other attitude objects that previously were perceived as immoral, including luxury products (as the results of Study 1 show).

Additionally, another interesting finding from this research is the mediating role of negative moral emotions but no mediation with positive moral emotions. Haidt (2003) described that moral emotions encompass both positive and negative elements. While, we expected that negative moral emotions would play a more prominent role in luxury product evaluations given the emphasis in sin and detachment in religious scripture (Hunt and Penwell 2008; Schmidt et al. 2014), our findings are still fascinating given that priming a particular mindset produces more positive evaluations of luxury consumption for some consumers. Suggesting that a much larger portion of consumer reasoning for consumption is driven by avoidance of these negative moral emotions (i.e. regret and guilt).

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

We revisit and reinterpret the interwoven relationship between cultural capital and consumption patterns (e.g., Bourdieu 1984; Holt 1998; Üstüner and Thompson 2012) in a dynamic, diverse and hierarchical society, and uncover the contextually important modifying role of empowerment. Bourdieu (1984) presents social life as a multidimensional status game in which people draw on three different resources—economic (financial resources), social (group affiliations and relationships), and cultural (distinctive tastes, skills and knowledge) capital, in a competition for status or symbolic capital (power). Different classes have different taste cultures and use different status consumption strategies that express and constitute their economic and cultural capital. Holt (1998) proposes modifications to Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital structured consumption in the American context, while Üstüner and Holt (2010) find the western model of status consumption inadequate to explain the nuances of distinctive consumption patterns in a less industrialized country like Turkey. Cultural capital and consumption has not been investigated in a hierarchical and culturally diverse society like India, where economic chasms create stark differences in habits across classes and castes, and society continues to be deeply patriarchal. With a similar goal to Holt (1998) and Üstüner and Holt (2010), we extend Bourdieu’s (1984) original analysis of taste and cultural capital by updating the framework to reflect important parameters in the modern Indian context. We suggest that differences in lifestyles, values, tastes and consumption can be understood through a modified framework of cultural capital that takes into account issues pertaining to differences in hierarchy, symbolic capital and gender inequalities.

We conduct ethnographic fieldwork documenting consumption preferences of 28 Indian women with different socioeconomic backgrounds in three different Indian cities. Women from patriarchal societies often occupy a lower position of power and status, resulting in lower symbolic capital, as compared to men (Sobh and Belk, 2011). The gender gap index, a measure of gender disparity developed by the World Economic Forum, finds India ranked 101 out of 136 countries, while the gender ratio stood at 926 women per 1000 men in 2015 as a result of unabated female feticide. This discrepancy is likely to be accentuated among lower social classes (Bhattacharya and Belk, 2017), with education and empowerment of women continuing to be a challenge. As such we expect female empowerment to be rooted in the habits and be the biggest impediment to cultural capital acquisition, and consumption to be structured within these boundaries.

Empowerment emerges as the key factor interwoven with cultural capital among Indian women, with low cultural capital (LCC) informants being significantly disempowered both before and after marriage, and high cultural capital (HCC) informants being significantly more empowered through education and employment. LCCs, in contrast to HCCs, demonstrate lower powers of decision-making and higher subjugation to social and consumption norms imposed by their husbands’ families. Most of them had gotten married at young ages without even seeing their husbands before the wedding, many cutting short their dreams of higher education. Seemingly “empowering” strategies adopted by the LCCs were, on the contrary, from an etic perspective, least likely to be empowering in practice. For example, marriage was seen as an opportunity to climb the social ladder, with hypergamy (marriage above one’s social status) being a common objective for the LCCs. However, three informants who had married above their social standing were even more subjugated by their husbands’ families compared to the others. From mundane daily household decisions (such as what to cook) to deciding what clothes they could wear, to more significant decisions such as choosing a school for their children, all were decided by the husband and his family. Hypergamy was therefore not the panacea they may have hoped for, prior to marriage. Similarly, giving birth to more children—sons in particular—was erroneously seen as a means to improve their position in the social hierarchy. Ultimately children of the LCC women only become canvases for fulfilling their own aspirations with respect to education or freedom of expression.

Consistent with research suggesting that individuals suffering from low personal control have an increased belief in God (Laurin, Kay and Moscovitch 2008), our LCCs strongly believe that external powers control their destinies. Consequently they indulge in precautionary consumption such as stringent religious rituals, and using superstitious artifacts (that “ward off the evil eye,” for example). An important point of difference in tastes from Holt’s (1998) U.S. context is the role of consumption objects, which may have lost relevance in the less hierarchical and more anonymous American culture, but are still of paramount importance in this hierarchical society where material consumption marks a relatively easy way to convey one’s social standing and attain respect from other members of society (Vikas et al 2015). LCCs feel empowered by acquisition of such consumption objects—however, this objectified cultural capital does little to enhance their symbolic capital. While institutionalized cultural capital such as that acquired via education and employment would be truly empowering, lower class women are prevented from such acquisition by virtue of symbolic domination. In this sense they remain trapped in a quagmire of disempowerment (Belk and Ghoshal, 2017). Their identities are defined by their families and communities via taste conformation to the social norm, and they project their aspirations for more empowered identities onto their children. Meanwhile HCC women are empowered to define their individual identities through taste distinctions, and show proclivity towards acquisition of institutionalized cultural capital such as expertise in specialized domains.

In this research we offer the novel proposition that it is challenging for LCCs to build on their embodied cultural capital, primarily determined by their habitats, due to lack of empowerment. In this sense symbolic capital determines cultural capital, and symbolic domination determines taste, that conforms to community norms. We also find that while LCCs covet the acquisition of objectified cultural capital, and aspire to marry above their social standing, these do nothing to empower them. Only institutionalized forms of cultural capital such as education and employment would help them negotiate a higher position in the social strata continuum.

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Activating Multiple Facets of the Self: How Self-Concept and Brand Personality Can Influence Self-Brand Connections

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Nowadays, it is crucial for companies to connect more with consumers and to create emotional brand connections (Malär et al. 2011). Brand managers need to understand how people can express themselves and reflect their identities through their product consumption. Previous research has demonstrated that individuals can use brands to identify with a specific reference group (Escalas and Bettman 2005), to differentiate themselves from undesired groups (Burger and Heath 2007) and to boost their self-esteem (Sirgy 1982).

This research explores what is the importance of identity-related brand personality in the creation of self-brand connections. For example, does the sincere, wholesome and truthful brand personality of Dove reach more the actual self of consumers with its enduring aspect, while the glamorous, sexy and charming aspect of Victoria’s Secret trigger more the ideal self of consumers? Drawing on the literature on personal and social identity, this paper investigates the effects of the self-concept of identity on the self-brand connections for different brand personalities to determine how brands can focalize on the bonding between the brand and the self-concept.

Based on the reasoning above, the authors propose the congruence between self-concept and brand personality leads to stronger self-brand connections. Therefore, the influence of the individual actual self on self-brand connections is stronger for sincere brands (H1). The influence of the individual ideal self on self-brand connections is stronger for sophisticated brands (H2). Furthermore, the presence of identity threat leads to stronger self-brand connections for the corresponding brand personality (sincere and sophisticated). Finally, the identity threat moderates the effect of the primed identity (actual self and ideal self) on brand-self connections for the different brand personalities.

In the first study, a survey (N=328) was conducted with 10 real brands identified as representing strongly one dimension of the brand personality in two pretests. In this survey, the results supported the influence of congruence between the self-concept and the brand personality on self-brand connections. First, actual self-congruence has a positive effect for both brand personalities. Even if this effect is positive for sophisticated brands (B=.504, p < .001), this effect becomes even stronger for brands that are associated with sincere brands (.822, p < .001). In support of H1, the effect of the actual self-congruence is stronger for sincere brands compared to sophisticated brands (X2Sol=18.99 Δ d.f. =1 p < .001). Ideal self-congruence, however, has a significant stronger positive effect for brands that are associated with similar brands (B=.554, p < .001) compared to sincere brands (Bideal =0.139, p < .001) in support of H2 (X2Sol=5.82 Δ d.f. =1 p < .001).

In study 2, participants (n=123) were randomly assigned to a 2 (self-concept: actual self, ideal self) x 2 (brand personality: sincere, sophisticated) design. An ANOVA with self-concept and brand personality as between-participants factors revealed the predicted interaction in support of hypothesis 1 (F(1, 122)=7.49, p < .01). The simple effects reveal that when participants were primed with an actual self-concept, they had more positive self-brand connections with sophisticated brands (vs. sincere brands) (Msophisticated = 5.29 vs. Msincere = 3.35; F(1, 122)= 3.58, p < .001). Conversely, participants who were primed with actual self-concept showed more self-brand connections with sincere brands (Msincere = 5.40 vs. Msophisticated = 2.58; F(1, 122)= 3.78, p < .01).

In conclusion, the present research expands our knowledge about the role of self-concept by demonstrating that its effects on self-brand connections for different brand personalities. The present results demonstrate that managers should consider the congruence between consumers’ identity and their brand personality to create stronger connections with the consumers.

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CERTAINTY OF POPULARITY: EXTENDING NAIVE THEORIES OF POPULARITY WITH UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers often assume that products are popular for a good reason (Surowiecki, 2004). Those reasons are informed by the naive theories they hold (Deval et al., 2013). One strand of literature, based on information cascades, emphasizes product (quality) inferences as explanatory mechanism (Bikhchandani et al., 1998) in the link between popularity and choice. Yet, prior research shows that consumers do not always infer high quality from popularity (Becker, 1991). Quality inferences appear to mainly arise when additional quality cues are linked to popularity cues. So, it may not be the popularity, rather the additional quality cue that drives the inferences (Muchnik et al., 2013). Indeed, there may be other mechanisms through which popularity by itself triggers choice (Parker & Lehmann, 2011). We propose a complementary mechanism, currently overlooked in literature, namely that consumers use popularity to reduce uncertainty that revolves around product quality. Consumers value a product’s performance that does not disappoint and aim to reduce probability of disappointment before purchase. A product may be preferred for a performance that does not disappoint, even if it is not the highest quality (Meyer, 1981; Rust et al., 1999). Given that consumers look at, and follow others, out of reasons of safety and certainty (Griskevicius et al., 2009; Raafat et al., 2009), we propose that the effect of popularity on choice is largely driven by uncertainty reduction.

Consumers may however draw on multiple naive theories, as inferences are contextually influenced (Loersch & Payne, 2011). Hence, consumers may also use popularity to assess the moral, societal value of an action (Gigerenzer, 2010), driven by considerations reflecting right or wrong human conduct (Reidenbach & Robin, 1990). The primary objective of this study is to explicate the process through which popularity exerts influence on choice through product-quality related inferential mechanisms. Yet, in doing so, we take into account, and measure, the extent to which popularity may be used to draw socially-related inferences where we distinguish between inferences of social approval, and inferences of societal value.

First, we demonstrate the existence of four types of inferences in three studies. In these three studies (1A: N = 47 / 1B: N = 39 / 1C: N = 36 students) participants evaluated a popular product (wine / cheese / beer) compared to a regular product as a product is always popular relative to competing products. Across the studies, participants inferred that the popular product would be less likely to disappoint (r > 2.80, p < .01), indicating uncertainty reduction. Additionally, participants inferred the popular product to have a higher societal value (r > 2.45, p < .05). This preliminary evidence is in line with our proposed route of uncertainty reduction, over and above existing mechanisms. The mechanisms proposed in previous literature where not consistently found. Inferences of quality were only made for cheese (t_(1B) (38) = 7.63, p < .001), and inferences of social value only for beer (t_(1C) (35) = 3.97, p < .001). We extend the study with a mixed-design choice experiment (N = 120) with the objective to examine if the effect of popularity on choice is mediated by inferences of uncertainty reduction. Participants overwhelmingly chose the popular wines (70% – 78%). Mediation results demonstrate the relevance of uncertainty reduction as an inference in explaining this popularity effect, over and above the effect of quality inferences. Inferences of uncertainty reduction and quality perception mediate (β’s <.05) the effect of popularity on intention (β, ns) and choice (β <.05).

Although popularity evoked inferences of social and societal value, these did not mediate.

Studies 1 and 2 have thus shown that consumers may draw multiple inferences from a single popularity cue. We propose that the context moderates this effect such that, in a product context, a popular product’s profile reflects properties of product quality and the uncertainty around that quality, whereas, in a social context, these effects are attenuated. In study 3 (N = 290) we test this in a 4-group between subjects design. We manipulate four contexts (c.f. Ma & Roese, 2014) in which participants choose products (across categories) and evaluate the inferential properties. We find that, specifically in a context focussed on product-properties, participants overwhelmingly use popularity to reduce uncertainties revolving the quality of a product (r > 3.85, p < .001). Participants make these inferences also in a societal context (t = 4.11, p < .001), yet to a lesser extent (F(3,286) = 3.246, p < .07). These results demonstrate the relevance of inferences of uncertainty reduction and are in line with our expectations.

Reduction of uncertainty revolving quality is a novel inferential route that mediates the relation between popularity and choice. Consumers consistently make inferences of uncertainty reduction with the help of a popularity cue, and this influences product choice. We demonstrate that uncertainty reduction is a relevant, impactful inference resulting from product popularity. Consumers appear to look at others to gather information about product performance (Bikhchandani et al., 1998), yet not only to infer higher quality, but to diminish uncertainty. This resembles biological tendencies to follow the crowd out of reasons of safety (Griskevicius et al., 2009; Raafat et al., 2009). In addition, across studies, we demonstrate that consumers draw upon different naive theories, as evidenced by the inferences of societal value. These inferences offer explanations for popularity beyond current perspectives that emphasize social inferences as explanatory mechanism (Cialdini et al., 1990).

The results have important implications for practitioners. Consider for example the introduction of foreign products to new markets, where communicating local popularity would aid to reduce uncertainty and benefit the introduction. Or consider social marketing campaigns, that may struggle with consumers’ concerns that ‘healthy foods are less tasty than unhealthy foods’ (Raghunathan et al., 2006) the authors find that when information pertaining to the assessment of the healthiness of food items is provided, the less healthy the item is portrayed to be, (1 and are likely to disappoint. Together, our results demonstrate the importance of popularity as a cue that consumers use in daily decisions to make choices they can be certain about.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

During the past decade, researchers and practitioners have shown an increased interest in how people misbehave in their role as consumers (Daunt and Greer 2015). Several studies have explored how some consumers act “in a thoughtless or abusive way, causing problems for the firms, its employees, and other customers” (Lovlock and Wirtz 2016, 524). Most of these studies have taken a dispositional perspective, explaining consumer misbehaviors by referring to the characteristics and predispositions of misbehaving consumers (Daunt and Greer 2015). At the same time, perpetrators of consumer misbehaviors have been in the foreground of existing misbehaviors-management practices. This paper offers and advocates an alternative approach to understanding and managing consumer misbehaviors. Using actor-network-theory (ANT), we suggest that consumer misbehaviors cannot be attributed only to perpetrators but should rather be seen as effects of networks of all kinds of actors (Latour 2005).

To better understand the assemblages that allow and perpetuate consumer misbehavior, we studied online trolling behaviors. Trolling involves deliberate, deceptive, and mischievous attempts to provoke reactions from other online users. In practice, trolling includes anything from offensively replying to customers under fake customer service accounts or posting misleading and damaging product tutorials to communicating with other online users in humorous but also aggressive ways. These behaviors closely correspond to the behaviors of so-called problem customers (Bitner, Booms, and Mohr 1994) and jaycustomers (Lovlock and Wirtz 2016). Their pervasiveness, their potential impacts on marketers, businesses, brands, and other consumers, and the fact that they are under-researched phenomena (Buckels, Trapnell, and Paulhus 2014) make trolling behaviors a relevant and insightful research context for investigating consumer misbehaviors.

In our study, we examined (1) what human and non-human entities are assembled in the performance of trolling and (2) what roles these entities play in the making of this form of online misbehavior. To do so, we adopted a case-study approach, investigating five different instances of trolling: playful trolling, shock trolling, online pranking of other consumers and businesses, fake customer-service trolling, and “good old-fashioned” trolling. The research data were drawn from 250 hours of nonparticipant observation of actors and their practices, seven in-depth interviews with trolls, more than 50 instances of instant messaging with trolls, bystanders, community managers, and targets, and a review of trolling-related documents. The analysis included identifying the actors and recording their relations and interactions. We performed within and cross-case analysis of the five actor-networks and engaged in open and axial coding to sort and categorize the identified actors.

Our findings reveal that online trolling is performatively constituted by a collection of human, nonhuman, and hybrid entities more or less interacting in concert with each other. These entities can be thematically categorized into troll(s) (i.e., the performer(s) of trolling), target(s) (i.e., persons or objects toward which trolling is directed), medium (i.e., an intervening channel through which trolling is conveyed), audience (i.e., the spectators of trolling), other trolls (i.e., other people engaging in trolling), trolling artifacts (i.e., materialized byproducts of trolling), regulators (i.e., actors engaged in detecting inappropriate behavior and maintaining order online), and revenue streams (i.e., financial and nonfinancial rewards associated with trolling).

Different (categories of) actors play different roles in the performance of trolling. An assemblage of three interacting actors—(1) troll(s), (2) target(s), and (3) a medium—has to be enacted for trolling to emerge. Other actors play a role in stabilizing the network and sustaining trolling even when trolls, targets, and a medium are not participating fully. For example, trolling artifacts such as post-produced videos of live-stream trolling and screenshots of textual trolling are distributed through the network for months after a trolling event has occurred. While audience members play an active role in coproducing and sharing these artifacts, this is only one of the ways in which they encourage trolling. Two more are asking trolls for advice about how to go about trolling or demanding new trolling content from them. Other trolls fuel trolling, for example, by pretending to be targets, usually with the intention of attracting more people to their social media sites. With similar intentions, businesses and other actors from the category revenue streams approach trolls with requests for trolling, offering financial or nonfinancial types of compensation. Lastly, the enforcement actions of actors in the category regulators (e.g., use of downvote, delete, and ban buttons, or an online moderator giving personal warnings) sustain trolling by indicating to the trolls that their actions are getting the desired effect. For trolls, even the most severe penalties seem to be perceived as modus operandi if not a badge of honor.

Our study provides the theoretical and managerial implications. First, by studying an online form of consumer misbehavior, we contribute to a more rounded understanding of consumer misbehaviors, which have been up to now predominantly studied in traditional, offline retail settings. Second, by drawing on actor-network-theory we extend the current research on consumer misbehaviors by presenting an alternative, more holistic view of the problem of misbehaviors. We also contribute to research on ANT by revealing that, in the case of trolling, the lack of compliance among the actors may stabilize and energize the network rather than lead to its destabilization and failure (Callon 1984). Finally, our empirical findings, by illuminating the influence that ‘invisible’ actors such as audience and regulators have over the practices of misbehaving consumers, offer new possibilities for management of these misbehaviors. As a way forward in tackling consumer misbehaviors, in particular trolling, we suggest that marketing practitioners and scholars focus on developing control mechanisms that will eliminate or minimize the effects associated with the (problematic) interactions between the actors. If we keep concentrating only on attacking the misbehaving consumers, then we are most likely just displacing the consumer misbehavior to other times and places.

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Opening the Black Boxes of Consumer Misbehaviors: Insights from Studying Online Trolling

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“That’s embarrassing!”
Effects of Brand Anthropomorphism on Intimate Disclosure
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

1. Introduction
Marketers typically strive to collect information about their consumers in an attempt to foster consumer-brand relationships. However, research has revealed that consumers are generally reluctant to divulge information about themselves to brands, especially when the information requested becomes intimate. In light of this consumer disclosure reluctance, several marketing studies have investigated the factors influencing disclosure behavior (Acquisti et al., 2012; John et al., 2011; Moon, 2000; White, 2004). Although these studies offer insights into the conditions under which consumers are more likely to self-disclose, a thorough Q of how particular brand positioning strategies might affect consumer propensity to reveal information to the brand is still lacking from the literature.

One positioning strategy that marketers frequently use to foster relationships with consumers is brand anthropomorphization, the act of endowing the brand with humanlike characteristics. Approximately 31% of the brands in the IRI marketing dataset pursue this strategy (see Kwak, Puzakova, & Rocereto, 2015). Given the high prevalence of brand anthropomorphization, the lack of research about its effect on self-disclosure is striking.

Anthropomorphized (vs. non-anthropomorphized) brands facilitate consumer-brand relationships because they provide quasi-social experiences (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012). Once a brand is anthropomorphized, it becomes possible for consumers to enter into a quasi-social relationship with it. Social interactions are pleasurable and lead consumers to experience positive affect (Wang, Baker, Wagner, & Wakefield, 2007). However, research has begun to illuminate unexpected drawbacks of employing an anthropomorphic strategy. In specific contexts such as product wrongdoing (Puzakova, Kwak, & Rocereto, 2013), this positioning strategy has been shown to lead to negative consumer response because anthropomorphized brands are perceived as being mindful. Considering that people are generally reluctant to engage in intimate self-disclosure because of fear of embarrassment (White, 2004) and that brand anthropomorphization leads to the perception that the brand is capable of evaluating others (Epley & Waytz, 2009), we expect that rather than facilitating consumer-brand exchanges, an anthropomorphic brand positioning strategy might have a negative effect on consumer intimate self-disclosure.

2. Studies
Across three experiments, we provide evidence that brand anthropomorphism negatively influences consumers’ disclosure of intimate information. These effects stem from the perception that anthropomorphized brands are mindful and capable of evaluating others, thereby eliciting higher consumer embarrassment associated with intimate self-disclosure. We further demonstrate that indirect questioning (i.e., asking respondents to answer questions from the perspective of another person) offers a good tactic to mitigate the negative effects of brand anthropomorphism on intimate self-disclosure, because it reduces consumer embarrassment.

All three experiments examined actual consumer disclosure to a brand rather than mere disclosure intentions, thereby obtaining data most closely resembling real consumer behavior. Consistent with prior research (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Collins & Miller, 1994; Moon, 2000), self-disclosure was measured along two dimensions, namely depth and breadth. Depth refers to the quality of information disclosed and was measured using independent judges. The judges rated each disclosure using a five-point scale (1 = “low intimacy”; 5 = “high intimacy”). Breadth refers to the quantity of information disclosed and was measured using a simple word count.

Study 1 investigated whether brand anthropomorphism negatively influences the consumer disclosure of intimate information. We employed a 2 (brand: anthropomorphized vs. non-anthropomorphized) × 2 (question: intimate vs. non-intimate) between-subjects experiment. 150 participants recruited from Mechanical Turk online panel (46% female; M Age = 32 years) were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. We gave participants the cover story that they would be participating in two related studies. In the first study, participants received information on a fictitious dating brand; they were shown either an anthropomorphized or non-anthropomorphized version. We manipulated brand anthropomorphism with a combination of visual and verbal humanlike elements. Participants learned that the brand was a European dating site that planned to expand to North America and that, as part of the expansion strategy, it had designed a survey to gain insight into how North Americans feel about themselves and about romantic relationships. Participants were then asked to complete the brand survey. Consistent with prior research (Jourard & Jaffe, 1970; Moon, 2000), the survey consisted of three questions on romantic relationships that were either low or high in intimacy. The second study was a questionnaire from the experimenters in which participants were asked to provide their reactions to the brand survey they had just completed and their general beliefs about the brand; this included the manipulation check questions and control variables (i.e., general propensity to self-disclose, product involvement, and gender). Results revealed that participants disclosed less intimate information to the anthropomorphized brand than to the non-anthropomorphized one. These effects occurred both in terms of disclosure depth and breadth.

Study 2 served four purposes. First, we aimed to replicate Study 1 with a different product category and to a different disclosure topic. Second, we tested whether embarrassment mediates the negative effect of brand anthropomorphism on consumers’ disclosure of intimate information. Third, we examined an alternative account according to which consumers are less likely to trust an anthropomorphized (vs. non-anthropomorphized) brand, feeling that it might have a humanlike mind with an evil intention to misuse intimate information (Puzakova et al., 2013). We employed a 2 (brand: anthropomorphized vs. non-anthropomorphized) × 2 (question: intimate vs. non-intimate) between-subjects experiment. 184 participants, recruited from Mechanical Turk online panel (all women; M Age = 33 years) were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Participants received information on a fictitious feminine brand. The manipulation of brand anthropomorphism was similar to that of Study 1. Participants learned that the brand produced sanitary napkins and that, as part of its research and development program, it was conducting a survey to gain insight into feminine hygiene issues. Participants were then invited to complete the brand survey. The survey consisted
of four questions on feminine hygiene issues that were either low or high in intimacy. Participants were then redirected to a questionnaire from the experimenters in which they were asked to provide their reactions to the brand survey they had just completed; this included the manipulation check questions as well as questions related to embarrassment, brand trust, and control variables (i.e., mood, product involvement, involvement with feminine hygiene, and gender). The results of Study 2 replicated the negative effect of brand anthropomorphism on intimate self-disclosure. These effects again occurred both in terms of disclosure depth and breadth. Importantly, Study 2 provided insight into the process through which brand anthropomorphism affects intimate self-disclosure via embarrassment. In addition, we strengthened our theorization by ruling out an alternative account according to which consumers are less likely to trust an anthropomorphized (vs. non-anthropomorphized) brand.

In Study 3, we examined whether indirect questioning mitigates the negative effect of brand anthropomorphism on intimate self-disclosure. In addition, we aimed to further reveal the role of embarrassment as an underlying mechanism by showing that the moderating effect of indirect questioning on self-disclosure occurs through embarrassment. The rationale for this study was that if an anthropomorphized brand decreases the disclosure of intimate information because it elicits higher embarrassment, then the negative effect should be reduced when the consumer’s self is perceived as less threatened, that is, when consumers are asked intimate information in an indirect way. We employed a 2 × 2 (question method: direct vs. indirect) between-subjects experiment. 95 undergraduate students from a North American university (62% female) were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and followed procedures identical to those reported in previous studies. Participants received information on a fictitious clothing brand. They learned that the brand was a European clothing brand that planned to expand to North America and that, as part of the expansion strategy, it had designed a survey to gain insight into North American consumers. The manipulation of brand anthropomorphism was similar to that of the previous studies. The questioning method was manipulated between participants. We told participants that the brand was planning to create an advertising campaign aimed at North American consumers. The campaign would aim to illustrate very intense romantic relationships. For this reason, information about how North Americans feel about very intense romantic relationships was sought. Insights from people’s real life experiences would provide inspiration for the advertisements. Accordingly, the brand survey consisted of four highly intimate questions. Consistent with prior research (Fisher, 1993; Fisher & Tellis, 1998; Sengupta, et al., 2002), we asked participants to answer the questions from their own perspective (direct condition) versus from the perspective of the average North American (indirect condition). Participants were then redirected to a questionnaire from the experimenters in which they were asked to provide their reactions to the brand survey they had just completed; this included the manipulation check questions as well as questions related to embarrassment and control variables (i.e., general propensity to self-disclose, mood, product involvement, self-image concerns, and gender). The results of Study 3 showed that the questioning method (direct vs. indirect) moderates the effect of brand anthropomorphism on consumers’ disclosure of intimate information. These results underscored our key assertions that brand anthropomorphism negatively affects intimate self-disclosure (both in terms of depth and breadth) when questions are asked in a direct style and that indirect questioning mitigates this negative effect. More importantly, Study 3 showed that when consumers are asked for intimate information in a direct way, brand anthropomorphism increases embarrassment and consequently lowers self-disclosure. In contrast, when consumers are asked for intimate information in an indirect way (i.e., about a typical other), the negative effect of brand anthropomorphism on embarrassment and subsequently on disclosure disappear.

3. Theoretical Contribution

This research contributes to the marketing literature in four important ways. First, we are the first to demonstrate that brand anthropomorphization has important implications for consumers’ self-disclosure to brands, an issue that currently receives considerable attention in both the marketing literature and in practice. In doing so, we not suggest that marketers should avoid using anthropomorphizing strategies but rather that they should be aware of the negative consequences of these positioning strategies. Furthermore, our results offer marketers guidance as to how to overcome the unintended negative effect of brand anthropomorphization and to more efficiently grasp the benefits of this positioning strategy. Specifically, we show that indirect attempts to obtain intimate information facilitate consumers’ propensity to self-disclose.

Finally, it is not uncommon for marketers to ask consumers to engage in relatively intimate self-disclosure. For example, online dating sites typically ask (potential) members to respond to surveys regarding their feelings about relationships and sex. Online dating sites are extremely popular among consumers; brands such as Match.com, eHarmony, or OkCupid gather more than 30 million users who produce an unprecedented amount of data (Statistic Brain, 2016). Similarly, the condom brand, Durex, regularly conducts sex surveys as part of their research program by asking thousands of adult consumers how they feel about sex and what impact this has on other aspects of their lives (Durex, 2012). Beyond relationship-related and sexual information, asking consumers about their income, food habits, alcohol consumption, body type, medical information and even their age is also likely to be perceived as intimate. Thus, our findings have relevance to many sectors, including the banking, food, beverage, clothing, and very importantly, public health industries.
5. Limitations and directions for further research

Future research should examine the extent to which the negative effect of brand anthropomorphism on intimate self-disclosure occurs if the brand gradually escalates from superficial to intimate questions. Moon (2000) found that consumers are more likely to disclose intimate information to a computer when they have first been “warmed” up through introductory questions. In contrast, Acquisti, et al. (2012) found that a question appears to be more (less) intimate if preceded by a more innocuous (a more intimate) question, which ultimately affects a respondent’s propensity to answer the question. An exploration of the order in which questions of varying intimacy are asked and how this order alters the effect of brand anthropomorphism on consumer self-disclosure is therefore an important avenue for further research.

Additionally, we conducted our studies using fictitious brands. This allowed us to cleanly manipulate brand anthropomorphism while controlling for preexisting perceptions of and relationships with an existing brand across conditions. Further research could delve deeper by employing existing brands with which consumers have developed a relationship. White (2004) showed that consumers with relatively deep (vs. shallow) relationship perceptions were more reluctant to divulge intimate information. We therefore expect that employing existing brands would further enhance the negative effect of brand anthropomorphization on intimate self-disclosure.

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How Tweet Readability and Brand Hedonism Affect Consumer Engagement

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

1. Introduction

In their attempts to increase consumer engagement with their brands, marketers usually post brief messages on their social media pages. Consumer engagement is a key measure of consumer–brand relationships, associated with strong self–brand connections, loyalty, and brand usage intentions (Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie 2014). In a social media context, measures of engagement usually involve consumer acts such as liking or sharing (e.g., re-tweeting) a brand’s message (Stephen, Scandura, and Inman 2015).

Social media platforms derive much of their appeal from their short formats, which enable quick and easy consumption, anywhere (Lee 2014), and makes users more likely to read and share branded messages, especially through their mobile devices. For example, Twitter constrains users to messages (i.e., “tweets”) that consist of no more than 140 characters. Such length restrictions require brands to craft their communication artfully (e.g., use abbreviations and acronyms) and rely on various social media-specific features (e.g., hashtags, at-mentions, emojis) to convey short, but appealing messages. Such efforts in turn can make tweets relatively complex and difficult to read and comprehend (Davenport and DeLine 2014; Temnikova, Vieweg, and Castillo 2015).

Despite rich research on brand communication in social media, we lack a clear understanding of how the readability of messages disseminated by brands on social media affects consumer responses. If consumers experience difficulties reading branded messages to which they are exposed, the power of social media communication to leverage engagement would decrease significantly. We address this critical gap by examining two important questions: How does the ease of reading branded tweets affect consumer engagement with brands? Are there specific brand characteristics for which the effects differ?

2. Theoretical Background

To answer our research questions, we draw on literature pertaining to processing fluency (Lee and Aaker 2004; Lee and Labbro 2004). Substantial research shows that consumers respond more positively to messages that feel easy to process, and message readability contributes to processing ease (Rennekamp 2012). Therefore, tweets that are easy to read seemingly might increase consumers’ propensity to engage with the brand, whereas tweets perceived as hard to read should deter engagement. However, it is unclear whether such predictions apply to all types of brands. For example, the level of hedonism associated with a brand might moderate the effect of readability on consumer responses, such that easy-to-read tweets negatively (positively) influence consumer engagement with more (less) hedonic brands. Hedonic brands already are expected to be unique, uncommon, and exclusive (e.g., Mantonakis et al. 2013; Pocheptsova, Labbro, and Dhar 2010), so an inference that a message from a more hedonic brand is uncommon and exclusive might invoke positive consumer responses (Mantonakis et al. 2013). Consumers might draw such inferences if a message is more difficult to read, which signals that it is less familiar (Pocheptsova, Labbro, and Dhar 2010; Song and Schwarz 2009). That is, we anticipate that reading difficulty might enhance consumer engagement for more hedonic brands but decrease it for less hedonic brands.

3. Data Collection

We used Twitter’s publicly available application programming interface (API) to collect a sample of branded tweets. The final data set of 24,960 branded tweets covers the period from January 1, 2015, to March 25, 2016. We selected brands from Forbes’s list of the 100 most valuable brands but excluded 4 brands that did not have a Twitter account, had not tweeted in the past three years, or did not tweet primarily in English.

The 96 valuable brands represent 19 broad industry categories, such as technology (e.g., IBM), automotive (e.g., Mercedes-Benz), consumer packaged goods (e.g., Danone), and financial services (e.g., Goldman Sachs). For each brand, we collected the last 3,200 tweets it posted, which is the maximum number of tweets that can be retrieved per account with Twitter’s API. Of these 3,200 tweets per account, we filtered out replies to specific consumers such that we retained tweets intended for all consumers and visible to the brand’s entire audience. Next, we limited the number of tweets to the most recent 300 per brand, to ensure balanced repartition across brands. Finally, we limited our data set to tweets from 2015 and beyond, to diminish the potential noise resulting from Twitter’s updates to its platform over time.

4. Measures

There are two main levels of analysis for this study: tweet and brand levels. Message readability and consumer engagement are tweet-level variables; brand hedonism is a brand-level variable.

Message readability. Consistent with recent research (Venturi et al. 2015), we examined a set of eight stylistic features as proxies for readability measures: (1) tweet length, (2) average word length, (3) frequency of non-words, (4) noun-to-verb ratio, (5) average parse tree depth (syntactic measures reflecting sentence complexity), (6) frequency of hashtags, (7) frequency of at-mentions, and (8) frequency of emojis. For each frequency measure, we used relative rather than absolute frequencies to control for the length of the tweet, which likely correlates with the absolute frequencies. We treated the eight readability variables independently, to gauge the individual effect of each readability variable on consumer engagement.

We classified the eight readability variables into four broader readability categories (Venturi et al. 2015): (1) raw text features (tweet length and average word length), (2) lexical features (frequency of non-words), (3) syntactic features (noun-to-verb ratio and average parse tree depth), and (4) Twitter-specific features (frequency of hashtags, at-mentions, and emojis). According to prior literature, the first three broad categories all decrease the ease with which people read messages. Virtually no empirical research has investigated the effect of Twitter-specific features on message readability though (cf. Davenport and DeLine 2014; Temnikova, Vieweg, and Castillo 2015), so predictions about their effects on perceived reading ease are less straightforward.

Consumer engagement with brands. We measured the number of shares (users clicking “retweet”) and likes (users clicking “like”) that each tweet received. We used the total counts of shares and likes
at the time the data were collected. We use a relative rather than an absolute engagement measure to ensure that the results are not driven by audience size.

**Level of brand hedonism.** For each brand, we measured the level of hedonism by relying on ratings from human judges, 200 participants whom we recruited from Mechanical Turk. They evaluated brands in terms of how fun, exciting, thrilling, and pleasurable the brand was, on a 7-point scale anchored by “not at all” (1) and “extremely” (7). We mean-centered the variable to ensure our analyses were interpretable.

**Control variables.** We included several control variables: the valence of the tweet (i.e., whether a tweet is positive or negative; Berger and Milkman 2012); whether the tweet comprises includes rich media (de Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang 2012); and the frequency of tweets posted by the brand (Kumar et al. 2016). Additionally, we employed time and industry fixed effects. The time fixed effects control for the respective year of branded tweets (e.g., Homburg, Ehm, and Artz 2015). We created a dummy variable for 2015, with 2016 as the referent. As we noted previously, the 96 brands cover 19 industrial sectors (Forbes 2016), so we rely on industry fixed effects to control for industry-level unobserved heterogeneity. We created 18 dummy variables representing each industry category, with “transportation” as the referent.

### 5. Model Specification

Before we present the model we used to investigate the effects of message readability and brand hedonism on consumer engagement, we address some pertinent issues. First, the two dependent variables (i.e., share and like) were highly skewed, so we used their logarithmic transformations to approximate a normal distribution (e.g., Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz, and Feldhaus 2015; Stephen, Scandra, and Inman 2015). The transformation is $\text{Ln}(1 + \text{variable})$, where we add 1 to prevent taking logs of 0. Second, because tweets were nested within brands, we applied hierarchical linear modeling (Hayes 2006) to account for possible interdependence among tweets within a brand.

We estimated a model for each dependent variable separately. Equations 1–8 provide an overview of our statistical model for the share dependent variable for tweet $i$ by brand $j$:

**Tweet Level 1:**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{LN}(\text{SHARE}_{ij} + 1) = & \quad \gamma_{00} + \sum_{m=1}^{8} \gamma_{m0} \text{READ}_{mij} + \sum_{m=1}^{8} \gamma_{m1} \text{MEDIA}_{ij} + \gamma_{10} \text{POS}_{ij} + \gamma_{11} \text{Y2015}_{ij} + \sum_{n=1}^{18} \gamma_{11+n} \text{INDUSTRY}_{nij} + \epsilon_{ij},
\end{align*}
\]

**Brand Level 2:**

\[
\begin{align*}
\gamma_{00} = & \quad 0 + \sum_{m=1}^{8} 0 \gamma_{m0} \text{READ}_{mij} + 0 \gamma_{m1} \text{MEDIA}_{ij} + 0 \gamma_{10} \text{POS}_{ij} + 0 \gamma_{11} \text{Y2015}_{ij} + \sum_{n=1}^{18} 0 \gamma_{11+n} \text{INDUSTRY}_{nij} + \mu_{j}.
\end{align*}
\]

Then the final model can be written as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{LN}(\text{SHARE}_{ij} + 1) = & \quad 0 + \sum_{m=1}^{8} 0 \gamma_{m0} \text{READ}_{mij} + 0 \gamma_{m1} \text{MEDIA}_{ij} + 0 \gamma_{10} \text{POS}_{ij} + 0 \gamma_{11} \text{Y2015}_{ij} + \sum_{n=1}^{18} 0 \gamma_{11+n} \text{INDUSTRY}_{nij} + \mu_{j}.
\end{align*}
\]

Where

- $\text{LN(SHARE} + 1)$ = logarithm transformation of the share variable.
- $\text{READ}_{mij}$ = group-mean centered measure of the $m$th readability variable.
- $\text{MEDIA}$ = rich media variable.
- $\text{POS}$ = content positivity variable.
- $\text{Y2015}$ = time fixed effects (whether tweet was posted in 2015, with 2016 as the referent year).
- $\text{INDUSTRY}_{nij}$ = industry fixed effects (whether tweet was posted from a brand belonging to the $n$th industry, from Industry1 = aerospace to Industry18 = telecom, and with transportation as the referent industry category).
- $\text{FREQCOM}$ = brand communication intensity.
- $\text{HED}$ = brand hedonism.
- $m$ = number of readability variables.
- $n$ = number of industry categories.
- $\gamma_{00}$ = brand-level intercepts.
- $\gamma$ = parameters to be estimated in the models.
- $\epsilon_{ij}$ = random error at the tweet level (i.e., Level 1 residual variance; assumed normally distributed with a mean of 0 and a variance of $\sigma_\epsilon$).
- $\mu_{j}$ = random error at the brand level (i.e., Level 2 residual variance; assumed normally distributed with a mean of 0 and a variance of $\sigma_\mu$).
Model Results

The results in Table 1 reveal that many message readability characteristics significantly affect consumer engagement, and the level of hedonism moderates most of them.

Table 1: Effects of Message Readability and Brand Hedonism on Consumer Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Share</th>
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<td></td>
<td>$\gamma$</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>$p$-Value</td>
<td>$\gamma$</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>$p$-Value</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>2.30</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Within-group effects (tweet-level)</td>
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<td>Control variables</td>
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<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEDIA</td>
<td>.14***</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Message readability</td>
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<tr>
<td>READ$_1$ GMC (Tweet length)</td>
<td>.01***</td>
<td>.00</td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.58</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>READ$_2$ GMC (Average word length)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>READ$_3$ GMC (Non-words)</td>
<td>-.57*</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-1.05***</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td></td>
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*p ≤ .10. **p ≤ .05. ***p ≤ .01.

Effects of message readability on consumer engagement. In line with our expectations, we find that the lexical and syntactic features negatively influence consumer engagement. Whereas tweet length, a raw text feature, exerts a significant, positive effect on the share variable, the effects of the other two raw text features (tweet length and average word length) on other consumer engagement measures are not significant. Among the Twitter-specific features, our results indicate mixed effects. The use of at-mentions negatively influences consumer engagement, but hashtags and emojis have positive effects on both consumer engagement variables. In terms of effect sizes, non-words and emojis exert the strongest effects.

Moderating role of brand hedonism. Brand hedonism significantly moderates the effect of all readability measures on consumer engagement. The results for the lexical and syntactic features support our hypotheses. When brand hedonism is low, a tweet with greater lexical and syntactic complexity receives fewer shares and likes. We observe opposite effects for brands with high levels of hedonism. The moderating effect of brand hedonism on the raw text features (tweet length and average word length) also is unexpected. Specifically, longer tweets and longer words in a tweet increase consumer engagement with less hedonic brands, but they reduce it for more hedonic brands. Finally, brand hedonism significantly moderates the effects of two Twitter-specific readability features on consumer engagement: the use of hashtags and the use of emojis. For a low level of brand hedonism, more hashtags and emojis increase consumer engagement. At a high level of brand hedonism though, these two Twitter-specific features reduce consumer engagement. We find no significant moderating effect of brand hedonism for the use of at-mentions.

We conducted several additional analyses and robustness checks using (1) an alternative engagement measure, (2) an alternative measure for the lexical readability features, and (3) a wider sample including tweets made by brands during the years 2013. The results confirmed our main analyses.

6. Theoretical Implications

This study offers three important contributions. First, we advance social media literature (e.g., de Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang 2012; van Laer and de Ruyter 2010) by deepening understanding of how message style affects consumer engagement with brands through microblogging services such as Twitter. This first empirical investigation of message readability on Twitter reveals the nuanced effects of a tweet’s readability, according to the hedonic nature of a brand. Second, this research contributes to message readability (Sawyer, Laran, and Xu 2008; Venturi et al. 2015) and processing fluency (Lee and Aaker 2004) literature, in that it challenges the conventional wisdom that clearer, more fluent, and easier-to-read communication universally results in more positive consumer responses. The level of brand hedonism is one important brand characteristic that moderates the impact of message readability on consumer brand engagement. Third, we contribute to readability research by examining various readability characteristics and determining how they interact with brand hedonism to affect consumer engagement. Specifically, we consider traditional readability characteristics (e.g., raw text, lexical and grammatical features), as well as characteristics specific to social media, such as hashtags (#), at-mentions (@), and emojis.

7. Managerial Implications

Our findings suggest that even before they start crafting a specific message, marketers should account for the hedonistic nature of their brands. Less hedonic brands will tend to benefit from clearer, more readable messages, but brands that are more hedonic require less readability (and perhaps more fun, novelty, and eccentricity). Such insights are particularly relevant for brands such as Google, which fulfills a rather functional task for consumers (i.e., search for information online) but also is perceived primarily as hedonic. Thus, it likely benefits from short, fancy, eccentric messages, rather than more elaborate ones that use simple language. At the same time, and somewhat counterintuitively, a brand such as Google could enhance its chances of garnering shares and likes if it refrains from using
too many social media–specific features (e.g., at-mentions, hashtags, emojis), which result in less engagement among consumers in our study. Marketing managers thus can use these results to guide their efforts to write impactful, engaging tweets.

8. Limitations and Further Research

We focused on consumer engagement on Twitter, a popular social media platform that offers an effective research context. Brands generally conduct social media strategies across a range of platforms though, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Our findings should hold in other social media platforms that allow brands to post short text messages and encourage consumers to engage with those messages, but additional research could seek to replicate our findings on other social media platforms. Second, we used two metrics for consumer engagement, namely, shares and likes, which are prevalent metrics and marketing objectives in social media settings, with widely available data. But other measures also are worth considering, such as whether consumers comment on messages, visit the websites of the brands that post messages, or buy more products from these brands.

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Choosing Unhealthy to Appear Warm: How Consumers Signal Personality Traits via Food Choice

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Food consumption is an inherently social activity, as most of our meals are consumed in the presence of at least one other person (Redd and de Castro 1992). Because food choices are often observed by dining partners, consumers can (and often do) modify their eating behavior in order to create a particular impression (Vartanian 2015). Drawing upon previous research on food choice, the stereotype content model, and social cognition, we examine the role of impression management on food choice in social contexts.

Our social interactions are heavily influenced by the need to signal warmth and/or competence as the two fundamental dimensions of social cognition (Fiske et al. 1999, 2002). Warmth typically includes evaluations of kindness, trustworthiness, and helpfulness (Aaker et al. 2010), while competence includes perceptions of effectiveness, power, and skillfulness (Hoepp and Lewis 2011). Warmth and competence are central to social judgments as they “account almost entirely for how people characterize others” (Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007, 78).

We propose that consumers associate different types of food with traits that fall along the fundamental dimensions of warmth and competence. Many food associations are developed as a result of the social context in which the food was consumed and are likely learned from an early age. For instance, unhealthy foods like waffles, eggs and bacon are strongly associated with family, sharing and happiness (Moisio, Arnould, and Price 2004). In contrast, rules about delaying dessert till after a more nutritious meal has been consumed or forcing children to eat vegetables result in healthy foods being associated with discipline and restraint (Cooke et al. 2011; Lupton 1994). Because of the inherent link between unhealthy (healthy) food and warmth (competence), we hypothesize that consumers are more likely to consume unhealthy (healthy) food when they are motivated to convey warmth (competence). We also propose that consumers’ tendency to choose unhealthy (healthy) food is driven by warmth- and competence-related associations of the food such that consumers motivated to appear warm (competent) are more likely to choose food positioned with warmth (competence) traits, regardless of food type.

As an initial test of our hypothesis, we administered a field survey (N=219) at a local restaurant. Patrons who were dining with at least one other person were approached by servers at the end of their meal and asked to fill out a survey indicating their purpose of visit (business or casual), and the perceived healthiness of their meal. Results revealed that participants dining with friends or family rated their meals as significantly less healthy than participants who came in for business meetings. To further examine the casual relationship between impression management goals and food choice, we conducted three experiments.

Our first experiment (N=206) tests the hypothesis that consumers will be more likely to choose unhealthy (healthy) food when they are motivated to appear warm (competent). We also included a control condition with no impression goal to measure default consumption preferences. The experiment had a 3 (Impression Goal: Warmth vs. Competence vs. Control) × 2 (Food Type: Healthy, Unhealthy) mixed-model design with food type as a within-subjects factor.

We informed participants that they have been assigned to convey a specific impression (warmth or competence) to another person. As a measure of our main dependent variable, we told participants to imagine going to lunch with the other person and asked them to indicate their likelihood of choosing a healthy or unhealthy meal. The results revealed a significant interaction between impression goal and food choice. Participants motivated to appear warm (competent) were more likely to order an unhealthy (healthy) than healthy (unhealthy) meal. There were no significant differences in likelihood of choosing healthy or unhealthy food among participants in the control condition.

Experiment 2 (N=92) was designed to further test our predictions in an incentive-compatible choice task. Participants were asked to select products that they believe convey either warmth or competence and would get to keep the products if successful at conveying the impression. The experiment was a two-cell (Impression Goal: Warmth vs. Competence) between-subjects design. Participants chose one of two snacks (M&M’s—unhealthy choice, and Raisins—healthy choice). Results revealed that participants motivated to convey warmth were more likely to choose the unhealthy snack than participants who were motivated to convey competence.

In experiment 3 (N=150), we test food stereotypes as the underlying mechanism of the effect of impression management on food choice. The experiment had a 2 (Impression Goal: Warmth vs. Competence) × 2 (Food Description: Consistent, Inconsistent) × 2 (Food Type: Healthy, Unhealthy) mixed-model design with Food Type serving as a within-subjects factor.

Participants were told to imagine that they recently moved into a new town and “would like to find a job” (competence condition) or “would like to make friends” (warmth condition) and that they and their potential employer (friend) are going to a new restaurant. Participants were presented with two meals—healthy and unhealthy. The two meals included a “chef’s note” which in the consistent condition matched the food type; i.e. the healthy food had competence-related description, and the unhealthy food had warmth-related description. In the inconsistent condition, the descriptions were reversed. Participants were asked to indicate their likelihood of choosing each dish.

The results revealed a significant interaction between impression goal, food description and food type. Results in the consistent description condition replicated previous findings such that participants motivated to appear warm (competent) were more likely to order an unhealthy (healthy) than healthy (unhealthy) meal. However, in the inconsistent food description condition, participants motivated to appear warm (competent) were less likely to order an unhealthy (healthy) than healthy (unhealthy) meal.

This research demonstrated that the two fundamental dimensions of social cognition influence our food choices such that that motivation to appear warm (competent) significantly increases the likelihood of choosing unhealthy (healthy) foods. Moreover, we demonstrate that food healthiness is used as an impression management tactic because of the inherent associations between unhealthy (healthy) food and warmth (competence). Finally, our results show that unhealthy choices can be inhibited by positioning unhealthy food as possessing competence-related associations.
REFERENCES:
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

For decades, values have been said to be “one of the most powerful explanations of, and influence on, consumer behavior” (Clawson and Vinson 1978) and can guide people’s actions (Schwartz 1992). According to Inglehart (1971, 2008), an intergenerational value shift should take place in society: Materialistic values (e.g., safety or wealth) should be replaced by post-materialistic values (e.g., quality of life). However, Inglehart’s predicted shift of values has been criticized (Brym et al. 2016; Tranter and Western 2010). Even though the importance of post-materialistic values has increased, materialistic values are still important (Segev, Shoham, and Gavish 2015) owing to political or economic incidents. Inglehart and Norris (2016) explain this phenomenon as a backlash against cultural change. Another reason for Inglehart’s misprediction may be the social desirability bias (SDB) of surveys, which can lead to underreporting of materialistic values. The SDB is considered either to reduce the validity of measured insights into consumers’ value orientations (King and Bruner 2000), or as an additional source of value reflection (Fisher and Katz 2000), indicating that faking allegedly esteemed values can hint at the relevance of a topic. In our article, we focus on the first perspective by developing and validating a new measurement tool.

Empirical research within the last five decades has used different value measurement approaches. What all the methods have in common is their pure verbal measurement. The Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) (1973) seeks to obtain insights into people’s value hierarchy by asking them to rank 36 values. However, this method is criticized for being impulsive, for the strict value rank-order and the item choice itself (Braithwaite and Law 1985). Schwartz (1992) developed the theory of basic human values, suggesting 10 basic values as trans-situational goals, varying in importance and serving as guiding principles in a person’s life. He developed a survey (SVS) inviting participants to rate a broad range of values (different varieties of each value) as guiding principles, based on a complex nine-point scale, ranging from -1 (opposed to my values) to 7 (very important). Hence, a high level of abstract thought is necessary for using the SVS successfully (Schwartz et al. 2001). Therefore, the survey might be vulnerable for SDB. For similar reasons, Kahle’s (1983) more parsimonious “List of Values” seems to be affected by SDB as it also uses rating scales (Fisher and Katz 2000; Lee, Soutar, and Louviere 2007).

Verbal measurement techniques, especially if they require abstract thinking skills (Torelli and Kaikati 2009) may induce rationalization processes in respondents and therefore diminish the possibility of obtaining intuitive and spontaneous answers. Individuals tend to reflect well on themselves (Randall and Fernandes 1991) and are therefore likely to give socially desirable answers (Zerbe and Paulhus 1987). Many verbal measures, especially if consumers only have to change the rating scale figure, face this problem. In the context of value measurement, studies (e.g., Fisher and Katz 2000) indicate that lots of values are affected by this problem. The degree to which value self-reports are affected by SDB depends on the value’s potential to present oneself in a favorable light (Fisher and Katz 2000). Over-reporting is likely to occur if values seem socially acceptable, whereas under-reporting is expected for socially undesirable values (Needle and Cronley 2004; Roxas and Lindsay 2012). In today’s research, universalism values, for example, play an important role (Doran 2009; Vermeir and Verbeke 2006; Yamoah et al. 2016) as ethical consumption is requested as a social standard (Auger and Devinney 2007), thus increasing the risk of SDB (over-reporting).

A materialistic orientation on the other hand faces the problem of being underreported, as negative social consequences are expected (Mick 1996). For many years, researchers have been interested in the scale of SDB occurrences and who over- and underreports (De Jong, Fox, and Steenkamp 2015). The “pure” indirect questioning technique (Schwartz et al.’s (2001) PVC approach, in which consumers indicate to what extent the description of another person is congruent with their own personality is a mixture of direct and indirect technique) uses questions like, “What would the typical other do?” (Fischer and Tellis 1998) and is problematic if personal values and hierarchies have to be discovered. Many researchers therefore use the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (or modifications) to detect SDB as a personality variable and ascertain whether or not a respondent is generally concerned with social approval and conforming to societal conventions (which may affect the validity of the survey). However, clever consumers might see through this verbal scale or misconstrue it so that inconsistencies appear (King and Bruner 2000).

Nevertheless, consumer research has a strong interest in obtaining insights into consumers’ real value orientations because values can guide behavior. Manufacturers and retailers wish to adjust marketing strategies according to the values of their target groups. Enlarging the share of fair trade or regional products, for example, may be a consequence of consumers’ increased interest in universalistic values, whereas more security officers in shopping centers may be a result of growing safety needs. However, this requires a valid method to measure values. Pictorial scales are expected to reduce SDB by facilitating intuitive answers without cognitive filtering and evaluation of the social effects (Groepel-Klein et al. 2010). Furthermore, pictorial scales could increase enjoyment and response rates.

Development of a Picture-Based Scale and Validation Studies

To map out a pictorial scale, different steps are necessary. We paid particular attention to careful validation (Groepel-Klein et al. 2010), and to the scale’s ability to reduce SDB in a self-reporting questionnaire.

Step 1: Identification of values and value varieties

Both materialist (Segev et al. 2015) and post-materialist (Ladhari and Tchetgna 2015) values play a part in contemporary marketing research and practice. Beyond the relevance of materialism (especially power) and post-materialism (especially universalism) values, such as stimulation or hedonism might be important, especially in consumer behavior. Schwartz’ (1992) 10 basic human values served as a theoretical foundation. However, some of these values are abstract and complex.

Schwartz et al. (2012) therefore deliver a detailed description of these abstract dimensions. Our goal in step 1 was to discover subtle facets of values (rather than broad supercategories) that are more apperceptive and can specifically be used in a consumption context. Results of a thorough literature review and the descriptions of Schwartz et al. (2012) served as a basis for qualitative focus group...
discussions (one at Saarland University, three in grocery stores in Germany; \( n = 20 \) (five participants per group); \( M_{\text{age}} = 50.2 \) years, SD = 25.7). According to the results of the focus groups, we identified 26 subtle value facets that might be relevant for consumer behavior.

**Step 2: Selection of suitable pictures for value visualization**

Five coders checked various commercial image databases to find pictures that represent the values identified in step 1 (screening of 10,000 pictures). In search for suitable and unambiguous pictures, the coders were guided by each value’s description offered by Schwartz et al. (2012). Particular attention was paid to the pictures’ diversity. This was necessary because in step 3 we compare whether single pictures or picture collages (representing different facets) are more effective in identifying values. Twenty pictures were selected for each value, later reduced to five or six by expert judgement. So, 135 single pictures were chosen for further investigation.

**Step 3: Validation studies**

**Verbal Validation (3a).** Sixty-nine participants (students and employees of Saarland University in Germany, 54% female; \( M_{\text{age}} = 25.61 \) years, SD = 7.54) were asked to allocate either single pictures or picture collages to a value list. Participants were told that the list showed different aspects that are more or less important in peoples’ lives. Each picture respectively each collage could only be allocated to one value in the list. All but one picture collages were assigned correctly to the value list (the collage for “considering the future” was assigned correctly to the value list by only 55.3% of the respondents whereas the percentages of respondents assigning all the other collages correctly to the corresponding value ranged between 76.3% and 100% and were on average much higher than in the single picture condition, demonstrating a superiority of picture collages).

Next, 106 further participants (61% female; \( M_{\text{age}} = 24.76 \) years, SD = 7.59) were asked to provide unaided labeling of the stimuli. Again, the collages outperformed the single pictures with respect to correct value identification (20 of 26 values labeled correctly in the collage condition, whereas in the single picture condition, only 18 values were labeled correctly). As values are abstract in nature (Torelli and Kaikati 2009), picture collages seem to represent them more accurately than single pictures do. To reduce the image material, recipients completing the labeling task for the collages were also asked to rank the pictures in each collage according to which picture best represents the corresponding value. A clear order emerged for all of the 20 correctly labeled collages.

**Stack Sort Analysis (3b).** To test the validity of the picture collages more comprehensively (and to further increase it) and also to control for the six values that were not identified in the verbal validation task, a stack sort analysis was conducted with 160 participants (60% female; \( M_{\text{age}} = 24.74 \) years, SD = 8.93) at Saarland University. Step 3a shows that picture collages represent value varieties better than single pictures. The pictures in the collages used in step 3a were the results of step 2. To discover whether consumers regard the same pictures as related, participants were asked to sort a number of pictures by perceived coherence. They were completely free to choose the number of stacks and the number of pictures per stack. To avoid cognitive overload, the number of pictures was subdivided into three units, so each participant was only shown pictures representing one-third of the 26 value varieties. Using co-assignment rates of all pairs of pictures for hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward’s procedure), 22 of the 26 value categories were replicated, which means 22 clusters consisted of the same pictures that were chosen via step 2 and used in step 3a. The values “tolerance”, “diversity” and “purposefulness” could not be replicated. For these categories, pictures were replaced and tested subsequently until the values were identified correctly.

Owing to the results of the stack sort task, “possession of money” and “prestige” formed one instead of two clusters; this was not changed.

**Comparison of Labeled Versus Unlabeled Picture Collages**

Based on these studies, the final pictorial scale for measuring peoples’ value orientations consists of 25 picture collages, each with three pictures. In a further step, labeled versus unlabeled collages were tested. On the one hand, labeling the collages might help dispel ambiguity and make the scale easier to use. Additionally, time needed to capture the intended value and therefore to fulfill the task might be shorter for labeled collages. On the other hand, labeling the collages with verbal stimuli may again lead to a SDB. As reducing this bias is one of the major goals of a pictorial scale, the unlabeled scale should be at least as good as the labeled scale with respect to performance, handling and enjoyment. To examine this, 52 students (between-subjects-design, \( n = 26 \) per group; 55.7% female; \( M_{\text{age}} = 22.31 \) years, SD = 3.01) were asked to attribute the 25 value categories (either with or without labeling) to a stimulus. A famous football club (FC Bayern Munich) and the pharmacist’s profession were chosen as stimuli. Based on expert judgement and website information, a broad variety of values compatible with the two stimuli were defined (appreciation, possession of money / prestige, success, dominance, purposefulness, friendship, excitement, quality, tolerance, diversity, and trust for Bayern Munich; security, quality, family, health, and trust for the pharmacist’s profession). The two scale formats did not differ with regard to time needed to fulfill the task (\( t(50) = 0.993, \) NS) or with regard to the number of correct and incorrect attributed values. Afterwards, participants were asked to evaluate the collages (either with or without labeling) with regard to handling and enjoyment. Results show that the different scale formats did not significantly differ with regard to handling, and unlabeled collages were more pleasant for participants than labeled ones (\( t(50) = 2.273, p = .027 \)).

**Comparing Verbal Versus Pictorial Scales Concerning SDB**

In the last step, the final unlabeled pictorial scale was tested against a verbal scale in relation to SDB. For the verbal scale, we used parts of the SVS (Schwartz 1992). In a group discussion with 11 participants at Saarland University as a pretest, seven of the 25 values were identified as potentially sensitive, that is they might trigger social desirability concerns (Tourangeau and Yan 2007). Six of these seven values appear to have a high self-presentation potential (e.g., social justice or openness to something new), thus leading to expected over-reporting by recipients. One value (dominance) tends to be viewed more negatively, so under-reporting was expected. Eighty-one participants (50.4% female, \( M_{\text{age}} = 32.19 \) years, SD = 13.75) were asked to rate the importance of these values as guiding principles on either a verbal or a pictorial seven-point scale. Results show that the six values for which over-reporting was expected scored higher in the verbal (vs. pictorial) scale condition (e.g., openness to something new: \( M_{\text{verbal}} = 5.48, M_{\text{pictorial}} = 3.71, \) whereas dominance, for which under-reporting was expected, scored lower in the verbal than the pictorial scale condition (\( M_{\text{verbal}} = 1.65, M_{\text{pictorial}} = 2.38 \)). It can therefore be concluded that verbal value scales are, compared to pictorial scales, more affected by over- (or under)-reporting of sensitive items, and therefore by SDB.

After the value rating, people read different scenarios, each presenting a typical behavior associated with the tested values. The description was either mirroring the specific value or was contradictory to it. For instance, participants read a scenario about themselves in which they want to get rid of old CDs, actually knowing that CDs
are not allowed to be thrown in the garbage, but have to be disposed of properly in special waste. This takes time and effort. Participants were asked to indicate the likelihood of performing the behavior described in the scenario on a seven-point scale (one single statement per described behavior for likelihood measurement, e.g. “How likely is it that you would dispose of the CDs in the garbage nevertheless?”; 1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely). Different studies (Eyal et al. 2009; Torelli and Kaikati 2009) use this method to reveal significant correlations between values and the likelihood of showing a value-congruent behavior. As the likelihood of performing the described behavior is measured with verbal scales and the behaviors explained in the scenarios seem to have high self-presentation potential (as values do, because the described behavioral reactions refer to specific values), this verbal self-reported likelihood of showing the described value-congruent behavior is expected to be influenced by SDB for the same reason value self-reports are. I.e., if somebody over-reports the importance of, for example, environmentalism values for reasons of social desirability, this person is also likely to over-report the likelihood of showing a described environmentally friendly behavior. Therefore, if the correlation between those measures is high, SDB seems obvious. Hence, in a further step, we tested whether significant correlations between value importance and likelihood of performing a described value-congruent behavior only occur for value importance measured with verbal, but not with pictorial scales. Results show that for five of the seven values tested, the expected effect occurred in the verbal condition, reinforcing the assumption that value measurement by using pictorial instead of verbal scales reduces the risk of SDB.

**General Discussion**

This article illustrates the development of a pictorial scale for science and practice to measure peoples’ value orientations with substantially reduced SDB. A thorough literature review and qualitative focus group discussions were conducted to identify subtle variants of values with importance for consumer research. Several steps were taken to assure the validity of the developed pictorial scale. Our study shows that picture collages outperform single pictures and do not need additional labeling for comprehension and handling. Additionally, our results show that verbal scales (compared to pictorial scales) have a higher risk to be fraught with over-reporting (or under-reporting if the expected social consequences are negative) and are therefore biased. Furthermore, significant correlations between value importance and the self-reported likelihood of performing a verbally described value-congruent behavior only occurred if value importance was measured with verbal scales. This leads again to the assumption that pictorial scales are less affected by SDB than verbal scales. However, an alternative explanation is also imaginable: correlations between verbally measured values and verbally measured likelihoods of performing a described value-congruent behavior might always be higher (because of the same modality) than correlations between pictorial and verbal stimuli (differing modalities). Future research could address this problem, e.g. by observing actual behavior (instead of measuring the likelihood of showing a hypothetical behavior described in a scenario). But as values can be more or less abstract, they might influence either near or distant future behavior. Studies comparing values’ influence on actual behavior therefore should regard the potentially moderating effect of temporal distance (Torelli and Kaikati 2009).

The importance of investigation into ethical consumption is increasing. People claim to care for the environment, but organic products still only account for a minor share of turnover. Simultaneously, the (seemingly) increasing concern for ethical values might lead to an under-reporting of materialistic values (which are opposed to universalism values and therefore might be associated with negative social consequences), that might nevertheless be important for consumers’ buying decisions. Under-reporting of these values might therefore bias the results of verbal surveys. Pictorial scales provide insights into consumers’ true value orientations without SDB, which might contribute to deeper understanding of this phenomenon and enable manufacturers and retailers to focus more accurately on consumers’ actual needs to get true data to use for aligning their marketing strategies.

The new measurement approach could be used to analyze the relevance of values for customer-retailer- as well as for customer-brand-relationships. Two studies conducted in Germany using the here developed picture scale on a touchscreen monitor (figure 1) showed promising results that a match of consumers’ and retailers’ values can be beneficial for both. Manufacturers and retailers could therefore try to match their positioning concerning diverse values with people’s most relevant values to share a common value basis and encourage long-term relationships. To do that, true (unbiased) data is needed — and could be provided by pictorial scales. Beyond that, the two studies conducted revealed that using picture scales is enjoyable for respondents — even if the interviews lasted 45 up to 60 minutes. So the developed approach seems to enable researchers to analyze comprehensive and complex issues without causing a fatigue effect.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Unhealthy eating habits and related diseases, such as obesity and cardiovascular diseases, cause serious challenges for national health systems (Cawley and Meyerhofer 2012). Thus, policymakers have a strong interest to address this problem. Authorities hope that health claims on food packages help consumers to identify and buy healthier food options at the Point-of-Sale. According to the US FDA (2015), “A health claim characterizes the relationship between a substance and a disease or health-related condition […]”. To ensure a high level of consumer protection, in the US as well as in Europe the use of health claims is regulated. In Europe, the HC regulation of the European Commission (since 2012) only allows companies to use a claim of the authorized EFSA list. Our research aims at providing a broad understanding of how these authorized health claims affect consumer behavior.

In an exploratory field study, we manipulated olive oils and registered sales data. The original package was manipulated by attaching a sticker to the bottleneck. Three alternative stickers were presented in a real supermarket, each for two weeks: A sticker (1) with a generic claim (claim without any reference to nutrition or health), (2) with a nutrition claim, and (3) with a health claim. All claims were in line with the EU regulation 1924/2006. The collected sales data served as reference values (benchmark) for comparison with the results of further lab experiments using the same stimuli in simulated shopping tasks. Our first lab study was a purchase simulation with (mobile) eye tracking. In a second lab study, we measured consumers’ electrodermal reaction while being confronted with the products. Sales data, eye tracking data and arousal measurement delivered consistent finding that consumers seem to (unconsciously) avoid the long and complex health claim. This is in line with findings of Newman, Howlett and Burton (2014), showing that consumers have limited resources when comparing health information. Based on this finding and with regard to the fact that daily food choices are typically based on routine, fast decision making and low involvement (Lähteenmäki 2014), we hypothesize that health claims should consist of familiar (comprehensible) expressions in order not to discourage consumers from further consideration. As advertising literature emphasizes the risk of wear out effects, we further hypothesize that the health message (the combination of substance and health function) should have an innovative character. When consumers already know the substance and function combination (e.g., that Vitamin C contributes to the function of the immune system), the health claim has limited informational value. Finally, we assume that priming consumers with a health theme will increase the accessibility of health claims.

In our main study, we tested our hypotheses by conducting a purchase simulation with eye tracking in a close-to-reality shopping situation. Participants were confronted with a shelf of juices and a shelf of cereals and were asked to carry out simulated shopping tasks: to buy a bottle of juice and a packet of cereals.

As hypothesized, we find that a health claim receives more visual attention when it contains familiar wording than when it contains at least one unfamiliar expression. Furthermore, we reveal that when a health claim delivers a new health message, the claim evokes more visual attention than a health claim that delivers an already well-known health message. Mediation analysis shows that this effect mediates the influence of the independent variable on choice behavior: When a health claim delivers a comprehensible but new health message, the carrier product is chosen more often than when the health claim delivers a well-known health message. This effect is mediated by visual attention to the health claim. Thus, whenever it is possible, health claims should be formulated in a familiar (comprehensible) way, but they should deliver a new health information. The question that arises is what one can do when regulation only allows to promote an already well-known health message. Thus, in our main study, we added a second shelf (the shelf of cereals) in which we addressed this question. We find that the effectiveness of a health claim delivering a well-known health message can be enhanced when the claim is combined with a picture that evokes claim-congruent health associations. However, data suggests that this final finding only applies to brands that are perceived as healthy brands.

In contrast to our expectation, priming does not increase visual attention to the health claim. However, with regard to priming, our results have methodological implications. Analysis of primed consumers’ survey data shows that these participants report attitudes that are contrary to their actual behavior. Therefore, we assume that social desirability bias or cognitive filters might have reduced the validity of our survey data. Although further research is needed to explain this gap between reported attitudes and actual behavior, the finding underlines the importance of our approach to mainly focus on research methods like purchase simulations, eye tracking, arousal measurement and the analysis of actual sales data.

Our results should be considered by authorities, companies and scientists. For policymakers, we provide empirical evidence on how health claims should be formulated in order to maximize their effectiveness. The findings should help companies to identify effective health claims. Finally, consumer researchers are encouraged to further investigate open questions. Further research should analyze how the health claim with changed wording performs compared to a nutrition claim, why there is a gap between reported attitudes and actual behavior when consumers are primed, why the strategy of adding a claim-congruent picture to a familiar health claim only works on healthy brands and whether the results can be transferred to other health claims. Shedding light into these questions will further enhance our understanding of how health claims can guide consumers to buy healthier food options at the Point-of-Sale.

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Heirlooms as a Passage Mechanism for Achievement-Based Values
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Drawing from the literature, we define heirlooms as objects that have been successively bequeathed within families from an older generation to a younger generation (Curasi, Price, & Arnould, 2004; Bradford, 2009). Heirlooms are often created out of objects that are associated with positive memories in the original owner’s life (Price, Arnould & Curasi, 2000; Bradford, 2009). This research asks whether specific subtypes of positive associations are stronger catalysts for heirloom creation than others.

We find objects tied to memories of achievement (vs. enjoyment) are more likely to be chosen to become heirlooms. Process evidence suggests that this happens because of an underlying motivation to establish accomplishments as a core family value in hopes that it inspires future generations to aspire for achievements in their own right. In this regard, such heirlooms appear to be less about creators ensuring their legacies are never forgotten, but more about creators leveraging their achievements to motivate the creation of a larger, collective legacy by their broader families.

Study 1 is a single-celled within-subject design that sought to use stories of actual heirlooms to ascertain the original associations of such objects. We surveyed participants by having them list real heirlooms within their own families and posed several questions about them tapping into the heirloom’s memory associations. A paired t-test revealed that heirloom stories were more strongly associated with themes of achievement (M = 6.22, SD = .93), than themes of enjoyment (M = 5.37, SD = 1.72; t(49) = 1.67, p = .001). Providing further evidence of this effect, participants believed that the original owner of the heirloom associated the item more with an accomplishment he/she was proud of (M = 5.34, SD = 1.49) than an event s/he found fun or enjoyable (M = 4.70, SD = 1.75; t(49) = 2.23, p = .030). This pattern of results provides preliminary evidence that heirlooms are more associated with accomplishments and achievements than events or memories that are enjoyable or fun.

The purpose of study 2 was to test the effect from a creator’s (rather than receiver’s) point of view. This experiment is a between-subject a 2 (object association: achievement vs. enjoyment) x 2 (gift purpose: heirloom vs. donation) design, in that participants were either asked to read a short passage about a pair of sunglasses that they associated with an achievement-based memory (running a marathon) vs an enjoyment-based memory (an unforgettable cruise), and then participants were asked to imagine that they were looking for an item to pass down to a child as a family heirloom vs looking for item to give their best friend as a going-away gift before he/she moves away. A 2 X 2 ANOVA on how suitable the sunglasses would be for the gift purpose yielded a significant interaction between object association and gift purpose (F(1, 136) = 4.38, p = .038), which we decomposed with planned contrasts. Confirming our main prediction, participants were more likely to consider using the sunglasses as an heirloom when they were associated with achievement (M = 3.76) than enjoyment (M = 2.65; t(67) = −2.46, p = .016). This pattern did not hold when considering the sunglasses for a donation to a charity auction (M 3.93 vs. 4.23, SD = 2.05; t(65) = −.60, p = .552). This pattern of results confirms our core prediction, as participants were more likely to consider making a given object an heirloom when the object was associated with a momentous achievement as compared to an enjoyable event. Notably, this occurred despite the events and object being equally positive and important to the original possessor.

In the study 3 we build on these findings by considering the underlying motivational process for this effect. We repeat the procedure of study 2 (using a new control condition) and then add five groups of mediator items representing five different potential mediators that previous qualitative work suggests could be driving our effect.

- Mediator items Group 1: The Expressing Love Hypothesis. Represents that giving away these sunglasses in this situation would express their love to the recipient.

- Mediator items Group 2: The Safe Home Hypothesis. Represents that giving away these sunglasses in this situation would help facilitate their familial values to the recipient.

- Mediator items Group 3: The Personal Legacy Hypothesis. Represents that giving these sunglasses in this situation would help facilitate their familial values to the recipient.

- Mediator items Group 4: The Familial Values Hypothesis. Represents that giving away these sunglasses in this situation would help facilitate their familial values to the recipient.

- Mediator items Group 5: The Encourage to Achieve Hypothesis. Represents that giving these sunglasses in this situation would help facilitate their familial values to the recipient.

We successfully replicate our effects from study 2. Using Hayes’s PROCESS macro we find serial mediation of our effect in the heirloom condition with mediator items Group 4 and Group 5 (LLCI = .7463, ULCLI = 1.8965), and find that mediator items Groups 1, 2, and 3 do not mediate our effect. This provides evidence that consumers find objects associated with memories of achievement (vs enjoyment) as more suitable heirlooms not because they always want to be remembered and want to live on symbolically for generations (personal legacy / symbolic immortality), not because they want to find a safe home for the item (insure good for the special object), not simply to express their love to the recipient… But rather because they want the recipient to know their own family’s legacy of successes in hopes that it will influence the recipient to strive to achieve more in his/her own right.

These findings illustrates that objects associated with memories of achievement are more likely to be chosen as a family heirloom than objects associated with enjoyment and identify which processes suggested by the literature are responsible the effect. Such findings have implications for both firms wishing to extend the life of the objects they produce and heirloom recipients now able to connect with the underlying motives of the original possessing ancestors.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Although consumers develop mainly positive relationships with brands (Fournier 1998), there is increasing interest in understanding negative brand perceptions (Fournier and Alvarez 2013). This is particularly relevant in a context in which skeptical consumers scrutinize all manner of brand actions. Consumers accuse brands of being insincere (Maehle, Otnes, and Supphellen 2011), inauthentic (Thompson and Arsel 2004) and dishonest (Lee, Motion, and Conroy 2009). Recently, criticism levied has resulted in the emergence of perceptions of brand hypocrisy. Volkswagen, for example, was accused by consumers of hypocritical behavior for deceiving the public and cheating on diesel emissions tests (Delacroix 2015). Brands such as Unilever, McDonald’s and Budweiser have also come under fire for corporate hypocrisy (Griner 2013; Northrup 2015; Kotz 2014). These examples raise important questions: Do consumers perceive brands as hypocritical? What are the factors underpinning this perception? What are the consequences of these perceptions? This study explores the meaning of brand hypocrisy from a consumer perspective and develops a measurement scale.

Saying one thing and doing another illustrates the nature of human hypocrisy (Martinie and Fontiat 2010). Researchers in psychology (Batson et al. 1997), philosophy (Grant 1997), management (Fassin and Buellens 2011), or organizational ethics (Fortin and Fellenz 2008) have studied significations and demonstrations of hypocrisy. In marketing, no research has focused exclusively on understanding the nature of brand hypocrisy from a consumer perspective. It is however increasingly relevant to study negative inferences towards brands (Fournier and Azarel 2013). Hypocrisy is said to be an important determinant of consumer firms’ evaluation (Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz 2009), but its exact nature remains unknown in a consumer-brand context. This study addresses this issue. The next paragraphs present the development of a brand hypocrisy scale across four studies (Churchill 1979).

Study 1: Item Generation

47 participants (mean =43) from an online panel were asked to think and write about what a hypocritical brand would be and to list brands that they perceived as hypocritical. Answers provided by participants (e.g., “McDonald’s: Their salads are not as healthy as they claim to be”, “Coca-Cola: It promotes itself as fun and hip when it is actually bad for you”, “KFC: KFC and breast cancer… totally non-sensical!”) were analysed and enriched with the literature to develop an initial set of 142 items capturing the concept of brand hypocrisy (e.g., “This brand says and does different things,” strongly disagree/strongly agree).

Study 2: Content validity.

Four marketing experts indicated how representative each item is of hypocrisy as it relates to brands. An item was removed/modified if one expert rated it as poor or mentioned it was ambiguous, or two experts rated it as fair. A list of 94 items remained.

Study 3: Initial administration

285 adults (mean =42) from an online panel were asked to think about a brand that they considered hypocritical and to rate it on the 94 items. A four-factor solution emerged following a principal component exploratory factor analysis. After removal of items (low loadings/high cross-loadings), 48 items remained and were interpreted ed in light of the items and the literature. The four dimensions are: image hypocrisy (a brand’s false appearances and failure to deliver on promises, e.g., “This brand pretends to be something it is not”), mission hypocrisy (a brand’s negative, unacknowledged impact on people or society, e.g., “This brand pretends to be good for people but is not”), message hypocrisy (a brand promoting unrealistic values and unachievable goals through its communications; e.g. “This brand pushes consumers towards unrealistic goals), social hypocrisy (a brand’s social activities disconnected from brand essence and perceived as strategic, e.g., “This brand supports charitable causes for marketing purposes”). A confirmatory factor analysis (AMOS-20) was computed and model was improved (modification indices=.3.84; Baggozi and Yi 1998; model comparisons). The final model is a four-factor correlated model (12 items, 3/dimension) (NNFI=.97, CFI=.98, SRMR=.04, RMSEA=.07, g2(48)=93.46, p<.001). Psychometric characteristics and discriminant validity between dimensions were satisfactory.

Study 4: Discriminant and predictive validity

180 adults from an online panel (mean =43) were asked to think about a brand that is either hypocritical or non hypocritical and to evaluate it. The four-factor model showed good fit (NNFI=.98, CFI=.99, SRMR=.02, RMSEA=.06). Discriminant validity between the dimensions and related constructs was tested: image hypocrisy with corporate hypocrisy (Wagner et al. 2009), mission hypocrisy with integrity dimension of brand authenticity (reverse scale) (Morhart et al. 2009), message hypocrisy with symbolism dimension of brand authenticity (reverse scale) (Morhart et al. 2015), social hypocrisy with the integrity dimension of brand personality in a non-profit context (reverse scale) (Venable et al. 2005). Results (e.g., confidence intervals, Anderson and Gerbing 1988; average variance vs. squared correlation, Fornell and Larcker 1981) confirmed discriminant validity. An overall comparison of brand hypocrisy with corporate hypocrisy (Wagner et al. 2009), further supported discriminant validity. Regarding predictive validity, the impact of hypocrisy on negative word-of-mouth and brand distance (Grégoire, Tripp and Legoux 2009) was tested. Regression results indicate that three hypocrisy factors are predictors (p<.05) of negative word-of-mouth (image β=.26/mission β=.51/message β=.16/R²=.66) and two (p<.05) of distance (image β=.37/mission β=.47/R²=.63). Predictive validity was also verified through structural equations. The first-order factors loaded on a global hypocrisy variable and significantly predicted negative word-of-mouth (γ=.83, p<.001) and distance (γ=.80, p<.001).

This research provides a comprehensive understanding of brand hypocrisy and develops a scale for measuring it. Results show that brand hypocrisy is a multidimensional construct comprising four dimensions. A brand can be perceived as hypocritical in instances of the following: i) If it fails to put words into actions (image hypocrisy), ii) If it negatively impacts society or consumer wellbeing (mission hypocrisy), iii) If it conveys images that are unrealistic or unattainable (message hypocrisy); and, iv) If it supports social responsibility activities for strategic considerations only (social hypocrisy). This research enriches the understanding of negative inferences attributed to brands by consumers, a neglected area in the literature (Fournier and Alvarez 2013). It contributes to the brand avoidance literature (Lee et al. 2009) by showing that perceptions of hypocrisy constitute an important determinant of negative behavior directly in-
volving consumers (i.e. brand distance) and the people around them (i.e. negative word-of-mouth).

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Processing Moving Numbers: How Update Frequency Influences Magnitude Judgments
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Consumers’ lives are pervaded with quantitative information. While individuals used to only evaluate static quantitative information, recent developments allow for dynamic representations in which numbers are regularly updated. For example, the health tracker Fitbit displays the number of steps that updates in accordance to one’s movement. On their website, Kickstarter, the global crowdfunding platform, displays up-to-date funding metrics for each project. In this paper, we examine how the frequency of updates of such dynamic figures influences how people form judgments about the figure’s magnitude.

Consider two versions of an indicator. The first version displays updates at a lower frequency, and in larger step-sizes between each change (e.g. going from 0, 25, 50, and finally 100). The second updates at a higher frequency, and in smaller step-sizes (e.g. 0, 1, 2, 3, …, 100). The focal question of this research is whether individuals’ magnitude judgment of the end-point (e.g., 100) is affected by the frequency of which information was updated (low vs. high).

One could predict that if the indicators all have identical starting points, end points, and total change, change should be noticed equally (Weber 1834). This implies that magnitude judgments should not differ. However, we could also predict that more frequent updates may lead to increased magnitude judgments. That is, an identical numerical value would be judged as larger when it is the result of high-frequency updates rather than low-frequency updates. We propose that this effect emerges because, when evaluating number magnitude, people rely on frequency information (i.e. frequency of updates) even when this information is irrelevant. Prior work has shown that people are particularly equipped to evaluate frequency information (Butterworth 2000, 2001, 2007). Consequently, when judging perceptual presentations of quantity, consumers rely on the number of elements, such that an identical quantity is judged larger when it consists of more elements (Alba et al. 1994, 1999). Analogously, we predict that consumers will judge an identical magnitude to be larger when the indicators displaying the magnitude updates more frequently.

In a series of studies, we show that, when asked, people express a preference for indicators with a higher update frequency— but increasing frequency of updates leads to increased magnitude judgments, which in turn results in an over-prediction of future data-points. We then moderate this effect by shifting people’s attention to the size of increase or step-size (Bagchi and Li 2011).

We employed the following general procedure in our studies, though context may vary per study (e.g. Kickstarter campaigns, game scoreboards). Participants were first given some information about the context. We then created two versions of an indicator, which differed in frequency of updates that they display. In the low-frequency indicator there were 4 updates occurring every 15 seconds; in the high-frequency indicator, there were 120 updates, every 0.5 seconds. The starting point, end point, and total change are always held constant across both versions. The indicators were animated GIF images that could be loaded to the online platform of our studies. Participants then viewed the respective indicator for one minute and continued with answering a set of measures.

In our pilot study, upon viewing both versions of the indicator in random order, participants exhibited overwhelming preference for the high-frequency version, and seemed to believe that this version is more informative and can help them keep better track of incoming information.

Results from Study 1 confirmed our prediction that, compared to low-frequency or no-frequency, increasing frequency of updates leads to increased magnitude judgments. Even though as observed in the Pilot study people’s lay belief favors higher frequency, in reality, increasing frequencies could sway people’s judgments.

In Study 2, we tested the prediction that increasing speed of updates would lead to increased magnitude judgments, and this in turn resulted in an inflated prediction regarding points in a future point in time. Additionally, contrary to previous studies, in this study we used indicators displaying a decreasing figure. We found corroborating evidence, showing that magnitude judgments mediated the relationship between frequency of updates and extrapolation of future data-points.

In Study 3, we document that this effect we observe is due to over-reliance on information regarding frequency. If one’s attention was more directed to the size of every increase (i.e. step-size), the difference in magnitude judgments diminishes.

Our work contributes to existing research on numerosity, as we extend prior work by examining how individuals draw inferences from dynamic quantitative information, as opposed to static forms (cf. Adaval 2013). In times when self-quantification is ever-present, researchers have started to investigate the influence of measurement on consumer behavior (e.g. Etkin 2016). Measurement is strongly tied with provision of (possibly constant) information, and collectively our findings shed light on how dynamic presentations of information can influence consumer judgments and the possible unintended consequences thereof, which we believe is of crucial importance.

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Hayes, Andrew F (2013), Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach, New York: Guilford Press.
Less Choosing, More Doing! Procedural Control Inoculates Against the Allure of More Choice

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A sense of control is essential to humans. Manipulating things in the environment is an infant’s first step to self-awareness (Furby 1978) and mastering challenges through agentic behavior is key to feelings of competence (de Charms 1968; White 1959). Feeling in control is associated with virtually all aspects of well-being, from happiness to health (Lachman and Weaver 1998; Larson 1989), and one of the most robust psychological phenomena is people’s striving for a sense of control (de Charms 1986). Consumer research shows that control is also important for customer satisfaction. People like actively partaking in product assembly because it addresses their need for control (Norton, Mochon, and Ariely 2012). Other research hints that choosing may also provide consumers with control. When perceiving little control, people are motivated to make multiple distinct product choices (Levav and Zhu 2009), and it has been posited that being offered more choice options—that is, a larger assortment—can function as a substitute for power and, more broadly, control (Inesi et al. 2011).

We explicitly test the idea that the widely acknowledged consumer preference for large assortments (Arnold, Oum, and Tigert 1983; Chernev 2003, 2006; Iyengar and Lepper 2000; McAlistier and Pessesmer 1982) is driven by a desire to feel in control. Furthermore, I find that giving consumers control in a more immediate way—by providing procedural control through greater behavioral involvement—eliminates the preference for larger assortments.

Study 1

Study 1 tested the basic assumption that desire for control attracts consumers to large assortments of choice options. If desire for control is a key driver, then states of low personal control should enhance people’s preference for large assortments.

Method

One hundred and sixty business undergraduate lab participants (38.1% women) were induced with a sense of high or low personal control via a pre-tested fluency manipulation. Specifically, participants generated few [versus many] examples of things in their lives that they could control, which enhanced [reduced] their sense of personal control because this task feels easy [hard].

During an ostensible break participants were given the opportunity to select a pack of chocolates from a vending machine in a room next door. The vending machine was filled with packs of small assortment of chocolate (containing five chocolates of a single flavor) as well as packs of large assortment of chocolate (containing five chocolates of five different flavors, specifically all 5 flavors represented in the small-assortment packs). Participants’ choice of assortment type was recorded.

Six participants guessed the hypothesis, and 25 participants chose not to get a snack. These individuals, who were distributed equally among conditions, were excluded from the analysis, though including them does not change the results.

Results and Discussion

A binary logistic regression with choice of chocolate packet as the dependent variable (single flavor assortment = 0, multi flavor assortment = 1) revealed that personal control significantly impacted assortment size choice (Exp(B) = 2.5, SE = .42, Wald χ²(1) = 4.69, p = .03). As predicted, the choice share of the larger assortment was significantly greater in the low control condition (33.3%) than in the high control condition (16.7%). In other words, people in the low personal control condition were more likely to choose a large assortment of chocolates i) than people in the high personal control condition, and also ii) than would be expected under random choice.

These results show for the first time that lower control drives preference for larger assortments. This finding supports the basic hypothesis that a major reason why consumers prefer large over small assortments is that large assortments of choice options promise more control. With this relationship documented, we next shift our attention to the impact of procedural control on attenuating this preference. To do this, we move from people’s general, abstract sense of control used in the first experiment to consumer contexts where procedural control through concrete behavioral involvement, along with assortment size, commonly varies in real life.

Study 2

Study 2 expanded upon this initial evidence that sense of control indeed plays a role in consumers’ preference for large over small assortments by investigating the effects of procedural control in preference for large assortments. Specifically, this experiment examined the respective impact of decisional control (stemming from assortment size) and procedural control (stemming from behavioral involvement) on perceived control, as well as downstream effects that perceived control has on the attractiveness of the consumption experience. This extension tested two predictions: first, that procedural control through behavioral involvement meets consumers’ need for control sufficiently, and second, that this makes decisional control from large assortments irrelevant, thus eliminating their attractiveness advantage.

Method

One hundred and ten participants recruited through Amazon’s MTurk (45.5% women) imagined an ice cream parlor that offered high or low procedural control and a small or large assortment of toppings. Specifically, people read that they were at an ice cream shop where they [versus the clerk] would scoop one topping of their choice onto their ice cream, and that this ice cream shop had 3 [versus 15] different toppings available (not further specified).

Assortment Attractiveness Measure. Participants rated the attractiveness of the ice cream parlor (1 = not at all attractive to 6 = very attractive).

Perceived Control Measure. Afterwards, they responded to three items pertaining to perceived control, rating how much influence they would have, how responsible they would be, and to what degree the experience would be under their control (1 = not at all to 6 = very much, combined into an index of Perceived Control, α = .85).

Manipulation Check for Perceived Choice. Further, participants indicated how much choice they felt this process offered (1 = very little to 6 = a lot). To ensure that this perceived choice question tapped into perceptions of choice options stemming from the breadth of the assortment, not from the number of decisions involved in the activity of topping one’s ice cream, people rated how many options the assortment contained as well as how many decisions they would make at the ice cream parlor.
Results and Discussion

Nine participants failed an attention check regarding the number of topping options in the scenario and were thus excluded from the analysis.

Manipulation Check for Perceived Choice Results. As expected, there was a main effect of assortment size ($F(1, 97) = 24.79, p < .001$), such that people perceived more choice when given a large (versus small) assortment. As intended, this was driven by perceptions of the breadth of options in the assortment rather than of increased decision-making in the procedure.

Perceived Control. As predicted, there was a main effect of procedural control ($F(1, 97) = 4.07, p = .047$), such that participants in the high procedural control conditions, who imagined topping their ice cream themselves, perceived significantly more control ($M_{high} = 4.78, SD = .88$) than did participants in the low procedural control conditions, who imagined a clerk doing it ($M_{low} = 4.41, SD = 1.04$). This confirms the strength of the procedural control manipulation.

In addition, there was a main effect of assortment size ($F(1, 97) = 4.42, p = .038$), such that people who imagined having many topping options felt they had greater control ($M_{large} = 4.78, SD = .89$) than did people who imagined having few topping options ($M_{small} = 4.43, SD = 1.03$). Importantly, however, the effect of assortment size on perceived control was qualified by a significant interaction with procedural control ($F(1, 97) = 7.74, p = .006$).

Follow-up contrasts revealed that only under low procedural control did a large assortment produce greater perceived control ($M_{large} = 4.86, SD = .89$) than a small assortment ($M_{small} = 3.96, SD = 1.00; F(1, 97) = 10.95, p = .001$). However, as predicted, under high procedural control, people perceived an equal degree of control, regardless of whether the assortment was small ($M_{small} = 4.84, SD = .88$) or large ($M_{large} = 4.71, SD = .91; F(1, 97) = .25, p = .62$).

Assortment Attractiveness Results. Results for attractiveness were analogous to those for perceived control. While procedural control did not have a main effect on attractiveness ratings ($F(1, 97) = .79, p = .378$), there was a main effect of assortment size ($F(1, 97) = 10.33, p = .002$), such that an ice cream shop with many toppings was significantly more attractive ($M_{large} = 5.02, SD = .99$) than an ice cream shop with few toppings ($M_{small} = 4.44, SD = 1.01$). More importantly, as predicted, the effect of assortment size on attractiveness was qualified by a significant interaction with procedural control ($F(1, 97) = 6.01, p = .011$).

Follow-up contrasts revealed a pattern similar to that for perceived control. Only under low procedural control was a large assortment more attractive ($M_{large} = 5.39, SD = .94$) than a small assortment ($M_{small} = 4.26, SD = .92; F(1, 97) = 15.47, p < .001$). Under high procedural control, people found the ice cream shop parlor equally attractive, regardless of whether the assortment was small ($M_{small} = 4.59, SD = 1.08$) or large ($M_{large} = 4.71, SD = .94; F(1, 97) = .21, p = .644$).

Furthermore, a bootstrapping mediation analysis provided evidence for moderated mediation (Hayes 2013). Specifically, only under low procedural control circumstances did choice exert its positive effect on attractiveness by enhancing perceived control, ($B = .39, CI = .13 – .77$), but not under high procedural control circumstances ($B = -.05, CI = -.28 – .16$).

This study revealed two important findings. First, though assortment size affects perceptions of choice, it does not inevitably lead to greater attractiveness of larger assortments. Only under low procedural control did more options enhance feelings of control; under high procedural control, options did not add anything. Second, the attractiveness of larger assortments mirrors perceptions of control. Only under low procedural control was the larger assortment more attractive. A mediation analysis formally corroborated the idea that perceived control drives assortment attractiveness: People ultimately strive for control, and if they cannot actively exert procedural control, larger assortments of choice options are attractive as a control substitute. However, when they can actively exert control in the process, more choice options are meaningless.

Study 3

Study 3 tested the extension of these findings in a context where exerting high procedural control is more consequential and thus undesirable.

Method

One hundred and sixteen participants (50% women) recruited via MTurk considered going to a Korean restaurant where they would either have high or low procedural control and a small or large assortment of meals to choose from. Specifically, they imagined a Korean BBQ where they personally [versus a chef] grilled the food and they could select one of 3 [versus 15] meat options. Then they responded to the same focal dependent measures as in study 2.

Results and Discussion

Nine participants failed an attention check regarding the number of meat options in the scenario and were thus excluded from the analysis.

Perceived Control Results. As expected, there was a main effect of procedural control ($F(1, 103) = 44.30, p < .001$), such that high procedural control lead to higher perceived control ($M_{high} = 5.18, SD = .72$) than low procedural control did ($M_{low} = 4.04, SD = 1.03$). This confirms the success of the procedural control manipulation.

In this study, there was no main effect of assortment size ($F(1, 103) = 1.12, p = .292$), but once again there was a significant interaction between assortment size and procedural control ($F(1, 103) = 5.71, p = .019$).

Follow-up contrasts showed that, again, only under low procedural control did a large assortment produce greater perceived control ($M_{large} = 4.33, SD = .93$) than a small assortment ($M_{small} = 3.75, SD = 1.04; F(1, 103) = 6.39, p = .013$). Once more, under high procedural control, people perceived an equal degree of control, regardless of whether the assortment was small ($M_{small} = 5.28, SD = .63$) or large ($M_{large} = 5.06, SD = .81; F(1, 103) = .82, p = .37$).

Assortment Attractiveness Results. Again, the results for attractiveness mirrored those for perceived control; only under low procedural control was a large assortment marginally more attractive ($M_{large} = 5.25, SD = .65$) than a small assortment ($M_{small} = 4.66, SD = 1.05; F(1, 103) = 3.28, p = .07$). Under high procedural control, people found the restaurant equally attractive, regardless of whether it offered a large ($M_{large} = 3.87, SD = 1.58$) or a small assortment ($M_{small} = 4.00, SD = 1.54; F(1, 103) = .14, p = .71$).

These results corroborate the evidence that the impact of large assortments stems from an associated sense of control. Further, it affirms that if control is conferred otherwise—through procedural control—the effect of having more choice options within large assortments is obliterated.

Study 4

Study 4 translated the question into a realistic brand choice setting using conjoint methodology.

Method

Three hundred and twelve business undergraduates (41% women) completed a choice-based conjoint study (Green and Srinivasan 1990) in which they read about pizza products involving no, low, or high procedural control (between-subjects) and chose between brands that featured small, medium, or large assortments of flavor.
Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 45) / 647

Specifically, participants made decisions about from-scratch pizza kits (i.e., rolling out dough, spreading sauce, dispersing toppings) or design-your-own-pizza kits (i.e., only dispersing toppings) or frozen pizza (i.e., only removing pizza from package) and chose between pizza brands that offered either 3, 6, or 9 flavors.

They made a total of 12 choices from different sets of pizzas that varied in the focal attribute—assortment size—as well as brand, price, and product rating. From these choices, we derived part-worths (i.e., utility) of different product attributes and attribute levels.

Results and Discussion

Procedural control had a significant effect on the marginal utility of having a larger assortment of flavors. Specifically, the marginal utility of increasing assortment size from small to medium was significant only in the no control ($B = .16, SE = .05, p < .01$) and low control conditions ($B = .18, SE = .09, p < .05$), but not in the high control condition ($B = .14, SE = .09, p > .13$).

General Discussion

Contributing to the literature on personal control generally and the emerging field of co-production and Do-It-Yourself products specifically, procedural control may be a more powerful conveyor of perceived control than breadth of choice. Adding to research on assortments, process evidence suggests that perceived control is an underlying driver of assortment attractiveness. Further, although having procedural control renders assortment size irrelevant for perceptions of control and thus attractiveness, the effect of greater perceived control need not always be positive: If it poses the risk of worse outcomes, consumers dislike exerting procedural control. Offering a suggestion to practitioners, offering co-production or other means of procedural control may be a suitable way for firms to stay attractive if they cannot offer large assortments as long as co-production is not viewed as detrimental to the experience (as was the case for the restaurant).

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Online Chameleons: The effects of Stylistic Mimicry of Nonverbal Cues on Consumer-Brand Interactions Online
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Employee interactions with consumers influence consumer-brand relationships and assessments of service quality (Bitner 1990). Although many of these interactions still occur as face-to-face communications (FTFC), a substantial amount has shifted to online platforms, generally known as computer-mediated communications (CMC), such as live chats and social media. Yet a central issue in CMC is whether social meaning is affected by the absence of nonverbal cues resulting in an impersonal and cold medium of communication (e.g., Rice and Love 1987). Social information processing (SIP) theory suggests that although CMC lacks nonverbal cues, communicators adapt their language, style and other cues to facilitate a stronger relationship development process (Walther et al. 2005). One such adaption is linguistic mimicry, defined as the “convergence on linguistic dimensions such as vocabulary or jargon as a way of signaling affinity toward their communication partner” (Scissors et al. 2008). We focus on nonverbal linguistic mimicry, specifically emoji and punctuation use, as it has been understudied in the marketing literature. The overarching goal of the research is to explore the potential ways in which consumers react to being mimicked by an employee during an online interaction and how that affects perceptions of consumer trust, satisfaction and rapport, all of which are important building blocks in establishing consumer-brand relationships.

We base our hypotheses on the mimicry literature which states that mimicry can foster positive interpersonal relationships (Stel and Vonk 2010), increase feelings of rapport, liking, affiliation, and closeness (Lakin et al. 2003), and induce feelings of a much smoother and more enjoyable interaction (Lakin and Chartrand 2003). However, research also shows that mimicry can have negative outcomes when applied to the wrong person or situation (e.g., Liu et al. 2011). Specifically, research shows that mimicry does not increase liking when one mimics a non-affiliative expression, such as anger (van der Velde et al. 2010), or is reminded of money (Liu et al. 2011). Therefore, we expect that in positive service interactions, mimicry will result in higher perceptions of trust, satisfaction and rapport (H1), while in negative service interactions, the effects of mimicry will be mitigated (H2).

We test our hypotheses across three between-subjects experiments. Our first two studies tested effects of mimicry using emoji mimicry (Study 1) and punctuation mimicry (Study 2). Study 1 (n = 116) used a 2 (service context: positive, negative) x 2 (mimicry: present, absent) between-subjects design. Participants were told that they were looking to purchase a laptop online (positive service context) or had a problem with a recent laptop purchase (negative service context) and had contacted the computer company for help. Participants were then shown a chat window containing their conversation with the company. The conversation included the use of an emoji by the consumer (participant) and this emoji use was either copied or not in the employee’s response. Our results revealed significant mimicry x context interaction effects on trust (F (1, 109) = 4.775, p<0.05), satisfaction (F (1, 109) = 4.061, p<0.05) and rapport (F (1, 109) = 3.868, p<0.06). In positive interactions, mimicry increased perceptions of employee trust, satisfaction, and rapport. These effects were mitigated in negative service interactions. These results support H1 and H2.

Study 2 (n= 106) adopted the same design as Study 1, but instead of using emoji, the customer added “!!!”; this punctuation use was either mimicked or not by the employee. We observed a marginally significant mimicry x context interaction for satisfaction (F (1, 99) = 3.145, p<0.08) and a significant interaction for rapport (F (1, 99) = 3.983, p<0.05), but there were no significant effects on trust. However, in contrast to H1, in the positive service context, mimicry reduced satisfaction and rapport. These effects were mitigated in the negative service context, consistent with H2.

We speculate that the difference in the effects of mimicry types are due to perceptions of rudeness (i.e., flaming). Research shows that the use of multiple punctuation marks in messages correlates with perceptions of flaming (Turnage 2007) between interactants online. In contrast, emoji can be used to mitigate perceptions of flaming (Thompson 1996) by expressing easily identifiable emotions. Therefore, we expect rudeness perceptions to mediate the effects of mimicry (H3).

To test H3, we ran a 2 (mimicry: present, absent) x 2 (mimicry type: emoji, punctuation) between-subjects experiments with a new, neutral service context (consumer had a question about his or her order number). Study 3 (n= 150; student population) results indicate a significant mimicry presence x type interaction on satisfaction (F (1,144) = 6.275, p<.05), rapport (F (1,144) = 9.579, p<.05), and rudeness perceptions (F (1,144) = 4.934, p<.05). There was also a significant main effect of mimicry type (F (1, 144) = 6.001, p <.05) on trust, but the interaction with mimicry presence was not significant. As expected, participants reported higher perceptions of trustworthiness, satisfaction, and rapport and lower perceptions of rudeness of employees who mimicked their emoji use than those who mimicked their punctuation use. However, there were no significant differences in perceptions in the no mimicry condition. To investigate the mediating role of rudeness perceptions, we ran 3 mediation tests using Hayes’s (2012) PROCESS macro. As Figure 1 shows, rudeness perceptions mediated the relationships between mimicry type and all three DVs, thus supporting H3.

Our research makes several theoretical contributions. First, we extend the literature on mimicry and marketing communications by showing the effects of mimicry of nonverbal cues on interactions online. We show that not all online mimicry results in positive outcomes, therefore, expanding the mimicry literature on the moderating effects of mimicry type. We also provide a possible explanation for understanding the negative effects of punctuation mimicry, namely rudeness perceptions. Second, we expand the literature on consumer-brand relationships by identifying a possible tool for building successful relationships online. We show that successful implementation of online mimicry can foster positive consumer-brand relationships online, helping compensate for the lack of nonverbal cues in CMC. Finally, we expand the literature on trust formation by examining an online behavior that can build or deplete trust.

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EXHIBITED ABSTRACT

While extensive literature has examined consumer responses to firm and product failure (e.g., Folkes and Kotsos 1986), less research has considered consumer failure. Literature on consumer failure has been limited to failure in isolation of firm interactions (Baumeister 2002), or the impact of failure experienced during firm interactions on subsequent firm interactions (e.g., Folkes 1984). Our research leverages the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) domain to show that consumers’ own failures influence how they perceive subsequent firm offerings addressing the failed task. While failure in this context has not been studied, evidence for potential consumer responses to such failure is mixed. From a goals perspective, task failure should elicit negative affect (Bagozzi and Pieters 1998), which is linked to negative consumption experiences (Alford and Sherrell 1996). However, from an attribution perspective, failure often signals increased task difficulty (Weiner 1985) which should increase satisfaction with subsequent firm completion of the task (Patterson, Johnson, and Spreng 1996).

To explain these competing hypotheses, we identified consumer mindset (Dweck and Leggett 1988) as a potential moderator. Those with a growth mindset believe that intelligence and ability are malleable and can be improved increased effort (Dweck 2006). They appreciate the ability of others and view failure as an opportunity to learn and improve (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck 2007). Conversely, those with a fixed mindset believe that intelligence and ability are relatively stable and frequently experience negative affect in response to failure (Dweck, Chiu, and Hong 1995). This suggests that while growth-minded individuals view failure as a learning opportunity, fixed-minded individuals interpret the same situation as a threat to their self and confirmation of their lack of competence.

Self-efficacy was identified as another potential moderator as those with high self-efficacy tend to have higher involvement in a consumption domain (Xie, Bagozzi, and Troye 2008), which has been shown to amplify both positive and negative consumption experiences (Richins and Bloch 1991). Low self-efficacy, on the other hand, results in low involvement and less extreme reactions to failure (Weaver and Brickman 1974). We thus anticipate that consumers with high self-efficacy will have more involvement in the failed task, resulting in stronger responses to their failure and subsequent firm recovery. Additionally, we identified shame a potential mediating process to explain our hypothesized interaction effects because it is elicited by failure (McGregor and Elliot 2005), and is differentially impacted by mindset (Tracy and Robins 2006) and self-efficacy (Baldwin, Baldwin, and Ewald 2006).

We leveraged the DIY domain to test our hypotheses because DIY attempts often result in failure followed by elicitation of professional services to complete the failed task (Wolf and McQuitty 2011). We conducted four studies across two tasks and two populations. First, to reconcile our competing main effect hypotheses, Study 1 employed an undergraduate sample (n=75) and a technology task. First, to reconcile our competing main effect hypotheses, Study 1 employed an undergraduate sample (n=75) and a technology task. Results from Study 1 revealed a significant impact of mindset (M = 6.42, M = 5.68; F(1,154) = 9.71, p = .002), while again showing no effect for those in a fixed mindset (F(1,154) = 86, NS).

Study 2 used an Mturk sample (n=160) and a plumbing-related task to confirm the moderating effect of mindset (measured variable) on post-failure carryover effects (F(1,156) = 13.9, p < .001), while the effect for those with more fixed mindsets was nonsignificant (F(1,156) = 84, NS).

In Study 3, we replicated interaction effects from Study 2 by manipulating mindset to increase causal interpretability (F(1,154) = 8.17, p = .005). We used an Mturk sample (n=348) and added measures for self-efficacy, shame, and potential competing affective mediators (Bolton, Keh, and Alba 2010). An ANOVA of failure, mindset, self-efficacy and their interactions on firm satisfaction revealed a three-way interaction (F(1,340) = 3.86, p = .05) in which the previous two-way interaction (failure x mindset) emerged only for those with high self-efficacy (+1SD). As predicted, the interaction for those with low self-efficacy (-1SD) was nonsignificant. Hayes’ (2013) PROCESS Model 12 revealed that shame mediated the relationship between failure and satisfaction for those with a growth mindset and average (B = 0.14, SE = 0.06, 95% CI = [0.03, .28]) or above average self-efficacy (B = 0.18, SE = 0.09, 95% CI = [0.03, .38]), but not for those with low self-efficacy (B = 0.09, SE = 0.08, 95% CI = [-.05, .27]). Similarly, mediation was observed for those with a fixed mindset and low (B = -0.25, SE = 0.09, 95% CI = [-.45, -.11]) or average self-efficacy (B = -0.11, SE = 0.05, 95% CI = [-.24, -.02]), but not high self-efficacy (B = 0.03, SE = 0.08, 95% CI = [-.12, .19]).

Overall, our findings show that consumer failures in isolation from firm interactions can impact firm outcomes. Specifically, we demonstrate that prior consumer failure positively impacts customer perceptions of firm actions for growth-minded individuals, while fixed-minded individuals have more adverse responses. Additionally, we show that those with a growth mindset are less satisfied with firm actions when they have not attempted the task. This suggests that it is not just failure that impacts satisfaction, but rather consumers’ overall experience in the domain. Additionally, we find that these reactions are accentuated when task self-efficacy is high, but attenuated when self-efficacy is low. We also show that the previous effects are partially mediated by shame. By identifying shame as the mediating process in these interactions, we provide initial insights for managers to reduce negative outcomes following DIY failures. Reducing shame, priming a growth mindset, or reducing task-related efficacy should thus represent viable strategies for firms to elicit more positive outcomes following consumer failure.

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Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 45) / 651


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Our perceptions of control fluctuate throughout our daily lives. For instance, experiences of putting in personal effort and obtaining the intended results can reinforce the belief that one has control. Conversely, being exposed to uncontrollable life events or being deprived of choice options can threaten this belief. In this paper, we show these incidental changes in perceived control can further affect how people make subsequent decisions. Specifically, we find that increasing perceived control can reduce the influence of cognitive feelings on judgment, thereby attenuating the effects of fluency. In contrast, lowering perceived control can facilitate the effects of fluency by increasing people’s reliance on feelings when making judgments.

Prior research suggests that greater perceived control can cause people to become less vigilant in making evaluations because they tend to think of successful outcomes and engage in self-aiding thoughts (Bandura 1993; Skinner 1995). For instance, research on the illusion of control (Langer 1975; Biner et al. 2008) finds that people expect better outcomes when they believe they have control over the situation. This lowered vigilance in turn can reduce people’s affective reaction toward decision-relevant information (e.g. Geer, Davidson, & Gatchel, 1970; Glass et al., 1973), because affective events have less emotional impact when people are not attending to them (Pessoa, Kastner, and Ungerleider 2002; Kahneman et al. 2004). In contrast, decreased control can increase people’s vigilance, where they become more cautious in searching for all decision-relevant information in order to avoid making poor decisions (e.g. Fischer, Schulz-Hardt, & Frey, 2008). Given that fluency (disfluency) generates positive (negative) feelings (Schwarz 2004) to influence evaluations, we postulate that people perceiving high (vs. low) control would be less prone to fluency effects. We conducted four experiments to find support for our predictions.

In experiment 1, we manipulated incidental perceived control by having participants recall a time when they had high or low control (Whitson and Galinsky 2008) and measured their attitudes towards a chocolate product in an advertisement. Fluency was manipulated by using either a clear or blurry font (Labroo and Kim 2009) and demonstrate across three experiments, that this is not the case when people are pursuing a goal. This is because people pursuing a goal (e.g., become kinder. The data revealed a main effect of fluency ($F(1, 200) = 4.3, p < .04$) and a significant interaction effect ($F(1, 200) = 5.14, p < .02$). Simple effects analyses showed that people feeling low control liked the product more in the high (vs. low) fluency condition ($F(1, 200) = 9.52, p < .002$), whereas those feeling high control did not show any difference ($F = 0.02, NS$). The results supported our predictions where that those feeling low control were more likely to incorporate their feelings of fluency into their judgments.

Experiment 2 replicated the effect while employing a different control manipulation and using a non-hedonic stimulus to increase the robustness of our effect. Specifically, we manipulated incidental control by having participants read an article on how effort (high control condition) or genes (low control condition) are responsible for people’s life outcomes (Cutright and Samper 2014) what role should products play in helping consumers pursue their goals (e.g., losing weight, maintaining a clean home and had them evaluate how long a new exercise routine would take for an average adult (Song and Schwarz 2008). Fluency was manipulated by using different fonts in describing the exercise routine. The data again revealed a significant interaction effect ($F(1, 156) = 4.71, p < .03$). Simple effects analyses showed that people feeling low control expected the exercise to take longer when described in a disfluent (vs. fluent) font ($F(1, 156) = 6.61, p < .01$). However, people feeling high control showed no difference ($F = .6, NS$). Furthermore, two post tests were conducted to rule out alternative explanations including construal level, general mood, risk preference, or confidence (all $ps > .11$).

Experiment 3 provided initial process evidence for our effect. Towards this goal, we manipulated perceived control as in Experiment 2 and had people evaluate the chocolate product as in Experiment 1, while also measuring participants’ affect after finishing the evaluation. First, there was a significant interaction effect ($F(1, 197) = 4.26, p < .04$), where the effect of fluency was significant only in the low control condition ($F(1, 197) = 5.94, p < .02$) but not in the high control condition ($F = .2, NS$). A moderated mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro (model 8, Preacher & Hayes, 2004) for formal significance tests of indirect effects are rarely conducted. After a brief overview of mediation, we argue the importance of directly testing the significance of indirect effects and provide SPSS and SAS macros that facilitate estimation of the indirect effect with a normal theory approach and a bootstrap approach to obtaining confidence intervals, as well as the traditional approach advocated by Baron and Kenny (1986 further showed that affect mediated the effect of control and fluency on people’s evaluation (95% CI: [-.0.148, -.0033]).

Finally, in Experiment 4, we explicat the underlying process by manipulating thinking styles directly. The procedure was similar to Experiment 3 except that before seeing the chocolate ad, participants were either asked to rely on their feelings or the information content. We expected that our previous results would be replicated in the information-focus condition, but that there would be a reversal of the effect in the feeling-focus condition (Tsai and Thomas 2011). As expected, there was a significant three-way interaction effect ($F(1, 436) = 9.49, p < .002$). Post-hoc analyses indicated that the interaction effect of control and fluency was significant both within the information focus ($F(1, 436) = 5.22, p < .02$) and the feeling focus ($F(1, 436) = 4.29, p < .04$) condition. Specifically, in the information focus condition, fluency had a significant effect for those feeling low control ($F(1, 436) = 3.9, p < .05$), but not for those feeling high control ($F = 1.64, NS$). However, in the feeling focus condition, fluency had a significant effect for those feeling high control ($F(1, 436) = 8.67, p < .003$) but not for those feeling low control ($F < 0.1, NS$).

In short, we found that higher perceived control leads to decreased fluency effects by weakening positive affect induced by fluent processing. However, lower control led to the predicted fluency effects, because such feelings are unconsciously misattributed to the judgment variable itself. Furthermore, when explicitly instructed to pay attention to feelings, fluency increased like in the higher control condition, whereas it eliminated the fluency effect in the lower control condition by disrupting the misattribution process.

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A Carbon Price by Another Name May Seem Sweeter: Consumers Prefer Upstream Offsets to Equivalent Downstream Taxes

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

How do consumers react to regulations on carbon emissions? Increasing the cost of carbon intensive activities such as flying should influence consumer choices, but does it matter how these costs are labeled? Previous literature shows that costs labeled as “taxes” are more odious to consumers than other equivalent financial costs, and this is particularly true for political conservatives (Hardisty & Weber, 2010; Sussman & Olivola, 2011). In this paper, we explore a novel dimension of carbon price labeling: whether the regulation is described as an “upstream” charge on the production and importation of fossil fuels or a “downstream” charge on goods and services, and how this “upstream” vs “downstream” labeling interacts with other frames.

According to conventional economic theory, entities regulated upstream will pass the carbon price through to consumers, assuming there is no way to scrub out or remove the emissions from the fossil fuel. Similarly, if consumers facing a downstream carbon price respond by reducing their demand, producers will then see the same reduction in profits as if they had faced the carbon price upstream and correspondingly passed on the cost to consumers.

Carbon regulation raises the price of carbon producing activities to make them less economically appealing, so as to induce emitters to find better, cheaper, faster ways of cutting emissions. Carbon regulation also sends a message to consumers that society thinks these activities are bad (similar to a “sin tax” for cigarettes), inducing consumers to voluntarily reduce their carbon emissions or choose environmentally friendly options. This latter purpose, sometimes called the communication of “injunctive norms,” has been found to be important for decreasing energy usage in residential homes in California (Shultz et al., 2007). Depending on whether and how it is communicated, moving carbon regulation upstream may hide this injunctive norm from consumers, and thus decrease the effectiveness of the regulation for changing consumer behavior.

On the flip side, some countries or states may be looking to make carbon regulation more attractive to consumers. For example, one country may implement a carbon price for air travel (in and out of that country), while a neighboring country does not. In this case, consumers would face a choice between paying carbon fee when traveling to one country but not the other. The country that implements the carbon regulation may want to maintain consumer demand for air travel to the country, and therefore look for a frame that is most appealing (or least unappealing).

These issues are especially relevant in the context of policies recently adopted by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the UN specialized agency for the sector, one of the largest and fastest growing contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions. The sector produces emissions on par with a top-ten emitting nation, and these are expected to increase three to four times over 2010 levels by 2040, based on current trends. In October 2016, ICAO agreed on a package of policies, including a market-based measure, to limit annual emissions for the entire international civil aviation sector over 2021-2035 at 2019-2020 levels. The Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) is voluntary for countries over its first phase (2021-2025), through mandatory for associated airlines, and mandatory thereafter. Many countries are still deciding whether or not to opt in and thus impose carbon offsetting requirements on arriving and departing flights. Airlines and their regulators will also have to determine how best to communicate (explicitly or otherwise) the associated carbon costs to their customers.

In a series of three studies, we test upstream vs. downstream carbon regulation labels on consumer choice in the aviation industry, along with three different policy frames: tax, permit, and offset. In combination, these two point of regulation frames and three policy frames result in six unique carbon price labels. We compare these six labels with two control conditions: a “no-fee” control in which there is no carbon price, and a “no-information” control in which there is an additional price but it is not highlighted or explained to consumers in any way. In Study 1, we compared these eight conditions in an exploratory fashion and found that the “upstream offset” combination was more desirable to consumers than any other combination of frames, and that the “downstream tax” combination was the worst. In Study 2, we replicated the key results and also found that the policy description is critical for the observed framing effects. In Study 3, we again replicated these results and further found that they are moderated by political party, such that self-identified Republicans show a strong distaste for the downstream tax frame.

Across three studies, consumers were more likely to choose a flight with a carbon price when the additional price was described as a “carbon offset for aviation fuel production and import” than when it was described using other frames, such as a “carbon tax for aviation travel”. Notably, this upstream offset frame was popular enough among consumers that it counteracted the expected preference to avoid the $14 additional cost of the fee.

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Presenting Health Information:
The Influence of Attribute and Numerical Framing on Health Risk Perception

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Health information are able to increase positive changes in health behavior among large populations (Fife-Schaw and Abraham 2009; Wakefield et al. 2010) due to the relationship between health risk perceptions and behavior intentions (Atkinson et al. 2015; Brewer et al. 2007; Dillard et al. 2012; Heideker and Steul-Fischer 2015; Rudisill 2013).

Scholars seldom analysed the effects of attribute and numerical framing on health risk perception for services like insurances. The use of framing creates differences in health risk perception among consumers (Menon, Raghubir, and Agrawal 2008, p. 996; Melas et al. 2012; Peters, Hart, andFraenkel (2011). Framing is the presentation of objective equivalent information in semantically different ways (Krishnamurthy, Carter, and Blair 2001). Levin, Schneider, and Gaeth (1998) categorize framing effects in the types of risky choice, goal and attribute framing. Numerical framing is an own framing effect beside theses and refers to changes in the interpretation of numerical information when describing it in different but equal frames (Kwong and Wong 2014).

In our two studies, we examine the effects of attribute framing and numerical framing of periodontitis (study 1) and the effects of attribute framing and numerical presentation of private accidents (study 2) on health risk perception. According to Gigerenzer et al. (2007) and Peters, Hart, and Fraenkel (2011), negative attribute frames increase health risk perception more than positive attribute frames (H1). Janiszewski, Silk, and Cooke (2003) impute fundamental character of any selling proposition to attribute information. Thus, we suggest an increase of purchase intention for the offered health insurance of dental supplement insurance (study 1) and private accident insurance (study 2): The higher the health risk perception, the higher the purchase intention for health insurance (H2). Regarding numerical framing, different studies have examined the advantages of frequencies compared to percentages (Gigerenzer and Edwards 2003; Peters, Hart, and Fraenkel 2011). For technical goods, Koukova and Srivastava (2009) illustrate that attribute and numerical framing of the impact information can influence consumers’ perception and behaviors. We assume adequate results for health risk perception: Negative attribute frames with high relative frequency will increase health risk perception more than negative attribute frames with percentages (H3). Drawing on Stone et al. (2015) who emphasized graphical display of icons to increase perceived risk, we suggest that negative attribute frames with text and a pictograph increase health risk perception more than negative attribute frames with plain text (H4).

A total of 222 participants (61.3% female; mean age = 23.47 years) participated in study 1 with a 2 (attribute frame: negative vs. positive) x 3 (numerical frame: percentage vs. high relative frequency vs. low relative frequency) between-subjects design. In the negative attribute treatments, information was given that 9 out of 100 people are injured through private accidents during leisure time or in the household compared to the positive attribute treatments where 91 out of 100 people are not injured. An offer for private accident insurance followed with a monthly price of €10.89. The same scales were used for participants’ perceived level of health risk perception and purchase intention as in study 1.

The results of study 2 underline the significant influence of attribute framing (F(1,148)= 6.35, β= 1.45, p= .013) (H1) on health risk perception. There is no direct significant effect of numerical presentation (F(1,148)= 0.46, β= 0.92, p= >.05) on health risk perception. The interaction between attribute framing and numerical presentation is significant (F(1,148)= 6.19, β= -1.44, p= .014, η²= .040) as hypothesized in H4. Compared to health information with plain text, information with pictographs increase the effect of negative attribute on health risk perception. Health risk perception has a highly significant influence on purchase intention for private accident insurance (β= 0.15, t= 2.29, p= .024) (H2).

We recommend negative attribute frames for health information to higher health risk perceptions. The use of higher relative frequency in negative attribute frames increases this effect and increases health risk perception more than percentages (Koukova and Srivastava 2009). We approve the addition of pictographs in health information to higher health risk perception. Further research should replicate these findings for other health risks and should focus on other methods of presenting frequencies to raise health risk perception. These investigations could temper the difficulties of understanding health information because of their presentation and could back the largely theoretical research area of the influence of graphs on risk perception, as mentioned by Lipkus (2007).

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Experiences and Material Purchases Differently Evoke Envious Reactions

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Envy can comprise two forms: a benign form, serving a positive societal force, and a malicious form, serving a negative societal force and the two can exist simultaneously (Van de Ven, Zeelenberg and Pieters 2009; Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters 2010; 2011). However, the conditions predicting the two are relatively unexplored. Drawing upon literature documenting different psychological processing of 1) material versus experiential purchases (Carter and Gilovich 2010; 2012), 2) self-focus versus other-focus (Mussweiler 2001) and 3) theories of envy as a reaction to status threat (Salovey 1991), three effects are expected. First, experiential purchases tend to evoke more benign envy in comparison to material purchases. Second, when consumers engage in self-focused comparisons experiences become associated with higher levels of malicious envy. Third, perceived desirability of the purchase to other people is likely to enhance malicious envy for material purchases.

Study 1. The aim of Study 1 was to test whether consumers felt more benign envy for experiences. Sixty-two students participating were randomly asked to either recall an experiential (n = 32) or a material purchase (n = 30) that another person made that caused them to react with envy. Next, benign and malicious envy was measured following instructions by Van de Ven et al. (2011). A t-test showed that people felt more benign envy related to experiences than material purchases (Mmaterial purchase = 3.60 vs. Mexperimental purchase = 4.44, t = 1.99, p <.05).

Study 2. The purpose of Study 2 was to examine the variables type of purchase (experiential versus material purchases) as well as with how type of comparison (self- versus other-focus) would affect benign and malicious envy. One hundred and ninety-six students participated in the study. We used a 2 (experiential vs. material purchase) X 2 (self vs. other-focus) between subjects design. Participants’ attentional focus on the self-versus others was primed using a method presented by Johnson, Nolde and Leonardis (1996). Replicating the procedure outlined by Van de Ven et al. (2011), participants’ envy was evoked by a story of a peer acquiring a phone (iPhone) but we also added a condition of an experience (a two week long vacation to Brazil). Benign and malicious envy was measured in the same manner as in Study 1. A two-way ANOVA using type of product (experiential, material) and type of comparison (other-focused, self-focused) as between-subjects variables and benign envy as a dependent variable, yielded a significant main effect for type of product, F(1, 190) = 57.30, p < .001, with experiences eliciting more benign envy (M= 4.27) than material purchases (M= 2.51). All other effects were non-significant. A two-way ANOVA using type of product (experiential, material) and type of comparison (other-focused, self-focused) as between-subjects variables and malicious envy as a dependent variable, yielded a significant interaction effect between type of product and type of comparison, F(1, 190) = 6.14, p = .000, a main effect for type of product, F(1, 190) = 6.35, p = .013, and a main effect for type of comparison, F(1, 190) = 8.96, p = .003. The results showed that self-focused comparison resulted in significantly greater levels of malicious envy for experiential purchases (M= 3.49) than other-focused comparisons (M= 1.91), or self-focused comparisons related to material purchases (M= 2.02), or other-focused comparisons related to material purchases (M= 2.25).

Study 3. The purpose of Study 3 was to investigate further and validate the role of other- vs. self-focused as well as investigate the role of perceived desirability of the purchase. One hundred and twenty-five students participated in the study. The experience and material purchases as well as the envy eliciting story and measures of envy were the same as in Study 2 (Van de Ven et al. 2011). Participants were also asked questions related how much they desired the purchase and estimate how much they thought other people desire it. We measured self vs. other focus using a scale by Gibbons and Buunk (1999). Using Hayes (2013) PROCESS model (Model 3) we estimated the impact of type of product (experiential, material), type of comparison (other-focused, self-focused), and perceived desirability (to self vs. others) on benign envy. As we had separate scales self-focused and other-focused comparisons, as well as for the perceived desirability of the purchase for the self vs. for others, we ran a total of four different models; self-self, self-other, other-self and other-other. The results revealed only a significant main effect for type of purchase (as earlier). We found a significant interaction effect between type of purchase and desirability of purchase to others so that material purchases that are attractive to others are associated with lower levels of benign envy, B = -.45, t = -1.95, p = .05., as well as as a marginally significant interaction effect between type of purchase and other-focused comparisons, B = .65, t = 1.88, p = .06, so that experiential purchases that were other-focused were associated with greater levels of benign envy.

Malicious envy. Using Hayes (2013) PROCESS model (Model 3) we estimated the same models using malicious envy as a dependent variable. The results revealed only a significant main effect for self-focused comparisons, so that self-focused comparisons were associated with greater levels of malicious envy (B = .35, t = 2.09, p = .04); all other effects were non-significant. Thus, we found that material purchases that are attractive to others is associated with lower levels of benign envy.

This research yields two main contributions to literature on envious reactions. First, attentional focus on the self, seem to be associated with maliciously envious feelings while attentional focus on others reduce levels of malicious envy. Second, experiences seem to inherently evoke more benign envy but at the same time these are subject to more malicious envy when combined with a self-focus. Also, the literature has assumed that the envyier should desire the envious purchase and estimate how much they desire the envious purchase. However, the conditions predicting the two are relatively unexplored. Drawing upon literature documenting different psychological processing of 1) material versus experiential purchases (Carter and Gilovich 2010; 2012), 2) self-focus versus other-focus (Mussweiler 2001) and 3) theories of envy as a reaction to status threat (Salovey 1991), three effects are expected. First, experiential purchases tend to evoke more benign envy in comparison to material purchases. Second, when consumers engage in self-focused comparisons experiences become associated with higher levels of malicious envy. Third, perceived desirability of the purchase to other people is likely to enhance malicious envy for material purchases.

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Experiences and Material Purchases Differently Evoke Envious Reactions


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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In this work, we set out to demonstrate when consumers will respond positively to genetic modification and, consequently, when they will perceive the benefits that a GMO offers. A growing body of research has demonstrated that people prefer natural things to less natural alternatives (Rozin 2005, 2006; Rozin et al. 2004). In fact, merely labeling a food product as natural can elicit a positive response from consumers (Rozin et al. 2004). Furthermore, research suggests the preference for natural things appears to be ultimately rooted in people’s moral values regarding the natural environment (Rozin et al. 2004; Sjoberg 2000). Like the moral motivation underlying the preference for natural, evidence suggests that there is a strong moral motivation underlying the opposition to genetic modification (Bredahl 2001; Frewer et al. 2013; Scott et al. 2016). For example, the moral response to genetic modification tends to stem from the notion that those who create GMOs are tampering with, or violating, nature (Sjoberg 2000). Where this poses a challenge for firms is that the moral obligation to nature is unconditional and thus people believe it should be upheld regardless of potential benefits (Baron and Spranca 1997; Scott et al. 2016). This finding is particularly important because it suggests that consumers may even be responsive to implicit benefits in GMOs, and thus overriding the moral response to genetic modification may facilitate consumers’ ability to perceive a GMO’s benefits. The question is, when would this occur? It is our contention that the answer to this question begins with what it means for something to be natural, and in particular, how people differentially reason about manmade and naturally occurring objects.

Drawing on research that distinguishes how people reason about manmade objects (e.g., cars, smartphones) and naturally occurring objects (e.g., apples, trees), we are the first to isolate the moral barrier to perceiving the benefits of GMOs, and in doing so, identify simple cues that marketers can adopt to overcome this barrier. Specifically, we propose that the distinction between natural and manmade objects becomes particularly relevant to GMOs in how evaluations are differentially impacted by human intervention. Human intervention through genetic modification violates a natural entity’s essence, rendering it unnatural. Given that people prefer natural and possess moral values about the preservation of nature (Rozin et al. 2004; Sjoberg 2000), they tend to weigh these values over any functional benefits that result from human intervention (Scholderer and Frewer 2003; Scott et al. 2016). However, for manmade objects, human intervention is both normative and purposeful. Given the emphasis on a manmade object’s intended function, human intervention tends to promote inferences about the purpose and functional implications of the intervention (Bloom 1996; 1998; Dennett 1987). If the object is perceived to be able to achieve its intended function, then arguably, this object is “good.” Hence, it stands to reason that if viewed as a manmade object, a GMO may be evaluated in terms of its functional benefits more so than its moral status.

The core objective of Study 1 was to demonstrate that consumers will respond more positively towards a GMO when they are cued to view it as manmade as opposed to natural. Participants (N = 175) were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (Label: GMO vs. Naturally Grown) × 2 (Product Cue: Natural Cue vs. Manmade Cue) between-subjects factorial design. Participants viewed an ad that either stated that the product was naturally grown or genetically modified. Also, the ad in the natural (manmade) cue condition depicted the product as fruit hanging from a tree (packaged). As predicted, purchase intentions were higher for the GMO that was presented as a manmade product (i.e., packaged) compared to the GMO that was presented as a natural product (i.e., fruit hanging from a tree).

Study 2 was designed to test whether cueing consumers to view the GMO as manmade also reduced moral opposition. Participants (N = 160) were recruited at a farmer’s market and randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (Label: GMO vs. Naturally Grown) × 2 (Product Cue: Natural Cue vs. Manmade Cue) between-subjects factorial design. Participants viewed an apple that was either noted as being naturally grown or genetically modified. Also, the apple in the natural (manmade) cue condition was red (blue). Consistent with Study 1, purchase intentions were higher for the GMO that looked like a manmade product (i.e., blue) compared to the GMO that looked like a natural product (i.e., red). Furthermore, consumers reported less moral opposition towards the GMO that looked like a manmade product compared to the GMO that looked like a natural product.

Study 3 was designed to test whether cueing consumers to view the GMO as manmade overrides the moral response and subsequently allows consumers to perceive the benefits it offers. Participants (N = 200) were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (Label: GMO vs. Naturally Grown) × 2 (Promotional Cue: Natural Cue vs. Manmade Cue) between-subjects factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to evaluate either four manmade or natural products. Then, participants evaluated another product (Corn Flakes) that was either noted as containing corn that was naturally grown or genetically modified. As predicted, purchase intentions were higher for the GMO cereal that was positioned amongst manmade products compared to the GMO that was positioned amongst natural products. Furthermore, consumers reported greater perceived utilitarian benefits and less moral opposition towards the GMO that looked like a manmade product compared to the GMO that looked like a natural product. Finally, a conditional serial mediation analysis revealed that moral judgments and perceived utilitarian benefits serially mediated the effect of Promotional Cue on purchase intentions for the GMO but not the natural product.

REFERENCES


Does Repeating Prompt Retreating? How the Structure of Initial Charitable Contributions Impacts the Magnitude of Subsequent Support

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Charitable organizations routinely struggle with gift and donor attrition, and retention rates have averaged below 50% for the past decade (Levis et al. 2016). Thus, although the majority of charitable giving research has focused on antecedents of initial contributions, such as charitable appeals (e.g., Macdonnell and White 2015; Smith et al. 2013), prosocial identity (e.g., Gneezy et al. 2012), and default amounts (e.g., Goswami and Urminsky 2017), it is critical to understand not only what motivates consumers’ donation behavior, but also what sustains it.

How can marketers shape consumers’ initial donation experience to increase the magnitude of future charitable gifts? We explore how a simple modification in donation structure (while holding the total donation amount constant) can impact charitable giving: whether the contribution is made as a single one-time, lump-sum gift or as a series of smaller gifts divided over time in recurring payments.

Past literature offers competing predictions about the effects of these two donation structures. On one hand, prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979) and hedonic editing (Thaler 1985) predict that consumers will derive greater happiness from segregating (versus integrating) positive events. This suggests that recurring, separate donations would heighten consumers’ donation happiness relative to lump-sum donations. Additional research shows that charitable giving serves as a positive self-signal of one’s prosocial character (e.g., Savary et al. 2015), which may be amplified by the greater frequency of making recurring gifts. Under either theory, recurring donors should experience more happiness or commitment to the charity, both of which would place upward pressure on their subsequent gift.

On the other hand, the anchoring literature suggests that recurring donations may decrease future donor support. Under this theory, the numerical value of one’s most recent donation amount would function as an anchor (Epley and Gilovich 2010). The most recent donation for recurring donors, however, is smaller than the most recent amount salient to lump-sum donors. Because consumers’ future decisions are often consistent with past behavior (e.g., Bentler and Speckart 1981; Ouellette and Wood 1998; Taylor 1975), recurring donors’ smaller anchor would result in smaller subsequent donations relative to lump-sum donors.

We conducted three studies to test these conflicting predictions. In Study 1, MTurk participants (n=159) imagined making an online charitable gift, totaling the same amount (i.e., $30): a one-time donation of $30; a recurring monthly donation of $5 for six months; or the same recurring donation, with notifications after each donation is made. Participants were asked if and how much they would donate after these initial gifts. Although the structure of the initial donation did not impact participants’ reported likelihood to make an additional donation (F(2,156)=5.69, p=.067), it did impact the estimated size of their predicted future donation (F(2,156)=35.85, p<.001). Lump-sum donors predicted that they would give significantly more (M=$18.73; SD=$14.91) than both types of recurring donors (with notifications: M=$4.24, SD=$4.39; p<.001; with notifications: M=$5.92, SD=$8.05; p<.001), which did not significantly differ from one another. Thus, consistent with the anchoring account, recurring donations resulted in lower subsequent charitable support.

Study 2 replicates our prior effects and directly compares the competing processes. After completing an unrelated study, MTurk participants (n=149) learned that real donations would be made on their behalf and were randomly assigned to one of three donation conditions: a single $.50 donation made on the day of the survey; a recurring $.10 donation every other day for ten days; or the same recurring donation, with email notifications following each of the five $.10 donations. All donations were actually made, in accordance with participants’ charity selections. Ten days later, participants completed a follow-up survey and were given the opportunity to donate a portion of their participation payment ($5.00) to the same charity.

Though all participants correctly recalled the objective amount of their total initial donation ($.50), lump-sum donors perceived their initial charitable contributions as subjectively larger (M=25.71; 0–Very Little, 100–Very Much) than those making recurring donations (with notifications: M=13.33, p=.010; without notifications: M=17.98, p=.091), which did not differ from one another. Moreover, differences in perceived contribution size mediated the size of additional donations ten days later, with recurring donors appearing to anchor on the perceived smaller magnitude of their initial donation when determining their subsequent giving, resulting in reduced charitable contributions relative to one-time donors (PROCESS model 4; 10,000 bootstrap samples; with notifications: b=−.027, CI95%=[−.060, −.006]; without notifications: b=−.016, CI95%=[−.042, −.001]). However, neither happiness about the donation nor commitment to the charity had any mediating effect on the subsequent donation amount.

Adapting Study 2’s paradigm, Study 3 modifies the initial donation to be both consequential and voluntary, with participants opting to spend time completing an unpaid task in order to make a donation to charity. Additionally, Study 3 manipulates the salience of donors’ total cumulative contribution prior to the charitable request (i.e., displaying their total amount given to date before their second donation decision was made). If recurring donors are anchoring on a smaller amount, then shifting attention to their total amount given (i.e., a larger anchor relative to the recurring amount) should increase subsequent charitable support. Replicating prior findings, one-time lump-sum donors again made marginally larger additional donations (M=$1.78, SD=$1.16) than recurring donors (M=$1.12, SD=$1.40) when the cumulative anchor was not presented (p=.082), but reminding recurrent donors of their cumulative charitable contribution mitigates this effect (one-time: M=$1.13, SD=$1.18; recurring: M=$1.16, SD=$1.18; p=.500).

This research suggests that a very simple and costless adjustment to donation structure may help charities boost giving of existing donors. Specifically, because donors anchor on the cognitively-accessible magnitude of their initial donation, it appears that lump-sum donations feel larger and, consequently, encourage larger subsequent contributions, in contrast to predictions derived from prospect theory and work on self-signaling. Whereas the current research shows that making separate, recurring donations reduces future charitable support, other work suggests that displaying disaggregated costs (e.g., “pennies-a-day”) increases compliance with charitable requests (Gourville 1998). Therefore, to understand the net-effect of lump-sum versus recurring donations, future research should consider how donation structure influences both the initiation and continuation of charitable contributions.
REFERENCES


Untangling the Effects of Self-Regulation Impairment and the Bright Side of Self-regulation Exertion: The Role of Construal Level

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Exerting self-regulation is a ubiquitous part of individuals’ daily life. Recently, the debate among the mechanism of the effect is popular. For example, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice (1998) contended that when individual exert self-regulation, the insufficient resource impairs their self-regulation. However, Molden et al. (2012) suggested that the primary reason for detrimental outcomes following high self-regulation exertion is a decline in motivation (as opposed to reduced resources).

Thus, in order to further untangle the process behind self-regulation impairment, we propose a cognitive model of self-regulation by introducing construal level as an alternative mechanism. Interestingly, self-regulation exertion and construal level often have parallel effects. For example, when individuals are in a high construal level, they lack the ability to focus on contextual detail and potential errors (Kardes et al., 2006), and this effect could also occur when individuals exert self-regulation (Baumeister et al., 1998). Although construal level has been shown to positively influence self-control (a specific format of self-regulation), it is not a necessary condition for self-regulation. When there is no proximal temptation to overcome, high construal level may not have a positive impact on performance (Fujita & Carnevale, 2012). The purpose of the present research is to propose a cognitive mechanism behind self-regulation impairment on vigilance task and also explore a beneficial outcome of self-regulation exertion. If self-regulation exertion indeed increases individuals’ construal level, such construal level may foster creativity. (Jia, Hirt, & Karpen, 2009)

Pilot study is to examine the assumption that construal level increases self-regulation only when the goal conflict occurs (self-control). We recruit dieters and non-dieters as participants. Participants did a task that required them to give examples of words as the manipulation of self-regulation exertion (Fujita et al., 2006). Afterwards, participants were asked to choose between goal-congruent and goal-incongruent choice. A binary logistic regression with diet conditions and construal level as predictors. The interaction term of logistic regression model was significant, χ²(1) = 3.86, p < .05. More specifically, among non-dieters, there is no significant difference between conditions. However, among dieters, under high construal level condition, they chose more low calories steak (83%) than high calories (17%), χ²(1) = 6.00, p < .05. The results of pilot study first replicated the findings from Fujita and Han (2009). In addition, we showed that this effect only occurs when there is a goal conflict (self-control).

Experiment 1 is to examine how self-regulation exertion influences construal level. Participants completed a Stroop task (Stroop, 1935) as the manipulation of self-regulation exertion (Hedgecock, Vohs, & Rao, 2012). In the Stroop task, participants were shown a series of words presented in a font color that was different from the meaning of the word. Afterwards, participants completed the behavioral identification form (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989) to assess their construal level. An ANOVA revealed a significant effect of self-regulation exertion condition on construal level F(2, 180) = 6.81, p < .01. We find that self-regulation exertion prompted individuals to have high construal level.

Experiment 2 examined whether construal level has an effect on vigilance task performance. We manipulated construal level using a two-pronged approach based on established manipulations (e.g., Fujita et al., 2006). Participants first finished the same construal level manipulation as the pilot study. After this initial manipulation, participants read five statements (e.g., “Ron is proofreading a paper”). Participants reported how or why of the statements based on their assigned conditions. Participants then completed a timed arithmetic task to assess vigilance. An independent-samples t-test revealed that participants in the high construal condition (M = 82, SD = 19) were less vigilant on the task than those in the low construal condition (M = 88, SD = .13), t(148) = -2.17, p < .05.

Experiment 3 aims to replicate the effect from study 1 and 2 and to test it as a whole model, and to show that the changes of construal level could elevate individuals’ creativity. After finished Stroop task and filled BIF scale, participants completed vigilance and creativity tasks. Participants did a grammar correction task as vigilance task and draw an alien as creativity task. A series of independent samples t-tests revealed the effect of self-regulation exertion on the vigilance task and the creativity task. Individuals in the high self-regulation exertion condition (M = 17.43, SD = 6.70) had higher construal level than those in the low self-regulation exertion condition (M = 14.97, SD = 6.52) (t(133) = 2.16, p < .05). In terms of the vigilance task, participants in the high self-regulation exertion condition (M = 6.59, SD = 3.31) corrected less grammar issues than participants in the low self-regulation exertion condition (M = 8.02, SD = 3.13), t(133) = 2.57, p < .05. In terms of the creativity task, participants in the high self-regulation exertion condition (M = 5.13, SD = 2.67) had higher overall scores in the creativity task than participants in the low self-regulation exertion condition (M = 3.87, SD = 2.24), t(133) = -2.98, p < .01. The pathway from self-regulation exertion to vigilance task via construal level was significant (indirect effect = -.23; 95% CI: -.67, -.01), and the indirect effect on creativity task through construal level was also significant (indirect effect = .20; 95% CI: .02, .52).

Experiment 4 is to replicate the effect of self-regulation exertion on creativity by using a different measure of creativity. We applied an emotion suppression task as the manipulation of self-regulation exertion (Gross & Levenson, 1997). Participants were asked to help a local restaurant to come up with a new pizza after manipulation of self-regulation exertion. Creativity was coded by the number of possible ingredients the participants came up with. The indirect pathway from self-regulation exertion to amount of ingredients via construal level was significant (indirect effect = .28; 95% CI: .01, .81).

These findings offer a new cognitive mechanism to the effect from self-regulation exertion. Specifically, we show that self-regulation exertion leads individuals to a more abstract cognition, and this abstract cognition could not only impair individuals’ vigilance but also enhance individuals’ creativity.

REFERENCES


A Case for Low Power: Self versus Response Efficacy in Health Persuasion

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Power refers to “asymmetric control over valued resources in social relations” (Rucker, Galinsky, and Dubois 2012, p. 353). Past research has shown that power affects how consumers make decisions and acquire products. Power enhances control, optimism, self-esteem, action (Fast et al. 2009; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee 2003), psychological distance (Magee and Smith 2013), and confidence (Brinol et al. 2007; Fast et al. 2012; Min and Kim 2013).

High- (vs. low-) power individuals are presumably better equipped to deal with decisions in domains such as health that require self-control in order to fulfill long-term goals. This is because—compared to low-power individuals—high-power individuals have a greater amount of control, have higher self-esteem, and are more likely to take action (Fast et al. 2009). In the current research, we focus on enabling low-power individuals to respond appropriately to health persuasion. How can marketers help individuals in the low-power mindset to make healthy decisions?

We approach this problem through the lens of various types of health messages and how they may be differently persuasive to low-power individuals. Consider two types of health messages that advertise the same product, but through different propositions of effectiveness. The first type is an advertisement for weight loss program which goes: “You can lose weight.” This ad focuses on the individual’s ability to lose weight—this is a self-efficacy message. The second type of weight loss program advertisement goes: “The program is assured to make you lose weight.” This ad focuses on program’s effectiveness in bringing about weight loss—which is a response efficacy message.

This research contributes to the literature on health messaging to discover a new perspective with power. We identify message skepticism as underlying mechanism that drives the persuasiveness of response efficacy health appeal for low-power individuals. Keller (2006) demonstrates that promotion-focused consumers are more persuaded by a self-efficacy (vs. response efficacy) appeal while the reverse is true for promotion-focused consumers. We add to this stream by examining the mechanism of persuasiveness of self-efficacy (vs. response efficacy) by power. Furthermore, this research contributes to power literature by exploring how power influences the processing of health message. This research highlights psychological mechanism of message skepticism underlying this effect.

Self-efficacy focuses on the ease of an advocated action, while response efficacy focuses on the effectiveness of an advocated action (Boer and Seydel 1996). There are many moderators that predict the persuasiveness of self-efficacy and response efficacy messages depend on the person’s focus, including whether the person is promotion or prevention focused, extent of fear, elaboration, and perceived control (Block and Keller 1995; Keller 2006; Litt 1988).

How might individuals’ mindset of power inform their perceptions of efficacy in pursuing long-term health goals? As stated before, power is associated with control and confidence (Fast et al. 2009; Fast et al. 2012; Galinsky et al. 2003; Min and Kim 2013). We theorize that feelings of control and confidence will affect individuals’ perceptions of self and response efficacy in the following manner. Driven by high confidence, high-power individuals are likely to believe that they can bring about a health outcome. Therefore, high-power individuals are likely to believe in both self and response efficacy messages. Conversely, low-power individuals are low on confidence; therefore are likely to be skeptical of self-efficacy messages and rely on assistance from a product to achieve their health goal.

Researchers have found evidence that consumers approach advertisements with a certain degree of skepticism (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). We posit the power mindset as the novel antecedent for skepticism. We suggest that low-power individuals are more skeptical of self-efficacy messages because they exhibit low levels of confidence.

In summary, low-power individuals will show high skepticism toward self-efficacy appeal and are more persuaded by response efficacy. Conversely, high-power individuals will show more confidence, and either form of efficacy is effective.

Three studies using different health contexts tested these expectations. In study 1, participants were asked to recall an event in which they felt powerful or powerless (Galinsky et al. 2003). Next, participants read information about a self-efficacy or a response efficacy health appeal that promotes sunscreen (Keller 2006). The results of Study 1 showed that low-power individuals had a greater intention of behaving in compliance with the message when they view response (vs. self-) efficacy messages. Conversely, either form of efficacy was effective for high-power individuals.

The objective of study 2 was to replicate Study 1’s effect and capture evidence of the underlying psychological process. We used an established role-playing task to make participants feel either powerful or powerless (Rucker, Dubois, and Galinsky 2011). Next, participants read either a self-efficacy or a response efficacy health appeal that promotes a diet plan (Keller 2006). Participants indicated their intention of performing the advocated action and message skepticism. The results revealed that low-power participants were less persuaded by the self-efficacy message than the response efficacy message. Conversely, high-power individuals’ persuasion did not vary by message type. Message skepticism mediated the effect for low-power individuals.

In study 3, participants induced in high (vs. low) power mindset were asked to choose between a self (vs. response) efficacy diet plan for themselves (vs. other). Participants in all conditions read the same information about two diet plans: diet plan A, a self-efficacy option and diet plan B, a response efficacy option. Next, participants indicated which diet plan was a better option. The results demonstrated that when choosing a health product for themselves, low-power individuals were more likely to choose a response efficacy option than high-power individuals. When recommending a product for others, individuals were equally likely to choose a response efficacy and self-efficacy product regardless of the level of power. This boundary condition provides additional process evidence.

This research presents substantive implications to healthcare marketers and policy makers by identifying what types of messages are more effective among low-power consumers. This paper makes welfare contributions to the field of health marketing.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Humans are remarkably prosocial toward other individuals. People adopt orphaned children, donate blood and organs to strangers, and collectively give billions of dollars to charity each year. Indeed, human prosociality has been shown to occur in ways that go beyond kin selection (Hamilton 1964), reciprocity considerations (Trivers 1971), or direct consequences for oneself. These results have been instrumental in the development of so-called models of “other-regarding preferences”, where, in contrast to standard assumptions of self-interested agents, people are assumed to have preferences over other people’s outcomes.

Since their development, these models have been found to have substantial explanatory power across numerous laboratory and field studies. At the same time, however, they struggle to explain some basic features of prosocial behavior, such as the widespread observation that people are not uniformly prosocial across circumstances. In laboratory experiments, for example, individuals donate more money to similar than dissimilar others (Emmner, Deaux, and Willits 1971) or two types (Hippie and Straight) and are more willing to rescue close than distant others from painful situations (Krueger 2003; Madsen et al. 2007). Considerable indirect evidence suggests that biological kinship plays an important role in altruistic behaviour. All previous reports of the influence of kin selection on human altruism have, however, used correlational (rather than experimental) in field data, individuals from certain groups have been found to be discriminated against in labor markets (Bertrand et al. 2005).

Not surprisingly, owing to the importance of person perception to questions of attribution, impression formation, and stereotyping, social cognition researchers have long sought to characterize the set of cognitive dimensions underlying attributions of traits to other people (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008; Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007). Although the specific details differ across frameworks, these studies have repeatedly converged on the idea that there exist fundamental dimensions, for example warmth and competence, capturing how people evaluate groups and individuals (Fig. 1A).

Accordingly, we sought to investigate the possibility that these core dimensions can be used to improve explanatory power of existing models of other-regarding preferences. Specifically, instead of a random anonymous counterpart, subjects were told a single trait about their counterpart (Fig. 1A). We selected 20 single-attribute descriptions of people that were expected, based on past research, to elicit perceptions spanning a two-dimensional space of warmth/morality and competence/agency. We confirmed these placements by recruiting an independent set of 340 participants to rate the targets on these dimensions.

We investigated how trait information affects behavior in a set of social dilemma games that capture different aspects of prosocial behavior (Fig. 1B). In a dictator game, 320 participants had the opportunity to split a sum of money with the counterpart however they wished. In the proposer role of the ultimatum game, 300 participants had the opportunity to offer some or all of the starting endowment to the counterpart, who would then choose to accept the offer or reject it. In the recipient role of the ultimatum game, 300 participants were allocated to self and other. In all cases, each participant made 20 decisions (with targets and exchange rates chosen randomly).

We found that allocations in the dictator game were significantly affected by target identity, $F(19, 5975) = 36.29, p < 10^{-15}$, such that some counterparts consistently received more than others. To model other-regarding preferences, we used an inequity-aversion utility function from the economic literature, in which the subjective value of an outcome is modulated by self-interest, sensitivity to advantageous inequity (the participant getting more than the counterpart), and sensitivity to disadvantageous inequity (the counterpart getting more than the participant).

We next considered two possible ways in which dimensions of person perception can influence other-regarding preferences. The first considered the possibility that person perception information additively affects attitude toward advantageous and disadvantageous inequity. This would correspond to the idea that individuals who are perceived as higher on warmth (or competence) would receive some fixed “bonus” or “penalty” compared to those who are perceived as being lower. In addition, we included the possibility that person perception information interacted multiplicatively with outcome values, for example by modulating the degree of inequity aversion. This captures the idea of a proportional “bonus” or “penalty”, such that individuals perceived as higher on warmth (or competence) would receive some fixed proportion more (less) than those perceived as lower.

Across all games including dictator game, ultimatum game sender and receiver roles, we found that the model with social perception information dramatically outperformed the baseline model, explaining nearly twice as much variance in behavior (likelihood ratio test $p < 10^{-6}$ in all cases, Figure 1C-E). Strikingly, we found that almost the entire improvement in fit in all three datasets can be attributed to the multiplicative model in which inequity aversion was directly modulated by person perception dimensions. Specifically, whereas the full model significantly improved fit of a model containing additive parameters (likelihood ratio test $p < 10^{-6}$), it did not significantly improve fit of a model only containing multiplicative parameters (likelihood ratio test $p > 0.5$).

Any realistic account of human social behavior must account for the fact that individuals flexibly adapt their behavior to different social contexts, including different interaction partners, as they navigate the social world. By providing a quantitative measure of social context that reduces a large number of factors into two core dimensions, measures of person perception provide a parsimonious and tractable way to explain such variation.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Humans are remarkably prosocial toward other individuals. People adopt orphaned children, donate blood and organs to strangers, and collectively give billions of dollars to charity each year. Indeed, human prosociality has been shown to occur in ways that go beyond kin selection (Hamilton 1964), reciprocity considerations (Trivers 1971), or direct consequences for oneself. These results have been instrumental in the development of so-called models of “other-regarding preferences”, where, in contrast to standard assumptions of self-interested agents, people are assumed to have preferences over other people’s outcomes.

Since their development, these models have been found to have substantial explanatory power across numerous laboratory and field studies. At the same time, however, they struggle to explain some basic features of prosocial behavior, such as the widespread observation that people are not uniformly prosocial across circumstances. In laboratory experiments, for example, individuals donate more money to similar than dissimilar others (Emmner, Deaux, and Willits 1971) or two types (Hippie and Straight) and are more willing to rescue close than distant others from painful situations (Krueger 2003; Madsen et al. 2007). Considerable indirect evidence suggests that biological kinship plays an important role in altruistic behaviour. All previous reports of the influence of kin selection on human altruism have, however, used correlational (rather than experimental) in field data, individuals from certain groups have been found to be discriminated against in labor markets (Bertrand et al. 2005).

Not surprisingly, owing to the importance of person perception to questions of attribution, impression formation, and stereotyping, social cognition researchers have long sought to characterize the set of cognitive dimensions underlying attributions of traits to other people (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008; Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007). Although the specific details differ across frameworks, these studies have repeatedly converged on the idea that there exist fundamental dimensions, for example warmth and competence, capturing how people evaluate groups and individuals (Fig. 1A).

Accordingly, we sought to investigate the possibility that these core dimensions can be used to improve explanatory power of existing models of other-regarding preferences. Specifically, instead of a random anonymous counterpart, subjects were told a single trait about their counterpart (Fig. 1A). We selected 20 single-attribute descriptions of people that were expected, based on past research, to elicit perceptions spanning a two-dimensional space of warmth/morality and competence/agency. We confirmed these placements by recruiting an independent set of 340 participants to rate the targets on these dimensions.

We investigated how trait information affects behavior in a set of social dilemma games that capture different aspects of prosocial behavior (Fig. 1B). In a dictator game, 320 participants had the opportunity to split a sum of money with the counterpart however they wished. In the proposer role of the ultimatum game, 300 participants had the opportunity to offer some or all of the starting endowment to the counterpart, who would then choose to accept the offer or reject it. In the recipient role of the ultimatum game, 300 participants were allocated to self and other. In all cases, each participant made 20 decisions (with targets and exchange rates chosen randomly).

We found that allocations in the dictator game were significantly affected by target identity, $F(19, 5975) = 36.29, p < 10^{-15}$, such that some counterparts consistently received more than others. To model other-regarding preferences, we used an inequity-aversion utility function from the economic literature, in which the subjective value of an outcome is modulated by self-interest, sensitivity to advantageous inequity (the participant getting more than the counterpart), and sensitivity to disadvantageous inequity (the counterpart getting more than the participant).

We next considered two possible ways in which dimensions of person perception can influence other-regarding preferences. The first considered the possibility that person perception information additively affects attitude toward advantageous and disadvantageous inequity. This would correspond to the idea that individuals who are perceived as higher on warmth (or competence) would receive some fixed “bonus” or “penalty” compared to those who are perceived as being lower. In addition, we included the possibility that person perception information interacted multiplicatively with outcome values, for example by modulating the degree of inequity aversion. This captures the idea of a proportional “bonus” or “penalty”, such that individuals perceived as higher on warmth (or competence) would receive some fixed proportion more (less) than those perceived as lower.

Across all games including dictator game, ultimatum game sender and receiver roles, we found that the model with social perception information dramatically outperformed the baseline model, explaining nearly twice as much variance in behavior (likelihood ratio test $p < 10^{-6}$ in all cases, Figure 1C-E). Strikingly, we found that almost the entire improvement in fit in all three datasets can be attributed to the multiplicative model in which inequity aversion was directly modulated by person perception dimensions. Specifically, whereas the full model significantly improved fit of a model containing additive parameters (likelihood ratio test $p < 10^{-6}$), it did not significantly improve fit of a model only containing multiplicative parameters (likelihood ratio test $p > 0.5$).

Any realistic account of human social behavior must account for the fact that individuals flexibly adapt their behavior to different social contexts, including different interaction partners, as they navigate the social world. By providing a quantitative measure of social context that reduces a large number of factors into two core dimensions, measures of person perception provide a parsimonious and tractable way to explain such variation.

REFERENCES


One More Unit to Increase Wanting: The Minimal Sharpness Effect
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Despite extant work on marketing communication involving numerical information, one category of numbers with minimal sharpness (i.e., numbers that are just above a round number and ending with one) has attained very little investigation. In the present article, we propose and demonstrate that using a minimal sharp number to describe a product characteristic, regardless of whether the number represents quantity, ingredient, or meaningless brand name, enhances consumers’ desire and preference toward the target product, which we term as minimal sharpness effect.

We contend that numbers with minimal sharpness are unique and tend to induce a sense of arousal, because they represent a salient boundary between round-number categories (Isaac & Schindler, 2014). The heightened arousal could be misattributed to consumers’ desire toward the focal product, and thus increase their wanting (Gorn, Pham & Sin, 2001; Schwarz, 2011). Moreover, given the affect-laden nature of this effect, whether the product valuation is feelings-based or reason-based would moderate the effect (Hsee & Rottenstreich, 2004). Similarly, the minimal sharpness effect would also be influenced by product type as well as consumers’ dispositional tendency to relying on feelings.

Study 1 provided initial support for our main hypothesis. We presented participants with an advertisement of a limited edition watch. Depending on the condition, the watch was described as limited to 999/1000/1001 pieces. Participants indicated how much they would be willing to pay for the watch (WTP) as a measure of their desire (i.e., wanting; Litt, Khan, & Shiv, 2009). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of number on WTP ($F(2, 143) = 4.884, p = .009$). Participants in the 1001 condition were willing to give a higher price than those in the 999 condition and those in the 1000 condition ($t(143) = 2.683, p = .008$). No significant difference was found between the latter two conditions ($t<1$).

Study 2 investigated the generalizability of the proposed effect in a charitable donating context. We asked to participants to donate to 501/1000/1001 African children in need. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of number on donation intention ($F(2, 144) = 4.079, p = .019$). Specifically, participants were willing to donate more to 1001 victims than to 1000 victims ($t(144) = 2.703, p = .008$). They were also willing to donate more to 501 victims than to 1000 victims ($t(144) = 2.151, p = .033$). However, participants did not show difference between the 1001 and the 501 conditions ($t<1$).

In Study 3 we tested the moderating effect of consumers’ initial interest toward the focal product. They were presented with an advertisement of a fragrance named IVES MILLER 99/100/101. Participants indicated their willingness to pay for the fragrance and reported their levels of arousal on two items. They also reported their interest in fragrances. In fragrances, we found that participants with high interest would like to pay more for the target fragrance in the 101 condition (vs. 99/100 conditions) ($\beta = .222$, $t(141) = 1.778, p = .078$), whereas those with lower interest were not influenced by the number ($\beta = -.122$, $t(141) = -.935, p = .351$). Further, a bootstrapping analysis (Hayes 2012; Model 7) indicated that the interaction between minimal sharpness and interest on WTP was mediated by the levels of arousal (95% CI: 0.0646 to 2.1569).

Study 4 aimed to explore the underlying mechanism of the proposed effect. Feeling-as-information theory suggests the observed effect should diminish when consumers are directed to attribute their feelings to other external sources (Reber, Schwarz, and Winkielman 2004). We recruited only male participants in this study and randomly assigned them to a 2(number: 100 vs. 101)2(sexual cues: without vs. with) between-subjects design. The results yielded a significant interaction ($F(1, 161) = 4.91, p = .028$), suggesting that when no external cues are available, the increased level of arousal induced by minimal sharpness is misattributed to the desire for the focal product.

In Study 5, we examined whether the effect would be influenced by mode of valuation. Participants first completed a task to prime feelings-based versus calculation-based processing, developed by Hsee and Rottenstreich (2004). Afterwards, participants were presented with the advertisement used in Study 1, and indicated how much they would be willing to pay for this watch. A 2 2-between-subjects ANOVA yielded a significant interaction between number and processing mode ($F(1, 195) = 4.788, p = .03$), confirming that the minimal sharpness effect occur only when valuation mode is feelings-based.

Study 6 explored whether the minimal sharpness effect could extend to consumers’ choice. Identical to Study 4, participants were presented with a new brand of chips Mr. Potato 100/101 and asked to choose between the Lay’s and the new brand. We also measured participants’ reliance on feelings to make choices (adapted from Hsee et al., 2015). Logistic regression revealed that participants were more likely to choose the new brand when its brand name contained 101 (vs. 100), only for those feeling-based consumers ($z = 2.64, p = .008$), but not for those reason-based consumers ($z = -0.79, p = .431$).

Study 7 aimed to examine the role of product type in moderating the effect. We posit that the minimal sharpness effect should also diminish when the product has greater functional values than incentive values, such as healthy food. We found that when choosing chips, consumers were more likely to choose the focal chips when its brand name contained 101 (vs. 100) for those who tended to rely on feelings, but not for those reason-based decision makers. By contrast, when choosing raisins, the number in brand name did not show an effect.

In sum, we observed that the minimal sharpness effect – numbers that just exceed a round number tend to elicit greater arousal and thus leading consumers to desire more toward products associated with those numbers. Further this effect was diminished (1) when an external source of arousal was provided (2) when the choice was not affect-laden, and (3) when the decision maker tended to rely on reasoning instead of feeling.

REFERENCES


The Effect of Lucky Feeling on Preference for Effort-Related Products and Activities

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

While some products are advertised to make life easier, many other products request consumers to exert more efforts during the consumption process (e.g., IKEA lets customers assemble furniture themselves; Wohlgemuth and Enzle 2002). However, when and why consumers may prefer high-effort products and activities over low-effort ones are still largely unknown. Taking a novel perspective, the current research proposes that incidental feeling of personal luck may lead to such preferences and investigates the underlying mechanism.

The feeling of luck can substantially bias behaviors (Hamerman and Johar 2013; Jiang, Cho, and Adaval 2009). Luck has been shown to make people overestimate their success (Wohlgemuth and Enzle 2002). When people believe that they can successfully achieve the expected outcomes, they will tend to take action for the events (Eccles and Wigfield 2002). Thus, the feeling of luck increases peoples’ tendency to take actions in order to get successful outcomes, e.g., gambling to win money.

However, it may be less obvious that the feeling of luck can also exert similar influences on people’s action tendency out of the range of outcome-oriented events. We predict that the feeling of luck may increase people’s propensity toward action in general (i.e., regardless of whether the activities involve any outcome-relevant components), due to the repeatedly strengthening of the link between luck and action-taking. Such a heightened action tendency, in turn, leads to the enhanced preference for high-effort products, as the relationship between high effort and action-progress is shown to be strong and bi-directional (Dewey 1897; Albarracin, Hepler, and Tannenbaum 2011). Five experiments tested these possibilities.

Experiment 1 tested the basic effect using a two-condition (lucky vs. control) between-subjects design (N = 83). Specifically, participants were first asked to recall a lucky experience (vs. a typical day) as a manipulation of lucky feeling. All participants then received three scenarios and were asked to choose what they would do in each scenario. There were two options in each scenario—one option was high-effort (e.g., leaving positive comments on Facebook) whereas the other was low-effort (e.g., only clicking the “Like” button). We found that for all the three scenarios, participants in the lucky condition were more willing to choose the effortful option than those in the control condition.

Experiment 2 replicated the effect with real behavior (N = 68). In the lucky condition, participants were told that they won a lucky draw, and thus had the chance to choose a puzzle toy as a reward. In the control condition, participants were asked to directly choose a puzzle toy as a reward for participation. There were seven similar puzzle options varying only on their level of difficulties. After selecting a puzzle, participants’ action tendency was also measured (Jiang, Zhan, and Rucker 2014). As expected, participants in the lucky condition chose more difficult puzzles than those in the control condition. Mediation analyses confirmed that action tendency elicited by lucky feeling was the driving force of the effect.

To rule out the alternative explanation of positive affect and to explore the influence of unlucky feeling, experiment 3 adopted a four-condition (lucky vs. control vs. happy vs. unlucky) between-subjects design (N = 137). Participants first imagined a lucky (vs. neutral vs. happy vs. unlucky) situation. They were then shown a scenario about an IKEA promotion activity in which customers were invited to design products themselves, and were asked about their willingness to participate in such an activity, the number of items they planned to design, and the time they planned to spend on it. Participants’ action tendency was also measured. As expected, participants in the lucky condition were more willing to participate, planned to design more items, and planned to spend more time on it, than those in the other three conditions. The effect was again mediated by action tendency.

We hypothesized that consumers’ preference for high-effort activities is driven by greater action tendency triggered by lucky feeling. If this is the case, this effect should be mitigated when these high-effort activities are no longer considered as involving concrete actions, e.g., the activities will be held in a relatively distant future. In experiment 4, we tested this possibility using a 2 (lucky feeling: lucky vs. control) × 2 (activity schedule: close vs. distant) between-subjects design (N = 134). Similar to experiment 1, participants first recalled either a lucky day or a typical day. They were then presented with a NIKE running event scenario, which was described to be held either tomorrow (close condition) or the next Friday (distant condition), and were asked to indicate their willingness to participate and their planned running distances. Replicating previous findings, when the activity was scheduled tomorrow, participants in the lucky condition were more likely to participate in the activity and planned to run longer distances than their control condition counterparts. However, when the activity was scheduled the next Friday, the effect disappeared.

The previous experiments confirmed that lucky feeling can lead consumers to prefer high-effort products and activities over low-effort ones. However, it was still unclear whether the observed results were driven by increased evaluation for high-effort options or by decreased evaluation for low-effort ones. Experiment 5 addressed this question using a 2 (lucky feeling: lucky vs. control) × 2 (product description: high-effort vs. low-effort) between-subjects design (N = 134). Similar to previous experiments, participants first recalled either a lucky day or a typical day. Then, participants were presented with a health tracker advertisement which was described as involving high or low effort when using it, and were asked to evaluate the tracker. As expected, for the product that needed high-effort, participants in the lucky condition evaluated the product more favourably than those in the control condition. However, for the low-effort one, the effect became non-significant, showing that the effect of lucky feeling was due to increased evaluation for high-effort options.

This research contributes to the existing luck research by documenting how feeling of personal luck alters individuals’ perception and attitude toward actions. It also extends our understanding of the role of consumer effort in the consumption process.

REFERENCES


Is Technology a Dangerous Dependency? The Effects of Anthropomorphism on Sharing Consumer Memories

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EXTEND ABSTRACT

Consumers have experienced an explosion of technology-mediated sharing (Protalinski, 2011), with 40% of online conversations about identity-relevant experiences sharing (Tamir and Mitchell, 2012). Despite this proliferation in sharing via technology, research on technology impacts on human perceptions and reactions is sparse (Shen, Zhang and Krishna, 2016). Our research investigates how consumer perceptions of technological sharing platforms can change memories for the shared information.

Sparrow, Liu and Wegner (2014) suggest that sharing with technology can lead to memory attenuation. Extending this literature, we posit that the type of information shared (e.g. identity-relevant) interacts with characteristics of the technology (anthropomorphism, servant/partner role) to impact memory. Specifically, we predict that when identity-relevant (identity-irrelevant) information is shared using technologies that are closer to human (technological) partners – i.e. anthropomorphized (objectified), memory for the shared information is likely to be worse (better). We suggest that these effects are due to differences in perceptions of the technologies as sharing partners, with anthropomorphized technologies perceived as being human and hence functioning as safe, trustworthy repositories for the memories (Huang and Rajagopal 2017).

In Study 1, 293 MTurk workers participated in a 2 (identity relevance: high vs. neutral) x 3 sharing partner (friend, Facebook, no-sharing) between-subjects study. An American identity was made salient (vs. not) in a travel experience recording a one-day detailed schedule. In the scenario, participants received a visitor guidebook containing coupons for 12 brands (6 American and 6 international brands).

After the scenario, participants shared their experience with their best friend (or on Facebook, or asked to write a description of a movie they watched recently (control)). We measured recognition memory for the travel experience, and identity-like brand promotions. The experience recognition required respondents to select correct details from a set of 24 statements (12 true and 12 false). Corrected recognition was computed by subtracting false recognition from true recognition (Dalton and Huang 2014). The corrected hits of identity-linked promotion were computed by correctly identifying old as old – falsely identifying new as old.

An ANOVA revealed a main effect of sharing partner ($F$ (1,287) = 4.24, $p < .02$) and an interaction between the sharing partner and identity relevance on the corrected recognition ($F$ (2, 287) = 15.6, $p < .001$). For identity-neutral experience, participants remembered more details when sharing with a best friend as compared to sharing on Facebook and no-sharing ($M_{friend} = 6.83, M_{Facebook} = 5.85, M_{no-sharing} = 4.87; F (2, 287) = 5.99, p < .01$). For identity-relevant experience, participants forgot more details after sharing it with a best friend as compared to Facebook and no-sharing ($p < .01$) ($M_{friend} = 4.18, M_{Facebook} = 7.15, M_{no-sharing} = 6.08, F (2, 287) = 14.5, p < .001$). Interestingly, sharing on Facebook also lead to memory enhancement rather than decay as compared to no-sharing ($p < .06$). Same patterns occurred for Corrected Hits of Identity-Liked Promotions.

Study 2 tested the moderating effects of anthropomorphism and consequence on attitude strength. 339 undergraduates participated a 2 (identity-relevance: high vs. neutral) x 2 (sharing partner: best friend vs. anthropomorphized technology vs. objectified technology) between-subject design study. The scenario and procedures were similar to study 1. They either shared the experience with a best friend (or wrote a diary entry and shared it through a hypothetical file-hosting platform Flycloud - a Dropbox-like service). Anthropomorphism was manipulated by reading a paragraph describing Flycloud using first person vs. third person pronouns (adapted from Aggarwal and McGill 2007). We measured recognition memory, attitude confidence (adapted from Krosnick and Smith 1994).

An ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between two independent variables on the corrected recognition ($F$ (2,333) = 9.00, $p < .001$). For identity-relevant experience, participants forgot more details after sharing it with best friend and anthropomorphized technology than objectified technology ($M_{friend} = 4.04, M_{anthropomorphized} = 4.63, M_{objectified} = 6.23; F (2,333) = 8.42, $p < .001$). Best friend and anthropomorphized conditions had no differences ($p > .27$). For identity-neutral experience, no differences were found ($M_{friend} = 5.78, M_{anthropomorphized} = 5.64, M_{objectified} = 4.91; F (2, 333) = 1.69, $p > .18$). Attitude confidence results showed the same patterns.

Study 3 tested the mediating role of perceived partner quality and another moderator-anthropomorphized technology (servant vs. partner). We reasoned that meaningful identity-relevant memories are more likely to be outsourced to a high quality partner (rather than a servant). Thus, identity memory decay will be attenuated when the interacting technology is perceived as a servant, and this effect is mediated by perceived partner quality.

Study 3 was a 2 identity-relevance (high vs. neutral) x 3 sharing partner (servant vs. partner vs. objectified technology) between subject design with 237 undergraduates. The same travel experience as studies 1 and 2 was used, and the target technology was a hypothetical blogging platform named Travelgrrr. To manipulate the different roles played, respondents were randomly assigned to either servant or partner condition (procedures adapted from Aggarwal and McGill 2012).

We measured recognition memory, perceived partner quality (7-items from Fournier 1998), perceived memory specialness (“If it was real, please evaluate how special this travel experience would be in your life”).

An ANOVA revealed a marginally significant interaction between two independent variables on corrected recognition ($F$ (2,231) = 2.94, $p < .06$). For identity-relevant experience, participants forgot more details after sharing with a partner-like technology than servant-like technology and objectified technology ($M_{servant} = 4.94, M_{friend} = 6.21, M_{objectified} = 6.66; F (2,231) = 3.32, $p < .04$). The servant and objectified technology were indifferent ($p > .49$). For identity-neutral experience, no differences were found ($M_{servant} = 6.17, M_{friend} = 5.47, M_{objectified} = 5.65; F (2, 231) = 49, $p > .61$). Mediation analysis (Process model 5) confirmed that perceived partner quality mediated the interaction effects on recognition memory ($-.7163$ to $.0011$; Effect=.2924; SE=.1816). Furthermore, memory decay had impaired perceived experience specialness.

Three studies show that in a social sharing context, anthropomorphized technologies (objectified technologies) with higher (lower) partner quality are more (less) likely to decay identity-linked memories, dilute attitude confidence, and decrease perceptions of experience specialness.
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Consumers’ Assemblages of Fear and Safety with Firearms: Obstacles to Addressing Gun Violence in an Armed America

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Firearms are ubiquitous consumer products in America. There are an estimated 300 million civilian-owned firearms, which are readily available for sale at sporting goods stores and mass merchandisers, and the ownership of which is protected by the Constitution (Cook and Goss 2014). Further, an estimated 8-14 million Americans have licences to carry concealed handguns on their person in public, and many more individuals live in states where licensure is not required (Cook and Goss 2014; Lott 2016). These products are dangerous by design and are implicated in a complex social problem defined by injury or death of more than 110,000 Americans each year due to gunshot (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). These rates of death and injury have been increasing (U.S. C.D.C.) and eclipse those of other developed nations by a factor of ten (Grinshteyn & Hemenway, 2016). Consumer interest in this issue has typically been conceptualized as two competing factions: those who support “gun control” and those who support “gun rights” (Winkler 2011).

Regardless of where consumers adopt one of these positions or neither, they must live in a society that includes millions of firearms and where awareness of gun violence is embedded in the social milieu. In this study, we aim to better understand how consumers experience life in an armed America by investigating the various ways that consumers assemble human, material, and other actors related to guns and gun violence in ways that make them feel fearful of, and safe from, gun violence (Carlson 2015; DeBrabander 2015; Light 2017; Lott 2016).

We use the lens of assemblage theories (DeLanda 2006; Deleuze & Guattari 1987) to organize our thinking about the broad and complex market and to provide insight into consumers’ understandings of this “wicked” social problem (Rittel & Webber 1973). We use the concept of assemblages to examine heterogeneous bundles of human and non-human market actors, and their respective capacities, which come together in ways that imbue the whole with a capacity greater than the sum of its parts. Specifically, we are interested in assemblages with the capacity to inspire feelings of fear or safety in the consumers who contemplate them.

The author team consists of two NRA members, one author who has hunting experience and has completed training requirements for a CHL, and one author who has no personal experience with firearms. In the summer and fall of 2016, we conducted semi-structured depth interviews with adult gun owners in Oregon and Texas as part of a larger project on firearms in America. We recruited a sample with diversity in attributes that the literature has identified as relevant to our research questions: gender, political affiliation, and gun ownership. Our data set includes transcripts and fieldnotes from interviews with 18 informants, including: 12 males and 6 females; 5 Republicans, 5 Democrats, 5 Independents, and 3 with no political affiliation; 13 gun owners, 10 of whom have licenses to carry concealed handguns, and 5 non-owners. Interviews lasted 60-120 minutes. Informants were asked about their experiences and opinions about gun ownership and use, beginning with a grand tour question (McCracken 1988) about their first experiences with firearms, and followed by prompts related to personal safety, fear, and policy. Data analysis entailed coding the textual data to identify themes, and moving iteratively between assemblage literature and our data to develop codes into an interpretation that addressed our research questions (Charmaz 2006; Corbin and Strauss 1990).

In our findings, we identify the bundle of network actors, including human and non-human components, in which each informant is situated. We reveal how each of these assemblages differentially shapes and is shaped by informants’ respective feelings of fear and safety, and we highlight the variation in the role of firearms in informants’ assemblages. For instance, some informants are fearful of an armed home invasion, and situate themselves within an assemblage of market actors in ways that offset that fear. Those assemblages may include a handgun(s), ammunition, firearms training, and a gun safe. Other informants are fearful of mass shootings or a child’s friend gaining access to a firearm, and situate themselves within assemblages that include police, background check legislation, and conversations with other parents about the importance of storing firearms securely.

Across informants’ respective assemblages, the agency to inflict harm on a person is distributed differently. Some attribute agency to kill or injure someone entirely to human actors - for example, one informant declares, “a loaded gun can sit in the corner over there and it won’t hurt anybody” - and stress the need for firearms training in situating a firearm safely within an assemblage. Conversely, others distribute the agency to harm people to a combination of actors, including the gun owner, a loaded firearm, and the situation, and firearms tend to inspire more fear than safety. Assemblages such as these include other actors, such as police and policies, to counter the fear of firearms misuse.

Based on our informants’ conceptualizations of safe assemblages, we identify two broad orientations of assemblages. The first, which we call self-protection, focuses on protecting informants’ personal safety in the face of an imminent threat, such as a home intruder, and places much of the responsibility for ensuring safety on the individual. The second orientation, societal protection, reflects a broader view which considers public safety as well as informants’ personal safety, and distributes the responsibility for keeping all citizens safe across a broad array of actors throughout society. We argue that variations in the composition and orientation of informants’ assemblages present challenges to reaching social agreement on how to address gun violence.

This research contributes an understanding of variation in consumers’ constructed assemblages to a growing stream of marketing research on human-object interactions (e.g., Bettany & Kerrane 2011; Epp & Velagaleti 2014; Ferreira & Scaraboto 2016), and we highlight the role of public policy in consumer’s social worlds. Further, we contribute to an emerging stream of qualitative research investigating the complexities inherent to this unique product market (e.g., Carlson 2015; Crockett 2017; Huff et al. 2017; Witkowski 2014).
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In Ones and Zeroes We Trust?: Money, Religion & Bitcoin
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

“...what one formerly did for the ‘sake of God’ one now does for the sake of money, that is to say, for the sake of that which now gives the highest feeling of power and good conscience.” (Nietzsche 1997, 123)

Campbell (2003) once argued that to understand any society’s values, one just had to search for its tallest buildings. Where once places of worship reigned supreme, today skyscrapers to capitalism eclipse their dominance. Money has always been intermingled with notions of faith and consumption (Simmel 1978). From a shared belief in the stock market prices, the value of gold as money, or believing in national currencies as a method of payment, money operates on the virtue of keeping faith (Graeber 2014). Concurrently, consumption and religion have also shared an uneasy but intermingled relationship (Weber 2002). While we have a rich understanding of how consumers spend money and the behaviors it evokes (e.g. Sundie et al. 2011, Zhou, Vohs, and Baumeister 2009, Liu and Aaker 2008, Di Muro and Noseworthy 2013), there is a lot more to be explored when it comes to the socio-cultural and historical sociality of money in and of itself (Belk and Wallendorf 1990). There is growing consensus that in a post-2008 financial crisis world, money’s fundamental value is being redefined. The earthquake of the financial crisis has shaken faith in the citadels of banking and monetary authority, paving the way for alternatives to emerge. Modern money as we know it is primarily created by governments and conferred legitimacy by the state banks (Ingham 1996). However, there is speculation that money is likely to become a pluralistic entity in the coming years (Dodd 2014).

Money demands faith and belief which is shared by a diverse community. There has been widespread recognition in consumer research that there is a search for the sacred in the seemingly profane, in both consumers’ pursuit of brands and consumption in general, and in religions’ turn to the marketplace to compete with other faiths and attractions (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989, Muhiz and Schau 2005, McAlester et al. 2014, Belk and Tumbat 2005, Sherry and Kozinets 2007). Zelizer (1997, 18) argues that money is “profoundly influenced by cultural and social structures”. In this paper, we explore this connection between religiosity and money through the context of the cryptocurrency Bitcoin (Zohar 2015; Maurer, Nelson, and Swartz 2013, Bjerg 2016, Humayun and Belk 2016).

Bitcoin takes the notions of belief, trust and faith to an all new extreme. Bitcoin was created by a person or group that still remain anonymous even if multiple false prophets have emerged to stake and patent the blockchain technology. While the notion of digital cash that could flow across geographic borders had been a cryptographers’ dream for many years, “Satoshi Nakamoto” made this a reality when he posted the white paper in 2008 laying out the blueprint for a decentralized peer-to-peer currency that would be enabled by the blockchain (Nakamoto 2008). A copy of the first block ever created “the Genesis Block” now rests in the Coin Room at the British Museum, cementing Bitcoin’s cultural and iconic status in monetary history. From its early days, Bitcoin has been repeatedly projected to soon die. Yet despite all the bad press, it continues to live on. Initially Bitcoin had limited appeal in terms of an exchange of value beyond the tech-geek community. It had been idiosyncratically used for buying pizza and alpaca socks. However, Silk Road, the online illicit market, captured the public imagination as a vivid manifestation of Bitcoin as a value-generating entity. Today more mainstream businesses accept Bitcoin, from Ernst & Young to Swiss Railways and as of March 3, 2017, Bitcoin had surpassed the value of an ounce of gold, trading at $1,268.

Bitcoin is not backed by anything of value, such as gold, or state banks like those that underwrite fiat currencies. It represents a rare intersection of technology, ideology and religiosity (Davis 2004, Noble 1997, Kozinets 2008). Based on consumer narratives from in-depth interviews, archival data, ongoing participant observation at Bitcoin/Blockchain events and a netnography, we analyze how discourses that employ dimensions of faith and religiosity emerge in trying to unite a diverse community of believers.

Our findings reveal that many consumers keep faith in Bitcoin’s underlying technology, even though they do lose faith in people. The algorithmic code’s neutrality is often pedestalized in contrast to human error. Our contributions here are threefold. First, we provide an analysis how in our digital world, the notion of money may end up changing and come to mimic the secular and agnostic nature of brands. Second, we contribute to understanding how notions of religiosity emerge in this community’s search for faith and belief, even though some of their discourses critique religion. As in the case of Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry (1989) the form of myth-making and religiosity displayed connects a dispersed community of believers who are searching for the sacred in the seemingly profane. Furthermore, our analysis shows how the boundaries between religiosity, technology and ideology seem to become ever more porous in our pervasive consumer culture (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Our analysis highlights the notions of belief and faith that money demands of its community. Although money has been viewed as serving eroding functions in society over the years, reinvented, it can still be a source of sacred and profound meanings for its consumers.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Brands use surveys to better understand satisfaction, an integral metric for predicting numerous downstream consumer behaviors including engagement (Brodie et al. 2011), loyalty, WOM, and purchase behavior (Anderson and Sullivan 1990; Mittal et al. 2005; Mittal and Kamakura 2001; Pallas, Mittal and Groening 2014). Given that consumers opt in to completing surveys, non-response bias related to satisfaction is a great a concern. Existing research on Word of Mouth (WOM) and anecdotal evidence suggests the most and least satisfied customers are most likely to complete surveys, i.e. an extreme satisfaction response bias (Anderson 1998). However, research in consumer behavior also gives reason to predict either a positive or negative satisfaction response bias. In the following, we review the literature on consumers’ motives for survey completion with respect to their satisfaction, we put forth a theory of consumer satisfaction survey response bias, and report four studies which test this theory.

The literature provides support for a negative response bias through the fact that greater levels of dissatisfaction lead to an increased likelihood of complaining to the brand (Singh 1988) and increased probability of engaging in negative WOM (Hennig-Thurau 2004; Oliver 1997; Nyer 1999; Sundaram et al., 1998; Sweeney et al. 2005; Wetzer, Zeelenberg and Pieters 2007; Szymanski and Henard 2001). Research on complaining and negative WOM finds that there are expressions of consumers’ desire to vent anger and frustrations (Nyer 1999) regarding an underwhelming experience and are driven by a desire for catharsis (Alicke et al., 1992; Berkowitz, 1970). While completing a survey may offer dissatisfied consumers an opportunity to vent normally achieved through complaining or negative WOM, research suggests that the completion of a survey will not offer satisfied consumers the same value that is normally achieved by engaging in positive WOM. Specifically, because survey completion is anonymous, the topic is set by the solicitor (East, Hammond, and Lomax 2008), and the communication is one-directional, survey completion lacks the necessary means for impression management (Berger 2014).

Past work also provides reason to anticipate an extreme response bias. In addition to the fact that dissatisfaction may motivate survey completion as a way of venting, satisfaction may cause customers to feel obligated to reciprocate for past benefits a brand has provided. In fact, consumers engage in positive WOM as a way of helping the brand (Hennig-Thurau 2004; Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster, 1998) or complimenting the brand (Erickson and Eckrich 2001). We take this one step further and suggest that consumers complete a survey about a brand not simply to help the brand, but to also comply with social norms (Hommans 1958). In social interactions balance is achieved through a reciprocal relationship (Bagozzi 1995; Goidnik 1960; Oliver and Swann 1989); when a brand exceeds a consumer’s expectations, thereby increasing satisfaction (Parasuraman et al. 1985; 1988), the consumer will feel obligated to reciprocate.

Notably, a third mechanism exists which may affect consumer’s behavior. Specifically, research on complaining behavior finds that complaining is a function of consumers’ ability and motivation; to complain to a brand consumers must believe has a favorable cost-benefit ratio (Oliver 1997). However, the costs and benefits of this option compete with two other options. The consumer can remain quietly loyal to the company, or they can ‘exit’ their relationship with the brand (Andreson 1988; Hirschman 1970; Maute and Forrester 1993; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1996). Given that exiting a brand relationship provides a substitute for complaining (Solnick and Hemenway 1992) and helps the consumer find a new solution, one should expect consumers that have the option to exit a brand to do so (a form of venting) as their dissatisfaction increases.

Based on this literature posit that when deciding whether to complete a survey about a brand three forces will influence consumers’ completion likelihood. First, increases in satisfaction will increase a consumer’s likelihood to respond to a survey about a brand, due to a greater perceived obligation to reciprocate (Hommans 1958). Second, decreases in satisfaction will result in a desire to vent (Hennig-Thurau et. al. 2004), which can increase a consumers’ likelihood to respond to the survey. However, in most scenarios, consumers will choose to vent not by completing the survey, but instead by existing their relationship with the brand (Szymanski and Henard 2001). Therefore, we anticipate a positive satisfaction response bias in most scenarios as it is almost always possible for a consumer to exit the brand relationship, but we anticipate an extreme satisfaction response bias when consumers cannot exit the brand.

Study 1

In study 1 we demonstrate that willingness to engage in WOM and willingness to complete a survey are differently related to satisfaction. To do so, we measured consumers’ willingness to complete a survey for their cable/internet provider or their willingness to engage in WOM about their cable internet provider, and consumer’s satisfaction.

Methods

Participants in this study were 2018 subjects who were recruited from MTurk (53% female and had a mean age of 32). Consumers identified their wireless company in a drop down menu. Participants were asked “Imagine [] asked you to complete a survey, about their products and services, how likely are you to complete it?” or “How likely are you to at some point tell friends or family about your experiences with []?” (seven point scale anchored by very unlikely and very likely). Participants then indicated their dissatisfaction with the company on an 11-point scale (anchored by very dissatisfied and very satisfied).

Results and Discussion

A regression analysis revealed an interaction of satisfaction and condition (WOM vs survey completion), β = .07, t(2015) = 2.71, p < .01. Further analysis is withheld for brevity, but visual inspection reveals WOM induced an extreme response bias, and survey completion induced a positive response bias.

Study 2

In study 2 an on campus corporation run by students sent a survey to over 3000 students as part of a larger effort to understand their customers. The sample included research pool participants. After a one week delay, all participants from the research pool answered a single question about their satisfaction with the campus corporation, as part of larger research session. Student’s likelihood to respond to...
the voluntary survey was analyzed according to the satisfaction data they provided in the lab.

**Methods**

In this study, 787 subjects (49% female, average age 20) that were registered in a student subject pool were emailed a survey from a university campus organization. For the analysis, participants were coded according to whether or not they completed the voluntary emailed survey. After one week, participants completed a series of surveys, one of which had a set of questions about their satisfaction with six university-related entities including the campus corporation. The measure was “How satisfied are you with each of the following?” (seven point scale anchored by very dissatisfied and very satisfied).

**Results and Discussion**

A binary logistic regression revealed a significant positive relationship between the measured independent variable, satisfaction, and the dependent variable survey completion, \( \beta = .243 \) Wald \( \chi^2(1) = 9.71, p < .01 \).

**Study 3**

In study 3, participants on MTurk were asked to indicate their satisfaction with MTurk while completing an unrelated survey. Participants were then contacted 6 weeks later and asked to complete a voluntary survey regarding their satisfaction with Amazon Mechanical Turk.

**Methods**

Participants (1567) were recruited from MTurk, (52% were female, average age 31). All participants were paid $0.50 for completing an unrelated survey, at the end of which they were asked to indicate their satisfaction with Amazon Mechanical Turk, “How satisfied are you with Amazon Mechanical Turk?” Responses were provided on a 10-point scale, anchored by dissatisfied and satisfied. Six weeks later, participants received an email requesting that they complete a very short unpaid survey regarding their satisfaction with Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants’ completion of the survey served as the dependent variable.

**Results**

A binary logistic regression revealed a significant positive relationship between the measured independent variable, satisfaction, and the dependent variable survey completion, \( \beta = .07 \) Wald \( \chi^2(1) = 6.75, p < .05 \).

**Study 4**

Study 4 sought to investigate the process driving survey completion. We measured participants’ willingness to complete a survey for their wireless provider, their satisfaction with the wireless provider, their agreement that completion would allow them to reciprocate, and their desire to vent by completing the survey.

**Methods**

Participants in this study were 1936 subjects who were recruited from MTurk (50% female and had an average age of 31). Consumers identified their wireless company in a drop-down menu. Participants were asked “Imagine [wireless company] asked you to complete a survey, about their products and services, how likely are you to complete it?” (seven point scale anchored by very unlikely and very likely). Participants then indicated their satisfaction with the company on an 11-point scale (anchored by very dissatisfied and very satisfied). Next, participants responded to the statement “Completing a survey for [company] would allow me to reciprocate for the benefits they have provided me” on a seven-point scale (anchored by strongly disagree and strongly agree). Participants then responded to the statement “Completing a survey for [company] would allow me to vent frustrations” on a seven-point scale (anchored by strongly disagree and strongly agree).

**Results**

A binary logistic regression was run to determine if the measured independent variable, satisfaction, predicted our dependent variable, willingness to complete a survey. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between satisfaction and likelihood of completing a survey, \( \beta = .234 \), Wald \( \chi^2(1) = 58.30, p < .001 \).

Mediation analysis was conducted following Process Model 74. Satisfaction served as the independent variable which predicted likelihood to complete a survey, obligation to reciprocate and desire to vent as mediators. The model allowed the effect of the mediators on the dependent variable to be moderated by the independent variable. A bias corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the moderated mediation of the obligation to reciprocate and the desire to vent revealed the mediating effects were moderated by the independent variable based on 10,000 boot strap samples (.01 to .02) and (.00 to .01) respectively. The results reveal that obligation to reciprocate (+) and desire to vent (-) mediate the relationship between satisfaction and response likelihood. Further they reveal in line with our theory obligation to reciprocate is a particularly strong mediator for satisfied consumers and the desire to vent is a particularly strong mediator for dissatisfied consumers.

**Study 5a**

In study 5a and 5b we manipulate consumers’ satisfaction and ability to exit a brand, to test the prediction that the ability to exit a brand moderates the effect of satisfaction on response likelihood. We predict that for consumers who are able to exit, a positive satisfaction response bias will emerge, and for those not able to exit, an extreme satisfaction response bias will emerge.

In study 5a, consumers read a short scenario regarding their experience with a cable company. Satisfaction was manipulated through service quality and included three levels, dissatisfied, neutral, and satisfied. The manipulation of the ability to exit stated that participants had “been with the company for a year but were able to exit or that they had ‘been with the company for a year but that the provider was the only provider in the area.’”

**Methods**

For this study, 364 subjects were recruited for MTurk (50% were female, average age was 30). The study manipulated satisfaction and ability to exit in a 3 x 2 orthogonal design. After reading the scenario, participants first indicated how likely they would be to complete a survey sent by the company in the scenario, “How likely would you be to complete the survey?” (9 point scale, anchored by very unlikely and very likely). They then indicated their satisfaction with the company “How would you rate your satisfaction in this scenario?” (7 point scale, anchored by very unsatisfied and very satisfied).

**Results**

The results indicate the manipulation of satisfaction was successful (M_dissatisfied = 4.2, M_neutral = 5.4, M_satisfied = 6.3) F(2,363) = 194.44, p < .001. An ANOVA testing the effect of satisfaction and ability to exit on likelihood to complete a survey revealed a significant interaction, F(2,363) = 3.02, p < .05. T-tests revealed that for consumers that were not able to exit, those who were dissatisfied were more likely to respond to a survey (M = 6.1) than those who were neutral (M = 5.1), t(121) = 2.1, p < .05, and that there was no effect for those who could exit p > .1.
Study 5b

In study 5b, consumers read a short scenario regarding their experience purchasing a TV. Satisfaction was manipulated through product quality included and three levels, dissatisfied, neutral, and satisfied. The ability to exit was operationalized through a manipulation of an option to return the TV (present not present).

Methods

For the study, 242 subjects were recruited for MTurk (53% female, average age 31). The methods closely matched those of study 4a, with a couple exceptions; responses to the likelihood to complete a survey were on a seven point scale and responses to satisfaction with the company were on an 11 point scale (same anchors were used).

Results

The results indicate the manipulation of satisfaction was successful \(M_{dissatisfied} = 2.6, M_{neutral} = 6.7, M_{satisfied} = 10.7\) F(1, 242) = 1710.07, p < .001. An ANOVA testing the effect of satisfaction and ability to exit on likelihood to complete a survey revealed a significant interaction, F(2, 241) = 4.09, p < .05. T-tests indicated that for consumers who were not able to exit, those who were dissatisfied were more likely to respond to a survey (\(M = 4.1\)) than those who were neutral (\(M = 2.9\)), t(78) = 3.10, p < .01, and that there was no such effect for those who could exit p > .1.

General Discussion

Together the studies reported here indicate that when consumers are able to exit a brand, there is a positive satisfaction response bias for survey completion. In contrast, the results demonstrate that when consumers cannot exit a brand, an extreme satisfaction response bias exists. We additionally demonstrate that survey completion is driven by and obligation to reciprocate and a desire to vent, the latter of which only drives survey completion when a more attractive alternative option (exiting the brand) is not available.

In addition to demonstrating existing assumptions regarding survey response have been mistaken, this research adds to our understanding of reciprocity between brands and consumers as well as consumer venting behavior. The findings suggests consumers will engage with a brand as an act of reciprocity based on their satisfaction, adding to past research which has found consumers reward firms for their overall effort according to reciprocity norms (Morales 2005). The work also identifies exiting behavior as a form of venting for dissatisfied consumers. Importantly, this reality suggests that brands may frequently miss out on feedback from their dissatisfied consumers, impeding the process of improvement.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Despite prevailing obesity problems, many people seem reluctant to exercise or restrain their food intake (Wansink 2014). Rather, we seem to prefer food that en passé contributes to our health and well-being. For instance, fat-, sugar- and sodium-reduced food is very popular, as are products that have certain health benefits: some nutrients may affect cardiovascular health (Engler and Engler 2006; Erdmann, Cheung, and Schroder 2008), while others may reduce the risk of dementia (Perez et al. 2012). To make these products' healthiness accessible to consumers, many producers provide health-related information front-of-package or back-of-pack. Health claims advertise a specific health benefit of the entire product or its ingredients, such as vitamins, fiber, or potassium. While nutrition claims (e.g., ‘low fat’) have been shown to negatively affect our diets (e.g., Belei et al. 2012; Wansink and Chandon 2006), (functional) health claims are thought to contribute to the improvement of public health (Williams 2005). Specifically, it has been argued that health claims assist people in making better informed food choices in that they increase intake of healthy food (Belei et al. 2012; Williams 2005).

A potentially negative outcome of health claims is that consumers perceive the respective products to be less calorific, thereby resulting in overconsumption of that food (Roe, Levy and Derby 1999; Wansink and Chandon 2006). In this paper, we put forth another mechanism that links health claim provision with undesired overeating. This mechanism involves exposure to a health claim featuring non-hedonic food product and delayed increased consumption of hedonic food (that does not feature a health claim) among some consumers. Specifically, we argue that when exposed to a health claim, high self-control consumers obtain a moral license that allows indulgence later on. Our contention is based on research in the field of moral licensing (e.g., Khan and Dhar 2006; Miller and Effron 2010; Wilcox et al. 2009) indicating that thoughts about moral behavior can license subsequent indulgent consumption. We move beyond existing research and show that the presence of a health claim allows licensing the delayed, increased consumption of hedonic food. Moreover, we argue that this effect is particularly strong when the health claim addresses a consumer-relevant benefit (van Kleef, can Trijp, and Luning 2005; Verbeke 2005) and when consumers have high self-control (Wilcox et al. 2009). We examine another boundary condition to the health claim-induced licensing effect in the form of product type. While health claims on products from healthy or neutral categories (such as yogurt or soup) allow licensing, health claims on hedonic products (such as chocolate custard) may rather induce a goal conflict resulting in decreased indulgence (Belei et al. 2012).

Results from lab experiment 1 where participants first evaluated a non-hedonic product the featured either a relevant or less relevant health claim and subsequently had the opportunity to consume chocolate beans (which unbeknownst to them was measured afterwards) support our predictions: participants who were randomly assigned to the high-relevance condition consumed more chocolate beans than participants in the no health claim/hedonic product condition. At the same time, health claim presence on a hedonic product led to decreased chocolate bean consumption compared to the no health claim/hedonic product condition. While increasing self-control reduced hedonic food intake when there was no health claim featured on the product (both healthy and hedonic), this effect was not observed when a healthy product featured the health claim. In the latter case, consumption remained almost unaffected by self-control. When the hedonic product featured the health claim, high self-control consumers were particularly reluctant to eat the chocolate beans.

Our findings extend existing research in showing that the mere presence of health cues can affect lagged consumption. This is an important addition to Wilcox et al. (2009) who only focused on the health cue’s effect on immediate choice. Our results also replicate previous findings that showed that in case of a health claim-induced goal conflict, subsequent consumption of indulging drinks decreased (Belei et al. 2012). However, when the product featuring the health claim was non-hedonic (soup or yogurt), lagged consumption increased. We further qualify existing research in showing that not all health cues produce similar outcomes. Although it has been shown that personal relevance of health claims is important (van Kleef, can Trijp, and Luning 2005; Verbeke 2005), research examining the downstream consequences of health claim provision (e.g., Belei et al. 2012) did not consider personal relevance. Our results indicate that particularly health claims that are personally relevant stimulate moral licensing. This boundary condition can be interpreted as speaking against a mechanism involving the magic bullet effect, where consumers generalize messages in health claims from one benefit to another (Roe et al. 1999).

On a larger scale, this paper adds to the growing body of research pointing to undesired consequences of providing nutrition information (Chandon and Wansink 2007; Elshiehwy, Jahn, and Boztug 2016; Pham, Mandel, and Morales 2016; Wansink and Chandon 2006). Research that compared a large number of health claims has shown some claims are better understood than others (Grunert et al. 2009; Lähteenmäki et al. 2010; Mariotti, Kalonji, Huneau, and Margaritis 2010). Misunderstanding can become problematic when it causes health halos (Chandon and Wansink 2007; Elshiehwy, Jahn, and Boztug 2016; Roe et al. 1999) and ultimately results in malnutrition. While most existing research focused on this phenomenon, we identified a mechanism where correctly understood health claims result in overeating.

REFERENCES


Value of Weighty Products: The Influence of Haptic Weight on Product Evaluations
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
People often hold or touch products before purchasing them. By holding the product in their hand, consumers gain the ability to evaluate the product’s weight and other haptic information (e.g., texture, hardness, temperature). For some products (e.g., laptop or groceries), weight is a critical aspect that provides diagnostic information and it might be positively (e.g., groceries) or negatively (e.g., laptop) correlated with the product value. However, weight is not critical or diagnostic for some other products (e.g., DVDs), though consumers still register weight information when handling these products. From a standard economic or rational perspective, haptic experience of weight should not have any impact on the product’s value for products whose weight provides neither positive nor negative diagnostic information. However, in this research, we posit the opposite showing that people perceive a product with a higher relative weight as more valuable and they are willing to pay more for a heavier product even though the weight is not a diagnostic attribute.

Past research has shown that experiencing physical weight unrelated to a target of judgment activates cognitive concepts metaphorically related to weight and subsequently changes people’s judged importance of unconnected issues (Jostmann, Lakens, and Schubert 2009; Zhang and Li 2012). This research moves away from cognitive activation and interpretation of weight and looks at the affective interpretation of a target product’s weight, albeit non-diagnostic, and how it influences perceived value of that same target product.

Importantly, haptic sensory input can also lead to affective interpretations. Peck and Wiggins (2006) have examined affective interpretations of the texture dimension of touch and shown that marketing messages incorporating a touch element with positive sensory feedback (e.g., having a soft texture) enhance affective response and are more persuasive for people with high autotelic need for touch. However, research has not looked at affective interpretations of weight in a product evaluation context.

Practical insight suggests that weight and heaviness lead to positive interpretations of products. Bang & Olufsen, a Danish electronics manufacturer, often make their products (from remote controls to sound systems) relatively heavy to create a perception of quality in their consumers’ mind (Lindstrom 2005). Moreover, companies print brochures and catalogs for luxury or expensive products on heavy papers to express their distinct identity and create a stronger touch experience for their customers (Hultén, Broweus, and Dijk 2009). Therefore, we expect that in a product evaluation context where people hold the product with their hand, holding a heavy product lead to a positive affective reaction. Furthermore, the word “heavy” often describes an excessive amount, a more potent, or a more powerful object, such as in heavy clouds, heavy machinery, heavy traffic, heavy taxes, a heavy schedule, and heavy rain. Since people show a preference toward excessive sizes of objects (Silvera, Josephs, and Giesler 2002), we expect that semantic interpretations of heaviness (i.e., an excessive amount, a more potent, or a more powerful product) also lead to positive affective reactions toward the product. Thus, we hypothesize that holding a heavy product triggers positive affective reaction toward the product.

In a product evaluation context, consumers often make judgments by asking themselves how they feel about a given product and they use the experienced feeling to form their overall evaluation of the product (Pham 1998; Pham et al. 2001). Relying on predictions of the affect-as-information account and affective interpretations of product heaviness, we hypothesize that consumers evaluate heavier products more positively and would be willing to pay more for the product, even when weight of that product provides irrelevant or non-diagnostic information.

We examined the effect of nondiagnostic weight on product evaluation and our proposed underlying mechanism across four experiments using different products. In Study 1a, we show that people are willing to pay more for a heavier package of earbuds. In Study 1b, we used point-of-purchase cardboard displays as the product. Point-of-purchase displays are frequently used to sell services, gift cards, tickets, season passes, or other products through retailers such as Costco. The point-of-purchase display we used showed a deal for playing bowling at a local bowling alley. Customers often hold the cardboard in their hand to read the details. Therefore, they receive haptic information of the cardboard display. Results show that people are willing more for the same bowling deal if they hold the heavier cardboard display.

In Study 2, we again used earbuds as the product and measured both people’s affective reaction toward the product and their willingness to pay for it. Results show people have more positive affective reactions toward the heavier earbuds package and are willing to pay more for it. A mediation analysis also shows that people’s positive affective reaction toward the product mediates the effect of weight on willingness to pay.

Past research has shown that whether people use their general positive or negative feelings induced by unrelated factors in their judgment depends on how much they feel they are entitled to judge (Croizet and Fiske, 2000). Thus, we expect variations in entitlement to judge a product moderates the effect of weight on product evaluation. In Study 3, we tested this prediction by manipulating people’s sense of entitlement to evaluate the target product. In this study we used the same product as Study 1b: cardboard displays showing a bowling deal. To manipulate a sense of entitlement to evaluate the product, we first asked participants to complete a test about their expertise in bowling game. Then, we randomly provided them with feedback that they either had or did not have expertise in bowling game. Next, they were provided with a heavy or light board to evaluate. Results show that the effect of weight on perceived value was attenuated when participants received the feedback of not having expertise. In other words, people rely on the positive feelings induced by the heavy board to evaluate the bowling deal only when they thought they were expert in bowling game, thus, they were entitled to evaluate it.

REFERENCES


The Divergent Effects of Social Power on Consumers’ Reactions to Waiting

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Waiting is unavoidable in consumption situations. Many situational factors can influence it, including visceral states (Van den Bergh, Dewitte, & Warlop, 2008), background colors (Gorn, Chattopadhyay, Sengupta, & Tripathi, 2004), and culture (Chen, Ng, & Rao, 2005). However, relatively little is known about how one particular emotional state affects it (except a notable investigation by Huang, Huang, & Wyer, 2016). The present research examined the implications of power.

Prior findings offer seemingly conflicting perspectives on the influence of powerful feelings on waiting patience. Certainty prior findings suggest that powerful people tend to be less patient on the “dull” waiting than powerless ones (O’Brien, Anastasio, & Bushman, 2011). However, other findings suggest that feelings of power may increase patience (Joshi & Fast, 2013).

In this research, we suggest that experience of power can either increase or decrease patience, depending on different interpretations of waiting time. If waiting is interpreted as a restriction on personal freedom, feeling powerful leads people to perceive greater personal freedom and subsequently to act more at their free will (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Galinsky et al., 2008; Guinote, 2007). Consequently, it should have an adverse effect on freedom-restricted wait. However, waiting also suggests one’s self-control ability (Mischel & Ebbesen, 1970). In this situation, feelings of power increase people’s perceived ability to exercise control over their own behavior (Fast, Gruenfeld, Sivanathan, & Galinsky, 2009; Joshi & Fast, 2013), and consequently result in greater willingness to wait.

Four studies evaluated the preceding hypotheses.

The first study examined whether experience of power made people less patient as a result of the increased feelings of restriction while waiting. Feelings of power were manipulated using the procedure employed by Galinsky et al. (2003). Then, participants were exposed to a waiting scenario, in which they need wait to get an extra bonus. After imagining themselves in the situation described, participants were asked to report how long they would be willing to wait. Afterwards, their perceived restrictions on freedom while waiting, as well as their anticipated aversiveness to waiting were assessed.

The data showed that participants reported the shorter time they would like to wait when they imagined feeling powerful than when they did not, and this effect was mediated by the effect of feeling powerful on participants’ perceptions that having to wait restricted their freedom.

Study 2 aimed to show the divergent effects of power on consumers’ decisions to wait. A 3 (powerful, powerless, vs. control) × 2 (“can” vs. “will” framing) between-subjects design was employed. Participants’ powerful or powerless feelings were elicited as previously. In control condition, participants were asked to write about the last time they went to a grocery store (see Galinsky et al., 2003). Participants then proceeded to an ostensibly unrelated task. They were asked to imagine that they went to a nice restaurant and found they had to wait for a while before being seated. Next, participants were asked either “how long can you wait?” or “how long will you wait?” Relying on prior research on linguistic framing (Fraser & Nolen, 1981; Patrick & Haghtvedt, 2012), “will you wait” emphasizes the personal will that drives waiting, whereas “can you wait” connotes people’s personal ability.

Results showed that feeling powerful increased the length of waiting if the “can” question was asked, whereas decreased the length of waiting if the “will” question was asked. Furthermore, the results involving control condition suggested that feelings of power, rather than feelings of powerlessness, drove the observed effects.

Study 3 measured participants’ feelings while waiting (feel their freedom to be restricted vs. feel their ability to tolerate the restriction to increase) to examine the proposed process of the effects. Participants were randomly assigned to cells of a 2 (powerful vs. powerless) × 2 (“can” vs. “will” framing) between-subjects design. After the power induction task, participants proceeded to an ostensibly unrelated second task. Following the procedure employed by May and Monga (2014), participants were asked to imagine that they were given a gift of imported Swiss cheese. While they would want to eat it right now, they were aware that waiting could improve the taste of it. Given this information, participants were asked either “how long can you wait?” or “how long will you wait?” In addition, they reported their feelings while waiting from 1 (feel that my desire and behavior is restricted) to 9 (I’m capable of tolerating the restriction).

Results of study 3 replicated those of study 2 and more importantly, confirmed the proposed mechanisms related to the perceptions while waiting.

The effects we identified in prior experiments are largely constrained to waiting scenarios. If our logic is correct, however, feeling powerful should have similar reactions to other experiences. In study 4, we asked participants to listen to the aversive music. Participants were randomly assigned to cells of a 2 (feelings of power: high vs. low) × 2 (framing of the experience: control vs. ability-related) between-subjects design. After the power induction task, participants in control conditions were further instructed to listen to a piece of annoying music for about 1 minute. In ability-relevant conditions, however, the instructions included: “Different people have different abilities to deal with aversive experiences. We are interested in your ability to tolerate such experiences.” Participants then listened to the music. Results confirmed the divergent effects of power on people’s reactions to other waiting-like experiences.

Four studies provide converging evidence for the divergent effects of power on waiting patience, as well as to other waiting-like experiences. In doing so the current research provides several theoretical contributions. First, it offers a novel theoretical account that may help reconcile prior conflicting findings. Second, the current research is among the first to examine whether and how feelings of power activated in one domain can affect consumer patience in the second unrelated domains. Finally, the current research makes related contributions to the growing literature on linguistic framing, in which two words used interchangeably can have profoundly different influences.

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Prepayment as a Self-Commitment Device to Improve Eating Habits
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Incentives play a central role in marketing and economics. A great deal of recent field research suggests that financial incentives can motivate people to do healthy behaviors, such as consumption of healthy foods (Dolan, Galizzi, & Navarro-Martinez, 2015), gym attendance (Milkmann, Minson, & Volpp, 2013), weight loss (Volpp et al., 2008), smoking cessation (Gine, Karlan, & Zimmerman, 2010), and other preventive behaviors (Kane, Johnson, Town, & Butler, 2004).

Many incentive programs studied people among who-by nature of their agreeing to participate in the study before the real study starts—are already willing to take on the tasks (Goldsmith & Dhar, 2013; Hossain & List, 2012; Levitt, List, & Sadoff, 2016). There are a few notable exceptions that studied participation and attendance itself. For instance, Charness and Gneezy (2009) studied gym attendance and found that financial incentives can help habit formation.

For many tasks, willingness to participate is a critical first step toward success. In fact, participation rate is arguably the biggest challenge in corporate wellness initiatives (Haisley, Volpp, Pellathly, & Loewenstein, 2012). This essay proposes a solution that increases participation rates without increasing per capita incentive rate. Although this essay focuses on a health-related behavioral task, the proposed solution can apply to other tasks.

Prepayment as a Proposed Solution
Our proposed solution is prepayment: moving the reward timing in traditional incentive programs to the start of the program or even before the program starts. People are told that acceptance of the prepayment is equivalent to acceptance of the task, which will be carried out later. If they are not able to complete the pre-specified task, the prepayment will be clawed back in the future.

Clawing back in extant literature refers to paying people their expected bonus in advance and taking it back if they underperform (Fryer Jr, Levitt, List, & Sadoff, 2012). Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of loss aversion and claw-back incentives on people’s performance (Fryer Jr et al., 2012; Hossain & List, 2012; Levitt, List, Neckermann, & Sadoff, 2012). In these studies, people were incentivized to do things that they had already committed to (e.g., teaching students, preparing for exams, manufacturing consumer electronics, resulting in program participation rates of close to 100%). Instead of using claw-back to motivate people who already committed to certain tasks, we extended the use of incentive claw-back to initial participation.

In our proposed solution, both participation and subsequent effort to fulfill the task are voluntary; people still have the option of not fulfilling the task even after they have accepted the prepayment. This arrangement of prepayment and claw back can be seen as an informal contract. We have come up with this solution based on two major findings in economics and psychology.

Hyperbolic discounting (Laibson, 1997) states that valuation falls rapidly during initial delays but more slowly as time goes by (Thaler, 1981). One consequence of the hyperbolic discounting is that people are present biased (Frederick, Loewenstein, & O’donoghue, 2002; O’Donoghue & Rabin, 1999, 2001; O’Donoghue & Rabin, 2002). That is, they excessively favor gratification now at the expense of future gratification. Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: People are more likely to accept a payment to perform a task if the payment is made earlier (prepayment) than later (post-payment)

Loss aversion refers to the notion that losses have greater impact on preferences than gains, or losses loom large than gains (Tversky & Kahneman, 1991). An immediate consequence of loss aversion is that the anticipated loss of utility associated with giving up a valued good is greater than the anticipated utility gain associated with receiving it (Tversky & Kahneman, 1991). This discrepancy was termed the “endowment effect” by Thaler and colleagues (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1991; Thaler, 1980). In our proposed solution, once participants accept the prepayment, it becomes their endowment. Accepted prepayment, in the form of endowment, will therefore be valued higher than post-payment (Thaler, 1980). The endowment effect, in turn, will motivate people to keep participating in any pre-committed task in order to avoid the loss of the prepayment.

Based on the above analysis we proposed our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Loss aversion after accepting prepayment can motivate people’s subsequent task participation and completion.

Study Design
Program Invitation
We posted flyers, announcing our study, on the campus of a large public university in the Southwest of the United States. We did not use any stopping rule and aimed to recruit as many participants as possible within our two-week recruitment period. One hundred and sixty-six students (72 women, aged 18-50 years, MD=21) signed up to participate in the study. We introduced our study as the “Free Fruit Program” with the goal of promoting healthy eating among the student population. Participants were asked to complete a 3-minute online survey about their eating habits and exercise regime in return for $2.00. At the end of the survey, participants were told to expect an email notification informing them about the start of the program.

Overall, 133 participants completed our online survey. We randomly assigned them to one of three treatment groups: We randomly assigned 133 students to one of three treatment groups: (1) Prepayment (N = 44), (2) Post-Payment (N = 44), and Control (N = 45). We sent an email invitation to each student two days before the start of the program phase 1:

Prepayment: You have been selected into our rewards group to get fresh fruit. That means not only can you get free fruit, you will be paid $10 upfront for your 10-day participation. You only need to collect the money on the first day of our program (Monday, Nov. 3).

If you miss your first chance to get fruit and come in on the 2nd day (Tuesday, Nov. 4), you will get $9. By the same logic, if you come in on the 3rd day (which means you missed fruit twice), you will get $8, and so on. Each time you missed your portion of your fruit, you will get 1 dollar less. Once you have collected your payment, you commit to collecting your fruit each business day until the program ends on Friday, Nov. 14. If you miss a day of fresh fruit, you will need to repay us $1. If you miss your fruit on two days, you will need to repay us $2, etc.”

Post-payment: Participants in this group received the following email: “You have been selected into our rewards group to get fresh fruit today, but you will be paid $10 upfront for your 10-day participation. You only need to collect the money on the first day of our program (Monday, Nov. 3).

If you miss your first chance to get fruit and come in on the 2nd day (Tuesday, Nov. 4), you will get $9. By the same logic, if you come in on the 3rd day (which means you missed fruit twice), you will get $8, and so on. Each time you missed your portion of your fruit, you will get 1 dollar less. Once you have collected your payment, you commit to collecting your fruit each business day until the program ends on Friday, Nov. 14. If you miss a day of fresh fruit, you will need to repay us $1. If you miss your fruit on two days, you will need to repay us $2, etc.”
fruit. That means not only can you get free fruit, you will also be paid $1 whenever you collect your fruit. The program starts on Monday (Nov. 3). For the next 10 business days, you can get one portion of free fruit plus $1 each day."

Control: Participants in this group received the following email: “We will provide free fresh fruit from tomorrow (Monday, Nov 3). For the next 10 business days, you can get one portion of free fruit each day.”

In addition, participants in all treatment conditions were informed about the location and collection time (10:11am and 2-3pm every business day) to get their fruit (and payment).

Program Implementation

A research assistant prepared the fruit every day (consisting of 3-5 different kinds of fruit, including apples, oranges, pears, plums, watermelon, mangos, strawberries, grapes, and bananas) and recorded the participants’ choices. The fruit was displayed in cups on a stand for participants to choose from.

Program Extension

On the last day of Phase 1, we informed participants about the extension of our program for another 10 business days (i.e., 2 more weeks). They were told that “Some participants liked our program so much that they were asking for an extension. We are therefore happy to announce that we will, indeed, by extending our program for another TWO WEEKS, beginning tomorrow.” Unlike for Phase 1, participants were informed in Phase 2 that they would receive fresh fruit only, and that no monetary compensation would be provided.

Results

We examined our data in two ways. First, we analyzed aggregated daily show-up frequencies (i.e., the total number of people showing up each day) over the 20-day program period. Second, we used survival analysis to analyze individual level data.

Overall, 27 participants out of 44 (61.4%) showed up at least once in the Prepayment condition, 18 out of 44 (40.9%) in the Post-Payment condition, and 16 out of 45 (35.6%) in the Control condition (Test for Equality of Proportions, χ²(2) = 6.62, p < 0.05). Ten participants showed up every day in Phase 1, out of whom seven were from the Prepayment condition, two were from the Post-Payment condition, and one was from the Control condition (χ²(2) = 6.82, p < 0.05). None of the participants showed up every day in Phase 2.

ANOVA

We analyzed the variance of the show up data over the 10-day period of Phase 1 (see Figure1). We treated each group of subjects as one unit of analysis (N = 3). Daily show ups of each group had been repeatedly observed for 10 days. A repeated measure ANOVA of the daily show up data with treatment (Prepayment, Post-Payment, Control) as between-unit factor and days as within-unit factor yielded significant main effects (F(2, 18) = 104.6, p < 0.001). Post-hoc tests with Bonferroni adjustment (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991) indicated that the average number of students showing up during Phase 1 was significantly higher in Prepayment condition than Post-Payment condition (M_{Prepayment} = 17.1 vs. M_{Post-Payment} = 9.6, p < 0.001) or Control condition (M_{Control} = 6.1, p < 0.001). Show-up was also significantly higher in Post-Payment condition than in Control condition (p < 0.01).

An analogous ANOVA for Phase 2 (see Figure 1) yields similarly significant treatment effects (F(2, 18) = 35.8, p < 0.001), although for considerably lower show-up rates. Post-hoc tests with a Bonferroni adjustment indicated that show-up was significantly higher in the Prepayment condition than in the Post-Payment condition (M_{Prepayment} = 4.1 vs. M_{Post-Payment} = 0.8, p < 0.001) or Control condition (M_{Control} = 1.1, p < 0.001). Show-up in the Post-Payment condition was not significantly different from the Control condition.

ANOVA results showed that the between-unit factor is mainly driving the show up variance. Post-hoc test confirmed the superiority of Prepayment in motivating show ups. Due to random assignments of individual members, the between-group difference can be caused by no other reasons than experimental treatments. Therefore, causal inference in traditional RCTs are still valid; prepayment makes more people show up.

Survival Analysis

Next, we explore the dynamic process by using survival analysis. Behaviorally, task participation is measured by initial showing up to get the prepayment, while task fulfillment is measured by the number of days participants persisted before they stopped coming. In order to do survival analysis, we define a failure event first. We have selected day 18 as a cut-off date. That is, if one participant could not persist to day 18 or later, she was considered “dead” on her last day to pick up the fruit. Otherwise, the participant survives until the observation window. All our results remained significant and qualitatively unchanged if we define the cut-off day as any day between 15 and 20.

Each participant’s days “survived” was calculated as the number of days before their last collection of fruit (last day included). For instance, if a participant’s last day to pick up fruit is on day 15, then she survived 15 days and was dead on day 15. Most of the participants were “dead” by the end of Phase 2, with only 6 participants surviving. Among them, 5 were from Prepayment condition; 1 was from Post-Payment condition. Survival analysis showed that there was an initial loss of participants on day 1 across all three treatments. Prepayment program had a significantly higher survival probability than the other two programs, suggesting that the Prepayment program was more successful than the other two programs (P_{Prepayment} = 61.4%, P_{Post-Payment} = 40.9%, P_{Control} = 35.6%, χ²(2) = 6.62, p < 0.05). Although there was a sudden drop after day 10, reflecting the removal of the financial incentives in Phase 2, Prepayment still did significantly better than the other programs.

Our survival analysis provided convergent evidence that there were significant differences among the three treatments in motivating task participation and task fulfillment, both for the entire four weeks (Phase 1 and Phase 2, Log-Rank Test, χ²(2) = 13.4, p < 0.01), as well as for the last two weeks (Phase 2, χ²(2) = 9.2, p < 0.01). Pairwise comparisons showed that Prepayment with Bonferroni adjustment had a significantly higher survival rate than Post-Payment condition (χ²(1) = 7.2, p < 0.01, entire four weeks; χ²(1) = 4.9, p < 0.05, last two weeks) and Control condition (χ²(1) = 12.2, p < 0.001, entire four weeks; χ²(1) = 7.2, p < 0.01, last two weeks). There were no significant differences between Post-Payment condition and Control condition (neither for entire four weeks nor last two weeks).

Discussion

One major issue of prepaying people is how to enforce money collection if they have not fulfilled the pre-specified task. In our study, most of the students who accepted the prepayment participated in the subsequent tasks. For those whose money needs to be collected, we were able to recover prepayments from all participants (by contacting them via email and/or text) except one. This fact indicated that students treated the prepayment program as an informal contract: once they accepted the prepayment, they knew they should either fulfil the task or return the money in the end.

Our results show that loss aversion, operationalized as daily goals, led to increased participation rates and significantly higher show-up rates and persistence with the program, even when financial incentives were removed (although at considerably lower levels).
Unlike previous studies that compared loss aversion to programs with one shot ex-post payments, we introduced a tougher-to-beat control condition, post-payment on a daily basis, that offered participants financial incentives and the flexibility to receive those without the potential of repayments. We believe that this post-payment condition is a more stringent test of our prepayment program, as the evidence from a pilot study with 150 online survey participants, who were shown all three programs side by side, indicates that most people (73%) preferred the flexibility of post-payment to the prepayment program (15%) and to the program without financial incentives (12%). This preference suggests that key to success would be to roll out the program without alternative options rather than rely on self-selection.

In summary, field evidence for the program demonstrates that people were more likely to show up and persist with the prepayment program at a higher rate. This effect continued post-intervention.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Both top-dog and underdog positioning have been widely used in marketplace. However, prior research provides no clear answer regarding which strategy is more persuasive, nor does it identify conditions under which one method of positioning may be superior to the other (Kim et al., 2008; McGinnis and Gentry 2009; Paharia, et al., 2011; Vandeloo, Goldschmied, and Richards 2007). Attempting to fill this gap, we examine the effectiveness of underdog and top-dog appeals from the perspective of consumers’ psychological state of power, because definitions of both constructs are based on hierarchical differences between different parties (French and Raven 1959; Magee and Galinsky 2008). Specifically, we propose that consumers in a low-power (high-power) state would respond to top-dog (underdog) appeals more positively because their desire to restore (express) power would be satisfied by showing support for a top-dog (underdog) brand.

Further, the proposed effect between positioning and power are moderated by the sales strategy (DeBono 2006; Rucker and Galinsky 2009). Particularly, when a hard-sell strategy that focuses on the utilitarian aspect of a branded product is adopted, lower-power consumers may no longer prefer top-dog appeals because endorsing top-dogs that are only functionally superior does not effectively restore their power. When a soft-sell strategy that focuses on the symbolic aspect of a branded product is adopted, high-power consumers will not respond more positively to underdog appeals because in this case, endorsing an underdog brand that is symbolic inferior will endanger their high-power status.

Study 1 tested our basic hypothesis that high (low) -power consumers are more likely to endorse underdogs (top dogs) in the context of business competition. Participant were first asked to write about a particular incident in which they had power over others or in which someone else had power over them. Afterward, participants were presented with two companies, one described as the top dog, and the other underdog, that were bidding for the same job. As the main dependent variable, participants indicated their support toward underdog and top-dog brands. As the dependent variable, participants indicated their preference for the advertised brand (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). The analyses revealed that when a hard-sell strategy was employed, the interaction between power state and appeal type was significant (F(1, 177) = 4.15, p < .05): high-power participants evaluated the advertised brand more positively when an underdog (vs. top-dog) appeal (p < .05) was utilized. However, low-power participants reported similar evaluations regardless of the appeal used. In contrast, when a soft-sell strategy was employed, there was only a main effect of appeal type (F(1, 171) = 11.90, p = .001): low-power participants still evaluated the advertised brand more positively when the top-dog (vs. underdog) appeal (p < .01) was used. Reversing our previous pattern however, high-power participants also evaluated the advertised brand more positively when a top-dog (vs. underdog) appeal was used (p < .05).

Three studies collectively demonstrated that consumer preferences toward underdogs and top-dogs depend on their psychological power states. In addition, we identified potential motives underlying individuals’ differential attitudes toward underdogs and top-dogs: expressing and restoring power. Importantly, consumers’ responses toward underdog and top-dog brands may shift depending on individuals’ power states and whether appeals are communicated using a hard- or soft-sell strategy. This research contributes to both power literature and research on underdog and top dog appeals.

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Buyers Are More Impatient Than Sellers:
Why Preferences for the Timing of Peaks Diverge in Experiential Purchases
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Suppose that the world-famous portrait, Mona Lisa, the most precious and valuable piece (“peak item”), will be exhibited at your local art museum together with some other great works of art. At what moment during their visiting duration will visitors (experience buyers) expect to see the Mona Lisa? Moreover, do expectations occur at the beginning, middle, or end? From an alternate perspective, when would the exhibition organizer (experience seller) prefer for the portrait to appear?

In consumer research, a growing body of literature has noticed and begun to explore the consumption of experiences (e.g., Boven and Gilovich 2003; Carter and Gilovich 2010, 2012, 2014; Ratner and Hamilton 2015; Li and Lee 2016). In the museum visiting context, the peak item, Mona Lisa, constitutes a peak moment (the most enjoyable or exciting moment when experiencing it (Privette 1983). In reality, regarding selling experiences (e.g., managers of a park, curators of a museum, organizers of a show, etc.), they are willing to locate the peak item at the end of the experience, because the ending part of an event is generally well remembered (Burt, Kemp, and Conway 2003), and experience sellers want consumers to remember the activity and retain a good memory of it.

However, we proposed that experience buyers would prefer an earlier peak rather than the delayed peak that is desired by experience buyers. Three studies consistently provided support for our hypotheses that experience buyers (vs. sellers) construe an experience at a relatively low (vs. high) level. Thus, they tend to form a local (vs. global) and short-sighted (vs. farsighted) perspective, so that buyers (vs. sellers) expect the peak to appear earlier (vs. later) in an experiential purchase. These findings indicate theoretical implications for the literature on experiential purchases and buyer-seller discrepancy, and empirical implications for aiding in the optimal design of activities, events, and a broad range of experiential consumption in order to increase consumers’ anticipated satisfaction.

Theoretical Background
Experiential Purchase and Peak Experience
In contrast to material purchases, which are made with the intention of ownership and possession (Carter and Gilovich 2012), experiential purchases are made with the primary purpose of consuming some experiences, which are intangible (Boven 2005; Keinan and Kivetz 2011) and impermanent (Carter and Gilovich 2012). An influential stream of literature has identified distinctions between experiential purchases and material purchases (see e.g., Chan and Mogilner 2013; Nicolao, Irwin, and Goodman 2009; Gilovich, Kumar and Jampol 2015). However, only a limited amount of research has explored the characteristics of one certain experience, which tends to have a typical narrative structure with a beginning, middle, and end (Boven 2005).

In general, experiential purchases provide consumers with fun, pleasure, and feelings of excitement (Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000), all of which constitute enjoyment-related benefits (Nicolao, Raghu and Mahajan 2007). In an experiential purchase, the maximum hedonic benefits are usually brought by a peak experience. A peak experience derives from Maslow (1962), which proposes that it is a period with the highest level of happiness. In the 1990s, researchers argued that consumers prefer a delayed peak, which means that the later the peak appears, the more enjoyment they feel, because consumers rely more on the peak and end when forming their overall evaluations of an experience (Fredrickson and Kahneman 1993; Bhargave, 2009).

Construal Level Theory
Construal level theory asserts that objects can be mentally represented either abstractly or concretely, depending on perceived psychological distance (Trope and Liberman 2003, 2010). Specifically, a high (vs. low) level of construal makes an individual has an abstract (vs. concrete) and holistic (vs. analytics) mindset, which focuses on the global (vs. local), “larger (vs. smaller) picture”, central (vs. secondary) features, and the final goal of (vs. the process and methods toward) the event or object (Trope and Liberman, 2010).

Buyer-Seller Discrepancy and Level of Construal
The presence of sellers and buyers, and the interactions between the two, are fundamental to the field of marketing (Meehan and Wright, 2012). A large body of extant literature has explored the buyer-seller discrepancy regarding price (Irmak, Waksalsk and Trope 2013), perceptions of price unfairness (Xia, Monroe, and Cox, 2004), reasons for product or service failure (Bolton and Mattila 2015), various aspects of the product (Johnson, Haubl and Keinan 2007), and level of construal (Irmak, Waksalsk, and Trope 2013). However, little is currently known about buyer-seller discrepancy in the context of experiential purchases.

In experiential purchases, experience buyers, who tend to consider themselves as immersed in an event (Zhang and Yang 2015), would like to construe behaviors more concretely (Hamilton 2014), because they are likely to perceive that events happened to the “self” (Spassova and Lee 2013), which invokes relatively local and short-sighted perspectives, and a lower level of construal. On the other hand, experience sellers, who provide experiences for others, are more likely to think of “they” or “others” more frequently, which invokes relatively global and far-sighted perspectives. Thus, experience sellers tend to construe behaviors more abstractly and form a higher level of construal (Yan and Sengupta 2011).

According to the impatience studies, the degree of impatience reflects a trade-off between the preferences for immediate rewards over delayed rewards (Kim and Zauberman, 2013). In our current study, the degree of impatience reflects a preference for the timing of peaks in experiential purchases. The extant literatures (e.g., Goodman and Malkoc 2012; Malkoc, Zauberman and Bettman 2010) have also demonstrated that level of construal affects impatience.

In summary, we proposed that the role in experiential purchases leads to different preferences for the timing of peaks. Specifically, experience buyers form a self-centered and local perspective, and develop a shortsighted view and a relatively lower level of construal. Thus, experience buyers are likely to exhibit more impatience regarding experience the peak of the event. In contrast, experience
sellers have an others-related and global perspective, and develop a farsighted view and a relative higher level of construal. Thus, experience sellers would like to show less impatience to make consumers experience the peak.

**Study 1: Consumer Choice**

The purpose of Study 1 was to provide initial evidence for our prediction that experiencers (buyers) would like the peak to appear earlier than do experience providers (sellers).

**Design and Procedure**

148 individuals (69 females, mean age=35) were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a subject pool, that has been shown to be reliable for experimental research (Goodman, Clyde, and Cheema 2013). Participants were randomly assigned to either the buyer condition or the seller condition. Each participant was asked to imagine himself/herself to be a tourist (vs. organizer) to visit (vs. organize) a film festival celebration which will last three days. Next, participants in the buyer (vs. seller) condition were asked to write down one of their favorite film genres (vs. the most popular film genre in their opinions). They were then asked to schedule the favorite genre (vs. most popular genre) on Day 1, Day 2, or Day 3.

**Results and Discussion**

A chi-square test indicated that the proportions of the day choices differed by condition ($\chi^2(1, N=148)=8.803, p=0.012$). More importantly, we examined the choices of Day 1 and Day 3 cross conditions using a two-tailed z-test for difference in proportions. We found that, in the experience-buyer condition, the proportion (represented as *"P") of the choice of Day 1 was significantly higher than that of the choice of Day 3 ($P_{Day 1} = 23.6\%, P_{Day 3} = 13.5\%; N=148; z=2.242, p<0.05$). On the other hand, in the experience-seller condition, the proportion of the choice of Day 3 was significantly higher than that of the choice of Day 1 ($P_{Day 1} = 12.2\%, P_{Day 3} = 21.6\%; N=148; z=-2.172, p<0.05$).

The results provided basic support for our prediction that buyers prefer scheduling the peak on the first day of the entire celebration duration, while sellers prefer scheduling the peak on the last day of the entire celebration duration.

**Study 2: Anticipated Satisfaction**

Since buyers (vs. sellers) want the peak to appear earlier (vs. later) than sellers (vs. buyers) do, buyers (vs. sellers) should have better anticipated satisfaction with the visiting plan that begins (vs. ends) with the peak moment. To confirm this prediction, we conducted study 2.

**Design and Procedure**

220 students (99 females, mean age=21) recruited from a U.S. Midwest university completed this study. We conducted a 2 (role: buyer vs. seller) × 2 (timing of peak: beginning vs. end) between-subjects design. Participants were instructed to imagine themselves to be tourists (vs. curators) visiting the museum (vs. deciding how these collections should be displayed). Then, participants were presented with one of the two plans:

- Plan 1: See the Mona Lisa first, and then the other collections successively;
- Plan 2: See the other collections successively, and then see the Mona Lisa last.

Then, participants were asked to rate their anticipated satisfaction on a 9-point scale (1=not at all satisfied, 9=very satisfied). The results provided basic support for our prediction that buyers prefer the peak to occur earlier and have higher anticipated satisfaction with a visiting plan that begins with a peak moment; whereas, experience sellers would like to arrange the peak to be later and have higher anticipated satisfaction with a plan that concludes with a peak moment.

**Study 3: Mechanism Exploration**

The first step of Study 3 was to determine whether buyers and sellers construe a certain experience at different construal levels. Given that individuals with a low (vs. high) level of construal are more (vs. less) impatient than those with a high (vs. low) level of construal (Malkoc, Zauber, and Bettman 2010), we predicted that low (vs. high) construal-level individuals would like to see the peak occur earlier (vs. later). The second step of Study 3 was to manipulate participants’ level of construal to test out logic that if buyers (vs. sellers) are manipulated into a high (vs. lower) construal level, buyers (vs. sellers) should be anticipated to prefer a later (vs. earlier) peak than buyers (vs. sellers) who are not manipulated.

**Study 3a**

**Design and Procedure**

148 U.S. residents (69 females, mean age=35) recruited from MTurk participated in this study. They were randomly assigned to either the event-experiencing (i.e., buyer) or event-offering (i.e., seller) condition, and then answered a questionnaire that we adapted from the behavior identification form (BIF; Vallacher and Wegner, 1989). We modified the original BIF slightly because of our special research context (see, e.g., Irnuk, Waksler, and Tribe, 2013; Study 1).

**Results and Discussion**

As predicted, participants in the experience-buying condition had a stronger preference for low-construal-level identifications (M=4.51); whereas, participants in the experience-selling condition had a stronger preference for high-construal-level identification (M=5.82; F (1,146) =11.702, p=.001).

**Study 3b**

In Study 3b, we manipulated participants’ construal level and checked their preferences for the timing of the appearance of the peak.

**Design and Procedure**

Previous research has demonstrated that considering questions of “why (how)” are effective in procedurally priming high (low)-level construal (Fujita et al. 2006). We conducted a pretest to evaluate the effect of our manipulation. 121 individuals (45 females, mean age=36) from MTurk participated in the pretest. Results show that manipulations were found to be effective and reliable ($M_{why}$ condition =5.21, $M_{how}$ condition =4.36; F (1,119) =5.596, p=.02).
Then, we manipulated experience buyers into a high level of construal and manipulated experience sellers into a low level of construal.

246 participants (110 females, mean age=32) were recruited from MTurk and randomly assigned to the four conditions. In the buyer (vs. seller)-condition, participants firstly wrote down one of their favorite (vs. the most popular). Then, participants in the buyer (vs. seller)-condition were randomly assigned to one of two sub-conditions: the high (vs. low)-construal-level condition and the control condition. Manipulations were consistent with those in the pretest. Next, participants in the buyer (vs. seller) condition were asked “At what moment do you expect to see your idol (vs. plan to schedule the performance) in the 90-minute show?” Finally, each participant’s mood was test using the PANAS (α=.955; Townsend and Sood 2012).

Results and Discussion

A one-way ANOVA revealed that, in the experience-buyer condition, participants who were manipulated to have a high construal level wanted to see their idol earlier than those in the control condition do (M_high-level manipulated = 50.19, M_control = 40.37; F (1,123) =4.337, p=.039). On the other hand, in the experience-seller condition, participants who were manipulated to have a low construal level wanted to schedule the idol earlier than those in the control condition do (M_low-level manipulated = 48.82, M_control =63.86; F (1,119) =16.777, p<.001). In addition, manipulation did not affect participants’ mood (F (1, 123) =1.571, p=.213; F (1, 119) =1.136, p=.289), ruling out mood as an alternative explanation. Study 3 support out prediction that buy/seller’s construal level drives different preference for the timing of peak.

Discussion and Conclusion

Three studies demonstrated that, in experiential purchases: 1) buyers are more impatient than sellers regarding waiting for the peak moment, and prefer the peak moment to occur earlier than sellers do; 2) buyers achieve more satisfaction when the experience begins with the peak, while sellers achieve better satisfaction when the experience ends with the peak; and 3) the phenomenon of this preference divergence was driven by the fact that buyers have a relatively lower psychological construal level, while sellers have a relatively higher psychological construal level.

Theoretically, the present research lies in the domain of experiential purchases. Although the extant research focuses on either the difference between experiential purchases and material purchases, or the different types of experiential purchases, the present study focuses on the course of one certain experience, i.e., why buyers prefer the peak to appear earlier and sellers prefer the peak to appear later. In addition, the present article found that it is psychological construal level that drives the different preference for the timing of peak between buyer and seller.

In practice, many marketers and managers apply the lay theory that the peak moment should be scheduled at the end of an event or activity based on the recency effect. However, our findings indicate that consumers seldom consider the event from a global perspective, and prefer the peak to appear earlier than sellers do in an event. Thus, our research provides a novel perspective for optimally designing an event or activity.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Modern technology allows us to send messages across new and diverse distances, but little research has evaluated how different formats affect how we perceive these distances. This research suggests that when it comes to interpreting information, not all forms of communication are created equal. Communication using different formats is shown to alter recipients’ perception of temporal (Study 1), spatial (Study 2), social (Study 3), and hypothetical distance (Study 4). We also find that the relationship between messaging format and psychological distance is partially mediated by perceived sender urgency (Study 4) and that the format-distance effects can be reversed by altering the perceived sender urgency within a format (Study 5).

In our first study, participants were asked to imagine that they had ordered food from their favorite restaurant and had just received a text message or email from the delivery service saying “Hey, sorry for the delay! Unexpected traffic. Will be there soon” and asked how long it would be before the food arrived (in minutes). We found that participants believed that the food would be delivered sooner when the message was received via text message than via email. This result indicates that the reception of a text message leads to lower estimates of temporal distance (decreased psychological distance) than the reception of an identical worded email.

In our second study, participants were told they had just received a text message (email) from their favorite food truck saying “Hey, our Food Truck will be near you at lunch today! Check out the exact location on our app to receive a 10% discount!” and asked how far away they believed the food truck would be from their location (in miles) at lunch that day. We found that participants believed that the food truck would be spatially closer to their location when the message was received via text message than via email. This result indicates that the reception of a text message leads to perception of decreased spatial distance (decreased psychological distance) between the sender and recipient compared to an identically worded email.

In our third study, we found that participants felt closer to the communicator who sent the message via text message than via email. These findings indicate that the perception of a text message leads to greater levels of felt social closeness (decreased psychological distance) with the sender than the perception of an identical email.

In our fourth study, we propose that text messages (relative to email messages) will decrease the perception of hypothetical distance (increased event-likelihood) of events related to the sender’s actions. We also examine the process through which message format affects psychological distance. Particularly, we wanted to see whether the perceived urgency of the sender would act as a temporal distance reference point (greater urgency approximating for shorter/closer time) from which to make assimilative judgments about an unknown distance (closer in time leading to closer judgments of other distances) (Maglio, Trope, Liberman, 2013).

To examine this, participants were asked to imagine that they had decided to attend a new exercise or personal training session at their local gym or club. After their first session, the trainer told them that sometimes they are able to get discounts for new members who train with them. The trainer tells them that they will check whether they are eligible for the discount and let the participant know. Participants were asked to imagine that a few days later they looked down at their phones to see that they had received either a text message or email from the trainer. We then asked participants how likely they believed they were to get the discount as well as how urgently they believed the trainer wanted to convey his message.

We found that participants believed that they were more likely to receive the discount when the message was received via text message than via email. We also found that participants perceived higher levels of sender urgency when the trainer sent his message via text message than via email. Perceived sender urgency was found to partially mediate the relationship between messaging format and hypothetical distance judgments using a bootstrap analysis (Preacher and Hayes, 2008) with five thousand resamples. This result provides evidence that the perception of a text message leads to higher estimation of event-likelihood or probability (decreased psychological distance) for sender-related events than the reception of an identically worded email and that this relationship is partially mediated by perceived sender urgency.

In our fifth study, we propose that by altering sender urgency we can alter perceptions of psychological distance regardless of the messaging format in which those messages are received. To examine this, participants were told they had just received an ostensibly non-urgent text message (or ostensibly urgent email) from their favorite food truck saying “Hey, our Food Truck will be near you this afternoon but we’re here all week (for one day only)! Check out the exact location on our app to receive a 15% discount, redeemable anytime (immediately)! See you there (soon)!” Participants were then asked how far away they believed the food truck would be from their location (in miles) at lunch that day. We found that participants believed that the food truck would be spatially closer to their location when the message was received via urgent email than via non-urgent text. This result indicates that the perception of greater sender urgency, regardless of messaging format, leads to perceptions of decreased spatial distance (decreased psychological distance) between the sender and recipient.

Our investigation provides evidence that communication format can alter the perception of psychological distance through its effect on perceived sender urgency. When we receive a message to have been sent more urgently we perceive the sender and message content to be closer in space, sooner in time, more socially connect and more likely. These findings are important for marketers and consumer psychologists as they provide a foundation from which to begin to understand how changing technology can impact our judgment, decision-making, and behaviour.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Two billion tons of waste go to landfills every year, threatening the environment, economy and society (Brosius, Fernandez, and Cherrier 2013; Trudel and Argo 2013; White, MacDonnell, and Dahl 2011). Upcycling, the process of transforming old into new products, is a promising way to help counter-act this alarming trend (Braungart 2013; Emgin 2012). Despite its growing popularity, the market for upcycled products is still small and research is scarce (Sung 2015; Wilson 2016).

Across four experiments, we show how consumer demand for upcycled products may be fueled through origin appeals (telling consumers what the product used to be), which we compare to outcome appeals (telling consumers what the product is now). We provide a consumer-status-explanation (McFerran and Argo 2014) for why this is the case. Specifically, we show how upcycled products make consumers feel unique, special, and recognized because of their historical value. We consider three competing explanations: authenticity, nostalgia, and sustainability. We also show that origin appeals are effective primarily, if they highlight what consumers cannot discern themselves, i.e., if the origin is only subtly (e.g., vases made out of insulators) vs. obviously (e.g., vases made out of light bulbs) visible. We show that these propositions are robust across products and original materials.

Study 1 establishes the effectiveness of origin appeals in the field. Two Facebook campaigns for an upcycling store were created (to increase page likes and online promotion clicks), targeting 1.34 million potential customers between 18 and 65. The ads featured an upcycled cake stand made from pot lids, a vase made from a light bulb and a pen holder made from forks. We manipulated appeal type, as in all subsequent studies, by communicating what the products used to be (“I used to be a . . . pot lid, light bulb, fork”; origin) vs. what they are now (“Now I am . . . a cake stand, a vase, a pen holder”; outcome). Unique and total like rate (likes relative to unique and total reach) and unique and total click rate (clicks relative to unique and total reach) were our DVs. Two-sample proportions z-tests revealed that origin appeals yielded higher unique (Z=6.72, p<.001) and total like (Z=4.65, p<.001) as well as click rates (Z=1.91, p=.06; Z=4.97, p<.001).

Study 2 investigates individual products, tests for moderation, establishes the process and addresses authenticity as a competing explanation (Beverland and Farrell 2010; DeLong, Heinemann, and Reiley 2005). Ninety students (50.5% female, Mage=22 years) participated in a 2 (appeal type: origin vs. outcome; between-subjects) x 2 (origin visibility: subtle cake stand vs. visible light bulb vase; within-subjects) factorial mixed experiment. They were instructed to evaluate ads for a vase and a cake stand. Items for status (McFerran and Argo 2014), authenticity (Kadirov 2015; Newman and Dhar 2014), and demand (operationalized as purchase intention; Karakan and Argo 2014), and sustainability (Kadirov 2015; Newman and Dhar 2014) were adapted from the literature.

A repeated-measures ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between appeal type and origin visibility on purchase intention (F(1,88)=7.21, p<.05, η²=.08). Origin appeals increased purchase intentions for the cake stand (t(88)=2.47, p<.05), but not for the vase (t(88)=1.06, p=.29). Likewise, we found the expected interaction on status (F(1,88)=12.21, p<.001, η²=.12). Moderated mediation analysis (Hayes 2013) established an indirect effect of origin appeals on purchase intention for the cake stand (CI95[-1.194]) but not for the vase (CI95[-.814, 235]). Authenticity mediated neither; it did not differ across groups.

Study 3 focuses on a single product and rules out nostalgia, which is known to generate preferences for products with references to the past (Schindler and Holbrook 2003) as another explanation. Seventy-five female students (Mage=24 years) participated in a 2 (appeal type: origin vs. outcome) x 2 (origin visibility: subtle vs. visible) between-subjects experiment and evaluated an upcycled cake stand. One group saw a cake stand made from pot lids (subtle origin). Another group saw a stand made from old vinyl records (visible origin). Demand and status were assessed as previously, nostalgia based on Wildschut et al. (2006).

The expected two-way interaction on purchase intention was also significant (F(1,69)=6.69, p<.01, η²=.10). Further, origin appeals increased status for the subtle (Msubtle=3.86, Moutcome=2.66, t(30)=2.26, p<.05), but not for the visible stand (Msubtle=3.97, Moutcome=4.30, t(39)=.73, p=.47). Two-way interaction: F(1,69)=4.86, p<.05, η²=.07). A moderated mediation analysis produced an indirect effect of origin appeals on purchase intention for the subtle (CI95[-0.37, 1.154]) but not for the visible stand (CI95[-0.621, 1.16]). Nostalgia failed to mediate the effect for both; it did not differ across groups.

Study 4 generalizes our effects to different products and original materials, shows that status increases demand because origin disclosure imubes products with history and eliminates sustainability as another explanation (Sörgqvist, Langeborg, and Marsh 2016). 482 female mTurkers (Mage=35 years) participated in a 2 (appeal type: origin vs. outcome) x 2 (product type: subtle vs. visible) x 3 (product category: bags, vases, bowls) between-subjects experiment.

We find the hypothesized interactions on purchase intention (F(1, 470)=14.52, p<.001, η²=.03), status (F(1, 470)=22.48, p<.001, η²=.05) and history (F(1, 470)=17.20, p<.001, η²=.04) for all categories. We also find an interaction between appeal type and origin visibility on sustainability (F(1, 470)=7.61, p<.01, η²=.02), making it a viable alternative account. Indirect effects of origin appeal via status on purchase intention turned significant for all products with subtle (CIs excluded 0), but not with visible origins (CIs included 0). Sustainability showed no consistent results. Sequential mediation analyses per product produced significant indirect effects from appeal type to purchase intention via history and status for all products with subtle origins (CIs excluded 0), corroborating our assumptions.

This research is the first to present a status-based explanation for why consumers demand upcycled products after viewing origin appeals. Specifically, it suggests that upcycled products may be used as alternative signals of status (Bellezza, Gino, and Keinan 2014) because they contain history. We show that particularly under conditions of low origin visibility, marketers need not waste resources on promoting upcycled products as environmentally-friendly. Instead, they should promote their status-affording potential by showing how they can help consumers stand out from the crowd.
REFERENCES


Please Do Interrupt, But Nicely! The Effect of Positive and Negative Interruptions on Product Evaluation and Choice
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Interruptions have become pervasive in our lives (Carrier et al. 2009). Extent research has only looked at the cognitive dimensions (timing, duration and cognitive demand), but not at the affective dimensions of interruptions, which is a lacuna because no interruption is devoid of affective undertones (An interruption from a tele-marketer selling offers induces a different affective response than a call from an old friend). Thus, understanding the impact of interruptions with positive and negative affective consequences on focal tasks can provide rich theoretical and practical insights. This research explores the impact of valenced interruptions on product evaluation and choice. It is found that valenced interruptions lead to stronger contrast in evaluation of otherwise similar products. Five studies demonstrate that positive (negative) interruptions lead to unfavourable (favourable) evaluation and lower (higher) choice of pre-interruption products; but favourable (unfavourable) evaluation and higher (lower) choice of post-interruption products.

We argue that interruptions carry some content, which is subject to meaning-making by the receiver (Weick 1995). Such meanings are mostly affect laden and can induce spontaneous positive and negative emotional responses (Berkowitz 1993; Han, Lerner, and Kelchner 2007). Moreover, it is known that positive (negative) affect leads to abstract (concrete) construal (Ishbel, Burns, and Haar 2005; Labbro and Patrick 2009). Finally, research shows that concrete (abstract) construal leads to focus on costs and ‘cons’ (rewards and ‘pros’) of a product (Vallacher and Wegner 1989; Eyal et al. 2004). Therefore, we hypothesize that positive (negative) interruption leads to favourable (unfavourable) evaluation of post-interruption product, through mediation of construal. Given that choice happens in a finite consideration-set (Nedungadi 1987), interruption may occur such that some products are evaluated before (pre-interruption) while some are evaluated after the interruption (post-interruption). Since the product evaluation is relative, favourable (unfavourable) evaluation of post-interruption product should relatively skew evaluation of other product, leading to unfavourable (favourable) evaluation of pre-interruption product. Lastly, we also consider the moderation of brand strength on the above proposed effect.

In Study 1, participants (N=132) were randomly allocated to one of the four conditions (positive/negative/neutral/no interruption). Two product profiles (pretested for equivalence on evaluation) were shown sequentially and an interruption (a buffering circle) was placed after the first product profile. Experimenters apologized for this interruption, and showed a video (positive/negative: pretested for valence; no video: neutral-interruption; no buffering: no-interruption condition). Product video resumed after the interruption, followed by choice/evaluation responses. Significantly larger (smaller) proportion of participants chose post-interruption product after positive (negative) interruption (χ²(1)=6.143, p=.013). A 4(interruption conditions)x2(pre/post-interruption evaluation) repeated measures ANOVA on product evaluation revealed a significant interaction effect (F(3,127)=7.901, p<.001). Planned contrasts revealed that for positive/negative interruption, post(pre-) interruption product was evaluated favourably than pre(post-) interruption product (M_post-interruption/positive interruption =6.70, t(127)=5.06, p<.001; M_post-interruption/negative interruption =5.26, M_post-interruption/neutral interruption =5.77, M_post-interruption/positive interruption =5.66, t(132)=1.65, p=.096). There was no significant difference in evaluation and choice in neutral/no interruption conditions. However, the means in negative and neutral interruption condition were not statistically different, indicating that similar negative meaning is attached to neutral interruption. These results provide initial support to our hypotheses.

If the effects are only due to the valence of interruption, similar results should be expected for valenced breaks (equivalent in affective content but are planned and consciously taken while interruptions are random and sudden). This is theoretically important as no previous research has contrasted interruptions with breaks. In Study 2, participants (N=136) were randomly allocated to: 2(interruption:break/interruption) x 2(valence:positive/negative) conditions. The design was similar to study 1, but participants in break conditions were told in advance about the video and two different product profiles (pretested for equivalence) were used for evaluation. Results consistent with Study 1 were found for valenced interruptions (M_post-interruption/positive interruption =6.08, M_post-interruption/negative interruption =4.25, t(132)=3.30, p<.001), but no significant effects were found for valenced breaks. Thus, the effects of interruptions are due to both the valenced content and the unexpected, random nature.

Study 3 explored the underlying process. Participants (N=208) were allocated randomly to: 2(intervention:break/interruption) x 2(valence:positive/negative) conditions. The design was similar to study 2, except that products were combined from study 1 and 2 (counterbalanced) for evaluation exercise. Affect and construal were measured by PANAS and BIF scale (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988; Vallacher, and Wegner 1989). Results for evaluation were consistent with first two studies. A mediation analysis (Hayes, 2013; Model 4) supported the mediation of construal between interruption and evaluation (95% CI for indirect effect:0.0110 to 0.4287). No such mediation was found for valenced breaks. Affect scores were significantly different in interruption, but not in break conditions.

So far, responses were provided in the end of product sequence, and we argued that better (worse) evaluation of post-interruption product influenced evaluation of pre-interruption product. Study 4 provides additional support for this relative evaluation argument. Participants (N=143) were allocated to: 2(interruption:positive/negative) x 2(responses:after-each-product/in-the-end) conditions. The design was similar to study 3, except that interruption was presented as sharing of missed information (positive/negative; pre-tested) about the study; and participants provided ratings after each product in simultaneous evaluation. Results consistent with prior studies (study 1-3) were replicated for ‘in-the-end’ evaluation, but only post-interruption evaluation results were replicated for simultaneous evaluation. As expected under relative evaluation argument, ratings of pre-interruption products in negative interruption were higher (lower) in case of in-the-end (simultaneous) evaluation (p<.001). Such statistically significant difference was not found in positive interruption condition.

The products in previous studies were unbranded. Study 5 explored the moderating effect of brand strength. Participants (N=118) were allocated randomly to: 2(interruption:positive/negative) x 2(brands evaluated:strong/weak; pre-tested) conditions. The design was similar to study 4, except that strong/weak brands were shown in evaluation exercise. Results were consistent with prior studies for
weak brands, but not for strong brands. This is consistent with prior research that strong brands are less affected by momentary stimuli and rely on prior memory structures (Hoeffler and Keller 2003), while weak brands are vulnerable to influence of momentary stimuli (like interruptions).

This research is among the first to study the affective consequences of interruptions, and to contrast interruptions with breaks. We hope that this work provides direction for more nuanced research and richer understanding of interruptions.

REFERENCES
Differential Impacts of God and Religion on Prosocial Intentions
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Religious organizations get the lion’s share of charitable giving. In US, faith-based organizations collected almost one-third of all monetary donations and volunteer services in 2014. Considering the monetary and timely value of faith-based charitable giving, it is of significant theoretical and practical importance to determine the most effective ways for fundraising when appeals involve religious reminders. However, past empirical research is inconclusive regarding the role of religious reminders on prosocial behavior and yields mixed results.

Early studies which were largely correlational suggested a positive link by evincing that higher frequency of religious practices leads to higher self-reported prosocial intentions (Brooks 2006). Later studies investigated the causal link between religion and prosociality through experimental methodology. This stream of research reported contradictory findings. While some studies found prosocial effects of religious primes (Pichon, Boccato and Saroglou 2007), others reported antisocial effects like increased prejudice (Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff 2010).

We argue that one reason of these mixed results is that “religion” has been used as an umbrella term in past research and priming procedures involved various concepts, which might have divergent cognitive corollaries. More specifically, we predict that the concept of God, which is a multi-faceted abstract concept across all religions and cultures, is likely to induce an abstraction in thinking, whereas religion, which is construed in terms of more concrete practices, is likely to result in a concrete mind-set. Based on fit effect (Lee, Keller and Sternthal 2010), which posits that compliance with messages increases when level of abstraction of different factors in the decision context fit each other—is suggested to occur since fit increases engagement, and engagement makes people “feel right” about the decision. 98 US participants (77 female; \( M_{\text{age}} = 21.5 \)) participated in a 2 (concept: God vs. religion) x 2 (message: abstract vs. concrete) between-subjects design, and were given the same manipulation as in study 2B. Next, they saw an either abstract or concrete description of a student club. They were asked to state their intentions (in minutes) to volunteer for the student club during weekend. We log-transformed their responses in order to meet the linearity assumption, and found a significant interaction (\( p < .05 \)). Those who thought about God reported a significantly higher intention to volunteer when the message was abstract (\( M_{\text{abstract, God}} = 3.94, M_{\text{concrete}} = 3.28; p = .04 \)). This effect directionally reversed when participants were reminded of religion (\( M_{\text{concrete, religion}} = 4.05, M_{\text{abstract}} = 3.71; p < .15 \)).

Finally, in study 4, we tested the mediating mechanism. The fit effect—intensified evaluations against a target when multiple factors in the decision context fit each other—is suggested to occur since fit increases engagement, and engagement makes people “feel right” about the decision. 48 US participants \( (M_{\text{age}} = 36.4; 51 \) female) participated in a similar study design as in study 3. Religious concept was manipulated through a sentence unscrambling task. Next, participants indicated their likelihood of compliance with one of two UNICEF (concrete or abstract) messages. They also indicated how right they felt about their response. A significant interaction was found (\( p < .001 \)). In God-prime, intentions to comply with an abstract request was significantly higher (\( M_{\text{abstract}} = 4.88, M_{\text{concrete}} = 3.25; p = .002 \)). The reverse was true under religion prime (\( M_{\text{concrete}} = 4.58, M_{\text{abstract}} = 3.58; p = .05 \)). We further found that “feeling right” mediates the effect at both religion-concept (\( CI_{\text{upper}} = [-.7956, -.0362] \)) and God-concept (\( CI_{\text{upper}} = [1.962, 1.4447] \)) conditions.

Taken together, this research suggests that different religious concepts have different cognitive corollaries, which influence people’s compliance with donation appeals depending on the level of abstraction implied by other factors in the decision context. From a theoretical perspective, this research helps reconcile some mixed findings in past research on the link between religious thoughts and prosocial behavior by separating impacts of two most frequently exposed religious concepts: God and religion. From a practical perspective, it provides insights for charity organizations for effective use of different religious reminders in fundraising and influencing consumers’ expenditure decisions on prosocial causes.

REFERENCES


Navigating Symbolic Pollution Through Symbolic Boundary Work –
Shaping a Sense of Home and Family in Family Assemblages

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Families can be characterized as “an assemblage of heterogeneous components (e.g. bodies, practices, objects, stories and everyday interactions) that form contingent relations across time to produce an emergent whole with a collective identity” (Price and Epp 2016, 60). The relations and capacities of the human and nonhuman component parts are contingent on each other and continuously unfolding. Hence, rather than having fixed boundaries, family assemblages occupy blurred and dynamic territories, where displacement amongst the component parts or disruption of family practices precipitates change (Price and Epp 2016). While recent consumer research has begun to employ assemblage theory to examine family consumption (e.g. Price and Epp 2016, Dinnin Huff and Cotte 2016), there is a paucity of studies which investigate how a sense of home and family emerge in family assemblages. The purpose of this paper is to explore how caring for family members suffering from illness characterized by gradual cognitive impairment and physical deterioration, specifically dementia and alzheimers, shapes experiences of home and family within family assemblages.

Drawing on Douglas (1967), we conceive symbolic pollution as “whatever […] eludes or threatens order” throughout the caregiving life course. It emerges when things become ‘out of place’, temporarily violating prior systems of classification (Dion, Sabri and Guillard, 2015, 565). As symbolic pollution implies a previous set of ordered relations juxtaposed with contraventions of the order (Douglas 1967, 48), illness requiring care within family assemblages, temporarily destabilizes boundaries, necessitating symbolic boundary work. That is prior family relations and capacities are temporarily displaced, rearranged and reconfigured through symbolic boundary work. We define symbolic boundaries as the “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space” (Lamont and Molnar 2002, 168).

Our qualitative study comprised long interviews (McCracken 1988), averaging two hours, with fourteen family carers, comprising nine females and five males, who had either voluntarily or involuntarily found themselves caring for another family member, without formal compensation or payment. A grounded theory constant comparison approach to data collection and analysis was adopted (Charmaz 2006). All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Emergent themes as to how illness requiring care within families framed experiences of home and family were induced (Spiggle 1994).

Our findings revealed how caring for family members within family assemblages temporarily resulted in symbolic pollution necessitating symbolic boundary work throughout the care giving trajectory. Contingent notions of home and family were constantly in the balance as family assemblages adapted to the consumption and provision of care precipitated by illness. As a result, family assemblages were in a constant state of becoming or morphogenesis (Price and Epp 2016). In this way, a reconfigured liminal sense of home and of family emerged, both during the caregiving trajectory and once it ended (e.g. when the family member in need of care moves to a residential home/hospital or dies) (Barnhart, Dinnin Huff and Cotte 2014).

Specifically, we induced two forms of symbolic pollution - Familial Strangers and Home Unfixtures - which dynamically modulated meanings of home and family. These were managed through two forms of ongoing symbolic boundary work: Labors of Homing and Familying On. Familial Strangers refers to previous family relations and identities being disrupted and sometimes unrecognizable. Family carers learnt to accommodate switched family identities. They performed symbolic boundary work to reacquaint their “estranged” family member using material representations, such as constantly changing and captioning photo albums. Home Unfixtures refers to the displacement, introduction and reappropriation of objects within the home. While experiences of domesticity or “homeyness” (McClenken 2005, 36) are typically created through physical, symbolic and pragmatic properties, relations and capacities within families, illness resulted of the colonization of the home by medical equipment and apparatus to make it safe and secure. For example, family carers installed baby monitors, stair gates and hoists. Both forms of symbolic pollution were accepted as “tolerated transgressions” (Dion, Sabri and Guillard 2014, 578) and reflected the deep and both temporary and irreversible disruption of prior relations and capacities within family assemblages.

Building on prior research which explored tensions and their resolution in family assemblages of care (Epp and Vegaeletti 2014), family carers performed symbolic boundary work in response to both forms of symbolic pollution. Labors of Homing refers to the conjoining, disjoining and commingling of family relations and capacities (spatially, geographically, and symbolically) to maintain a sense of home. In line with Figueiredo (2016, 77), a sense of home emerged as “multiple, fragmented and distributed across different spaces”. Familying On refers to altered family practices or labors of holding family together (Price and Epp 2016). Family members stepped in and out (both voluntarily and involuntarily) of caregiving relations, while certain members seemed to be “sucked in” to a caring role, from which they could not extract themselves.

In summary, we make three main contributions relating family consumption and caregiving within family assemblages of care. First, we reveal how illness requiring care by family members for other family members emerged as a temporary form of symbolic pollution that modulated family assemblages and created a liminal altered sense of home and family. Building on prior research on symbolic pollution (Douglas 1997; Dion, Sabri and Guillard 2014), we reveal how family caregiving temporarily disrupts previous classifications of home and family, rendering both constantly in the making (Barnhart, Dinnin Huff and Cotte 2014). Second, we reveal how illness precipitated ongoing processes of deterritorialization within family assemblages. Illness transformed material capacities that typically provide a sense of home, denoting safely, comfort and welcome (homeyness) into sites of surveillance and fortification. We thus respond to Figueiredo’s (2016, 87) call to “understand which material and expressive capacities of resources facilitate movement and coupling with other territories, and which capacities hinder de-coupling and recoupling”. Third, we reveal that illness facilitated, stretched and altered relations and capacities within family assemblages, or a sense of family, which in turn necessitated symbolic boundary work. That is, illness contemporaneously de-constituted and reconstituted families throughout the caregiving trajectory. We conclude with limitations and an agenda for future research.
REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Interpersonal similarity is a fundamental contributor to exchange relationships (Palmtier et al. 2006), and its relevance for relationship development is one of the most widely accepted finding in social science (Mackinnon, Jordan, and Wilson 2011). Yet, despite a large body of research, scholars debate the precise nature of interpersonal similarity and the underlying mechanisms that drive its relational effects (Tidwell, Eastwick, and Finkel 2013). For decades, scholars have assumed that similarity of attitudes, beliefs, and other characteristics enhance mutual liking over time (Davis and Rusbult 2001). However, a meta-analysis of 313 studies finds that this link actually weakens and even disappears for partners with increasing interaction (Montoya, Horton, and Kirchner 2008). Thus, researchers have called for investigation into other potentially more powerful relationship facilitators such as interaction patterns and conversational flow (Koudenburg, Gordijn, and Postmes 2014; Montoya et al. 2008).

We take these insights as a point of departure and investigate a new form of similarity—similar emotional ability between two people—which reflects a deeper level of interpersonal similarity. The way in which people use and communicate emotions when interacting with others may play a crucial role in how they form relationships and make decisions. This exchange of emotional information potentially constitutes a powerful facilitator of consumer interactions, beyond the effects of traditional physical and attitudinal similarity.

Emotional ability (EA), commonly called emotional intelligence, reflects an individual’s ability to reason about and apply emotional knowledge when achieving a desired outcome (Mayer and Salovey 1997). When interacting with others, EA determines how people communicate emotional information to their partners. These normative expectations of the appropriateness of how people use their emotions are referred to as “display rules” (Ekman 1982), “feeling” rules (Hochschild 1979), or more recently “emotion norms” (Ekman, Friesen, and Ellsworth 2013; Heise and Calhan 1995). Research suggests that two individuals with similar EA will likely use their emotions in similar ways. As such, EA should allow people to align their emotions, resulting in pleasant and effortless interactions. In contrast, those who use emotions differently are unlikely to align their emotions and thus, may have considerably more difficulty interacting. Beyond the established roles of emotional ability and physical similarity, we suggest that EA similarity may offer a new path for understanding consumer interactions and why they flourish or fail to develop.

Emotional Ability Similarity

We define EA similarity as an intuitive deep-level interpersonal ability to process emotional information in a congruent way based on shared emotion norms. Just as attitudinal similarity is based on congruent cognitive information that is recognized and understood by another (Brockner and Swap 1976), EA similarity is based on congruent emotional information that is exchanged allowing the subtle but powerful emotions of others to be recognized and understood in the same way by the receiver.

Research indicates that emotion norms can vary widely and are based on accumulated knowledge and past experiences using emotions when interacting with others (Miller and Prentice 1996). The development of emotional norms is understudied but central to emotional ability (Mayer and Geher 1996; Salovey and Grewal 2005). Druskat and Wolff (2001) found that the EA of group members corresponded to the emotional norms used within that group. For example, higher EA groups used more care and attention toward their partners and displayed better listening skills when communicating, whereas, low EA groups tended to use lengthy discussions to solve problems and then collected and combined perspectives in a mechanical way. George (2000) further indicated that when emotional norms are reciprocated they evoke emotions “stemming from a feeling of ‘rightness’ between individuals” (p.1045).

In line with this research, we suggest that different emotional norms are adhered to at varying levels of EA. Since high EA individuals are more effective at processing emotions, interactions at shared high levels of EA are likely to exhibit greater emotional expression and use of emotional information (Forbes and Jackson 1980; Lyons and Schneider 2005; Mayer and Geher 1996). Individuals interacting who share compatible emotional norms are likely feel significantly more connected, understood and validated.

In contrast, since low EA individuals are less effective at using emotions, interactions at shared low levels of EA likely rely less on emotions and thus are less expressive with their emotions in the interaction (Mayer and Geher 1996). Despite their low ability to use emotions effectively, individuals interacting who share compatible emotional norms are likely feel significantly more connected, understood and validated. Thus, as indicated in our conceptual model (figure 1), we predict:

**Hypothesis 1:** Dyads with EA similarity will exhibit greater relational outcomes than non-similar dyads, beyond the effects of conventionally measured surface-level physical and deep-level attitudinal similarity.

**Effortless Communication Underlying Emotional Ability Similarity**

If EA similarity leads to relational success in market interactions, what underlying process facilitates these effects? We suggest that dyads with EA similarity, by virtue of compatible emotional norms between members, are likely to experience effortless interactions. By easily recognizing and interpreting emotional information in their partner, EA similarity fosters a conversational flow that is smooth and comfortable. Effortless communication reflects the reduced mental energy needed to effectively interact, particularly as each person draws on limited resources to respond, seek goals, and make choices (Baumeister 2002). Furthermore, effortless communication can produce a feeling of genuineness and desirability for the other person through mutual intimacy and meaningful information (Cesario and Higgins 2008). In short, communication requires less effort when both individuals share compatible emotion norms,
thereby promoting enduring exchange relationships. Therefore, we predict:

**Hypothesis 2:** Effortless communication will mediate the relationship between EA similarity and relational success, such that dyads with EA similarity will exhibit a) less mental energy expended toward the interaction.

**EA Similarity and Decision Quality**

We extend our conceptualization to also include joint decision tasks made by consumers, and thus, advance the literature on social influence (Jiang et al. 2010; White and Argo 2011). We expect that partners with similar EA are likely to make higher quality joint decisions.

In contrast, non-similar dyads are likely to feel confused, misunderstood, and ignored in the decision process, ultimately disrupting meaningful communication and impeding the quality of their joint decisions. As individuals attempt to mentally align disparate perceptions and uses of emotional information with their exchange partner, they will likely be less able to isolate and incorporate relevant emotions and make informed decisions. Thus, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 3:** Dyads with EA similarity will make higher quality joint consumer decisions than non-similar dyads.

**Study 1 – Field Study of Customer-Salesperson Relationships**

The goal in study 1 was to demonstrate the effect of EA similarity on actual customer-salesperson relationships. Customers and salespeople with EA similarity (i.e. dyads with similar EA scores) are anticipated to experience greater relational success over time. Three indicators of exchange relationship success are loyalty, satisfaction, and positive word of mouth (WOM) communication (Crosby et al. 1990; Yim et al. 2008). To test our hypothesis, we focus on the extended process of home buying and capture dyadic responses from both customers and their real estate agent over time (1 year).

**Sample and Procedure.** We collected dyadic data by working with the salespeople of a Fortune 1000 real estate firm and their customers. First, with the help of senior management, we emailed 1,049 salespeople requesting their participation in a survey. The survey instructed salespeople to identify their last customer they worked with. Next, customers were notified and asked to respond to questions pertaining to the salesperson. We received 172 responses within two weeks for a response rate of 49%, resulting in 69 completed surveys and, thus, usable dyads for our longitudinal analyses.

**Results**

*Test of Hypothesis 1.* Using OLS regression (N = 69 dyads), EA similarity significantly predicted consumer loyalty (b = -0.53, t = -3.40, p < .01; model 1), customer satisfaction (b = -0.53, t = -3.32, p < .01; model 2), and positive word of mouth (b = -0.38, t = -1.96, p < .05; model 3), all above and beyond our set of controls. Negative coefficients indicate that dyads with lower differences among their EA scores (higher EA similarity) were more likely to report higher quality consumer relational outcomes. Taken together, these results offer support for H1.

*Planned Contrasts by Similar and Non-similar EA Dyads.* Additionally, we trichotomized each person’s EA score (M = 100, SD = 10) into a high (>110), moderate (90-110), and low (<90), to compare how similar EA dyads (high-high, moderate-moderate, low-low) and non-similar dyads (low-moderate, low-high, moderate-high) influence relational success. Loyalty to the salesperson was used as our focal outcome to examine how unique levels of EA influence relational success.

As a conservative test, the highest mean for non-similar EA dyads (mod-high; 2.83 average loyalty) is significantly different (A1.38, t = -3.29, p < .01) from the lowest mean for similar EA dyads (low-low; 4.21 average loyalty). This pattern held across all outcomes.

**Study 2 – Sales Interaction Study**

In study 2, we examine an underlying mechanism for why EA similarity promotes relational success. Specifically, we investigate whether similar EA dyads experience effortless interactions (less exertion during interactions). We used a mock sales interaction design which is comparable to those used by scholars examining interpersonal similarity.

**Sample and Procedures.** The sample included 104 respondents (ages 18-22) who answered initial EA questions, and then were randomly assigned role as a salesperson or customer. The salesperson was instructed to assist the customer with their purchase decision of a digital camera. After the interaction, lasting 10 minutes, participants returned to their cubical and filled out survey items about the other person and their interaction. They then completed items related to similarity, attractiveness, friendliness, familiarity, and relational success.

Next, respondents were thanked and asked to complete a brief unrelated study. Here we assessed the mental exertion that occurred for them during the interaction by evaluating their depletion levels via persistence on an anagram task. We recorded the total number of completed words from the total number of anagrams for each respondent, after checking they were English words with at least 3 letters, per task instructions.

**Results**

*Test of Hypothesis 2.* Mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro (Preacher and Hayes 2008). Similar EA dyads completed significantly more anagrams (b = -.29, t = -2.82 p < .01) beyond our set of controls. Furthermore, dyads with a higher number of completed anagrams experienced significantly more relational success (i.e., harmonious interactions; b = .24, t = 3.10, p < .01) beyond our set of controls. Additionally, a test of the mediation found that the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect (Zhao et al. 2010) from EA similarity onto relational success through resource depletion was significant as it did not cross 0 (a * b = -1.96, p < .01, CI: -0.02 to -0.01) while the direct effect was non-significant (c = .005, t = .87, p > .10). These results suggest indirect-only mediation, in support of H2 and our conceptual model.

*Planned Contrast by Similar and Non-similar EA Dyads.* Similar to study 1, we trichotomized each person’s EA into a high (>110), moderate (90-110), and low (<90), to compare how similar EA dyads (high-high, moderate-moderate, low-low) and non-similar dyads (low-moderate, low-high, moderate-high) score relative to effortless interaction (dyadic average total number of anagrams completed). Findings indicated a statistically significant difference between groups (F(4, 100) = 4.37, p = .003).

Furthermore, as a conservative comparison test of unique EA levels, the highest mean for non-similar EA dyads (mod-high; 18.22 total completed anagrams) was significantly different (A10.52, t = 2.25, p < .05) from the lowest mean for similar EA dyads (low-low; 28.8 total completed anagrams). This provides further evidence that similar EA dyads were significantly less depleted than non-similar
dyads and thus experienced less effortful interactions, in support of H2.

Study 3 – Dyadic Decision Quality

The goal of study 3 was to extend the effects of EA similarity to a decision-making task in which members of a dyad must solve a food choice task by working together. Thus, we expect dyads with similar levels of EA to make higher quality joint consumption choices.

Sample and Procedures. Participants were 236 undergraduate business students who initially completed an online survey assessing their EA. Upon arrival, participants were randomly assigned to one of 118 dyads, including 31 male–male groups, 36 female–female groups, and 51 male–female groups. Participants were instructed to work together to solve a problem that student organizations face when planning events: menu selection for a dinner party. Various healthy and unhealthy options were available.

The decision quality outcome was measured by the total amount of calories that each dyad selected to be consumed through the menu selections. Total calories were calculated based on quantities cross-referenced from nutritional guides (e.g., www.calorieking.com) that should be minimized to maintain a healthy diet. This measure is similar to measures used in recent studies on cognitive biases in food choice decision-making (Chandon and Winsmink 2007).

Results

Test of Hypothesis 3. OLS regressions were used to test hypothesis 3. Results indicated significant differences (b = .36, t = 4.02 p < .001) and a change in R square (AR-square = .12, p = .000). Dyads with less EA similarity (higher difference scores) selected meals with significantly higher calories. Thus, similar EA dyads made superior joint decisions relative to non-similar dyads in support of H3.

Planned Contrasts by Similar and Non-similar EA Dyads. Similar to studies 1 and 2, we trichotomized each person’s EA into a high (>110), moderate (90-110), and low (<90), to compare how similar EA dyads (high-high, high-moderate, low-low) and non-similar dyads (low-moderate, low-high, moderate-high) performed on a joint decision task (total calories per dyad). Findings indicated a significant difference between groups (F(4,118) = 7.03, p = .000). Furthermore, as a conservative comparison test of unique EA levels, the lowest mean for non-similar EA dyads (mod-high; 5,396 total calories) was significantly different (Δ-1427, t=2.03, p<.05) from the highest mean for similar EA dyads (mod-mod; 3,969 calories).

General Discussion

EA similarity reflects a deep-level of interpersonal similarity, beyond physical features and personal characteristics, and captures the ways that individuals jointly process emotional information and communicate on the same wavelength. Results from three studies reveal that EA similarity enables individuals to communicate with ease, which in turn, fosters easy and effortless interactions, and thus greater relational success that endures past initial interactions.

Overall, our findings challenge the received notion that higher EA is uniformly likely to create ideal outcomes for interacting with others. Rather, results indicate that people with similar EA communicate on a similar wavelength, “get along” better, make better joint decisions, and are more likely to form enduring relationships.

Notably, we find that EA similarity accounts for outcomes beyond commonly measured forms of similarity, attractiveness, familiarity, and friendliness. Collectively, these three studies provide evidence that birds of a feather not only flock together, but more precisely, feel together, and that consumer interactions must consider, at least in part, the role of EA similarity.
When and How Consumers Defend Their Psychological Possessions

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The concept of psychological ownership (a feeling that “It is mine!”; Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003) has recently garnered significant attention in the marketing literature, largely due to its positive implications for marketers, such as willingness to pay more (Peck & Shu, 2009). In the present research we draw attention to the edgier side of psychological ownership (PO): its potential to engender territorial responses (Brown, Lawrence, & Robinson, 2005).

We propose that consumers perceive infringement, or threat, with respect to a psychologically owned target when they believe that another person is signaling PO of the same target. That is, consumers’ perceptions of infringement and subsequent territorial responses are stronger when they infer that another individual is signaling control over, investment of self in, or intimate knowledge of their psychologically-owned target. Further, we argue that these effects are more intense when consumers believe they have strongly signaled their own PO of a target (i.e., their territory) in advance.

Across five studies, we manipulate a consumer’s PO of a target product and/or their communication (marking) of that PO. We also vary another person’s PO signal of the same target. We then measure the consumer’s infringement perception and observe and document their territorial behaviors. Contributing to the PO and territoriality literatures, this research provides the first demonstration of the role of the antecedents of PO in ownership signaling, as well as the first evidence that consumers’ territorial responses depend on their own PO of a target, their communication of that PO, and others’ PO signals. In so doing, we contribute to the nascent literature on consumer territoriality (Ashley & Noble, 2014) by demonstrating the anticipatory and reactionary defenses that result.

Study 1 was a laboratory experiment in a restaurant context in which we elicited high PO of a cup of coffee and then manipulated a server’s (the other’s) PO signal by having the server move (not move) the participant’s coffee cup. Observers recorded participants’ behaviors, participants were invited to tip the server, and infringement perception and additional territorial responses were measured. Among other responses, participants whose coffee cup was moved by the server tipped the server less, were less likely to respond positively to the server, and were more likely to move the coffee cup toward themselves and to exhibit a negative nonverbal expression. Territorial responses were mediated by participants’ infringement perception.

Touch elicits PO through its effect on perceived control (Peck, Barger, & Webb, 2013). Accordingly, another individual’s touch should signal their PO and thus trigger infringement perception on the part of a consumer. In study 2, participants either imagined wearing (high PO) or evaluating (low PO) a sweater at a retail store checkout counter (Spears & Yazdanparast, 2014). They were then told that the customer behind them touched the sweater, either seeking (no PO signal) or not seeking (control-oriented PO signal) prior permission.

Infringement perception was greater when the sweater was touched without (versus with) prior permission, but only when PO of the sweater was high (versus low). Additionally, infringement perception triggered anticipatory and reactionary defenses (Brown, 2009) including putting down the separator bar, not telling the infringer about money they dropped (retaliation), giving the other customer a nasty look, perceiving the other customer to be “crazy” or ill-mannered, and picking up or moving the sweater.

In study 3, participants volunteered for a nonprofit organization in a lab setting and either copied an artistic design (low) or created their own (high PO). The assistant signaled (did not signal) ownership of the design by stating “That looks like my design” (stating nothing). Replicating prior results with an intangible target of ownership, participants exhibited reactionary defenses such as not picking up the assistant’s dropped pen, less positive word-of-mouth intentions, and lower donation intentions. They also exhibited anticipatory defenses by indicating they would leave more quickly and be more likely to post a selfie with their design on social media.

Study 4 was a field experiment that builds on research suggesting that individuals feel ownership for the space around them and may respond territorially when their space is invaded (Altman, 1975). Passers-by on a busy thoroughfare in a city were given $3.00 and asked to purchase a snack in the university convenience store. A confederate customer invaded their personal space either saying nothing, or saying “Excuse me, sorry.” Both reactionary (e.g. not picking up the infringer’s dropped pen) and anticipatory (e.g. leaving more quickly) defenses were observed.

Narcissists are more likely to overestimate the degree to which others find them physically attractive (Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011), and they likely also overestimate others’ assessment of their psychological ownership of an attractive target. These exaggerated metaperceptions should lead narcissists (but not non-narcissists) to perceive infringement even in the absence of clearly marked territory.

In study 5, participants imagined locating a pizza stand intentionally (high) or by chance (low PO). Anthropomorphization of an inanimate object transforms the object into a social entity (Beggan, 1992), and thus should enhance others’ perceptions of intimate knowledge of an ownership target. Therefore, participants were told that while they were looking at the pizza, a stranger approached and said either “I am not familiar with this pizza” (no PO signal) or “I know this pizza well. I call this pizza Antonio” (intimate knowledge-oriented PO signal).

Replicating prior results, infringement perception was greater when the consumer’s PO was high than when it was low, but only when the other customer signaled PO of the pizza by naming it. The interaction was significant for participants who were high, but not low, in narcissism. Territorial responses triggered by infringement perception included leaving the pizza stand quickly, responding negatively to the other consumer, and classifying the other’s behavior as “weird” or “mentally ill.” A posttest confirmed the positive association between narcissism and psychological ownership metaperception.

Across five studies in different contexts, these results demonstrate when and how psychological ownership signals of others, both consumers and employees, can result in consumers’ territorial responses, and what kind of reactions may occur.

REFERENCES


Giving More or More Giving: Comparing the Appeal to Make a Difference versus Express Support in Charitable Giving
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Marketers of charities use various solicitation methods to persuade consumers to invest resources to advance certain social causes. In general, charitable organizations seek different levels of contributions, from symbolic contributions (e.g., petition signing) to substantial help (e.g., making large contributions). In addition, some charitable organizations wish to increase their outreach by building a social movement that involves as many people as possible, whereas others focus on raising a few large donations, with less concern about outreach.

To encourage more people to give and to encourage organizations to give more, charitable organizations develop and use different persuasive appeals. The current research compares two categories of appeals—one calling to express support and the other to make a difference—and tests the distinction between these appeals on both the number of contributors (participation rates) and the average contribution size. We predict whether an appeal to express support for a cause increases the participation rate by tapping into people’s motivation to express commitment to the cause via widespread symbolic giving. In contrast, we predict an appeal to make a difference increases the average contribution by tapping into people’s motivation to help a social organization make progress on solving a problem. We further argue that these decisions—whether versus how much to give—are partially independent.

We build on research on the dynamics of regulation, which distinguishes between the motivation to make progress and the motivation to signal personal commitment, in goal pursuit (Koo and Fishbach 2008; Fishbach et al. 2014). At times, people choose goal-directed actions with the motivation to make progress on and eventually complete a goal, whereas at other times, their main motivation is to express their commitment to pursuing the goal regardless of progress. Likewise, we suggest that people may give to express commitment to a cause or to make progress in solving the problem. We further propose that social campaigns and fundraisers tend to rely on two common categories of persuasive appeals, which map onto and activate these distinct motivations.

First, an appeal to express support (e.g., “express your support” “show that you care”) taps into commitment-based motivation: motivation to choose more symbolic actions that are less concerned with moving the goal forward than with demonstrating that many people endorse the goal. An appeal to express support encourages many people to participate in a campaign by contributing something, even if it is a small amount, because people understand that the number of contributors matters for successfully communicating support.

By contrast, an appeal to make a difference (e.g., “make a difference,” “let’s make progress”) taps into progress-based motivation: motivation to move a goal forward, close the gap, and complete the goal. These appeals encourage actions that are designed to change the status of a goal. Therefore, when a social organization encourages people to make a difference, it communicates that the amount of contributions matters most, such that a few large contributions are as useful as many small contributions.

Accordingly, our hypothesis is that express-support (vs. make-a-difference) appeals would generate a larger number of contributions, because it motivates people to give symbolically to express their commitment. By contrast, make-a-difference (vs. express-support) appeals would generate higher average contributions, because it motivates givers to give substantially to make progress.

We report two field studies and two lab studies. Study 1 was a field study in which we mailed solicitation letters to a selected group of alumni (N = 10,189) as a part of an annual fundraising campaign at a large business school. We framed the request as “express support of the school” or “make a difference for the school” in the letter. As predicted, we found a greater participation rate in the express-support appeal than in the make-a-difference appeal, but a greater donation amount in the make-a-difference appeal than in the express-support appeal.

Study 2 was another field experiment with Compassion International, including a control condition (neutral appeal) to demonstrate the observed effects were driven by the positive impact of the appeals, not by the negative impact. We asked participants to write a message to children on a campaign website and told them that the university would donate 1 cent per character submitted by each participant (i.e., the longer the message, the greater the donation amount). The participation rate was higher in the express-support condition than other conditions, whereas the average length of message was longer in the make-a-difference condition than other conditions.

Whereas field studies with real contributions provide high external validity, they also create a natural dependence between the decision to give and the decision about the amount to give. To address the dependency, in Study 3, we moved to a lab setting to have participants make only one decision: either decide whether to give or how much to give. Participants were presented with one of the following appeals: expressing support, making a difference, or no appeal (control), and indicated either the likelihood of donating something (%), or the amount of donation assuming they all donate something ($). Donation rate was higher in the express-support condition than other conditions, whereas donation amount was higher in the make-a-difference condition than other conditions.

In Study 4, we provide more evidence for process underlying the distinct patterns to solicitations. In a two-step study, we showed (a) express-support versus make-a-difference appeals activate distinct motivations (commitment vs. progress), and (b) a manipulation of these distinct motivations affected the pattern of donation decisions (more giving vs. giving more).

When people join a social movement to promote a social cause, free riding and social loafing naturally result in motivational deficits. Therefore, understanding people’s source of motivation for contributing personal resources toward a social cause is critical. This research finds that different persuasive appeals evoke different motivations for giving, which has implications for whether and how much people give.

REFERENCES
It’s Mine, But I’ll Help You: How Ownership Salience Increases Prosocial Behavior
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Feelings of ownership are an important ingredient to individuals’ lives given that each of us interacts daily with various material and immaterial objects we own. Ownership satisfies people’s need for self-identity, helping them “define themselves, express their self-identity to others, and maintain the continuity of the self across time” (Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks, 2003, 89). Moreover, one’s possessions help individuals respect themselves, feel satisfied with themselves, feel they have much to be proud of. As such, possessions can confer a sense of self-worth.

Despite benefits of psychological ownership to individuals in expressing self-identity and enhancing self-worth, religious and other writings suggest that materialistic individuals are self-centered and that the overemphasis on material possessions and acquisition are “inherently incompatible with sharing and giving to others” (Richins and Dawson 1992, 308). In this research, we propose and show that contrary to normative beliefs, psychological ownership, or the salience of one’s possessions, does not hinder prosocial behavior; instead, it increases it by enhancing individuals’ feelings of self-worth.

Ownership has been examined in a wide range of disciplines, from anthropology, sociology, and psychology to consumer behavior and management. Research on the state of psychological ownership (i.e., “mine-ness”) has focused primarily on its roots, how people experience it, and the owner’s relationship to the owned entity to make predictions about emotions, cognitions, and behaviors towards the entity (Pierce et al. 2003; Pierce and Jessilam 2011). Psychological ownership has been shown to influence an individual’s attitudes, values, and behavior toward the target entity (Peck and Shu 2009; Shu and Peck 2011; Weiss and Johar 2013). Though insightful, past research has not yet examined how psychological ownership influences cognitions and behaviors unrelated to the owned entity.

Research suggests that psychological ownership can convey a sense of worth, affecting global judgments of one’s self-worth (Belk 1988). In fact, a large body of research has shown a compensatory relationship between self-esteem and materialism, such that low self-esteem increases materialistic tendencies since possessions compensate by providing a sense of worth (Chaplin and John 2007; Ferraro, Escalas, and Bettman 2011).

State self-esteem refers to a person’s sense of her/his value or worth in the moment, and a boost to self-worth means that the person feels proud, pleased with oneself, and valuable. Self-consistency and self-enhancement theories (Epstein 1973; Swann et al. 1987) predict that in such situations people act prosocially to maintain or enhance self-esteem because positive behavior towards others reinforces a positive sense of self that maintains cognitive consistency. Thus, we expect that psychological ownership (i.e., when people are thinking about the things they own) enhances state self-worth, which in turn increases subsequent prosocial behavior.

Value of possessions varies across different individuals. Materialism captures “the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions” (Belk 1984, 291). Therefore, we expect individual differences in materialism to be important moderating factors predicting the effect of salience of ownership on subsequent prosocial behavior. Specifically, we do not expect a boost in one’s state self-worth to happen when ownership becomes salient for individuals low on materialism because they do not assess their self-worth strongly by their possessions. As such we do not expect salience of one’s possession to increase helping behavior in individuals that are less materialistic.

Central to our argument linking salience of possessions to self-worth is the contention that individuals regard their possessions as part of themselves. Previous work has identified “mine-me sensitivity” (Weiss and Johar 2013) as an important individual difference that captures differences in the extent to which individuals associate “mine” with “me.” Individuals low in mine-me sensitivity have weaker associations between possessions (“mine”) and the self (“me”). For these individuals, the association between objects and the self does not change much based on whether they own the objects or not. When ownership becomes salient (i.e., when people are thinking about the things they own) individuals use their possessions to determine their state self-worth. However, because low mine-me sensitivity indicates weaker associations between possessions and self, salience of ownership should not boost self-worth compared to those high on mine-me sensitivity, hence, ownership salience should not predict helping behavior of individuals low on mine-me sensitivity.

We ran six studies to test the effect of ownership salient on self-worth and prosocial behavior and to examine factors moderating this effect. In Study 1A, owners behaved more generously toward partners in a dictator game than did non-owners. In Study 1B, felt ownership, induced by touching an object, increased subsequent helping. In Study 2, we examined state self-worth as a psychological mechanism underlying these effects. Ownership salience led to a boost in self-worth encouraging individuals to be more helpful. In Studies 3 and 4, we examined materialism and mine-me sensitivity as individual differences moderating the effect of ownership salience on prosocial behavior, showing that our proposed effect did not hold for individuals low on materialism or low on mine-me sensitivity. In Study 5, we attenuated the effect of ownership salience on donation by making the negative attributes of one’s possessions relevant.

In this research, we tested a counterintuitive hypothesis, that is, increasing the salience of possessions encourages giving and sharing. We found that ownership salience boosts self-worth, which results in greater prosocial behavior towards various beneficiaries. Relying on a psychological perspective of ownership, our paper goes beyond existing work and offers a novel perspective for understanding the positive consequences of salience of possession. We detail the psychological mechanism and test it in controlled laboratory studies using both a mediation and moderation approach, as well through a variety of manipulations of psychological ownership and different tasks to assess prosocial behavior. We provide fresh insights into the psychology of ownership, an important area of inquiry in the consumer literature.

REFERENCES


It’s Your Experience: Investigating the Effect of Asymmetric Resource Investments on the Enjoyment of Group Consumption Experiences

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Group consumption experiences (e.g., parties, community group events) are not only ubiquitous in our everyday lives, but also have important economic and social implications. Further, despite the fact that a large segment of the experiential economy is devoted to these more complex events, little research has examined the utility that consumers obtain from such group experiences. Past work has mainly focused on dyadic groups and on situations where all parties are assumed to make a symmetric contribution to the consumption event (e.g., Ariely and Levav 2000; Bhargave and Montgomery 2013; Dzhogleva and Lamberton 2014).

In the present paper, we explore more complex group consumption dynamics. Specifically, we propose that when consumers take part in group experiences, they invest asymmetric resources: some take responsibility over management of the experience, while others contribute little beyond their personal participation. We theorize and find that this asymmetry impacts the anticipated and experienced utility extracted from joint experiences.

The theoretical basis for this prediction comes both from prior literature on resource investments and experiential utility. In prospect, individuals who assume greater responsibility anchor on the work involved in the management of the event and anticipate lower enjoyment compared to the rest of the group (H1). This is because work and fun are construed as two separate, mutually exclusive dimensions of volitional behaviors (Laran and Janiszewski 2011). Thus, consumers who contribute significantly to the event may anticipate fewer opportunities for enjoyment. In contrast, in retrospect, consumers with greater resource investments may extract greater experiential utility than the rest of the group (H2). This may be because higher resource investments also allow for the customization of the event, may lead to feelings of pride and competence (Franke et al. 2010; Mochon et al. 2012), may make consumers more connected to the rest of the group (Reis et al. 2000), or may create greater busy-ness and flow (H3; Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Hsee et al. 2010). Each of these mechanisms can enhance the actual enjoyment for consumers with high (but not low) resource involvement.

Study 1 used a prediction-experience paradigm to test whether our proposed miscalibration emerges, and if it is specific to individuals who invest greater effort in a group consumption experience. Based on pretests, we use the roles of host (higher investment) and guest (lower investment) as proxies for asymmetric effort investment. Five hundred thirty-nine MTurk participants completed a 2 (role: host, guest) x 2 (experience: prediction vs. experienced) study. Hosts (guests) imagined organizing (being invited to) a beer tasting party. Experiencers imagined the activities using pictures, cued imagery and descriptions, while those in the anticipated condition proceeded directly to the measures. We first note that there was no difference in the vividness with which hosts and guests imagined the event ($F's<1$), while there was a main effect of the experience condition (Manticipated $= 5.53$ vs. Mexperienced $= 5.77$; $F(1, 535) = 6.90, p=.009$), suggesting that the experiential manipulation was successful. Importantly, the effort contribution by experience v. predictor interaction on enjoyment was significant ($F(2, 535) = 13.62, p < .001$, see figure 1). Hosts predicted lower enjoyment of the event than guests ($5.46$ vs. $5.78$; $F(1, 535) = 6.17, p = .01$) but reported higher enjoyment than guests in retrospect ($6.20$ vs. $5.84$; $F(1, 535) = 7.47, p = .006$). Further, hosts’ anticipated enjoyment was lower than their experienced enjoyment ($F(1, 535) = 31.86, p<.001$), demonstrating that hosts engage in affective misforecasting.

In study 2, 170 MTurk participants imagined the same scenario as in study 2. After rating their enjoyment of the event, they indicated to what extent they experienced flow, pride, and connectedness to others. Hosts reported higher enjoyment of the event than guests ($6.21$ vs. $5.83$, $F(1, 168) = 9.34, p = .003$). Importantly, experienced flow was the only significant mediator (coefficient $= .19$, 95% CI: .04 to .34) such that hosts experienced great flow, which lead to greater enjoyment.

Study 3 investigated an intervention that can increase the experienced enjoyment for guests and thus, provided process evidence through moderation (Spencer et al. 2005). The design was 2 (role: host, guest) x 2 (flow: control, flow). Participants imagined being hosts or guests at a game night party. The game was described either as challenging and highly engaging (flow manipulation) or not so engaging (control). In the control condition, we replicated that hosts reported greater enjoyment than guests ($5.19$ vs. $5.70$; $F(2, 352) = 5.39, p=.02$; see figure 3) while in the flow condition the difference was not significant ($6.13$ vs. $6.07$, $F<1$).

To illustrate a boundary condition and ensure that the experienced enjoyment was not driven by cognitive dissonance, study 4 used a 2 (role: host, guest) x 2 (outcome: good vs. bad) between-subjects design. Participants ($N$=493, MTurk) imagined hosting (being a guest) at a game night party which was described as either successful (good outcome) or not (bad outcome) and then reported their enjoyment of the event. The outcome by event role interaction on enjoyment was significant ($F(1, 489) = 12.99, p <.001$, see figure 2). In the good outcome condition, hosts reported higher enjoyment than guests ($6.26$ vs. $6.06$, $F(1, 489) = 3.20, p = .07$), thus replicating our previous findings; in the bad outcome condition, hosts reported lower enjoyment than guests ($2.81$ vs. $3.20$; $F(1, 489) = 10.87, p = .001$). Importantly, regardless of the outcome, hosts reported investing more resources than guests ($5.05$ vs. $2.51$; $F(1, 489) = 759.79, p <.001$; interaction is ns). Hence, the enhanced utility hosts report in retrospect cannot be explained by cognitive dissonance.

This paper is the first to examine consumers’ satisfaction with joint experiences which involve asymmetric resource investments and to conceptualize and study the role of host vs. guest. We find an interesting case of affective misforecasting – hosts anticipate lower utility from group experiences compared to guests but extract greater happiness in retrospect. Process evidence suggests that hosts’ greater enjoyment of group events is driven by greater experience of flow. We are about to run a field experiment to provide additional process evidence.

REFERENCES


Religious Shoppers Spend Less Money

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Four out of every five people in the United States are affiliated with a religion, according to a 2015 Pew Research Center study. Despite being a widespread part of American society, limited research has been conducted on how religion affects people’s routine, non-religious activities. In the present research, we examine whether religiosity affects the money and time people spend on their grocery purchases, which represent a major and frequent consumption activity.

We are surrounded by religious symbols and cues that remind us of religious values that guide our or others’ actions. Such symbols and cues, research has found, powerfully affect our behavior. For instance, reminders of God have been shown to influence the way people behave in risky domains such as skydiving (Chan, Tong, and Tan 2014; Kupor, Laurin, and Levav 2015). Thinking about God provides people with a sense of security, which induces greater risk taking as long as the risky behavior does not fall outside of one’s moral boundaries. Research has also found a link between religiosity and virtuous behavior. In fact, reminders of religion (such as the Ten Commandments) have been shown to reduce unethical behavior (Mazar, Amir, and Ariely 2008).

More relevant to the current topic, research has found that people with stronger religious beliefs exhibit less brand reliance (Shachar et al. 2011) and are less likely to engage in conspicuous consumption (Stillman et al. 2012) than those with weaker or no religious beliefs. In addition, being exposed to brands has been shown to reduce one’s commitment to religion (Cutright et al. 2014). These findings are consistent with the notion that religious thoughts lead to distancing oneself from materialism and unjustified spending. In many religions, overspending is perceived as an immoral behavior because it wastes resources. Being careful with one’s spending, instead, is commonly viewed as virtuous.

More generally, religious people have value systems that differ from those of less religious people (Mokhlis 2006), and they follow religious principles and values in their daily life. They tend to have greater concern for moral standards (Wiebe and Fleck 1980) and more traditional views (Wilkes, Buurnett, and Howell 1986), and they tend to be more conservative (Barton and Vanghan 1976) and satisfied with their lives (Wilkes et al. 1986) than less religious people. Building on this body of research, we argue that a higher degree of religiosity (either at the individual or community level) is associated with conservative shopping behavior, such that those high in religiosity spend less money on their purchases, make fewer unplanned purchases, and spend less time shopping. We also suggest that, more generally, religiosity affects people’s spending behavior, such that even being reminded of God makes people less likely to spend money. We maintain that this occurs due to the belief common to many religions that one should refrain from overspending time and money on consumption. These beliefs, which can be made salient not only by a religion’s tenets but more generally by priming religion, translates into real consumption behavior. We test our hypotheses in four studies using both field and lab data.

Study 1: Religiosity and Spending on Groceries at the County-Level

Every five years, the U.S. Census Bureau surveys businesses around the country as a part of the Economic Census and releases information on industry revenues and other relevant metrics, broken down to the county level. We collected the data on grocery store sales from the 2012 Economic Census. We obtained county-level data on religiosity from the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA), which conducted its most recent survey in 2010. Over 230 religious groups reporting more than 150 million adherents participated in the survey.

Our dependent variable is grocery store sales per store in a particular county. Our key independent variable is the number of religious adherents (per 1,000 population) reported for a county. In the regression model, we control for several county characteristics such as the log of population, the log of median income, and the log of median age.

Consistent with our prediction, the regression results reveal a negative relation between religiosity and grocery store sales ($b = -0.162, p < .05$). The estimated coefficient on religiosity suggests that a 20% increase in the number of religious adherents living in a county is associated with about a 3.2% decline in the county’s grocery store sales per store.

Study 2: Shoppers in More Religious Counties Spend Less Money on Their Purchases

This study uses data collected by the Point of Purchase Advertising International in 2011-2012. Shoppers at 35 different grocery stores across 10 states in the U.S. were randomly intercepted by interviewers as they entered the store and asked to complete pre- and post-shopping surveys in exchange of a $25 store gift card. 2,401 shoppers completed the survey (mean age = 46.4 years, mean income = $60,794, 75.2% female). As a part of the survey, participants were asked to provide their zip code for survey validation. We use this information to match each observation with the county-level religiosity data obtained from the ARDA. We have three dependent variables: (1) total money spent, (2) the number of unplanned items purchased, and (3) time spent shopping.

As in Study 1, the independent variable of interest is the log of the number of religious adherents (per 1,000 population) who live in the same county as the participant. Following previous research (e.g., Inman, Wiener, and Ferraro 2009), our regression models control for various shopper and shopping trip characteristics such as the log of shopper age and the log of shopping trip budget.

We excluded 500 observations without information on zip code because we cannot match these observations with the religiosity data. We further excluded 197 participants who participated in a simultaneous EEG-eye-tracking study and put on special equipment that monitored their activity during the entire shopping trip. Finally, we discarded 177 observations due to missing data on items purchased, shopping budget, income, or age. These exclusions yield a final sample with 1,527 observations.

Supporting our prediction, we find that county-level religiosity is negatively associated with participants’ total spending ($b = -0.168, p < .01$), unplanned purchases ($b = -0.135, p < .05$), and shopping time ($b = -0.199, p < .05$). The results imply that a 20% increase in the total number of religious adherents living in a county is associated with about a 3.4% decline in total spending, about a 2.7% decline in the number of unplanned items purchased, and about a 4% decline in time spent shopping.
Study 3: Individuals’ Religiosity and Their Willingness to Pay

We recruited participants from Amazon’s MTurk. 606 adults completed the study (mean age = 34.1 years, mean income = $47,739, 59.6% female).

This study employs a hypothetical grocery shopping scenario. We asked participants to imagine that they were going grocery shopping and planned to spend about $25 during their shopping trip. The shopping task consisted of two parts: (1) browsing and buying relatively typical grocery items, and (2) deciding how much to pay for an unplanned item toward the end of the shopping trip. Specifically, in the first part, participants picked an item among several options presented under seven different product categories (i.e., grapes, milk, eggs, frozen pizza, snacks, soda, and bread). To ensure that all participants spent the same amount of money prior to the unplanned shopping task (i.e., $24.50 in total), the price of each item in a given category was the same (e.g., red grapes, green grapes, and black grapes were all priced at $2 per pound).

After participants completed the first part of the task, we asked participants to imagine that they had come across a special issue of one of their favorite magazines as they were going to the cashier to pay for their purchases. Following Haws, Bearden, and Nenkov (2012), we measured participants’ willingness to pay (WTP) for the magazine by asking them to indicate whether they would purchase the magazine at different prices ranging from $0 to $8 with $0.50 increments. Upon completion of the shopping task, participants answered a set of demographic questions, which included a five-item religiosity scale adapted from Worthington et al.’s (2003) religious commitment inventory (α = .98).

We excluded 11 participants who provided non-monetonic responses to the WTP question (e.g., a participant was not willing buy the magazine at $2.00 but would do so at $2.50). We further removed eight participants whose WTPs were greater than or equal to $7.50, as such values are more than three standard deviations above the mean (M = $2.50, SD = $1.63). These exclusions yield a final sample with 587 observations.

Supporting our prediction, we find a negative relation between participants’ religiosity and their WTP for the magazine (b = -.096, p < .05). Specifically, one standard deviation increase in religiosity is associated with a 5.41% decline in the average participant’s WTP. Note that our regression model controls for such variables as the participant’s age, gender, and education. Also, controlling for participants’ impulsivity did not alter our results.

Study 4: Religiosity Prime and Spending Behavior

We recruited participants from Amazon’s MTurk. 809 adults completed the study (mean age = 35.3 years, mean income = $52,250, 58.2% female).

This study uses the same shopping task employed in Study 3. To manipulate religiosity, we asked participants before they began shopping to watch a short video and rate the speaker in the video on various dimensions (e.g., the use of body language). Participants were randomly assigned to either the religiosity condition or the control condition. In the former condition, participants watched a video of a speaker discussing God’s presence. In the latter condition, they were shown a video of a speaker presenting oil painting tips.

After participants made their product choices and indicated their WTP for the magazine, we presented them with a three-item scale used to measure the extent to which they believed that buying the magazine would be a waste of money. The items included in the scale are “Buying the magazine would be wasting money,” “If I buy the magazine, that would be a wasteful consumption,” and “It would be irresponsible of me to spend money on the magazine” (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; α = .95). We averaged participants’ responses to these items and created a single measure of beliefs about wasting money. We use this measure as a potential mediator of the effect of religiosity prime on participants’ willingness to spend money on the magazine.

Among the participants, 35.2% indicated that they had no religion (116 were atheists and 169 were agnostic), 21.5% were Protestant, 15.7% were Catholic, 20.6% reported that they follow other religions, and 6.9% declined to answer. We excluded the participants with no religion from the analysis as the religiosity prime lacks relevance for them and thus may fail to generate the predicted effect. A manipulation check conducted with participants from the same subject population supports this view. Specifically, we measured participants’ feelings toward God using the following four items: “I feel God’s presence,” “I desire to be closer to God,” “I believe God watches over me and others,” and “One should seek God’s guidance when making decisions” (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree, α = .98). Whereas the religiosity prime invoked stronger feelings toward God among participants with a religion (M = 3.89 vs. M_control = 3.58, t(272) = 2.40, p < .05), this was not the case among those with no religion (M = 1.54 vs. M_control = 1.49, t(125) = 0.36, n.s.).

Further, we excluded 15 participants who provided non-monetonic responses to the WTP question. We also removed 7 participants whose WTPs are more than three standard deviations above the mean. These exclusions resulted in a final sample with 502 observations.

As expected, participants in the religiosity condition were willing to spend 9.5% less on the magazine (M = $2.29, SD = $1.50) than those in the control condition (M = $2.32, SD = $1.58, t(500) = 2.40, p < .01). Further, we excluded 15 participants who provided non-monetonic responses to the WTP question. We also removed 7 participants whose WTPs are more than three standard deviations above the mean. These exclusions resulted in a final sample with 502 observations.

As expected, participants in the religiosity condition were willing to spend 9.5% less on the magazine (M = $2.29, SD = $1.50) than those in the control condition (M = $2.32, SD = $1.58, t(500) = 2.40, p < .01). More important, after controlling for feelings about wasting money, the effect of the religiosity prime on WTP became statistically insignificant (b = -0.489, p = .006). We obtained consistent results in a multivariate setting with control variables. As an additional analysis, we also controlled for participants’ emotional states measured with a PANAS scale. Our results did not change.

Further, we tested whether participants’ feelings about wasting money mediates the effect of religiosity prime on their WTP for the magazine. When we included feelings about wasting money in the regression model, it predicted WTP for the magazine (b = -0.489, p < .01). More important, after controlling for feelings about wasting money, the effect of the religiosity prime on WTP became statistically insignificant (b = -0.489, p = .237). Supporting the mediation, the 95% bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect of the religiosity prime on participants’ WTP for the magazine through feelings of wasting money does not contain zero (i.e., CI = [-0.254, -0.008]).

General Discussion

Although religion represents a key aspect of many people’s lives, little is known about how religion affects one’s non-religious routines. In the present research, we identify a frequent consumption activity that is influenced by religiosity: grocery shopping. Our evidence shows that religiosity curbs the money and time people spend on their grocery purchases. We find that people who live in more religious counties spend less money on groceries and less time shopping for groceries than those in less religious counties. Focusing on religiosity at the individual level yields parallel results: The more religious people are, the less willing they are to seize on purchase opportunities that arise during a shopping trip. This effect seems to be due to a common religious principle: it is wrong to waste one’s money and time on material things. Overspending and consuming...
more than one needs are typically unwelcomed behaviors in communities with strong religious ties.

An alternative hypothesis—that greater religiosity leads to higher spending—is not supported by our data sets. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence suggests that some religious leaders and prominent figures in predominantly religious countries endorse lavish life styles. In such cases, religion may have a “licensing effect” on spending (e.g., “God has given me wealth and spending ability” or “I deserve better things because my religion makes me a better person”) that could be compounded by religion’s positive effect on risk taking (e.g., “God protects me, so I can take the risk of spending money”). We encourage future research to examine whether religion’s effect on spending is conditional on one’s social status and wealth.

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The Effects of Perspective on Prosocial Emotions and Intents
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When imagining someone in pain, individuals can either put themselves into the victim’s shoes or evaluate the possible remedies for the situation from an observer’s perspective. The affective reactions to the situation depend on the perspective that they take (Jones and Nisbett 1972). That is, individuals who appraise a situation from different perspectives can have different emotional reactions (Hung and Mukopahyay 2012). In a case that they get too close to the victim and lose themselves, they may be too distressed to consider help. Yet in another case if they stay too distant, they may become disinterested to empathize and fail to recognize the need of help. These cases highlight the mixed findings in literature concerning which perspective, of the victim or of an observer, is more effective to motivate prosocial intents.

To reconcile this dilemma, we theorize that the effects of perspective are underlain by two opposite forces—the capacity to empathize and self-awareness to evaluate potential obligations. In literature, empathy and self-consciousness have been treated as opposite ends of a continuum. That is, people who imagine the situation from the victims’ perspective are assumed to lose themselves in the situation, blurring the subjective distinction between themselves and the others (Green and Brock 2000). However, this conceptualization does not account for all of the effects that perspectives might have. When several parties are involved in a situation, people might imagine the situation from the two basic perspectives but also that of persons other than the victim who are involved in the situation. The effects of taking the perspective of this involved observer have not been articulated.

This research sets out to understand the effects of the perspective of involved observer and shows that this perspective is optimal in stimulating prosocial intent. We predict that although both the perspectives of victim and involved observer boost empathy and distress as compare to that of disinterested observer, only the latter elicit more guilt and results in enhanced prosocial intent. These effects can be summarized in two parallel routes, empathy-based and obligation-based.

Three experiments validate the proposed effects and mechanisms. In the studies, participants read about a fatal ferry collision. In disinterested-observer conditions, they imagined the situation as if they watched a new report of it on television. In involved-observer conditions, they imagined themselves as passengers on the undamaged boat which left the scene immediately after the collision. In study 3, participants imagined themselves as a passenger on the ship passing by the scene. In victim conditions, they imagined themselves as a passenger on the sinking boat. Then participants listed their thoughts, and reported their emotions and prosocial intent.

In study 1 (N = 71), participants reported more distress when taking either an involved observer’s perspective (M = 7.41) or the victims’ perspective (M = 6.41) than by taking a disinterested observer’s perspective (M = 5.70; F(2, 68) = 4.39, p = .016). However, the involved observer’s perspective induced more guilt (M = 8.27 vs. M = 5.87 vs. M = 2.40; F(2, 68) = 4.20, p = .018) and a greater prosocial intent (M = 8.04 vs. M = 6.35 vs. M = 6.75; F(1, 68) = 3.20, p = .078). We created two contrast variables to examine the empathy-based (1, 1, and -2 for involved observer, victim, and disinterested observer perspectives respectively) and the obligation-based routes (1, -1, and 0 respectively). Bootstrapping analyses (Model 4, Hayes 2013, based on 5000 resamples) supported for both the empathy-based (95% CI: .0574 to .5406, empathic distress as the mediator) and the obligation-based routes (95% CI: .0071 to .6532, guilt as the mediator).

In study 2 (N = 118), participants completed a more extensive questionnaire which assessed the underlying processes. The results replicated the observed effects of perspective on distress (M = 5.98 vs. M = 5.33 vs. M = 4.27, p < .001) and guilt (M = 4.77 vs. M = 2.42 vs. M = 2.30, p < .001). As predicted, results indicated that the effect of perspective on empathy mirrored its effect on distress (M = 6.43 vs. M = 6.41 vs. M = 5.12, p = .019) while the effect on self-consciousness was parallel with that on guilt (M = 6.76 vs. M = 5.74 vs. M = 5.57, p = .024). As in Study 1, planned contrasts were created to examine the mediating effects of empathic distress and obligation-based mechanisms (Model 6, Hayes 2013). Bootstrapping yielded a significant mediation pathway for both the empathy-based (95% CI: .0014 to .0670) and the obligation-based routes (95% CI: -.0706 to -.0014).

Study 3 employed a 3 (perspective: victim vs. involved observer vs. disinterested observer) × 2 (context: newspaper vs. donation appeal) between-subjects design. We predicted that donation appeals enable individuals who take the victim’s perspective to recognize their role as a help-giver at the outset and thus these individuals adopt a perspective similar to that of involved observers in the situation we have considered. Specifically, context moderated the effects of perspective on guilt (F(2, 219) = 2.61, p = .076) and prosocial intent (F(2, 219) = 3.12, p = .046), but not empathic distress (M = 5.75 vs. M = 5.84 vs. M = 4.76, p = .001). In the newspaper conditions, the effects of perspective on guilt (M = 4.07 vs. M = 2.53 vs. M = 2.75, p = .002) and prosocial intent (M = 7.22 vs. M = 6.04 vs. M = 6.62, p = .031) observed in earlier studies were replicated. In the donation appeal conditions, however, the feelings of guilt (M = 3.51 vs. M = 3.24, F < 1) and motivation to help (M = 6.70 vs. M = 6.76, F < 1) of the participants who employed the victim’s perspective increased to the level experienced by who employed that of the involved observers. Comparably, that of disinterested observer induced less intense feelings of guilt (M = 2.18) and prosocial intent (M = 5.96). This suggests that to consider helping, individuals must be conscious of the distinction between themselves and the victims and thus of being a position to help.

Past research assumed that individuals would lose themselves completely in a situation when they imagine it vividly and empathize with the protagonists. However, the present studies show that the disposition to empathize and the level of self-consciousness can be induced independently in a given perspective. This occurs when individuals imagine themselves as an observer who is physically (or emotionally) involved in the situation.

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The Effect of Societal Nostalgia on Future Optimism and Public Policy Endorsement
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Consumers feel nostalgic not only toward their own personal past, but also toward a society’s past in which the individuals might not personally experience (Davis 1979). In practice, reminiscence about a society’s past has been used as an effective marketing appeal (Muehling and Pascal 2011). This type of nostalgia is not less common than reminiscences about one’s personal past (Holbrook 1993; Sedikides et al. 2006; Wood 2010). However, its effects other than those on advertising effectiveness have not been systematically examined.

Focusing on societal nostalgia, we show that it increases optimism towards the society’s future. While this effect seems to parallel the effects previously shown with personal nostalgia (Cheung et al. 2013), we show that it is driven by a distinct process. That is, societal nostalgia enhances identification with the society, which is based on a common social category rather than relational bonds with others (Sedikides and Brewer 2001). Specifically, we conceptualize that a nostalgic experience can be associated with relational or collective identities (Brewer and Gardner 1996), depending on the emphasis of the reflection. For example, individuals often reflect on nostalgic events in their student life. These events are associated with the relational self if the focus is on their personal relationships with others, such as their cohorts or even acquaintances (Wildschut et al. 2014). However, these events can also relate to a person’s collective identity if the reflection focuses on the self as a student of one’s alma mater (i.e., a depersonalized social entity). According to identity theories, the nostalgia effects observed in prior research concern relational identities. Nostalgia of this sort is evoked by the reminiscences of a person’s own past and leads to a positive affect and a sense of social connectedness. This connectedness in turn bolsters one’s self-esteem, induces upbeat feelings about the future, and elicits optimism. Societal nostalgia, on the other hand, concerns individuals’ collective identity of being a member of a society. It enables individuals to re-experience the successes and failures of the past society. These experiences augment the extent to which being a member of the society, as a collective identity, fulfills the need to maintain a meaningful identity. Thus, identification with the society can be consolidated as an individual reminiscences nostalgically about the society’s past.

Enhanced identification has implications for how people perceive the society. People who identify with a group tend to believe that their fellow members work as a cohesive unit for collective welfare (Brewer and Kramer 1986), thereby feeling less vulnerable to societal changes (Jenson 1998, 2002) and foreseeing a reasonable chance to succeed (Stanley 2003). Besides, identification also associated with reduced social uncertainty (Hogg 2000, 2009). Taken together, identification with a society gives rise to the belief that everyone in that society is likely to restrict their self-interests to preserve a collective good (Brewer and Kramer 1986). Therefore, we predict that societal nostalgia enhances identification and, with it, an optimistic outlook toward the society’s future and actions for social progress.

In four experiments, we examined the effects, the mechanism, and boundary condition of societal nostalgia, with similar procedure and manipulation. We specifically manipulated nostalgia along two independent dimensions: temporal foci (past vs. present) and content (personal vs. societal). In the past conditions, participants wrote about a food stimulus (a traditional snack or coffee) in relation to their childhood or the past society (personal vs. societal). In the present conditions, they wrote about the stimulus in relation to their daily life or the society today respectively. In the control condition, they wrote a description about the features of the stimulus. Then in ostensibly unrelated tasks, all participants rated their mood, reported their optimism towards the society’s future, and responded to other measures concerning possible processes and decisions.

In a 2 (temporal foci: present vs. past) × 2 (content: personal vs. societal) design, study 1 demonstrated that societal nostalgia boosts societal optimism, and that this effect is due to nostalgic reminiscences about the society’s past and not a mere activation of the concept of society. In a similar design with an additional control condition, study 2 validated the proposed mechanism, showing that identification with the society mediates the effects of societal nostalgia on optimism and consumer confidence. Study 3 employed a single-factor between-subjects design (three level, societal past vs. personal past vs. control) and provided converging evidence for the proposed account. It also showed that societal nostalgia makes participants more risk-taking in public policy endorsement but not in their personal decisions. To distinguish the identification-based and the connectedness-based account, in study 4, participants listed either the general attributes of the members in the society or their negative characteristics before the nostalgia treatment. The results indicated that the effects of societal nostalgia were independent of member evaluation while the effects of personal nostalgia may attenuate when unfavorable thoughts about the members were salient. Across the four studies, societal nostalgia had little effect on mood, perceptual contrast (competence, studies 1-3; general evaluation of society, study 4), and changes in psychological distance (temporal construal, studies 2-3; self-construal, study 3; construal level such as abstract-concrete and global-local thinking, study 4).

To conclude, societal nostalgia has received scant attention in the literature. This paper explores the psychological effects of this specific type of nostalgia on individuals’ perceptions about the society’s future and decisions for the society. These effects were evident across cultures (Hong Kong and US) for both traditional and mundane (coffee) stimuli. However, they did not occur when people thought only about the society at present. Drawing upon identity theories, we validated that societal nostalgia lies in an impersonal identification process rather than interpersonal bonds, and it evokes a unique psychological process that cannot be explained by several intuitive alternative accounts. However, we did not contend that the identification process (and its downstream effects) is the only pathway of influence. Other psychological effects, such as those induced by high-level construal, stemming by societal nostalgia await further investigation.

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Your Lay Beliefs about Your Personality Predict Your Political Ideology

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Ideology is a subject of enormous interest with theoretical, practical and policy implications. The traditional conceptualization since the French Revolution was of political ideology lying along a single left-right dimension (derived from which side of the French Assembly Hall supporters and opponents of the status quo sat). This formulation usually contains two inter-related aspects: 1) advocating versus resisting social change and 2) rejecting versus accepting inequality (Bobbio 1996; Burek 1987; Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009). Numerous studies demonstrate a stubborn and reliable negative correlation between liberalism and conservatism (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway 2003b; Sidedius and Pratto 1999; Weber and Federico 2007; Whitley 1999).

In the current research, we provide empirical evidence that an epistemological motivation (i.e., implicit self-theory) contributes to political ideology. This is of interest because theorists have made conflicting predictions. One account based on personal control suggests that some individuals endorse conservatism because they perceive the world and individuals as fixed and unvarying (i.e., entity theorists) and this belief can increase a sense of personal control which has been shown to reduce support of big government (Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, and Laurin 2008). Another possible account based on threat sensitivity, however, predicts exactly the opposite: it suggests that individuals who view the world as constantly changing (i.e., incremental theorists) will be more sensitive to changes because they view the world as consistently changing and changes are uncertain and uncertainty is threatening, which will lead them to support conservatism (Jost, Federico, and Napier 2008). These two arguments thus make opposite predictions regarding the relationship between political ideology and implicit self theories. The current research addresses this ambiguity directly.

In Experiment 1, we attempted to provide initial evidence of the association between implicit self-theory and political ideology. Participants’ political ideology was measured by asking their overall political orientation, social and cultural orientation, and economic orientation using established scales (Carney, Jost, Gosling, and Potter 2008). Next, each participant’s implicit self-theory was assessed using the Implicit Person Theories Measure (Levy, Stroessner, and Dweck 1998). Finally, they provided demographic information such as age, gender, race, having a child or not, and household income (HHI). We regressed political ideology on implicit self-theories after controlling for age, gender, HHI, education, race, and children variables. We found that the impact of implicit self-theory on political ideology was significantly different from the entity–high PC condition and from the entity–control PC condition, but the entity–high PC and the entity–control PC conditions did not differ in their political ideology, suggesting that the “default” PC for entity theorists is a high level of control. In contrast, among incremental theorists only the high PC condition resulted in a difference in ideology from the control PC condition, suggesting the “default” for incremental theorists is a lower level of personal control.

In Experiment 4, we attempted to show how the documented effect of implicit self-theories on political ideology could be utilized in a political campaign. We constructed four different versions of print advertisements for a political candidate differing on a 2 (advertising copy: entity vs. incremental) X 3 (personal control (PC): high vs. low vs. control condition) between-participants design. After being primed with one of the implicit self-theory orientations, participants were asked to write a short essay about different topics to alter their levels of personal control (Cutright, Bettman, and Fitzsimons 2013). After then, participants indicated their political ideology using the measure from Experiment 2. A 2 X 3 ANOVA on political ideology yielded a significant interaction effect between implicit self-theory and personal control (PC hereafter), along with the main effects of implicit self-theory and of personal control. Planned analysis showed that the control PC conditions replicated the results of Experiment 2. Among entity theorists, only those in the low PC condition differed from the control PC condition in terms of their political ideology: the entity–low PC condition was significantly different from the entity–high PC condition and from the entity–control PC condition, but the entity–high PC and the entity–control PC conditions did not differ in their political ideology, suggesting that the “default” PC for entity theorists is a high level of control. In contrast, among incremental theorists only the high PC condition resulted in a difference in ideology from the control PC condition, suggesting the “default” for incremental theorists is a lower level of personal control.

The current research provides empirical evidence that an individual’s implicit self-theory orientation influence his/her perception about personal control, which, in turn, decides his/her political ideology.
REFERENCES


The Moral Nature of Stigmatization: Mitigating the Negative Effects of Stigma on Helping
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
A stigma is an undesirable characteristic, imperfection, or mark of dishonor that leads a person to be rejected by society (Goffman 1986). The stigmatized include the mentally ill, criminals, welfare recipients, undocumented immigrants, the obese, and those who abuse drugs and alcohol (Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2006; Overton and Medina 2008). Despite being among the neediest in society, the stigmatized are often the least likely to receive help (Latner and Stunkard 2003; Lundberg, Hansson, and Bjorkman 2007). Consequently, organizations have undertaken various promotional efforts designed to educate others and increase support for the stigmatized. Unfortunately, research suggests these campaigns are often ineffective (Corrigan 2012; Heijnders and van der Meij 2006) or even counterproductive by reinforcing negative attitudes (Korszun et al. 2012; Tolomiczenko, Goering, and Durbin 2001).

We propose that promotional efforts for stigmatized groups are likely to be ineffective if they do not address the group’s perceived deficit in moral character. We theorize that the stigmatized receive less help compared to other people in need because they are considered immoral, and therefore aversive, unworthy, and potentially harmful. Consistent with our theory, we find that people are less willing to help a homeless person who carries the stigma of a mental illness, a criminal record, or alcoholism compared to a homeless person who is a military veteran. However, we find that the negative effect of the stigma on helping is fully mitigated when the stigmatized person behaves virtuously. Importantly, we demonstrate that behaving in a virtuous manner is insufficient to redeem the stigmatized. It is only when the virtuous behavior is undertaken voluntarily and for an unselfish reason that it is diagnostic of moral character and consequently has the power to mitigate the negative effects of stigma on helping.

The relevant literature has not yet acknowledged the moral basis for stigmatization. However, previous research has considered how people respond to stigmatized groups (Gay and Whittington 2002; Harris and Fiske 2006). Harris and Fiske (2006), for example, examined how people respond neurologically to the homeless and to drug addicts—two groups identified as stigmatized in other research (Dunlop and Tracy 2013; Phelan et al. 1997). They found that exposure to images of addicts and the homeless evoked not only intense dislike in participants, but also disgust and contempt, which are negative emotions reserved for those who are morally condemned (Haidt 2003; Hutchenraper and Gross 2011). Furthermore, participants displayed a lower activation of the medial prefrontal cortex when exposed to images of the stigmatized compared to images of members of societal in-groups. The authors concluded that participants considered the homeless and drug addicts to be “less than human” (p. 847). The foregoing illustrates that stigmatization involves the most essential of all moral judgements—is a person good or bad?

Given the moral basis for stigmatization, we propose that a moral redemption is necessary to mitigate the negative effect of stigma on helping. We find evidence across four studies that a stigmatized person in need is helped significantly less than a non-stigmatized person in need. However, we find that the stigmatized individual is morally redeemed and offered more help when he or she behaves virtuously. Study 1 examined the effect of a virtuous behavior on the willingness to help a homeless person who is either a veteran or a criminal. We found that the virtuous act of returning a lost wallet to its rightful owner (vs. the control condition) significantly increased the willingness to help the homeless criminal. In contrast, the same virtuous act had no effect on the willingness to help the homeless veteran.

Study 2 examined the stigma of alcoholism and modified the virtuous behaviour manipulation. We used the same behavior across conditions and manipulated the motive to be either selfish or unselfish. We found that participants were more likely to help the homeless alcoholic when he returned the lost wallet for an unselfish reason (vs. selfish reason). However, there was no effect on the willingness to help the homeless veteran across levels of virtuous behavior; he was already perceived to be moral. This study demonstrates the importance of motive, even when the behavior is socially desirable.

Study 3 examined the stigma of mental illness and introduced a measure of moral character to directly test its hypothesized role. We found the expected pattern of results on moral character and willingness to help. Specifically, returning a lost wallet (vs. control) had a significant effect on helping responses, but only when the homeless person was mentally ill. We found that the moral character of the homeless person was a significant moderated mediator—it fully mediated the negative effect of stigma on helping responses in the virtue-absent condition. However, there was no effect in the virtue-present condition, suggesting that the virtuous act mitigated the negative effect of stigma on helping.

Study 4 replicated the results of study 3 using a new virtue manipulation in which a virtuous behavior (i.e., picking up trash) is carried out voluntarily or involuntarily. Specifically, voluntarily (vs. involuntarily) picking up trash had a significant positive effect on moral character and helping responses only when the homeless person was stigmatized. Again, moral character was a significant moderated mediator. This study also ruled out empathy (Batson et al. 1997; Batson et al. 2005; Fisher and Ma 2014) and Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS; Aron, Aron, and Smollan 1992) as alternative explanations for the results.

To sum, four experiments provide evidence for the moral basis of stigma and the redeeming effect of moral behavior; the negative effect of stigma on moral character and helping is fully mitigated when the stigmatized person behaves virtuously. By demonstrating this effect, the current research contributes to the literature on stigmatization and non-profit marketing. Prior research has not yet recognized the link between stigmatization and morality. Our research offers theoretical and practical insights into why members of stigmatized groups are unlikely to receive help and how addressing this deficit in moral character in promotional efforts can increase societal acceptance and support for the stigmatized.

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REGRET-FREE TRIALS:  
ASYMMETRIC EFFECTS OF PRICE PROMOTIONS ON NEW PRODUCT TRIAL 

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT 

Getting consumers to try and adopt new products is one of the fundamental challenges of marketing. Once consumers are happy with what they have, anticipated regret becomes a major barrier to the trial and adoption of new, even much better things (e.g., Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler, 1991; Ritov and Baron, 1995; Simonson, 1992). Once consumers find products they like, they anticipate regret forgoing what works for what may not, leading them to stick to the familiar and avoid the new. When deciding to try a new detergent or even a new way of preparing coffee, for instance, consumers worry that they may not like the new product and worry that they will feel regret for having forgone the chance to use or consume something they would have enjoyed for certain.

We suggest that price promotions may reduce the barrier to trial incurred by anticipated regret, if a discount is applied to both familiar and new products. A few points merit clarification. First, while prior research has examined the pricing strategy for new products (e.g., Krishnan, Bass, and Jain, 1999), none of this work examined consumers’ choices when they were offered a discount on both familiar and new products (e.g., “50% off any one regular price item”). Second, different from previous research examining the pricing strategy for durable goods and innovation adoption, we focus on consumers’ daily purchase decisions, such as the beverage purchased at a coffee shop.

In a pilot study, managers with an average of 6.4 years experience predicted the percentage of customers who would order an unfamiliar beverage at Starbucks, if the firm offered five levels of price promotion to any one beverage on the menu: 0% off, 33% off, 50% off, 67% off, or 100% off. In line with common theories of pricing and new product adoption, the results revealed that the managers predicted a linear uptake in trial of new products as the magnitude of price promotion increases.

Contrary to these predictions, in five experiments, we find that price promotions have asymmetric effects on new product adoption. Moreover, we find that this effect is mediated by consumers’ anticipated feelings of regret toward negative outcomes. In a field experiment in Boston, MA, we asked 300 Starbucks customers to name their usual order and a new beverage they considered trying. We then randomly assigned them to receive one of three price promotions for any one beverage ordered: 0% off (full price), 50% off, or 100% off (free). In the full price condition, the price of each beverage was its original price. In the 50% off condition, the price of each beverage was half of its original price. In the 100% off condition, the price of each beverage was $0. All participants then chose which beverage they would order: their usual beverage, the new beverage, or neither beverage. Results revealed no increase in choice share of new beverages from the full price to 50% off promotion conditions. Only in the 100% off condition was choice share of new beverages significantly higher in than the full price (and the 50% off) condition.

Our next four experiments tested the robustness and generalizability of the effect with regard to different promotion levels and products, and tested our proposed mechanism in online vignettes. Experiment 2A (N = 400) examined the asymmetric price effect on new product trial for Starbucks beverages at four different price promotion levels (full price, 33% off, 67% off, and 100% off). We found a significantly greater choice share for new beverages when beverages were free, but no difference of choice share for new beverages between the full price condition, the 33% off condition and the 67% off condition. In Experiment 2B, participants (N = 300) choose between usual and unusual toothpastes from Target at one of three price promotion levels: 0% off, 50% off and 100% off. Again, choice share of new toothpaste was significantly greater only when all toothpastes were free. There was no difference in demand for new toothpaste between the full price and 50% off promotion conditions.

In Experiment 3 (N = 298), participants indicated their usual Starbucks beverage order, a new beverage in which they were interested, and made a choice of beverage after assignment to one of the three price promotion levels in Experiment 1. Participants then reported the extent to which anticipated feeling regret if they did not enjoy their chosen beverage. The results replicated those of Experiment 1, such that choice share was only increased in the free promotion condition, and was no greater in the 50% off condition than the full price condition. Moreover, we found that price promotions only reduced anticipated regret in the free promotion condition, and this difference in anticipated regret mediated (explained) the increase in demand for new beverages when all beverages were free.

In Experiment 4 (N = 300), we tested our process account with moderation. In addition to full and zero price conditions, we included a full price condition with a money-back-guarantee (MBG). If anticipated regret indeed underlies the resistance to choose a new beverage, offering a MBG should eliminate anticipated regret and moderate the effect of the promotion on new product adoption. Consistent with our prediction, consumers in the 100% refund condition were significantly more likely to choose a new beverage than participants in the full price condition, and were just as likely to choose a new beverage as participants in the 100% off condition.

Taken together, findings from five experiments demonstrate an asymmetric effect of price promotions on new product trial. More important, we find that such consumer choice is driven by the asymmetry of reduction in anticipated regret. The results elucidate an actionable and important way to align marketing strategy with consumer psychology.

REFERENCES 


Does the Organic Label Increase Consumption? How Food Type and Health Locus of Control Turn the Label Into a Double-Edged Sword
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Organic labels serve as a heuristic cue in food shopping decisions (Vega-Zamora, Torres-Ruiz, Murgado-Armenteros, and Parras-Rosa, 2014). Food companies desiring to encourage consumers to consume their products will be interested in understanding how an organic label can increase consumers’ food consumption. However, overconsumption can lead not only to weight gain but also to rapid satiation and delayed repurchasing (Inman, 2001). Given the susceptibility of consumption to contextual factors, we expect an organic label to affect consumers’ food consumption. Our questions of interest are as follows. Does an organic label always enhance consumers’ food consumption? Under what circumstances does an organic label actually reduce consumers’ food consumption? What is the underlying mechanism involved?

We are interested in boundary conditions that could amplify or dampen the effects of the organic label on food consumption. The extant literature has recognized two types of motivations that induce consumers to purchase organic food: contextual differences (e.g., food type) (van Doorn and Verhoeef, 2011) and individual differences (e.g., consumers’ sociodemographics, health consciousness, ideology, and environmental concerns) (Grunert and Juhl, 1995; Hjelm, 2011; Honkanen, Verplanken, and Otter, 2006; Hughner, McDonagh, Prothero, Shultz, and Stanton, 2007; McEachern and McClean, 2002; Michaelidou and Hassan, 2008; Padel and Foster, 2005; Schifferstein and Oude Ophuis, 1998; Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, 2009). This article contributes to these evolving research streams by proposing that food type (virtue vs. vice) and individual differences in health locus-of-control (HLOC) simultaneously affect the impact of the organic label on food perceptions and food consumption.

Study 1 examined whether the effects of an organic label on food consumption were moderated by different food types and, if so, whether food consumption is based on the perceived healthiness of the food. We conducted a 2 x 2 (food type: vice vs. virtue) x 2 (HLOC: externals vs. internals) between-subjects experiment to test three hypotheses. However, a major limitation to this study was the self-reported measure for the dependent variable (i.e., intended food consumption). In Study 2, we adopted an objective measurement of the food intake amount to indicate the influence of the food consumption. Besides food type as a moderator, individual differences are recognized as influential in food perceptions. Study 2 examined whether and how the joint effects of organic label and food type on the food consumption may differ for people with an external vs. an internal HLOC. Thus, we conducted Study 2, a 2 x 2 (food type: vice vs. virtue) x 2 (HLOC: externals vs. internals) between-subjects design.

Our results suggest that, first, an organic label increases externals’ consumption of vice food. Second, an organic label decreases food consumption in the following two conditions: 1) when externals are exposed to virtue food, and when internals are exposed to vice food. Although an organic label provides a heuristic cue regarding the healthiness of the food, it does not increase the food consumption of health externals. 2) For health internals, vice food with an organic label induces a certain skepticism which leads to reluctance regarding its consumption. These results show different reasons why health externals and internals decrease their consumption of that has an organic label. Third, the presence or absence of an organic label makes no difference to internals facing virtue food. As discussed earlier, an organic label may not have a positive effect on health internals since such people take various factors into consideration in their food choices. Therefore, the organic label may not effectively induce health internals to increase their consumption of virtue food.

This research contributes to the literature streams regarding organic food in marketing, health perceptions, and food consumption. First, we examine how organic labels may serve as a heuristic cue to increase or decrease food consumption, subject to food type and individual differences in HLOC. Previous research has analyzed the meaning and interpretations placed on the term “organic,” and how those interpretations influence consumption behavior (Janssen and Hamm, 2012; van Doorn and Verhoe, 2011; Vega-Zamora et al., 2014). Food consumption behavior with individual difference variables remains unexplored. Although perceived healthiness is strongly associated with organic food—and this important feature makes it superior to conventional food (Janssen and Hamm, 2012; Vega-Zamora et al., 2014)—this heuristic cue does not necessarily induce people to increase their consumption of such food. Results of Study 2 show that organic labels can be a double-edged sword on food consumption.

Second, previous research on organic food focused on self-reported data as dependent measures (e.g., WTP, attitudes toward the food, or purchase intentions) (Aschemann-Witzel, Marosscheck, and Hamm, 2013; D’Amato and Falzon, 2015; Janssen and Hamm, 2012; van Doorn and Verhoe, 2011). The current research contributes to this evolving research stream by adopting both objective and attitudinal measures in its examination of food consumption behavior.

Third, it is interesting to compare our Study 1 with van Doorn and Verhoe (2011), since both studies examined the interaction between organic label and food type. However, the patterns of our results in regards to intended consumption are somewhat in opposition to those found by van Doorn and Verhoe (2011) regarding WTP. Van Doorn and Verhoe (2011) did not find differences between vice and virtue food in regards to WTP, but they did observe that an organic label negatively affects quality perceptions regarding vice food. In our study, an organic label actually enhances participants’ intended consumption. When interpreting this inconsistency, it is important to recognize that food consumption behavior may not necessarily mean the same thing as quality perception (especially based on perceived monetary value). In our study, participants’ evaluations of their intention to eat were based entirely on their psychological feelings toward the product, thus making this an affect-driven decision. The cognition-based items used in van Doorn and Verhoe (2011) caused their participants to evaluate perceived food healthiness based on cognitive information processing. On the other hand, the affect-based items used in our study might prime participants to perceive food healthiness based on affective information processing. Future validation will be needed.

Advances in Consumer Research
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732
REFERENCES
Close the Deal Now or Later?: The Impact of Power Distance Belief on Choice Deferral

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The current research examines the link between power distance belief (PDB)—the extent to which people accept and endorse hierarchy and inequalities in society (Hofstede 2001; Zhang, Winterich, and Mittal 2010) and consumers’ tendency to postpone purchase (choice deferral). Previous research (Briley, Morris, and Simmonson 2005) may suggest a positive association between PDB and choice deferral. However, the impact of PDB on choice deferral has not been explicitly examined so far. In contrast, we show in a series of three studies that high (vs. low) PDB individuals are less likely to defer choices for symbolic products—products which convey the user’s identity to other people such as watches or sunglasses (White and Dahl 2007)—and this is because of their lower tendency to engage in impression management, defined as people’s attempt to control others’ impressions of them (Leary and Kowalski 1990; Schlenker 1980).

Specifically, high (vs. low) PDB cultures tend to be rigid, inflexible, and discourage social mobility (Carl, Javidan, and Gupta 2004), and tend to be less generous and charitable toward others (Winterich and Zhang 2014). Moreover, the rigid nature of PDB may imply that people may be fixedate, have firm opinions, and be less likely to change their opinion of others (Carl et al. 2004), which may reduce their perceived ability of changing others’ view of themselves. Because a primary reason people engage in impression management is to obtain rewards and benefits (Schlenker 1980), we suggest that people are less likely to engage in impression management when PDB is high (vs. low) because of the lower possibility of obtaining rewards and benefits in such contexts. In turn, the lower tendency to engage in impression management should reduce choice deferral for symbolic products. This is because people with higher impression management concerns consider more number of attributes (for example, they may not only consider utilitarian and functional attributes, but also symbolic and identity-enhancing attributes; Schlosser and Shavitt 2002; Shavitt 1990, 1992), have a higher threshold for accepting products, and prefer alternatives that can be easily justifiable to others especially when the products have the potential to signal their identity (i.e., symbolic products), which can lead to higher choice deferral for such products. Formally,

Hypothesis 1: High (vs. low) PDB individuals are less likely to defer choice and this effect is stronger for symbolic (vs. non-symbolic) products.

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between PDB and choice deferral for symbolic products is mediated by impression management.

We have argued that low (vs. high) PDB individuals are more likely to defer choice for symbolic products because they consider a greater number of product attributes, including symbolic and social identity related attributes as well as functional and utilitarian attributes. Because people often have minimum threshold expectations for each attribute considered (e.g., 25 miles per gallon; 8 GB RAM; Johnson, Meyer, and Ghose 1989; West, Brockett, and Golden 1997) the more the number of attributes considered, the greater is the likelihood that the brands under consideration will fall short of expectations on at least some attributes (Brandt 1988). In effect, the greater number of attributes increases the uncertainty that the brands will perform satisfactorily on key attributes, leading to a greater choice deferral for symbolic products among people low (vs. high) in PDB. We reasoned that when people are made to believe that products in the marketplace perform satisfactorily on key attributes (compared to when this belief is not induced), the tendency of low PDB individuals to defer choice will be significantly mitigated, but that of high PDB individuals (who are less likely to defer choice to start with) will be unchanged.

Hypothesis 3: When people believe that products in the marketplace perform satisfactorily on important attributes, low PDB individuals’ tendency to defer choice will be significantly mitigated, but that of high PDB individuals will be unchanged, compared to that in a control condition.

In study 1, we demonstrated that the effect of PDB on choice deferral is stronger for symbolic (briefcase, shoes, and sunglasses) versus non-symbolic (blender, detergent, and hand soap) products. We found a significant interaction between measured PDB and product type ($F(1, 203) = 4.371, p<.04$). For symbolic products, the slope of PDB was negative ($\beta = -2.121, SE = .090, t(102) = -2.347, p<.03$), but, for non-symbolic products, the slope of PDB was not significant ($\beta = .013, SE = .06, t(101) = .211, p=.833$), suggesting that PDB decreases choice deferral for symbolic, but not non-symbolic products.

In study 2, we employed a bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 iterations (Model 4, Hayes 2012) and showed that the effect of PDB on a choice deferral is mediated by impression management ($\beta = .022, SE = .016, CI_{95} = .001, .067$).

In study 3, we demonstrated one important boundary condition.

Study 3: We predicted that when participants are explicitly told that most products in the marketplace meet the requisite standards on symbolic and social identity related attributes (manipulated belief condition) low (but not high) PDB individuals would be less likely to defer choice compared to the control condition. Floodlight analysis (Spiller et al. 2013) suggested that a significant negative effect of manipulated belief (vs. control condition) on choice deferral likelihood for participants whose PDB score were less than 3.304 ($\beta = -.261, SE = .067$).

Collectively, these findings support our prediction that high (vs. low) PDB individuals are less likely to defer choice for symbolic (vs. non-symbolic) products. Also, we found the evidence that these differences are attributed to high (vs. low) PDB individuals’ lower tendency to engage in impression management. This research contributes to impression management literature by showing the negative relationship between PDB and impression management and it also contributes to choice deferral literature by identifying an important but less explored factor related to cultural variables: power distance belief. We confirmed this effect by using various products across studies. Moreover, we demonstrated one important boundary condition that strengthens our proposed mechanism of impression management.

REFERENCES


I Can Find a Better Deal: The Effect of Power Distance Belief on Price Sensitivity

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The current research investigates the effect of the cultural dimension of power distance belief (PDB)—the degree to which people endorse and expect inequality in society (Hofstede 2001; Zhang, Winterich, and Mittal 2010) on consumer’s price sensitivity—the tendency to expend effort in looking for better priced options. In this paper, we propose that high (vs. low) PDB individuals are less price sensitive because they have lower perceptions of self-efficacy, which reduces their perceived ability to obtain better deals.

Specifically, when PDB is high, people endorse social hierarchy and accept inequality (Carl, Javidan, and Gupta 2004; Hofstede 2001). These societies, such as the caste system in India, have a more fixed and immutable structure and discourage mobility across social classes. In contrast, low PDB societies value equality and tend to have a more flexible societal structure (Carl et al. 2004). They also encourage and promote mobility across social classes (e.g., “Pursue the American dream”).

We propose that the above-noted limitations in high (vs. low) PDB cultures reduce people’s perceptions of self-efficacy—an overall confidence in one’s ability to complete challenging or novel tasks (Schwarzer and Jerusalem 1995). Indeed, several studies suggest that Asians perceive themselves to be lower on self-efficacy than do Westerners (Cianni 1994; Eaton and Dembo 1997; Lam, Schaubroeck, and Aryee 2002; Mau 2000; Schaubroeck, Lam, and Xie 2000), suggesting that PDB may reduce perceptions of self-efficacy. Because high PDB societies are rigid and discourage social mobility, they may give lesser hope for upliftment to its members. Research also suggests that individuals in high PDB societies experience more constraints and restrictions (Hofstede 2001; Zhang et al. 2010) and tend to be more self-critical (Heine et al. 1999). Moreover, self-efficacy is determined by each individual’s past experiences in various contexts (Sherer et al. 1982). Therefore, people in high PDB societies may be more skeptical about their ability to get things done. Similarly, people differ in terms of how to respond to authority in family and school life depending on PDB and these determine people’s self-efficacy (Oettingen 1995). Accordingly, high (vs. low) PDB individuals may have lower perceived self-efficacy.

We further expect the lower perceived self-efficacy among high (vs. low) PDB individuals to demotivate them from searching for lower prices, showing lower price sensitivity. There is always uncertainty (i.e., risk) associated with searching for lower prices because people may or may not be able to find lower prices even after trying. Therefore, people with greater confidence in their ability to conduct a challenging task (i.e., those high, versus low, in self-efficacy) may be more likely to search for lower prices. Formally,

**Hypothesis 1:** When PDB is high (vs. low), people are less likely to expend the time and energy in order to find the lowest prices (i.e., are less price sensitive).

**Hypothesis 2:** Perceived self-efficacy mediates the effect of PDB on price sensitivity.

We also test a boundary condition for the effects posited above. Processing fluency increases self-efficacy (White, MacDonnell, and Dahl 2011). Hence, we expect that when people are given products or services that have a hierarchical (vs. equal) structure (e.g., dividing customers into different classes and providing different benefits based on the class vs. treating all customers equally regardless of the customer class), high (vs. low) PDB individuals will experience higher processing fluency stem from the match between the product structure and their belief, and hence, perceive higher self-efficacy, leading to higher price sensitivity.

**Hypothesis 3:** When PDB is high (vs. low), people are more likely to expend the time and energy in order to find the lowest prices for hierarchically (vs. equally) structured products or services.

In study 1a, participants were randomly assigned to the high (N = 46) or low (N = 45) PDB condition. We used the PDB manipulation from Zhang et al. (2010). Price sensitivity was measured via a 5-item, 7-point scale (α = .80) developed and validated by Lichtenstein, Ridgway, and Netemeyer (1993). A sample item is “I will grocery shop at more than one store to take advantage of low prices.” An ANOVA on price sensitivity revealed that low (vs. high) PDB individuals were more price sensitive (M_{lowPDB} = 4.64, SD = 1.21, M_{highPDB} = 4.04, SD = 1.18; F(1, 89) = 5.86, p < .02).

In study 1b, PDB was measured by using Yoo, Donthu, and Lenartowicz (2011)’s scale (α = .80). Thereafter, participants were given specific purchasing situations with three different types of products (digital camera, laptop, and designer clothing) in which they found the item to purchase in a store. They were told that they might find a cheaper price if they keep searching at other stores or online. Each participant was asked to indicate his/her intention to try other stores or websites to find a lower price for each product. Results suggested that the effect of PDB on price sensitivity index is significantly negative (β = -.28, t(128) = -3.79, p < .01), as predicted.

Study 2: PDB was measured as in study 1b and price sensitivity was measured as in study 1a. Lastly, general self-efficacy was measured via a 10-item, 4-point scale (α = .89) developed and validated by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). We replicated the negative impact of PDB on price sensitivity (β = -.24, t(146) = -3.16, p < .01). Further, a bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 iterations (Model 4, Hayes 2012) indicated that the indirect effect of self-efficacy on the link between PDB and price sensitivity was significant (β = -.03, CI_{95} = -.1037, -.0003), suggesting the effect of PDB on price sensitivity is mediated by self-efficacy.

Study 3: PDB was manipulated as in study 1b (high PDB condition: N = 174 vs. low PDB condition: N = 173). Thereafter, participants were randomly assigned to the hierarchically structured airline service (N = 177) or equally structured airline service (N = 170) condition. They were asked to indicate their price sensitivity about the flight ticket purchases (α = .86). A 2 x 2 ANOVA revealed a significant two-way interaction (F(1, 343) = 7.77, p < .01). Further, when the product structure was equal, low (vs. high) PDB individuals were more likely to search for lower prices (M_{lowPDB} = 5.68 vs. M_{highPDB} = 6.05; F(1, 343) = 4.44, p < .05). However, when the product structure was hierarchical, high (vs. low) PDB individuals were marginally more likely to search for lower prices (M_{highPDB} = 6.11 vs. M_{lowPDB} = 5.80; F(1, 343) = 3.36, p < .07).

Taken together, these findings supported our prediction that high (vs. low) PDB individuals are less likely to be price sensitive (i.e., they have a lower tendency to expend effort to search for lower prices), and that this effect is mediated by self-efficacy. We also reveal an important boundary condition, which suggested that self-
efficacy can be enhanced when the product structure matches with consumer’s societal values.

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A Consumer-Based Model of Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Practices: The Case in a Northeastern U.S. Community

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Various research studies have shown that medication, combined with lifestyle changes, including decreasing caloric intake and increasing physical activities, would delay onset of chronic health problems, such as diabetes (Katula et al. 2013; Knowler et al. 2002). Nevertheless, health disparity still persists and discrepancies in health outcomes, such as life expectancy and incidence of chronic diseases, have enlarged over time in the U.S. (Braveman and Egerter 2013). For many health indicators, people in the poorest or least educated groups, often ethnic minorities living in impoverished neighborhoods, have the worst health, but middle-class people also are less healthy than those who are at the highest social hierarchy (Marmot 2004). Although the adoption of a healthy lifestyle is the most cost-effective way in improving health outcomes, why is it not widely adopted by people of low income and education levels? The purpose of this study is to understand physical activity and nutrition (PAN) practices from the consumers’ perspective. Consumer research emphasizes on behaviors as experienced by consumers rather than relying solely on medical experts. Consumer studies adopt a “bottom-up” perspective to investigate the complexities on poverty and health (Hill and Dhanda 1999; Lee, Ozanne, and Hill 1999). This study focuses especially on the lived experiences of consumers who are most affected by this problem, namely low-income ethnic minority. Based on this study, we offer a model of household physical activity and nutrition (PAN) practices, as individual decisions on PAN practices often spill over to all of the members in the same household.

The study was conducted in the City of Reading, PA. Reading City has a population 88,000 in 2016, with about 58% of its population is of Hispanic or Latino origin. We used convenience sampling to purposely recruit ethnic minority informants from a Catholic Church. Bilingual (Spanish-English) moderators and interviewers are trained to conduct the interviews with both English- and Spanish-speaking informants.

Four focus groups (n=29) were conducted to generate consumers’ thoughts and vocabulary about their lifestyles and social lives. These informants (and their family members) were then invited to participate in depth interviews (n=25) two weeks afterwards. The participants were asked to bring 10-15 pictures about their lifestyle to the interviews, tell stories about the pictures, and elaborate how various activities fit in their lifestyle. The qualitative data were translated and transcribed in English. The informants were also asked questions about their family situation, neighborhood, health and working conditions.

We drew on Lisa Penaloza’s concept of consumer acculturation (1994) and Nakata et al’s framework of stressor-resource-behavior (2016) to guide our theoretical interpretation. Consumer acculturation refers to consumer socialization processes, such as modeling, reinforcement, and social interaction, which are central behavioral processes through which consumer skills, knowledge and behaviors were transferred by acculturation agents, including family, friends, and institutions, such as schools and churches (Penaloza 1994). Nakata et al’s approach to health-related consumption practices is to take an encompassing view of consumers’ lives, such that both their personal characteristics and their environmental situations determine their practices (Nakata et al. 2016).

Two major findings were identified from the data, interpretation, and theoretical perspectives. The first finding is that physical activity and nutrition (PAN) practices are situated in and dynamically affected by the stressors and resources encountered in consumers’ daily life. Stressors could stem from consumers’ living, working, family, and medical conditions (Braveman and Egerter 2013). The resources that the consumers could muster to engage in PAN practices are economic capital, cultural capital, interpersonal social capital (Bourdieu 1984), institutional and community social capital (Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen 2003), and emotional capital (Froyum 2010; Reay 2004).

The second finding is that the adoption of a healthy lifestyle means engaging the in a complex, interwoven, and delicate constellation of practices: maintenance, socialization, assimilation, segregation, and reverse socialization. Therefore, the change agent needs to take residents’ stressors/resources into account when devising intervention programs to nudge community residents to engage in PAN practices.

Our investigation of stressors helps explain why it is difficult to adopt a healthy lifestyle, because a disruption in any one practice due to stressor(s) can trigger a disruption in another practice. Adoption of PAN practices is more likely if the driving forces of resources are greater than the constraining forces of stressors. As resources fuel one another in a generative way, consumers’ health outcomes are likely to improve significantly if they can wield various forms of capital effectively. For example, consumers’ cultural capital of health literacy enable them to learn about nutritious diets and physical activities, which in turn allow them to be change agents in their respective families (social capital) and community (community social capital).

For most of the informants that we interviewed, they are hopeful about the positive changes they can bring to themselves if they are given PAN related knowledge and if their community is offered more resources. Due to interconnections among PAN practices, PAN practices are often most effective when they were carried out in sync with others. Lastly, it should be added that PAN practices needed to carry out indefinetely to realize long-term effects. Research on the effectiveness of potential interventions need to measure the longitudinal effects of interventions plus their habit-forming potential so that the gains in health outcomes can be carried forward open-endedly.

Community advocates and medical professional need to understand their community members’ lived context so that they are able to design appropriate community services that encourage the cultivation of various types of capital (e.g. professional clothing drive and job fair to improve residents’ economic capital, nutritional workshops to increase cultural capital, emotional intelligence seminar to increase emotional capital), to implement projects that build on existing networks (e.g. churches, chambers of commerce, community food-bank networks), to build alliances among community agencies, and to set up an advisory board that will guide and sustain the healthy lifestyle initiative over time.

Last but not least, we investigated the health disparities among Hispanics in this research. Hispanics have surpassed African Ameri-
cans as the largest U.S. minority group in 2003 (National Research Council 2006). Hispanic segregation from the whites is lower than African American segregation, however, since immigration often reinforces ethnic enclaves, it becomes imperative to study how health disparities play out among the Hispanics (Iceland and Nelson 2008).

REFERENCES


The Diverging Effects of Cuteness on Risk Preference: Moderating Role of Gender

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This research examines how exposure to cuteness influences consumer risk preference. Intriguingly, extant work implies seemingly contradicting predictions. One line suggests that cuteness may increase risk-seeking tendency through display of aggression (Aragon, Clark, Dyer and Bargh 2015; Figueredo and Jacobs 2011). The other line implies that exposure to cuteness should lead individuals to be more risk averse (Nitto et al. 2012; Sherman, Haidt, and Coan 2009). Thus, in our work, we reconcile these possibilities by suggesting gender as a moderator. Specifically, we propose that exposure to cuteness decreases men’s risk perception, which in turn increases their risk-seeking tendency. In contrast, exposure to cute stimuli increases women’s risk perception, which leads them to be more risk-averse.

The present conceptualization stems from the notion that cuteness is often associated with vulnerability. For example, the word cute is often used to describe small living entities such as babies and baby animals, which usually are physically weak. In addition, past research also suggests that cuteness is linked to cognitive vulnerability. Cuteness has a cognitive connotation of weak, vulnerable, submissive, and powerless (Goldhill 2015; Hellen and Sääksjärvi 2013). These properties of cuteness are related to affects such as helplessness, pituitaryness, and despondency (Goldhill 2015).

We then turn to the question of how the vulnerability of cuteness can affect consumer risk preference. On one hand, exposure to vulnerable cute objects creates an illusory sense of control, which in turn leads to lower perceived risk and greater risk-seeking propensity. People’s self-perception is malleable, depending on the context or reference point (Aaker 1999; Mandel 2003). For example, Kim and McGill (2011) found people were more willing to play the slot game when their sense of control changed at the anthropomorphized slot machine. By the same logic, we suggest that cuteness, via the vulnerability connotation, will enhance individuals’ sense of control and make them more risk-seeking. On the other hand, exposure to cuteness has also been found in prior literature to trigger protective, caretaking, attentive and careful behavior (Lorenz 1943; Nittono et al. 2012; Sherman, Haidt, and Coan 2009; Sherman et al. 2013). The effect of cuteness on careful behavior is proposed to stem from evolution. Drawn from motivated cognition that individuals inflate their perception to better perform the task (Nicholls 1984), we suggest people may inflate their risk perception in the environment to increase the infant’s chance of survival. For example, in one study, participants performed tasks more attentively after viewing unrelated cute images (Nitto et al. 2012). In line with this, we propose this evolutionary tendency would lead people to be more risk averse in general.

The most critical question then becomes under which condition each of these opposing predictions is more likely to manifest. To this end, we draw on prior work on gender difference to suggest gender as a moderator. The most relevant finding is the distinction between agency and communion (Bakan 1966). Agency goals are related to male characteristics such as self-focused, active, decisive, self-confident, and competitive; while communion goals are related to female characteristics such as caring for others. These differences imply that males are more likely to treat vulnerable cute objects as a reference point, leading to lower perceived risk and stronger risk-taking propensity. In contrast, females are more likely to feel empathy for the cute objects, leading to higher perceived risk and less risk-taking tendency.

Four studies were designed to test our proposition. Study 1A was a between subject design with 192 undergraduate students. They were presented with images of puppy and kitten (cute condition) or images of adult dog, lion, and tiger (control condition) (Sherman, Haidt, and Coan 2009). Then they were asked to indicate their preference between two options following previous literature (Duclos, Wan, and Jiang 2013). In line with our prediction, male participants in the cute condition indicated stronger preference for the riskier option than those in the control condition. The pattern was reversed for female participants.

Study 1B was to test the robustness of Study 1A by using different kinds of cuteness manipulation and different option choices. 237 mTurkers participated in a between-subject repeated measure online experiment. Option choices were presented either in a cute or neutral font. Consistent with our prediction, male participants in the cute condition demonstrated stronger preference for the riskier option than their counterparts in the control condition. In contrast, female participants’ risk-seeking tendency was lowered in the cute than that in the control condition.

The aim of Study 2 was to explore the underlying process. 271 undergraduate students participated in an experiment. They were randomly assigned to view either a cute computer or a normal computer. Later they were asked to indicate their perceived risk of computer without warranty. As predicted, male’s risk perception was lower in the cute condition than that in the control condition. For females, their risk perception was higher in the cute condition than that in the control condition though it didn’t reach significance.

The main objective of Study 3 was to test the mediation role of risk perception. 251 participants were randomly assigned to view either a cute or neutral slot game webpage and asked about their risk perception and willingness to play the game. The results replicated the same pattern as previous studies. More importantly, we found support for our proposed underlying process that risk perception mediated the effect of gender and cuteness on people’s risk preference.

The present research contributes to our understanding of consumer behavior along a few directions. Foremost, this research introduces gender into the cuteness theoretical framework and offers a nuanced understating of how cuteness influences perception and decisions. It also adds to the increasing literature on how gender affects consumers’ preference and behavior by showing that cuteness amplifies risk preference between men and women. Furthermore, this research contributes to the risk taking literature by adding one potential antecedent.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Classical economic theories model people as perfectly selfish and lazy. Homo economicus (Thaler 2000) should never anonymously give money to strangers or do any unpleasant work when they are not being paid to it. This assumed self-interest is why organizations generally offer their workers explicit incentives to motivate them. However, many behaviors seem to be motivated by more than self-interest, both in laboratory experiments and in everyday life. These prosocial behaviors reflect people’s willingness to utilize their own resources—including many of significant value—for the benefit of others. This apparent selflessness raises questions about the potential motivating influence of others and the possibility that organizations are missing out on a potentially powerful source of motivation. This research directly examines the possibility that prosocial motivation can be used to motivate workers, using real-effort experiments that isolate and compare prosocial sources of motivation with other more tradition forms of motivation such as fixed salary and pay-for-performance.

Most of the existing research on work motivation has focused primarily on self-interested motivators, including extrinsic ones, such as monetary rewards and punishments, and intrinsic ones, such as job satisfaction and worker autonomy. We go beyond these traditional motivators and posit that prosocial motivations are important in the workplace for two reasons: First, as organizations turn away from hierarchical structures and towards flatter, more group-based structures, workers have increased interpersonal interaction and must rely more on their coworkers (Kanter 1989). Prosocial motivations may therefore be a significant source of motivation and play a big role in group productivity. Second, prosocial motivators may cost less than self-interested motivators such as additional salary and provide additional organizational benefits. By examining if and why workers are willing to exert effort to explicitly benefit their co-workers, we hope to better understand the psychology behind prosocial behavior and introduce prosocial motivation as an additional source of work motivation.

In addition, although the prediction that prosocial motivation can elicit some effort is hardly controversial, we are also interested in how much effort can be elicited. Although work motivation researchers have recently started to explore others as a source of motivation (e.g., Batson 1987; Grant 2007), none have directly compared the potential strengths of such “prosocial” motivations with self-interested motivations. This research fills that gap by directly comparing prosocial motivations to more standard types of work motivation such as fixed salary and pay-for-performance incentives. To do so, we implemented a simple operationalization of using others as a source of work motivation: In what we call the “pay-for-others” (P4O) incentive scheme, each worker’s output directly affects another worker’s payment rather than affecting their own payment. This novel incentive scheme allows for direct comparison to more standard pay-for-performance (P4P) incentives.

We hypothesized that, 1) workers in the P4O conditions will exert effort even when that effort only benefits others, and 2) under certain conditions, prosocial motivation (P4O) can be more motivating than traditional financial motivation (P4P) because direct financial incentives can “crowd out” intrinsic motivations (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 1999). We test these hypotheses in two real-effort experiments that asked P4O participants to work for the benefit of another participant without receiving payment based on their own performance.

In Experiment 1, participants completed an anagram task similar to TextTwist in which they were given 4 minutes to generate as many three to seven letter anagrams as possible from a set of letters, “a d e r s t w.” Their performance determined their own pay (P4P), determined the next participant’s pay (P4O), or was irrelevant (fixed pay). We found evidence that P4O incentives were indeed motivating, and that they could be even more motivating than traditional P4P incentives. However, we found that fixed pay participants also generated more anagrams than P4P participants, suggesting that at least part of the performance difference between P4O and P4P was due to relatively small levels of P4P incentives “crowding out” intrinsic motivation for the relatively enjoyable anagram task.

We designed Experiment 2 to replicate these results while eliminating the “crowding out” effect by switching to a mindless number-counting task. Participants counted the numbers of 1’s in randomly-generated 15x10 grids of 0’s and 1’s. Participants were shown one grid at a time, and after each grid, the participant was given the option to either continue onto the next grid or end the task. This task has previously been used by economists as a “tedious and repetitive task” that has no dependency on prior skill, little possibility for learning, and a clearly positive cost of effort (Abeler et al. 2011). To further disentangle the many possible motivators of prosocial behavior, we created seven conditions in a fractional factorial design that varied the source of the participant’s payment, the target of the participant’s effort, and the audience for the participant’s effort.

The results of Experiment 2 showed that when the task is sufficiently boring, P4O incentives were at best equally motivating as P4P incentives, and only when there was a possibility for “conditional indirect reciprocity.” That is, P4O incentives were only effective when the previous participant’s effort determined the current participant’s payment and the current participant’s performance would determine the next participant’s payment, and so on. In other words, participants were motivated to “pay it forward” only if they thought past others had acted prosocially and future others could continue to act prosocially. Experiment 2 also allowed us to rule out many other potential sources of prosocial motivation as main drivers behind P4O incentives, including self-signaling, self-presentation, guilt and shame aversion, altruism, observation effects, and competition effects.

REFERENCES


The Influence of Virtual versus Actual Identity on Impulsive Consumption
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The ubiquity of the Internet has dramatically changed how consumers define their identities in recent years (Rosen 2012). For example, Palfrey and Gasser (2016) showed that generations grown up with the Internet have started to form a new identity (i.e., virtual identity) in this virtual environment. Virtual identity is the self the individual construes on the Internet (e.g., Bargh, McKenna, and Fitzsimons 2002). Recent research has found that virtual identity does exist (e.g., Turkle 1995), is different from actual identity (e.g., Bargh and McKenna 2004), the identity people display in offline life, and will influence how people see themselves and interact with others (e.g., McKenna and Bargh 1998). Thus, it is necessary for researchers to further understand the consumption consequences of virtual identity. Surprisingly, no theoretical-based research has been conducted to investigate these consequences. This research aims to fulfill this gap by examining the effect of virtual identity on impulsive consumption, which is associated with critical consumer issues, such as obesity (Nederkoorn et al. 2006) and credit card debts (Norvilitis et al. 2006).

To provide a solid understanding on the connection between virtual identity and impulsive consumption, we developed theoretical arguments based on possible-self, self-determination, identity conflict, and self-regulation theories.

First, the virtual environment opens the restrictions of social norm and allows people to explore possibilities of themselves beyond the expectation of the social background (Nagy 2010; Suler 2002). Therefore, it is conducive to people developing new possible identities (Bargh et al. 2002). This stream of literature suggests that conceptually people’s virtual identity is a reflection of their possible selves, the selves people think they cannot realize in their daily life but may become in the future (Markus and Nurius 1986).

According to the self-determination theory, people are driven to realize the self-goals associated with their possible selves (e.g., Higgins and Kruglanski 2000; James 1890; Oysermen 2007). People typically want to achieve as many self-goals as possible. However, people’s resource is limited (Vohs and Faber 2007), and it is nearly impossible to realize all possible selves. In short, sensing the multiple possible selves can make consumers aware of the competing pressure on their limited self-control resource to realize these possible selves. Accordingly, the potential conflicts among multiple possible selves can lead to self-control resources depletion (Oyserman, Gant, and Ager 1995). Finally, the self-regulation literature has extensively shown that when individuals have depleted self-control resources, they are less likely to regulate themselves; in other words, they behave in an impulsive manner (e.g., Hofmann, Rauch, Gawronski 2007).

In summary, we propose that a virtual identity will tend to be associated with reduced self-control resources and these reduced self-control resources will lead to greater consumer impulsiveness (see figure 1). More formally, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 1:** Individuals will consume more impulsively when their virtual identity is accessible than when their actual identity is accessible.

**Hypothesis 2:** The effect of salient virtual identity on impulsive consumption is mediated by self-control resources.

Furthermore, to test our theoretical explanation for the virtual identity effect, we investigated a theory-driven moderator: self-construal. Prior works have demonstrated that independent individuals are more likely to consume impulsively than interdependent individuals due to low control resources (Zhang and Shrum 2009). Hence, we predict that self-construal will moderate the effect of virtual identity on impulsive consumption. Specifically, independent individuals will be more likely subjected to the influences of virtual identity than interdependent individuals. Formally, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 3:** Self-construal moderates the effect of virtual identity on impulsive consumption. Specifically, the effect of virtual identity on impulsive consumption will be stronger for individuals with an independent self-construal than those with an interdependent self-construal.

We conducted four studies to test these hypotheses. Study 1 confirms the existence of a relationship using multiple measures and methods. Studies 2 and 3 test our process hypothesis. Using different methods, both studies support the mediating effect of self-control resources -- individuals who have lower self-control resources exhibit a greater impact of virtual identity on impulsive consumption. Finally, study 4 supports the hypothesized moderating impact of self-construal, i.e., we observe the effect for individuals with an independent but not interdependent self-construal.

**Study 1A**
**Method**
Study 1a is a survey in which we develop and validate a measure of virtual identity and then examine its correlation with impulsive consumption. We asked participants to complete a series of scales that included measures of virtual identity and impulsive consumption. Then they reported basic demographics and their usual patterns of using the Internet. The chronic virtual versus actual identity was measured via items adapted from Luhtanen and Crocker (1992), Phinney (1992), and Tu, Khare, and Zhang (2012) whereas impulsive consumption was measured via the impulsive consumption scale (Rook and Fisher 1995).

**Result and Discussion**
To test H1 we ran a regression on impulsive consumption with the chronic virtual identity score as a predictor. The overall model was significant ($F (1, 221) = 11.32, p = .001, \eta^2 = .05$) as was the coefficient of the predictor ($\beta = .22, t = 3.36, p = .001$); individuals with greater virtual identity scores are more likely to report greater impulsive consumption. Study 1a provides the initial support for hypothesis 1; individuals whose virtual identity is chronically more accessible have a greater tendency toward impulsive consumption. Because 1a use correlation analysis from survey data, we designed study 1b, an experiment, to begin to address causation.

**Study 1B**
**Method**
Study 1b is a lab experiment in which we primed virtual identity and then measured the impact on impulsive consumption. Ninety
undergraduates from a large US university participated in this study in exchange for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions and told that they would be taking part in two unrelated studies. In the first study, participants worked on a short writing task within which we primed virtual or actual identity (modified the paragraph-writing task from Trafimow, Triandis, and Goto 1991). In the virtual condition the description read: The writing task concluded with questions regarding the task. We captured the main dependent variables when participants completed a series of measures, which we framed as a prescreening session for another study. Finally participants reported on basic demographics.

**Result and Discussion**

In line with H1, the ANOVA results comparing the effect of virtual identity versus actual identity on impulsiveness revealed a significant main effect ($F(1, 89) = 4.45, p = .04$); individuals with salient virtual identity showed greater impulsiveness than individuals with salient actual identity ($M_{VI} = 4.51$, $M_{AI} = 3.78$). To our knowledge, study 1 (a and b) is the first to demonstrate that consumer impulsiveness is affected by virtual identity. In subsequent studies we attempt to explicate and test the mechanism linking virtual identity and consumer impulsiveness, and examine alternative explanations.

**Study 2**

**Method**

Studies 2 replicated the effect of virtual identity with a more subtle virtual identity manipulation, scrambled-sentence task (adapted from Sull and Wyer 1980) and a behavioral measure of impulsive consumption, grocery-shopping scenario (Vohs and Faber 2007), to enhance the external validity. Participants were 286 undergraduates from a large U.S. university who participated in the study in exchange for partial course credit. We randomly assigned participants to one of the two conditions: virtual identity and actual identity. Participants were told that they would be completing multiple tasks. In the first task they read the manipulation of virtual-actual identity. In the second task we told them that we were interested in people’s everyday choices and we asked them to imagine a grocery-shopping scenario (Vohs and Faber 2007; Zhang, Winterich, and Mittal 2010). In the ostensibly unrelated third task, participants completed a questionnaire that included measures of potential mediators and demographic characteristics. We used the self-control scale (Tangney et al. 2004) to measure self-control resources. In order to test alternative explanations, we also use the seven-item public self-consciousness and six-item private self-consciousness subscales of the self-consciousness scale (Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss 1975) to measure public or private self-consciousness. The self-consciousness was considered because that a frequently-mentioned feature of the online world is that it is more anonymous than the real world (e.g., Bargh et al. 2002; Nagy 2010). According to the anonymity literature (e.g., Rubin 1974), when individuals perceive the person they are interacting with doesn’t know them they will be more likely to express their genuine feelings and act on their urges. Thus, anonymity can serve as a potential alterative mediator.

**Result and Discussion**

ANOVA conducted on impulsive consumption revealed a significant main effect of virtual versus actual identity ($F(1, 284) = 3.87, p = .05$). Individuals with a salient virtual identity indicated greater impulsiveness than did those with a salient actual identity ($M_{VI} = 4.89$, $M_{AI} = 4.07$; see figure 3). This result provides additional support for hypothesis 1.

The results from PROCESS (Hayes 2013) revealed a significant indirect effect via self-control that did not include zero (95% CI: 0.0235 to .2136). In addition, we ruled out private and public self-consciousness as alternative mediators. Using the same analysis, the results showed that when private self-consciousness (95% CI of -.1555 to .0684) or public self-consciousness (95% CI of -.1318 to .0082) were included as mediators, the CIs included zero. In sum, we found support for self-control resources as a mediator between virtual identity and impulsive consumption and evidence that allowed us to rule out self-consciousness as a mediator.

**Study 3**

**Method**

In study 3, we used the moderation-of-process method by manipulating self-control resource via the white bear task (Wegner et al. 1987). Participants were 154 U.S. respondents to a request posted on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) who participated and received a small cash incentive. This was a 2 (identity: virtual identity vs. actual identity) X 2 (self-control resources: high vs. low) between-subjects design and participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Participants were told they were responding to two different studies. They completed two written exercises: our virtual identity/actual identity prime and then the manipulation of self-control resources. In the ostensibly unrelated second study, participants first completed the grocery-shopping scenario from study 2 and then the manipulation check and demographics.

**Result and Discussion**

The 2 (virtual vs. actual identity)* 2 (high vs. low self-control resource) ANOVA on impulsive consumption showed a significant two-way interaction ($F(1, 150) = 8.12, p = .005$). Specifically, the effect of virtual identity on impulsive consumption was only significant for the high self-control resource condition ($M_{VI} = 4.86$, $M_{AI} = 3.96, p = .02$), but not the depleted self-control resource condition ($p = .12$). This supports H2. Study 3 provides additional support for hypothesis 2. We showed that if we independently reduce self-control resources through our manipulation, we are able to eliminate the impact of virtual vs. actual identity on impulsiveness. Individuals whose self-control resources were not depleted, however, showed the expected connection between identity and impulsiveness.

**Study 4**

**Method**

Study 4 tested the moderator, self-construal. It is a 2 (identity: virtual identity vs. actual identity) X 2 (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent) between-subjects experiment in which 250 undergraduates from a large US university participated for course credit. Participants completed two written exercises: the first manipulated virtual/actual identity (same as study 1a) and the second manipulated independent/interdependent self-construal (Hamilton and Biehal 2005). In the “second study,” we measured impulsive consumption (same as 1b) and self-control resources (same as study 2). Participants were thanked and dismissed after they completed demographic questions.

**Result and Discussion**

The ANOVA result showed a significant two-way interaction ($F(1, 246) = 4.52, p = .03$) for independent self-construal, participants were more impulsive when their virtual identity was activated than when their actual identity was activated ($M_{VI} = 4.53$, $M_{AI} = 3.74, p = .03$). For interdependent self-construal, however, virtual identity effect on impulsive consumption was not significant ($p = .32$). This study supports H3.
In our theorizing, the impact of our independent variable (Virtual/actual identity) on the mediator (self-control resources) should be moderated by self-construal. We ran PROCESS model 7 (Hayes 2013) to test this moderated mediation. The results are supportive. When self-control resources was examined as the mediating factor, the mediating pathway from the virtual identity by self-construal interaction to impulsive tendency was significant. In particular, in neither the indirect effect of an independent self-construal (.2016 to -.0051) nor an interdependent self-construal (.0839 to -.0444) did the confidence interval include zero.

General Discussion

The central idea of this research is that consumer impulsiveness is more likely when individuals’ virtual identity is salient. We first demonstrate the relationship between virtual identity and impulsive consumption by both measuring (in study 1a) and manipulating (in study 1b) virtual identity. The results showed that participants with a more salient virtual identity indicated higher levels of impulsiveness than if it were less salient. Studies 2 and 3 provide further support for the main effect of virtual identity by using a different virtual identity manipulation and a choice scenario measure of consumer impulsiveness. The use of different measures supports the robustness of the results. In addition, studies 2 and 3 provide direct support for our proposed mechanism in which the link between identity and consumer impulsiveness is mediated by self-control resources. Finally, study 4 tested one theoretically related moderator: self-construal. Compared to individuals with an interdependent self-construal, participants with an independent self-construal were more likely to have their virtual identity result in impulsive consumption. In addition to showing that we can turn on and off the effect of virtual identity by manipulating a conceptually related variable, study 4 also reinforces our conclusion from studies 2 and 3 about mediation. That is, we found that the interaction of virtual identity and self-construal on impulsive consumption operates through self-control resources.

The current research makes these contributions. Ours is among the first papers to study the impact of virtual identity on consumer decisions. It is surprising that little academic research has investigated the effects of this important consumer identity, given the central role of identity in consumer decision-making (Berger and Heath 2008; Reed et al. 2012). Recently, Hershfield et al. (2011) examined the impact of interaction with online self-avatars on consumers’ savings in real life. Our research is related in that it also examines the impact of the virtual world on real life decisions. In addition, our research contributes to the literature on impulsive consumption. We find that social identity can serve as a driver for impulsiveness. Typically research linking impulsiveness and self-control resources has focused on the depletion of this resource by engaging in other energy-draining tasks (e.g., the suppression of emotion (Vohs and Heatherton 2000)). Our research suggests that a focus on a virtual identity can also cause a decrease in self-control and thereby an increase in consumer impulsiveness.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Consumers assign specific roles to brands, perceiving them as either partners or servants (Fournier 1998) which influence their relationship with the brands (Aggarwal 2004). Additionally, marketers use these roles to communicate the value their brands provide to consumers. For instance, some brands serve as partners where they work with consumers (e.g., Allianz describes itself as a “trusted partner”) whereas others assist as servants where they work for consumers (e.g., Scrubbing Bubbles says, “we work hard so you don’t have to”) to provide benefits. Understanding the impact of brand roles is important because they can influence consumer responses (Aggarwal and McGill 2012). Our research adds a critical contribution to understanding this relationship by investigating the influence of a significant consumer based difference— implicit self-theories— on consumers’ perception of brand roles.

Research in psychology shows that people have an implicit conception about the malleability of their personality traits (Elliot and Dweck 1988). People believe that personality consists of either malleable traits that can be grown (i.e., incremental theorists) or fixed traits that cannot be changed (i.e., entity theorists). Since incremental theorists consider their attributes to be malleable, they focus more on cultivating their attributes and less on demonstrating them. Since they consider negative performance to be an outcome of not putting in sufficient effort, incremental theorists tend to focus on investing effort to improve their ability (Hong et al. 1999). As such, incremental theorists adopt learning goals and become mastery oriented looking for ways to improve their ability and performance (Hong et al. 1999). Thus, incremental theorists would prefer partner brand relationships where they can work hard with partners to achieve better outcomes.

Since entity theorists consider their personal attributes to be fixed, they focus on demonstrating that they have a sufficient amount of the required attributes to achieve a goal. Since they consider negative performance to be an outcome of not having a sufficient amount of attributes (i.e., a lack of ability), entity theorists tend to avoid demonstrating deficiencies. Therefore, entity theorists adopt performance goals by focusing on gaining favorable judgments of their attributes and avoiding negative ones (Hong et al. 1999). Thus, entity theorists would prefer servant brand relationships where they receive assurances of success from the brand and it will work for them as servants to achieve their desirable goals.

Research shows that people’s motivation to complete a goal is influenced by the difficulty of goals (Bandura 1997). When facing an easy (vs. challenging) task, entity theorists know they can do well and rely less on the brand to gain confidence in their abilities (Park and John 2014). When incremental theorists face an easy (vs. difficult) task, they are able to learn and master the task easily without relying on partner products. Therefore, incremental (entity) theorists should prefer partner (servant) product for difficult (vs. easy) tasks.

Study 1 (102 undergraduate students) employs a 2 (implicit theory: entity, incremental) × 2 (brand role: partner, servant) design. Implicit theory was measured in this study. Participants first completed the implicit theory scale and then viewed an ad for a shirt from Nike Trainer One. The partner (servant) ad emphasized how the shirt will “partner (serve) and work with (for)” the user. We measured participants’ Material Value Scale as a control variable. The two-way interaction between brand role and implicit theory was significant. The Johnson-Neyman technique showed that for consumers with incremental theory belief higher than 4.51, the partner role (vs. servant role) increased brand preference, whereas for consumers with incremental theory belief lower than 3.03, the partner (vs. servant) role decreased brand preference providing support for our prediction.

Study 2 was conducted to (i) examine the underlying mechanism, (ii) test if our proposed effect occurs independent of the brand being anthropomorphized or objectified and (iii) rule out self-brand connection as an alternative explanation. 450 MTurk participants were assigned to a 2 (implicit theory) × 2 (brand role) × 2 (anthropomorphism: anthropomorphized vs. objectified) between-subjects design. We manipulated implicit self-theories and brand role. We manipulated anthropomorphism and objectification by asking participants to describe what kind of person versus what kind of product the brands are respectively (Aggarwal and McGill 2012). The three-way interaction effect was not significant. As expected, we replicated the two-way interaction of implicit theory and brand role on purchase intention. Mediation analyses revealed that learning goal mediated the effect of incremental theory on purchase intention; performance goal mediated that effect of entity theory on purchase intention.

Study 3 was conducted to (i) test the moderating role of goal difficulty on observed effects; and (ii) to replicate our findings by using a more utilitarian oriented product (i.e., Excel study kit). Study 3 employed a 2 (implicit theory) × 2 (brand role) × 2 (task difficulty) design in which the first two variables were manipulated between subjects and the third one was measured. Floordlight analyses revealed that incremental theorists preferred the partner (vs. servant) study kit when perceived difficulty was high but not low. Entity theorists preferred the servant (vs. partner) study kit when perceived difficulty was high but not low. Mediation results were consistent with Study 2 only for participants who believed Excel was difficult.

Study 4 tested the robustness of Study 3 results by manipulating the perceived difficulty of the task (Bosmans, Pieters, and Baugnart 2010). We used the same procedure and measures as before. As expected, incremental theorists preferred the partner (vs. servant) study kit and entity theorists preferred the servant (vs. partner) study kit in the high (vs. low) task difficulty condition. Mediation results were consistent with Study 3. All effects were significant at p < .05.

In sum, this research provides the first systematic investigation of consumers’ preference for brand roles as a function of their implicit self-theories and motivation to achieve their desirable goals. We argue that implicit self-theories need to be taken into consideration in the promotion of “brand-as-servant” role. Brand roles can be a valuable asset in advertising and ad-appeals can be tailored to consumers based on their implicit self-theories.

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When and With Whom to Ally? The Influence of CM Strategic Alliances on Consumer Purchase Behavior
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

According to the IEG Sponsorship Report (2016), U.S. cause-related marketing (CM) spending reached $1.92 billion in 2015, representing a 135 percent increase from 2002. Recently, it is increasingly common to find firms involved in the strategic alliances with others firms to execute the CM program—CM alliance (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). For example, General Mills teamed up with the other food companies (e.g., ConAgra Foods, Kraft Foods, and Kellogg) to donate meals to Feeding America. Likewise, the Product (RED) campaign engaged companies such as Apple, Gap, and Bededere Vodka to contribute 50% of profits from designated products to provide medicine to AIDS patients in Africa.

We refer to the former type of CM alliance as within-industry alliance (General Milles), the latter as cross-industry alliance (RED). While solo CM campaign remains dominant in the marketplace (138 campaigns, 41 percent), both within- (83 campaigns, 25 percent) and cross- (113 campaigns, 34 percent) industry alliances are viewed as important strategic alternatives for many firms (Engage for Good 2015). The above raises important questions that have not yet been fully investigated: Whom should firms ally to make CM more effective? Furthermore, the impact of within- and cross-industry alliances may depend upon firm and consumer characteristics. When firms should ally to make CM more effective?

A CM alliance can play a role in how a firm’s commitment to a cause is perceived, which can affect acceptance of the good deed (Van den Brink et al. 2004). According to attribution theory (Heider 1958), when consumers perceive that a company is making a significant effort to a cause, they are more likely to infer altruistic motives on the part of the sponsor, and thoughts of corporate profits associated with the sponsorship act can be minimized (Rifon et al. 2004). We predict that a within-industry alliance may elicit perceptions of high entitativity group with strong commitment to the cause and thus increase consumer preferences to a firm’s products. Entitativity has been defined as “the perception that an aggregate of individuals is bonded together in some way to constitute a group” (Hamilton, Sherman, and Castelli 2002, p. 141). High entitativity groups share properties such as similarity, common movement, and common goals (Campbell 1958; Lickel et al. 2000) and their members are perceived as active participants in carrying out plans to achieve collective objectives (Brewer et al. 2004). These characteristics are related to the factors of greater perceived commitment: the amount of input, the durability of the association, and the consistency (stability) of input (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987).

The present work further examines firm and consumer characteristics that moderate the CM alliance effect. For a well-known company, the degree of liking for the brand is established (Bettman and Sujan 1987) so forming a CM alliance will not benefit brand attitude much. However, for an unknown company, consumers will heavily scrutinize its motive to make a judgment due to a lack of trust (Ellen et al. 2006). Thus, we predict that a within-industry alliance can enhance consumers’ confidence in the unknown firm’s intrinsic motive, thereby increasing CM product preference. Further, Grau and Folse (2007) find that compared with high-cause involvement individuals, low-cause involvement individuals rely more on CM message cues to produce favorable attitudes and participation intentions. Therefore, within-industry alliance message can be more desirable for low- (vs. high-) cause involvement individuals.

Results from four studies and an empirical data support our hypotheses. Study 1 employs a 3 (alliance: within, cross, no) x 2 (familiarity: well-known, unknown) between-subjects design. Participants were first asked to examine a recent company announcement, named “The Fighting Hunger Project”. During the next three months the firm(s) will donate 5% of the proceeds from the sales of the participating products to help fight hunger. We chose General Mills as the well-known target company and a fictitious food company named pop as the unknown target company. In the within-industry alliance condition, the company worked together with the other three companies from the same food industry (e.g., Kraft foods, Kellogg’s, and Nestle) and in the cross-industry alliance condition, the company worked together with the other companies across different industries (e.g., Ford, Motorola, and Gap). In the no alliance condition, the company worked exclusively with the cause. As expected, participants were more likely to buy the products for within- versus cross-industry alliance when the company is unknown, but not when the company is well-known.

Study 2 tested the moderating effect of cause involvement on consumers’ preference toward cross-industry alliance products. The between-subjects design and stimuli were the same as before. Participants indicated their cause involvement in the end (Grau and Folse 2007). Results replicate the finding in study 1 and this effect is diminished for high cause-involvement individuals, supporting the moderating role of cause involvement.

Study 3 ruled out company-cause fit as an alternative account (i.e., lower fit between fighting hunger and partners from different industries than from the same food industry). Study 3 employed a 2 (alliance: within, cross) x 2 (fit: high, low) x 3 (product: food, detergent, calculators) mixed design with alliance and fit as the between-subjects factors and product as the within-subjects factor. We generated the high- and low-fit conditions for each product category (confirmed by a pretest). As expected, within- (vs. cross-) industry alliance leads to greater purchase intentions, regardless of high (or low) cause fit with the company.

Study 4 examined the underlying mechanism in a 2 (alliance) x 2 (product) between-subjects design. We measured participants’ willingness-to-pay (WTP) and purchase intentions. To test the underlying mechanism, participants responded to items including the perceptions of corporate commitment to the cause and entitativity regarding the alliance. As expected, within- (vs. cross-) industry alliance leads to stronger perceptions of entitativity, which leads to greater perceptions of corporate commitment to the cause. The greater perceived corporate commitment in turn leads to a greater WTP. Having observed the commitment issue of cross-industry alliance, we verified it using an empirical data. Using data from an online CM news website, we found that firms are less likely to continue cross-industry alliances may depend upon firm and consumer characteristics. When firms should ally to make CM more effective?
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumer shoplifting, the theft of merchandise from retail establishments, is a serious problem for retailers, representing more than $16 billion worth of lost sales each year (Allen 2014; National Learning & Resource Center 2014). Surprisingly, shoplifting is quite a ubiquitous phenomenon: an astounding 60% of consumers admit to having shoplifted at some point in their lifetime (Baumer and Rosenbaum 1984). Most shoplifters are “non-professionals” without prior criminal record, who steal not because of financial need but because of social influences (National Learning & Resource Center 2014). It is these social influences on which we focus in this research to advance our understanding of shoplifting. That is, we investigate under which conditions, shoplifting intentions and actual shoplifting behavior may ensue from social exclusion – experiencing a lack of social connection because of being alone, isolated, or rejected (Bau- meister et al. 2005; Twenge et al. 2001).

Shoplifting behavior usually begins when social influence has a particularly strong effect on consumers – in adolescence (Cox, Cox, and Moschis 1990; Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol 2004), and adolescents frequently cite social influences to justify their shoplifting behavior (Cox et al. 1990; Forney, Crutsinger, and Forney 2006). Further, because social exclusion engenders negative affect, we expect that a driving reason for the effect of social exclusion on shoplifting is that socially-excluded consumers are motivated to engage in behavior to repair and escape their negative mood through the theft of merchandise. Lastly, social exclusion is unlikely to have a uniform impact on the shoplifting intentions of all consumers alike. Instead, although socially-excluded (vs. included) consumers generally are likely to experience greater negative affect, it is only those socially-excluded consumers who have experienced shoplifting’s mood-enhancing properties (i.e., shoplifters - those who have shoplifted before) that should seek to repair their mood by shoplifting.

In this research, we argue that one way to cope with negative affect triggered by social exclusion is through shoplifting because of its perceived mood repair properties. The theft of merchandise has been linked with excitement and experiential properties (Kallis and Vanier 1985; Sarasalo, Bergman, and Toth 1997), with shoplifting providing both the pleasure from consumption and also from the acquisition of the product. Some shoplifters, for example, have self-reported experiencing hedonic pleasure from the act of successfully shoplifting (Fullerton and Punj 1993). When in a negative mood, socially-excluded (vs. included) consumers may be motivated to engage in deviant thrill-seeking in an effort to feel better, and shoplifting constitutes such a means (Fullerton and Punj 1998).

Study 1 was a one-factor, two level (shoplifting history: shoplifter versus non-shoplifter) between-subjects design. Participants arrived to the lab and were socially excluded using Cyberball (Williams and Jarvis 2006). Once the session was over, lab assistants counted the number of chocolates left in the bowl and the amount of money in the jar, so that we could examine if any chocolates had been taken without payment.

Participants who indicated that they had shoplifted before were defined as shoplifters, whereas those who had not previously shoplifted were defined as non-shoplifters. A single-factor (shoplifting history: shoplifter vs. non-shoplifter) ANCOVA, controlling for age and gender, found that socially-excluded shoplifters (M = .64) shoplifted more pieces of chocolate than did non-shoplifters (M = .21; F(1, 80) = 3.99, p < .05).

Study 2 was a 2 (social acceptance: inclusion versus exclusion) x 2 (shoplifting history: shoplifter versus non-shoplifter) between-subjects design with social acceptance manipulated and with shoplifting history measured. Social acceptance was manipulated using the Cyberball game as in study 1. Next in an ostensibly unrelated study, all participants were instructed to imagine that they were alone in a department store with an opportunity to steal a pair of jeans worth about $150.

A 2 (Social Acceptance: Social Inclusion vs. Social Exclusion) x 2 (Shoplift) ANCOVA on shoplifting intention, controlling for age, was significant (F(1,69) = 4.41, p < .05). We also found a main effect of shoplifting history (F(1,69) = 13.03, p < .001), such that those individuals who had shoplifted before reported significantly higher intention to shoplift the pair of jeans (Ms = 2.26 vs. 1.16). More importantly, planned contrasts revealed that the socially-excluded shoplifters expressed greater intentions to shoplift the jeans than did the socially-excluded non-shoplifters (3.08 vs. .99; F(1, 69) = 13.32, p = .001). However, shoplifting history did not impact shoplifting intentions among socially-included participants (1.85 vs. 1.30 for shoplifters vs. non-shoplifters; F(1, 69) = 1.45, p > .20).

The objective of study 3 was to test for the moderating role of product type on our previously found effect in study 2. Participants first completed the same social acceptance manipulation from study 2. Next, we presented participants with the same shoplifting scenario previously used which asked them to indicate their intention to shoplift; however, we manipulated whether the target option was a hedonic (6 pack of energy drinks) or a utilitarian (pack of pain relievers) product. After participants had indicated their intention to shoplift, we measured the extent to which shoplifting was perceived as a mood repair mechanism.

A 3 (social acceptance: exclusion vs. inclusion vs. control) x 2 (shoplifting history: shoplifter vs. non-shoplifter) x 2 (product type: hedonic vs. utilitarian) ANCOVA, controlling for age, on shoplifting intention was significant; F(2, 595) = 5.08, p < .01. planned contrasts revealed that socially-excluded shoplifters (vs. non-shoplifters) expressed greater intentions to shoplift the hedonic energy drinks (2.16 vs. 1.19; F(1, 595) = 10.94, p < .01).

Next, we tested for moderated mediation with the mediator of shoplifting as perceived mood repair using model 12 from the PRO-CESS macro (Hayes 2013). The index of moderated mediation was significant (95% CI: .17, 2.01) providing evidence for moderated mediation (Hayes 2015).

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The Effect of Facial Resemblance on Product Purchase: The Moderating Role of Mental Construal

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The significance of human facial resemblance has emerged as an important driver of both psychology theories (Zebrowitz, Kikuchi, and Fellous 2010) and consumer research (e.g. Tanner and Maeng 2012), which include mate choice, kin selection, and social interaction (DeBruine 2004; Hinsz 1989; Kraus and Chen 2010; Platek et al. 2003, 2004). Although it is well established that people draw inferences about others based on the way they look (e.g. facial morphology), the current literature has mostly focused on perception of, and behavior towards, individual faces that resemble oneself or one’s familiar others. There is a dearth of research that explores the inferences derived from the faces of groups (of individuals) presented together. In this paper, groups formed by pairs of individual faces were shown to resemble each other. In particular, we aim to address three research questions: does collective facial appearance of a group matter? Will facial resemblance among team members bias consumers’ group-level perception and subsequent decision-making? Which type of consumers may be susceptible to face-based biases in judging groups?

Theoretical Development

Adding to the literature on face-based perception, this paper examines the impact of participants’ drawing inference about group facial resemblance on participants’ evaluation of the presented groups along with the product presented by the groups. This relationship depends on the perceivers’ construal level and springs from inferences made based on a group’s faces. As construal level theory illustrates, when perceiving several objects within a big picture, perceivers can either have a focus more intently on higher-order goals or on contextualized, lower-order details (Liberman, Trope, and Wakslak 2007; Trope and Liberman 2003). Similarly, based upon Schwarz and Bless’s (1992, 2007) model of exclusion/inclusion as well as Förster and his coauthors (2008) global local model of social judgment (GLOMO), high-level construals in a global processing are more inclusive than in a local processing; such perceivers tend to group the stimulus objects in the same category. Hence, when a high-level construal is induced, participants process faces globally and have a tendency to make inferences about group traits based on faces of the presented group (Liberman, Trope, and Wakslak 2007; Trope and Liberman 2003). Accordingly, facial resemblance enhances consumers’ perception of how group members work well with each other. Increasing group facial resemblance leads to greater mental inferences about perceived group entitativity (i.e. groupness, homogeneity, cohesiveness). Specifically, facial resemblance at a group level signals a higher level of intragroup similarity or entitativity, which is often associated with increased cooperative intent (Wang, He, and Liu 2016) or higher likelihood to work toward a common goal (Ip, Chiu, and Wan 2006). While there is adequate evidence showing that entitative groups benefit from positive team traits that lead to better team performance (e.g. Hollingshead 1998; Mulvey and Klein 1998), consumers then consistently transfer perceptual group entitativity, inferred from the evaluation of represented groups of faces, to the associated presented products (Beckwith and Lehmann 1975; Wirtz and Bateson 1995). On the contrary, when a low-level construal is activated, perceivers tend to conduct local processing and focus on each individual face rather than a group of faces (Trope and Liberman 2003). In summary, we predict that (a) construal level moderates the effect of facial resemblance on product purchase likelihood, such that facial resemblance enhances purchase likelihood only among consumers with high-level construals; and (b) the interactive effect of facial resemblance and construal level is mediated by perceived group entitativity.

Methodology

The hypotheses were tested in a series of three experiments. To prepare for the experimental stimuli, we followed digital morphing to manipulate facial resemblance, also adopted by recent face research (e.g. Verosky and Todorov 2010). This technique digitally combines the facial photographs of two (or more) different individuals to produce a composite face that represents a weighted average of the features of all the input faces. By controlling how much each input face contributes to the morph output (anywhere from 0% to 100% of the total contribution) we are able to precisely (and objectively) vary the degree of facial resemblance among team members in this study’s stimuli samples. In such case, two pairs of faces were created as experimental stimuli as either the low resemblance group (10% morphing) or the high resemblance group (30% morphing).

In experiments 1, evidence was provided indicating that subtle changes in facial resemblance among team members influence product purchase likelihood, depending on construal level. One hundred and seventy-three undergraduate participants were randomly assigned to either the low-resemblance condition or the high-resemblance condition. Participants were asked to report their intent in purchasing the product and complete the Behavior Identification Form measuring their chronic construal level (Vallacher and Wegner 1989). Among participants with high-level construals, the spotlight analysis revealed a significant and positive effect on purchase likelihood ($b_{high} = .68, t = 2.53, p = .01$). However, for participants with low-level construals, there is no significant effect of facial resemblance on purchase likelihood ($b_{low} = -.06, t = -.24, ns$).

The purpose of experiment 2 is to confirm the results using a different operationalization of construal level. In the high-level construal conditions the headline emphasized the end outcomes of participation. By contrast, in the low-level construal conditions, the headline pinpointed the means to achieve the end results. The study has a 2 (facial resemblance: high versus low) × 2 (construal level: high versus low) between-subjects design. One hundred thirty-three participants from mTurk crowdsourcing services were recruited and asked to report product purchase likelihood. A two-way ANOVA conducted on purchase likelihood indicated a significant interaction effect ($F(1, 130) = 4.26, p < .05$). Planned contrasts analyses revealed that consumers at high-level construals tended to buy the product presented by the high-resemblance versus low-resemblance artists ($M_{low} = 2.30, M_{high} = 3.08; F(1, 130) = 4.97, p < .05$). Among consumers at low-level construals, there was no significant difference in purchase likelihood between the facial resemblance conditions ($F < 1$).

In experiment 3, we operationalized construal level as the desirability (high-construal) or feasibility (low-construal) of the product and replicated the findings. In addition, we tested the underlying mechanism of perceived group entitativity. Similarly, One hundred
and seventy participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. They then reported product purchase intent and perceived group entitativity. Consistently, a 2 × 2 ANOVA analysis on purchase likelihood was performed to show a significant interaction effect ($F(1, 166) = 4.17, p < .05$). Moreover, the moderated regression model revealed a significant indirect effect through perceived group entitativity (95% confidence interval: .001, .380), which fully mediated the interactive effects of facial resemblance and construal level on purchase likelihood.

Discussion

This study contributes to the literature on facial resemblance and by and large to face-based inference research. While it is well established that how individuals appear to be (e.g., facial morphology) can affect how they are judged by others, little research concerns perception of groups (of individuals) purely based on facial cues. This research extends the scope of this line of research from individual-level perception to group-level perception in the context of facial resemblance. We demonstrate in three experiments that increasing facial resemblance only enhances product purchase likelihood for consumers at high-level construals. These findings are robust across different operationalizations on construal level (self-measured vs. message-framed vs. desirability/feasibility featured), contexts (fundraising event vs. shopping for furniture), and sample characteristics (undergraduate students vs. non-student sample from mTurk). In practice, marketers can improve purchase behavior by morphing facial features of a group of salespeople and altering the advertising message at an abstract high-level framing. Given the widespread usage of team photos or multi-face imageries in visual media, our findings provide managerial implications for a wide range of audiences, including firm advertising, employee team promotion, collaborative consumption, political campaign and academic collaboration.

REFERENCES


Fevered Pitch: Anxiety and Risk Avoidance in Response to Low-Pitch Ambient Sounds

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The consumer experience is comprised of a complex and multilayered soundscape that includes both scripted (e.g. spokesperson voice, background music) and unscripted (e.g. crowd noise, the hum of appliances) elements. Despite the omnipresent nature of sound, relatively little research has explored how the most basic structural properties of sound can impact emotional and behavioral responses among consumers. We explore how the pitch of ambient sound impacts consumer anxiety and subsequent willingness to engage in potentially risky behaviors. Specifically, we propose that, compared to moderate-pitched ambient sounds, low-pitched ambient sounds signal a possible environmental threat resulting in an anxious response causing heightened risk appraisal and subsequently increased risk avoidance. We test these relationships across six studies.

In study 1, we test whether the presence of a relatively low-pitched vs. moderately-pitched ambient sound impacts the selection of “safe” or “risky” products in a retail environment. While hidden speakers played either a 60Hz or 720Hz sine wave, shoppers at a grocery store were presented with the option of trying a free sample of either Texas BBQ (low risk) or Bombay Curry (high risk) flavored kale chips. As expected, pitch impacted risk aversion (Chi-Square = 4.05, p<.05; PROC FREQ in SAS). When the low-pitch sound was playing, only 21% selected the “riskier” flavor; when the higher-pitched sound was playing, 44% did.

In study 2, we replicated the results from study 1 in a more controlled lab environment and with the addition of a control condition. Participants made a series of dichotomous choices between a certain cash payoff and an unguaranteed chance at a larger payoff (Griskevicius et al. 2011) while speakers in the ceiling played either a relatively low-pitched (80Hz), a relatively higher-pitched (720Hz) sine wave sound, or no sound at all (control condition). Again, pitch of the ambient sound had a significant impact on risk aversion (F(2,228)=4.68, p<.01). Participants in the low pitch condition took fewer risks (M<sub>LowPitch</sub>=11.5) than those in both the moderate pitch (M<sub>ModeratePitch</sub>=14.3) and control conditions (M<sub>Control</sub>=14.5).

In study 3, participants listened to 1 of 2 versions of anti-smoking ad for which we varied the pitch of the background music. Participants in the low pitch condition (M<sub>LowPitch</sub>=1.55) reported significantly lower intentions of smoking in the future relative to those in the more moderately-pitched condition (M<sub>ModeratePitch</sub>=2.06; F(1,128)=4.57, p<.05). Furthermore, this effect was mediated by the perceived risk associated with smoking (a<sub>x b</sub>= -.2093; 95% C.I. = -.5236 to -.0098).

In study 4, we find initial evidence that our effects are driven by anxiety. Using a word search as our D.V., we found that participants in the low-pitch condition found significantly more anxiety related words than participants in the moderate-pitch condition (M<sub>LowPitch</sub>=1.26, M<sub>ModeratePitch</sub>=.922; F(1,178)=4.88, p<.05) suggesting a greater sensitivity to anxiety related terms.

In study 5, we provide more direct evidence that anxiety drives the relationship between the pitch of ambient sound and risk aversion and introduce a potential moderator of our effect: sound source. To this end we used a 2 (ambient sound: low pitch vs. moderate pitch) x 2 (sound source: strangers vs. friends) between subjects design. Participants imagined visiting an Asian restaurant in a neighborhood that historically had rather high crime rates, but that the food at the restaurant was typically well reviewed. We found a significant interaction between the sound source and pitch (F(1,135)=4.87, p<.05) on risk aversion. When the ambient sound was ascribed to strangers, participants indicated a lower willingness to try a potentially risky food if the pitch of the ambient sound was low (M<sub>Low</sub>=3.84, M<sub>Moderate</sub>=4.80; F(1,132)=6.72, p=.01), replicating the results of previous studies. However, when the ambient sound was attributed to friends our effect was attenuated (F(1,132)=.311, NS). We also found a significant interaction between the sound source conditions and pitch conditions on anxiety (F(1,135)=4.29, p<.05) such that in the “strangers” condition participants felt less safe (more anxious) when the ambient sound was low-pitched (M<sub>Low</sub>=3.59, M<sub>Moderate</sub>=4.09; F(1,132)=3.56, p=.06). However, this effect was again attenuated in the friends condition (F(1,132)=1.11, NS). Finally, a bootstrap (N=1000) analysis shows that feelings of anxiety mediated the interaction of pitch and sound source on risk avoidance, specifically the willingness to consume a risky product (a<sub>x b</sub>= -.2325, 95% C.I. = .0107 to .6292).

Finally, in study 6, we test our full serial mediation model. To this end participants listened to an ad for a risk reducing product, car insurance, in which we manipulated the pitch of background traffic noise (low-pitch vs. moderate-pitch vs. control). Replicating our earlier findings, pitch had a significant impact on risk averse behavior (F(1,168) = 5.33, p<.01). Participant's were willing to pay more for the advertised insurance in the low-pitch condition (M=$79.27) compared to both the moderate-pitch (M=$70.10, p<.05) and the control conditions (M=$66.33, p<.01). Risk appraisal (a<sub>x b</sub> = -.4929; 90% C.I. = -1.350 to -0.597) weakly mediated the relationship between pitch condition and risk avoidance (willingness to pay for insurance) while anxiety alone did not (a<sub>x b</sub> = -.3544; 90% C.I. = -.5020 to .0689). Anxiety did, however, mediate the relationship between pitch condition and risk appraisal (a<sub>x b</sub> = -.0429; 90% C.I. = -.1374 to -.0006) and risk appraisal mediated the relationship between anxiety and risk avoidance (a<sub>x b</sub> = -.5435; 90% C.I. = .1173 to 1.458). Finally, taking these steps together, there was significant serial mediation between pitch condition, anxiety, risk appraisal, and risk avoidance (a<sub>x</sub> <sub>d</sub> x b<sub></sub> = -.1090; 95% C.I. = -.4609 to -.0047).

Taken together, these results suggest that subtle differences in the pitch of ambient sound can have a strong influence on both emotional and behavioral responses. Specifically, compared to moderate-pitch ambient sound, low-pitch ambient sound leads to risk aversion through anxiety and situational risk appraisal.

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Increasing Incentive Effectiveness by Linking the Incentive to a Source the Consumer Paid Into
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Government, employers, and marketers often use incentives to motivate certain behaviors (e.g., Shapiro and Slemrod, 2003; Volpp, Asch, Galvin and Loewenstein, 2011). However, their effectiveness varies considerably. Insight as to why this might be can be found in multiple streams of research. Of particular relevance to our work, Epley and his collaborators (Epley and Gneezy, 2006; Epley, Mak and Idson, 2006) demonstrates that consumers are more likely to spend windfall framed as a bonus (other’s money) than as a rebate (one’s own money). Potentially at odds with these findings is research on savings and decumulation decisions (Shu and Payne, 2015) which finds that the more strongly people feel that Social Security benefits come from money they contributed through their working life, the sooner they want to claim (and presumably spend) it.

To reconcile these findings, we note that windfalls require no action to be taken in order to be received, while claiming Social Security benefits early requires a volitional decision by the retiree. Building on these streams of research, we predict that consumers will react to incentives differently depending on whether the incentive is linked to their own money or other people’s money, and whether the incentive is conditional on their behavior, or is in the form of an unconditional windfall. Specifically, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: When receiving an incentive is contingent upon making a purchase, a consumer is more likely to make the purchase if the incentive is framed as being funded from a source she/he has paid into.

Hypothesis 2: When receiving an incentive is not contingent upon making a purchase, a consumer is less likely to make the purchase if the incentive is framed as being funded from a source she/he has paid into.

In Study 1, participants imagined they were in the market for a house with some flexibility on the issue of when to buy. While they would prefer to buy next year rather than this year, there was a factor that might expedite their decision, namely, a $10,000 first time home buyer incentive. The experiment manipulated the source of the incentive: individual income taxes / corporate income taxes / seller concession. The dependent variable was the likelihood of purchasing a new house now, elicited on a 9-point scale. A one-way ANOVA revealed no main effect of the source of the incentive (F(2, 201) = 4.14, p < .05). Pairwise comparisons showed that participants in the individual income tax condition were more likely to expedite the purchase (M=7.49) than participants in either the corporate tax condition (M = 6.95; t(201) = 2.16, p < .05) or the seller concession condition (M = 6.82; t(201) = 2.71, p < .01).

Study 2 generalized the investigation to a car incentive, and measured participants’ psychological ownership of the incentive with three items adapted from Shu and Peck (2011). Participants imagined that they were in the market for a new car with some flexibility on when to buy. However, a $2,000 incentive would expire within a month. Again, the experiment manipulated the source of the incentive: individual income taxes / corporate income taxes / manufacturer concession. The dependent variable was the likelihood of purchasing a new car now, elicited on a 9-point scale. Results indicated that participants were more likely to expedite their purchase in the “individual income tax” condition (M = 6.94) than in the “corporate income tax” condition (M = 6.11; t(192) = 2.28, p < .05) or the “car manufacturer” condition (M = 6.03; t(192) = 2.43, p < .05). A bootstrapping analysis demonstrated that that psychological ownership of the incentive fully mediated the effect of the source of incentive on early purchase (β = .34, SE = .10; 95% confidence interval = [.16, .56]).

Study 3 examined the effectiveness of an incentive in encouraging healthier diets and explored the issue of contingent vs. windfall incentives. The study adopted a 2 by 2 factorial design. A scenario described a $200 discount of a CSA membership offered by a health insurance company. The incentive was either contingent on subscription or paid up front (in which case it could be spent elsewhere), and was either funded by insurance premiums or donations. The dependent variable was the likelihood of CSA subscription, elicited on a 5-point scale. An ANOVA revealed no main effect of the source of the incentive (F(1, 118) = .06, p = .81), a main effect of the contingency of the incentive (F(1, 118) = 3.77, p = .05), and the predicted interaction between contingency and source of the incentive (F(1, 118) = 11.67, p < .01). Specifically, when the incentive was contingent upon CSA subscription, students were more likely to subscribe when the incentive was funded by insurance premiums than by donations (Mpremiums = 3.62, Mdonations = 2.81; t(59) = 2.65, p = .01); when the incentive was not contingent upon CSA subscription, students were less likely to subscribe in the “premiums” condition than in the “donations” condition (Mpremiums = 2.44, Mdonations = 3.14; t(59) = 2.20, p < .05).

In summary, framing purchase-contingent incentives as being funded by money consumers have contributed to increases consumer’s perceived ownership over that incentive, which in turn increases their motivation to claim it. However, this effect reverses for non-purchase-contingent (windfall) incentives. These findings have potentially significant implications for a wide range of public policy oriented incentives that aim to motivate society-improving behaviors. For example, consider the cash-for-clunkers program, or incentives to buy solar power systems, both would potentially be made more effective by simply framing the source of the subsidies/ incentives as being paid into by the target market. Similarly, in the consumer realm, we have preliminary data that grocery store promotions are more likely to be successful if framed as being store profit funded (i.e. shoppers contributed to) than a manufacturer concession.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Many of our daily activities are not freely chosen, and our freedom to choose how to behave is often constrained by rules and norms. However, being autonomous – in other words being choiceful in one’s actions (deCharms 1976; Deci and Ryan 1985) – represents a critical condition for well-being (Ryan and Deci 2000). In this context, and unsurprisingly, research has established that consumers are eager for autonomy (Zheng, Van Osselaer and Alba 2016), whether it refers to freedom of choice (Markus and Schwartz 2010) or freedom in behavior (Levav and Zhu 2009), and exhibit reactance where their autonomy is threatened (Brehm 1966).

However, the assumption that being autonomous may always be beneficial for consumers may be challenged. Drawing below on the literature on self-determination (Deci and Ryan 1985b) and the theory of psychological stress and coping (Lazarus and Folkman 1984), we propose that the pleasure derived from the experience of autonomy varies as a function of whether consumers perceive the situation in which they have autonomy as risky. Specifically, we propose and test a model where autonomy leads to stress or personal control depending on the level of risk that they perceive in the situation in which they exert their autonomy.

Theoretical Background

Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the belief that one can freely choose how to behave in a specific situation (Deci and Ryan 1985a), or the extent to which people feel free to initiate their own actions (deCharms 1976; Deci and Ryan 1985, 2000). Autonomy is at the heart of the self-determination theory (hereafter, SDT; Deci and Ryan, 1985a, b, 2000), which posits that autonomous actions are accompanied by a sense of freedom and volition (Butzel and Ryan 1997). Extant research consistently provided support for the beneficial effects of autonomy, mainly in the academic (Grolnick and Ryan 1987; Vallerand, Fortier, and Guay 1997) and work domains (Kirkman and Rosen, 1999, 2000). This notion of autonomy has driving positive outcomes has also been observed in consumption settings. For instance, Zhang et al. (2011) found that consumers value more their goals when they perceive that they autonomously decided to reach that goal. In the domain of computer games, Kim, Chen and Zhang (2016) identified autonomy as an important condition for enjoyment.

However, this notion of autonomy as being always beneficial has recently been challenged by Chen and Sengupta (2014), who observed that because ‘vice products’ are intrinsically enjoyable and therefore induce guilt, consuming a vice product leads to lower vitality when consumers are autonomous in their decision of eating that vice product. Their results hence challenge self-determination research, which finds that increased decision autonomy usually heightens vitality. What we propose is in line with this latter notion that autonomy may not always be beneficial for consumers. We develop our rationale for this notion below.

Autonomy under risk

Previous research in a wide array of areas have brought evidence for positive effects of autonomy. For instance, among teachers (Pearson and Moomaw 2005) and workers (Kalleberg, Nesheim, and Olsen 2009), autonomy is positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to stress. However, the relationship between autonomy and well-being can be complex, and the question arises if the positive effects of autonomy always hold, or, said differently, if being autonomous can lead to negative outcomes under specific circumstances. We posit that perceiving risk in the situation one has autonomy over can be such a circumstance. Perceived risk refers to the perception of variances in the possible gains and losses that could result from that particular choice (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; March and Shapira 1987). Hence, people perceive a specific option less risky when, controlling for expected outcomes, this option is more certain than another more probabilistic option. In this regard, what could be argued is that when people have autonomy in a given situation, the perception of risk makes salient the probabilistic negative outcomes that can occur from the experience of autonomy, making the experience less pleasurable. Hence, we propose that risk moderates the effect of autonomy on pleasure such that when autonomy is high, a high (versus low) level of risk makes the experience less (versus more) pleasurable (Hypothesis 1).

According to the theory of a theory of psychological stress and coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), stress arises when people evaluate a particular encounter with the environment as irrelevant to their well-being. Relying on the notion that risky situations are those that are associated with uncertainty (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; March and Shapira 1987), consumers who face risk might also encounter a situation that is less certain to make them achieve their goals as compared to a non-risky situation. In such environments that are risky, autonomy can reveal immobilizing or even detrimental to people (Markus and Kitayama 1991) and lead to experience the situation as stressful (Hypothesis 2a). On the contrary, non-risky situation might make the outcome more certain and lead autonomous people to perceive more contingencies between their behavioral choices and the outcomes. As such contingencies are a core component of control beliefs (Seligman 1975; Skinner 1995, 1996), it may be argued that when risk is low, autonomy leads to a stronger perception of personal control (Hypothesis 2b). Given the literature on stress and control seeing these affective reactions as mediators of the effects of the environment on pleasure (Folkman et al. 1986; Hui and Bateson 1991), both stress (Hypothesis 3a) and personal control (Hypothesis 3b) should mediate the effects of autonomy on pleasure. Further, people who face risk might perceive the situation as threatening, and low autonomy might in this context promote defensive reactions. Because defensiveness has been shown to be less likely to occur when a person has greater autonomy (Knee and Zuckerman 1998), people who have autonomy may react more strongly to risk, leading to an increase in stress. On the contrary, when risk is low, autonomy may be here beneficial to psychological well-being and leads to more personal control. Therefore, when risk is high, autonomy may lead to an increase in stress and consequently on pleasure (Hypothesis 4a), while when risk is low, autonomy may increase personal control and pleasurae (Hypothesis 4b).

Study 1

Procedure. A 2 × 2 between-subjects experiment manipulated autonomy and perceived risk. Participants (N=206 students, 50% male) were asked to imagine themselves with a friend on vacation in Macao, where they had to rent a scooter. Pictures of the streets
of Macao and the scooter were provided on a screen to facilitate projection in the scenario. Autonomy was manipulated following the definition of autonomy as the ability to initiate behaviors (Deci and Ryan 200). In the low autonomy condition, participants were told that they could not drive the scooter because their friend was willing to drive the scooter himself. In the high autonomy condition participants were told that they could choose to drive the scooter themselves. Perceived risk was then manipulated. In the high risk condition, participants were informed that more than 25% (versus 1% in the low risk condition) of tourists who rented a scooter over the last 5 years had been involved in a crash. Then, participants rated how much pleasure they would have riding the scooter in the city, their stress (Durante and Laran 2016, a=.89) and their personal control (Cutright, Bettman, and Fitzsimons 2013; a=.83). For manipulation check purposes, participants rated their perceived autonomy (Chen and Sengupta 2014; a=.94) and how much driving the scooter in Macao was risky (one item). All scales were 7-point Likert scales.

Results. Manipulations of autonomy (M_{Low Auton.}=5.13, M_{High Auton.}=2.44, F(1, 204)=275.67, p < .001) and risk (M_{Low Risk}=4.60, M_{High Risk}=2.19 F(1, 204)=105.31, p < .001) were successful, and the manipulation of autonomy did not affect personal control (F(1, 204)=3.67, p < .05).

A 2-way ANOVA revealed no effects of autonomy (p > .05) on pleasure, but a negative effect of perceived risk of preference (F (1, 204)=4.68, p < .01; M_{Low Risk}=3.93; M_{High Risk}=3.51). Supporting Hypothesis 1, a significant interaction was observed (F (1, 204)=22.01, p < .001). Precisely, in the low risk condition, autonomy had a positive effect on pleasure (M_{Low Auton.}=3.53; M_{High Auton.}=4.31, p < .01), while a negative effect was observed in the high risk condition (M_{Low Auton.}=3.98; M_{High Auton.}=3.09, p < .001). Supporting Hypothesis 2a, results revealed positive effects of autonomy (F (1, 204)=6.89, p < .05; M_{Low Auton.}=3.92; M_{High Auton.}=4.37) and risk (F (1, 204)=20.41, p < .001; M_{Low Risk}=3.78; M_{High Risk}=4.57) and, interestingly, their interacting effect (F (1, 204)=3.90, p<.05), whereby in the low risk condition autonomy had no effect on stress (p > .05) but had a positive one in the high risk condition (t=-2.97, p < .01; M_{Low Auton.}=4.15; M_{High Auton.}=4.92). Turning to Hypothesis 2b, results revealed a significant positive effect of autonomy (F (1, 204)=4.71, p < .05; M_{Low Auton.}=3.08; M_{High Auton.}=3.41) and a negative effect of risk (F (1, 204)=38.87, p < .001; M_{Low Risk}=3.69; M_{High Risk}=2.78) on personal control. Supporting Hypothesis 2b, a significant interaction was observed (F (1, 204)=4.25, p < .05) whereby autonomy had a positive effect on personal control when risk was low (M_{Low Auton.}=3.35; M_{High Auton.}=4.03, p < .05) but had no effect when risk was high (p > .05).

Then, a mediation analysis revealed significant indirect effects of autonomy on pleasure through stress (CI=-.25; -.02) and personal control (CI=-.21; -.22), supporting H3. Results from a moderated-mediation analysis where stress and personal control were included as mediators and risk as a moderator revealed that the mediating effects of stress (CI=-.35; -.01) and personal control (CI=-.37; -.01) were moderated by risk, but differently. Specifically and supporting Hypothesis 4, stress negatively mediated the effects of autonomy on pleasure when risk was high (CI=-.34; -.03) but not when risk was low (CI=-.11; .05), while the mediating effect of personal control was positive in the low risk condition and (CI=.03; .37), and non-significant in the high risk condition (CI=-.06; .09).

Study 2

To examine if the effects observed in study 1 replicate on the field, we interviewed 122 participants (66.4% men, M_{Age}=35.23, S.D.=11.21) of car racing in the West of France during two weekends in July and August 2015. We waited on the parking lot of the circuit for people who had just finished driving a car. Because the cars that people could drive vary in their power, perceived risk was likely to vary across cars. Also, although people were supervised by a professional instructor, some instructors were supposedly more lax than others, making autonomy subject to variation. Hence, every third person who arrived on the parking lot after having driven a sports car was systematically approached and asked if they would answer some brief questions about their experience of driving the car. The same measures as in study 1 were used and adapted to the context of the study. In addition, participants rated their general risk-taking tendency (Kim and McGill 2011).

Results. A moderated-mediation analysis was performed with autonomy as the independent variable, stress and personal control as the mediators, pleasure as the dependent variable, perceived risk as the moderator and general risk-taking tendency as a covariate. The analysis yielded significant positive effects of both autonomy (β=.91, p < .001) and risk (β=.73, p < .01) on pleasure, as well as their significant interaction (β=-.15, p < .01) showing that when autonomy increases, a low level of risk leads to higher pleasure. Supporting Hypotheses 2a-b, results also revealed that neither autonomy (β=.17, p > .10) nor risk (β=.03, p > .05) had an effect on stress, but their interaction was observed (β=-.10, p < .01), such that when risk is high, being autonomous makes the experience more stressful. Personal control was not affected by risk (p > .05) but by autonomy (β=.98, p < .001) and their interaction (β=-.15, p < .01) such that when risk is high, autonomy has no effect on personal control but has a positive effect when risk is low. Hypotheses 3-4 were also supported, with mediating effects of both stress (CI=-.19; -.03) and personal control (CI=-.01; .17) and similar significant indexes of moderated mediation for stress (CI=-.084; -.003) and personal control (CI=-.082; -.001) were also observed, with the same pattern of results as in study 1. For all analyses, general risk-taking tendency had no effects (p > .05).

Hence, study 2 replicates previous results. However, some differences pertaining to the effects of autonomy and risk on stress were observed. To address these differences, we hypothesize that self-efficacy, or the belief that one is able to mobilize the skills that are necessary to attain a given goal (Bandura 1982, 1997), moderates the effects of autonomy on stress, such that when autonomy increases, self-efficacy makes the experience of autonomy less stressful (Hypothesis 5).

Study 3

Procedure and sample. A 2 × 2 between-subjects design was conducted with autonomy (low vs. high) and risk (low vs. high) as fixed factors. Participants (n=240, 54% female, M_{Age}=28.28) were asked to read a scenario where they had to imagine cooking a meal for an evening with friends and to choose one dish to cook from a list of five dishes (the dishes did not significantly differ on indulgence). In the condition of high autonomy, respondents were advised that they had the option of following a recipe or doing as they wished, while in the low autonomy condition they were specified that they had to follow a recipe scrupulously and that no room was left for imagination. Then, in the low-risk condition, it was indicated that on Internet forums consumers reported feeling that the recipe had a nice chance to please. In the high risk condition, it was indicated that consumers on the forums pointed out that the recipe had only a 40% chance to please. Respondents then completed the same measures of pleasure, stress, personal control, autonomy and risk as in previous studies, as well as one of self-efficacy (Keller 2006; a=.75).

Results. The manipulation of autonomy and risk were successful, and self-efficacy was not affected by the manipulation of risk (p > .10). As studies 1-2, the same patterns of interacting effects of autonomy and risk on pleasure (F (1, 236)=8.66, p < .01), stress (F (1, 236)=8.01, p < .01) and personal control (F (1, 236)=7.59, p <

.01) were observed. Also, results yielded the same mediating effects of stress (CI=-.51; -.19) and personal control (CI=.01; .14), that were again moderated by risk perception (CIstress=-.80; -.16; CIcontrol=-.37; -.02). Finally, a regression revealed that when risk is high, stress is marginally affected by efficacy (β=.17, p=.10) and its interaction with autonomy (β=.31, p < .05), whereby for all values of self-efficacy below 5.57, having autonomy results in significantly higher levels of stress than not having autonomy. Age and gender had no effects on self-efficacy (p’s > .05).

Conclusion

The three studies reported here support our hypothesis that the pleasure derived from being autonomous can vary as a function of risk perception. The extent to which a consumption experience is pleasurable varies according to the degrees of stress and personal control that consumers may feel in response to their autonomy and risk. Hence, marketers should reduce perceived risk so that autonomy leads to an increase in personal control and pleasure.

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I Speak Starbucks, do You? Distinction and Inclusion on Linguistic Brand Codes

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Successful brands are active producers of cultural objects, rather than mere parasites that appropriate popular culture. Indeed, brands create symbols, myths, and even prescriptive models for the way we think and the way we behave – our goals, ideals, and values. Eavesdropping on someone ordering a drink at Starbucks or talking about a sci-fi narrative brand will make obvious that brands also change the way consumers talk. Despite the widely-accepted centrality of language to culture (Crawford & Valsiner 1999), brand-specific linguistic codes have been largely overlooked in cultural approaches to consumer research.

Despite the lack of deliberate examination, the existence of linguistic codes shared and used within consumption communities and brand communities is widely recognized. Thomsen, Straubhaar and Bolyard (1998) use the words “jargon or group speak” to describe the insider code used within cyber-communities. Schau and Muñiz (2002) find a “community jargon” shared in brand-related personal websites. Langerak et al. (2003) use the term “specialized language” for the jargon spoken within an e-brand’s virtual community. In their ethnography of the new bikers, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) define subcultures of consumption as having unique jargons, and their data illustrates several examples of “biker vernacular.” One of the Trekker sub-communities described by Kozinets (2001) revolves around the constructed language Klingon. Muñiz and Schau (2005) describe a characteristic “formulaic language” within users of the discontinued Apple Newton. Whereas the presence of brand codes has been repeatedly acknowledged, their relevance to consumer researcher theory and marketing implications have yet to be explored.

This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by putting the spotlight on this particular brand cultural object.

We bring together Bourdieu’s cultural capital theories (e.g. Bourdieu 1986, Bourdieu & Passeron 1990), a brand culture approach (Schroeder 2009), and a consumer research reading of socio-linguistics to study the practices and discourses created by branded jargon and dialects. Starbucks is our context for studying brand codes. Brand-specific linguistic codes were studied using an ethnographic (Kozinets 2002) approach complemented with in-store observation. Brand related conversations were extracted from official and fan-created websites, Twitter messages and YouTube videos. Findings were further informed by naturalistic observation in Starbucks coffeehouses.

Findings confirm the appropriateness of the “brand language” metaphor, revealing the ubiquity of its use among consumers and illustrating the many ways in which linguistic brand codes mirror natural languages. Specifically, this study sheds light on the largely unexplored topic of how “brand literacy” (Bengtsson & Firtat 2006) is acquired. Careful examination of Starbucks’ linguistic brand code reveals “jargon” to be an insufficient term to refer to a code with grammar-like properties in which issues of syntax (e.g. word order), pragmatics (e.g. tacitness and sub-textuality), and style (e.g. redundancy) matter. Linguistic competence in “Starbucksese” is revealed as a continuum ranging from complete lack of fluency to “native-like” competence. Two main opposing discourses co-exist around Starbucks’ ordering script. A wide range of oppositional and skeptical consumers see the brand code as unnecessarily cryptic, putatively designed to pretentiously sound “vaguely European” or simply expert Starbucks cultural hegemony. A second discourse (as voiced by baristas, and endorsed by most fans) is to discount the need for the code and the barriers to learning it without denying its complexity.

Among the most brand loyal customers endorsing the latter discourse, competence in Starbucks linguistic code signals commitment to the brand (and hence, status within the fan community). These fans often police the brand discourse and community in such a way that lack of fluency is tolerated, if looked down upon, but oppositional discourse is attacked and silenced.

On the other ideological end, oppositional customers, in their own words, “make a point” of not learning or using the linguistic brand code while ridiculing those who do and sharing with like-minded users their successes in defying Starbucks cultural dominance. Interestingly, they do so while still being Starbucks customers (many of them declared frequent customers).

Amid this dialectical war, occasional and unaligned Starbucks customers must still manage to navigate the brand code. Lacking fluency, they do so using a variety of compensatory strategies that typically result in negative feelings or suboptimal outcomes.

Fans use brand codes as a field-specific cultural capital and a source of identity, belonging, and group status. In the case of a highly accessible brand like Starbucks, cultural capital is more tied to how to consume and less to what is consumed (Holt 1998). Whereas less-than-expert customers are needed if code competence is to be a signal of high status, deniers of the value of “speaking the brand” are a menace to status-seeking fans who have learned the code. Lack of fluency is described by consumers as a source of rejection and anxiety. Consistent with previous theory (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, Lamont and Lareau’s 1988), cultural and social exclusion prove to be a central component of the status game. On the other hand, and deviating from previous literature on consumer resistance, we find oppositional consumers who are “anti-Starbucksese” rather than anti-Starbucks. Consumers can be polarized not only for and against a brand (as in Thompson & Arsel 2004, Kozinets & Handelman 2004) but for and against a brand’s cultural objects while still consuming the brand. Etic interpretation of this form of consumer cultural resistance is that consumers are inverting the sign of marketer-imposed codes (Ozanne & Murray 1995) while still using them for status-seeking purposes. As Holt (2002) points out, opposition does not liberate from the market, but instead drives consumers to build their resistance identity through the market. We extend Holt’s findings by adding that even opposition to a brand’s cultural objects does not emancipate from the brand: knowing and denying brand cultural objects can be two fields within the same context; two strategies in the same status-seeking game of cultural capital.

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Increasing PSA Effectiveness: Two Routes from Self-Threat to Message Acceptance

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The typical goal of a public service announcement (PSA) is to prompt viewers to behave in a more socially responsible way. Interestingly, many PSAs use shocking stories or visuals to illustrate the irresponsibility of viewers’ current behaviors. However, by illustrating how a viewer may be acting in a socially irresponsible way, such messages are likely to create an identity threat and thus may lead to defensive reactions rather than to more responsible behaviors.

To increase acceptance of threatening messages, past research has attempted either (1) to reduce individuals’ experience of threat through self-affirmation (Sherman and Cohen 2006; Sherman, Nelson, and Steele 2000; Steele 1988) or (2) to elevate individuals’ mood (Raghunathan and Trope 2002). In this research, we highlight the relationship between these two solutions, we identify conditions under which each is more or less effective at reducing resistance to counter-attitudinal messages, and we explore the mechanism for their influence on message acceptance. More specifically, we propose that the more important a threatened identity domain is to an individual, the more seriously a person’s identity will feel threatened, and the less effective cross-domain self-affirmations are therefore likely to be. As suggested by Tetlock et al. (2000), sacred or important values are harder to compensate or trade-off (Tetlock et al. 2000). If and when a self-affirmation does not reduce an identity threat, any effect on message acceptance might be credited to mood.

In study 1, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: threat-only, threat-compensation, and no-threat. Participants in both the threat-only and threat-compensation conditions engaged in a procedure that threatened their moral identity (i.e., admitting to online piracy behavior). Later, participants in the threat-compensation condition were asked to write an essay to self-affirm their competence. Lastly, all participants evaluated advertisements and expressed their agreement to anti-piracy messages. Results showed that participants in the threat-only condition showed greater preference for moral advertisements than those in the no-threat condition (p < 0.05), which was consistent with past research on within-domain compensation. Contrary to what previous self-affirmation research might predict, the preference for moral advertisements for those in the threat-compensation condition was not significantly different from that in the threat-only condition (p = 0.81). This result indicated that participants’ threatened moral identity was not effectively compensated by cross-domain self-affirmation. However, relative to participants in the threat-only condition, participants were more willing to accept threatening messages in the no-threat condition (5.6 vs. 4.57; t(92) = 3.02, p < .005), and in the threat-compensation condition (5.56 vs. 4.57; t(87) = 2.67, p < .01). This result raises a paradox that why individuals become more accepting of threatening messages when they still have discrepancy in their threatened identity.

Study 2 investigated the underlying mechanism for this increased message acceptance. In this study, we replicated our finding that cross-domain compensation increased willingness to accept threatening messages, but did not reduce self-discrepancy. We also showed that cross-domain compensation improved respondents’ mood, which mediated the effect of cross-domain compensation on message acceptance. Further supporting our claim that improved mood can enhance message acceptance, we showed in this study that simply thinking about a sunny day (which is not related to self-affirmation or compensation) also enhanced message acceptance.

In Study 3, we demonstrated conditions under which cross-domain compensation was effective vs. ineffective in reducing self-discrepancy. Moreover, we showed that even when cross-domain compensation was ineffective, it could still increase message acceptance. Specifically, participants received a threat to one of five life values (family, honesty/kindness, competency, spontaneity, and physical attractiveness), then they received an essay writing task designed to self-affirm one of those five life values. We found that the cross-domain compensation effectively reduced self-discrepancy only when the threat was to the least important value and the compensation was to the most important value. However, even when the cross-domain compensation did not effectively reduce discrepancy, it still increased participants’ mood and, in turn, increases their message acceptance.

Last study, we applied our findings in a field study to show the role of mood in improving the effectiveness of PSA. 70 male workers (generally heavy smokers) working at a construction site in China were randomly assigned to one of three conditions by receiving three different types of PSA messages in print: control condition (no PSA), threat condition (a threatening PSA featuring pictures of the deadly consequences of smoking), and mood elevation condition (a PSA featuring pictures of healthy looking families living happily). Then they were asked to answer five questions regarding anti-smoking messages, gender (70 males), age (mean = 38), and how many cigarettes they smoke each day (mean = 19).

Results showed message acceptance in the mood elevation condition was significantly higher than that in the control condition (4.08 vs. 3.49; t(44) = 3.24, p < .005) and the threat condition (4.08 vs. 3.39; t(47) = 2.47, p < .05); mood in the mood elevation condition was significantly higher than that in the control condition (4.80 vs. 3.10; t(44) = 7.83, p < .001) and the threat condition (4.80 vs. 1.83; t(47) = 12.33, p < .001). A mediation analysis showed that mood mediates the influence of different PSAs on message acceptance, the mean indirect effect from the bootstrap analysis is also significant (a × b = 0.18), with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (.0384 to .3765).

This research contributes to literature on self-affirmation and persuasion and have practical implications in improving the effectiveness of PSAs.

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Towards a New Framework of Eco-Food Consumption: The Importance of Contextual Drivers

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Green consumer trends demonstrate that an influential group of aware and ethical consumers has emerged. However, what consumers say about the importance of ethical and environmental issues often differs from their actual behavior, and the share of eco-friendly food in total consumption has remained low (Rousseau and Vranken 2013). Frequently this gap between consumers' attitudes and their actual buying behavior refers to the so-called attitude-behavior gap (Carrigan, Szmigin, and Wright 2004). The gap can potentially be explained by the multifaceted nature of sustainable consumption. Existing studies mostly focus on individual consumer characteristics, which means that macro and structural causes of sustainable consumption tend to be ignored (Thorgesen 2010). For example, the cultural context needs to be taken into account, as it has a direct influence on social pressure and pro-environmental value orientation (Kumar, Manrai, and Manrai 2017; Strizhakova and Coulter 2013). Thorgesen (2010) argues that both macro factors (e.g., culture) and structural factors (e.g., political regulation, national labelling systems) are more important determinants for sustainable consumption than individual-level attitudinal variables.

This study looks on one particular type of sustainable consumption, namely eco-food (i.e., food encompassing environmental, ethical and health benefits) and addresses the wider social framework and cultural system in which this type of food is consumed. As a result, we suggest a new conceptual framework that contributes a contextual dimension to our understanding of eco-food consumption. In this way, we extend the existing literature by suggesting that consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward eco-food are influenced by five contextual drivers: (1) cultural values; (2) media discourses (which focus on different issues in different societies); (3) governance and law (different food safety regulations, differences in trust in national/stately systems); (4) geographical characteristics (e.g., country size, access to locally, regionally and nationally produced food); and (5) country-of-origin effect/provenance (preference for national vs. local food).

Our aim is to explore how these contextual factors explain the differences in consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward eco-food in the US and Norway. Both countries are developed and industrialized and contain a growing eco-food market. However, they differ on cultural orientations and other dimensions (country size, food regulations, media discourse, and so on). We can therefore expect differences in the importance of eco-food concerns. To collect the data, we conducted 40 in-depth interviews in Norway and the US (twenty in each country). The researcher began by discussing consumers' food habits and their salient concerns pertaining to food purchases. The interviewer then explained the concept of eco-food, probing informants' perceptions of the category and its salience to their purchasing and eating behavior. Moreover, the interviewer probed for contextual factors influencing consumers' perceptions of eco-food. The interview procedure yielded around 520 pages of transcribed single-spaced text. The research team utilized the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1968) to identify the presence of the contextual drivers discussed in the conceptual framework. In addition, the researchers conducted a media discourse analysis to identify food and eco-food related topics discussed in the media in the US and Norway. We also compared the food safety regulations in both countries.

We discerned the following patterns when comparing responses from the US and the US. Like previous research (e.g., Carrigan et al. 2004), the current study shows consumers experience an attitude-behavior gap in both countries. Specifically, informants offer two broad reasons for not purchasing eco-food, or for not buying as much as they would have liked – namely, price and access. Nevertheless, interesting differences emerge between American and Norwegian consumers when they explain the reasons for buying eco-food. While American consumers highlight the health benefits, ethical considerations and animal welfare are the most prevalent among their Norwegian counterparts. Moreover, Norwegian consumers exhibit much stronger preferences for nationally produced food, as they consider Norwegian food to be similar to eco-food along the dimensions of safety and ethicality. We argue these differences can be partly explained by contextual factors such as cultural values, differences in media discourse, food regulations, a nation’s geographical characteristics and provenance effects. Norwegian culture emphasizes egalitarianism and harmony and de-emphasizes mastery, which calls for selfless concern for the welfare of others (Schwartz 2006). In contrast, American individualism emphasizes affective autonomy and mastery at the expense of harmony (Schwartz 2006). This combination leads to justifying and encouraging egoistic self-advancement.

This distinction may result in a more functional, self-focused approach to eco-food in the US (with a focus on health and taste benefits), while ethical (and especially animal welfare) issues prevail in Norway. In addition, our analysis reveals that focus on issues in the media differs in the US and Norway. While Norwegian media devotes attention to animal welfare issues, there is still more emphasis on health issues and food safety (e.g., pesticides and hormones) in the US. Our informants confirm the influence of media discourses and refer to recent feature stories in the media while explaining their reasons for buying eco-food. Moreover, Norway has more restrictive food safety regulations (EcoWatch 2014), which can explain consumers’ trust to non-eco-food produced in Norway. Geographical differences may also play a role. Norway is much smaller country than the USA and it can explain the different perceptions of provenance. While consumers in the USA exhibit preference for local non-eco-food, Norwegians perceive local food much broader and prefer all the food produced in Norway.

This study contributes to the existing literature by bringing attention to the contextual factors which were earlier neglected in the literature (Thorgesen 2010). The findings are important for both companies and policy makers as we highlight the importance of taking into account contextual dimensions while promoting eco-food in different countries. However, this study has a number of limitations and more research is necessary. We address only two countries and the research can be extended to different types of cultures, e.g. more collectivistic cultures. We also do not focus on the variations between ethnic groups, which can be especially important in the US. Moreover, there is a need to consider how a combination of product-, consumer- and context-level drivers influences eco-food consumption.
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The Double-Edged Sword of Social Closeness in Gift Giving
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Consumers constantly decide what to bring into their lives, from people (who to date) to places (where to live) to products (what to buy). Beyond such what questions, any acquisition necessitates a subsequent, unexamined question: How long will I keep it? We examine this concept of retention, or the duration over which consumers maintain possession of something. To probe retention, we first present a series of three pilot studies that tests a straightforward prediction relating retention to gift giving. Specifically, people retain gifts for a longer period of time when they come from socially closer others. We then identify a condition (explicit consideration or inclusion of gift quality information) that causes this pattern of retention to reverse (longer retention for gifts from distant others) as a function of gift recipients’ shifting expectations for their social connection with gift givers in the future. Practical implications for gift giving as well as theoretical relevance for future research on retention are discussed.

In a set of three pilot studies, we document the obvious conclusion that people keep gifts longer when they receive gifts from socially closer (versus distant) givers. Throughout, we find longer retention for gifts from objectively and subjectively closer others, across a range of retention measures – viz. prospective retention (“How long will I keep this new item?”); retrospective retention (“How long did I keep a former possession?”); and a combination of the latter (“How long have I had this, and how much longer should I hold onto it?”).

We then tested whether this pattern would maintain when the price of the gift is revealed. Counterintuitively, we found in a set of four studies that such gifts are retained longer when they originate from distant givers. In all, when price information was present, retention of a high-priced gift was higher when the gift was from a socially distant giver than from a socially close giver (Studies 1-4). This result was shown to be conditionally mediated by the expectation of increased future closeness with a distant (versus a closer) gift giver (Study 4). That is, unlike gift givers (and others more generally) that are prima facie socially close, people who stand at a greater social distance have a greater potential to move through that distance in becoming closer. In turn, these expectations for change in connectedness in the future informs decisions in the present.

Study 1 asked participants about their retention intentions for gifts that were low- or high-priced ($10 vs. $75) from a socially distant or close giver. When price information was revealed, the pattern of results was notably different than in our pilot studies: For the low-priced gift, expected retention did not differ between close (M = 105.80 days, SD = 66.26) and distant (M = 118.80 days, SD = 42.85) givers, F < 1, p > .8; but for the high-priced gift, expected retention was significantly higher when it came from a distant giver (M = 1474.60 days, SD = 414.56) compared with a close giver (M = 1226.40 days, SD = 457.83), F(1, 144) = 10.15, p = .002, η² = .07.

Study 2 provides evidence that price is used as a proxy for product quality in retention decisions. Study 2 tested two different prices (as in Study 1) across two different levels of gift quality (“rather low in quality – about a 2 on a 10-point scale” vs. “very high in quality – about a 9 on a 10-point scale”). When quality of the gift was revealed, expected retention was consistently higher when the gift came from a distant friend at both low (M = 504.40 days, SD = 294.67) and high (M = 1430.80 days, SD = 314.69) levels of quality, as contrasted with the expected retention from a close friend at low (M = 368.76 days, SD = 215.39) and high (M = 1328.60 days, SD = 331.19) quality levels.

Study 3 provides discriminant validity between liking of the gift and retention. Using a high- and low-priced pen methodology similar to Study 1 and including a measure of liking, Study 3 found that among participants asked about liking, only a significant main effect of gift price emerged (p < .001), whereas giver distance and the interaction between distance and price two did not prove reliable (p > .4). The general conclusion appears to suggest that expensive gifts are liked more than inexpensive gifts regardless of who is giving them. Thus, it appears that consumers consider and make retention-related decisions in a manner that is conceptually dissociable from mere liking.

Finally, Study 4 examines the mechanism by which the addition of price information seems to provide a boost in retention for gifts from distant givers: An inferred expectation by recipients of increased closeness with givers in the future. Using new gift and price scenarios, we asked participants not only how long they planned to retain the gift but also how, if at all, they anticipated their relationship with the gift giver would change in the future. While more increased closeness was anticipated for a distant (M = 0.28, SD = 0.61) versus close (M = -0.08, SD = 0.28) giver in the low-priced gift condition, F(1, 96) = 6.15, p = .015, η² = .06., the high-priced gift showed an even larger difference in anticipated increase in closeness between the distant (M = 2.72, SD = 0.61) and close (M = 0.16, SD = 0.47) giver, F(1, 96) = 311.09, p < .001, η² = .76. A reliable indirect pathway emerged for both the close giver (β = 26.23, SE = 15.53; 95% CI = 6.22-73.65) and the distant giver (β = 266.64, SE = 82.90; 95% CI = 97.56-427.98). Crucially, the model estimated the index of moderated mediation at 240.41 (SE = 75.15), and a 95% confidence interval for this estimate did not include zero (90.09-389.89). This suggests that, while gift price-evoked expectations of future relationship change predicted retention in both gift-giver conditions, the psychological process relating price to anticipated change and retention was more impactful in evaluating gifts from a distant (versus close) giver.

Taken together, this research emphasizes the relevance of retention as a conceptual variable. It also provides an initial treatment of it as an experimental outcome that allows for novel consumer insights into the relationships between social closeness, price information, and gift retention.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The question whether marketers should use one- vs. two-sided messages has received considerable attention in the persuasion literature (e.g., Eisend, 2006), but without straight answers. On the one hand, the inclusion of negative information in a promotional message seems to enhance attitudes and intentions (e.g., Crowley & Hoyer, 1994), whereas, on the other hand, attitudes and intentions can be derogated (Eisend, 2006). We argue that attitude ambivalence could account for these mixed results. Past research demonstrates that attitude ambivalence plays an important (negative) role in influencing attitudes and intentions (e.g., Priester & Petty, 1996). When people are confronted with a two-sided message, this may induce feelings of evaluative conflict (i.e., attitudinal ambivalence) which may lead to lower attitudes and purchase intentions. However, when a two-sided message does not evoke high levels of ambivalence, we expect positive effects on message effectiveness as previously documented in message sidedness literature.

The first objective of this research is to introduce attitude ambivalence as an explanatory factor for prior inconsistent results concerning the effectiveness of one- vs. two-sided messages (study 1). We know that ambivalent attitudes are generally more susceptible to persuasion (van Harreveld et al., 2009). Most research focuses predominantly on the underlying reasons why (e.g., because they are less strong, or because they are a source of psychological discomfort which people want to resolve). Instead, our research focuses on refutation as a tool to get people with highly ambivalent attitudes ‘off the fence’ (study 2). Next, study 3 introduces refutation on the same vs. different product attributes as a moderator of these effects. This work advances the literature on ambivalence and message sidedness, while also providing hands-on recommendations to practitioners dealing with cases of high ambivalence.

137 undergraduate students were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (one- vs. two-sided) by 2 (high vs. low ambivalence) between-subjects factorial design. They were a set of equally important attributes that described an MP3 player. Message sidedness was manipulated by providing either only positive or both positive and negative product attributes. Low vs. high ambivalence was manipulated by varying the amount of attributes, in line with prior research (Priester, Petty & Park, 2007). We found significant interaction effects for attitude towards the MP3-player and purchase intention. As expected, two-sided messages only yield more positive attitudes and intentions when ambivalence is low (vs. high). Hence, when designing two-sided messages, marketers should avoid creating ambivalent situations, because ambivalence offsets the positive effects of two-sided messages on message effectiveness.

Study 2 tests whether a refutational statement in a two-sided message increases message effectiveness when ambivalence is high. The intent of two-sided refutational messages is to first introduce an opposing view, and subsequently demonstrate why this opposing view is inferior (Allen, 1991). A non-refutational two-sided message merely offers both views while not refuting the opposing view in the message. We argue that a refutation can uplift message effectiveness in ambivalent individuals. 106 MTurk participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (two-sided nonrefutational vs. refutational) by 2 (high vs. low ambivalence) between-subjects factorial design. Study 2 was identical to the previous one except for some modifications: (a) only two-sided messages were used, (b) a different product stimulus was used to generalize across products: a notebook, (c) the attributes were pretested on their importance level, and, finally (d) measures of negative and positive WOM were included. The results show significant interaction effects: in case of high ambivalence, refutational two-sided messages lead to higher attitudes, purchase intentions, and proportionally more (less) positive (negative) WOM (compared to non-refutational two-sided messages). Hence, a refutation may overcome the perverse effects of ambivalence in two-sided messages.

Study 3 examines whether the nature of the refutation matters. Refutational statements can be based on the same or different product attributes, for example: “This laptop has a short battery autonomy, but on the other hand the battery charges exceptionally fast” (same attribute) vs. “This laptop has a short battery autonomy, but on the other hand this model has many USB ports” (different attribute). We test whether refutation on the same vs. different attributes in a two-sided message amplifies attitudes, purchase intentions, and WOM. 305 participants of an online respondent panel were randomly assigned to one of six conditions in a 3 (two-sided non-refutational vs. two-sided refutational on the same attribute vs. two-sided refutational on a different attribute) by 2 (high vs. low ambivalence) between-subjects factorial design. Study 3 was similar to study 2 except (a) the same vs. different product attribute level refutational statements were manipulated by tailoring the type of product attribute(s). The results show that among high (vs. low) ambivalent individuals, same-attribute refutations lead to significantly proportionally more (less) positive (negative) WOM and higher purchase intentions (vs. different-attribute refutations or non-refutational two-sided messages). Among individuals with low (vs. high) ambivalence, refutational two-sided messages, irrespective of whether they are based on the same or different product attributes, lead to significantly lower purchase intentions and proportionally less (more) positive (negative) WOM (vs. non-refutational two-sided messages). Hence, a two-sided message with a focus on the same attribute is more persuasive while addressing highly ambivalent people.

This research shows that attitude ambivalence explains previous inconsistent results concerning two-sided messages’ effectiveness. That is, two-sided messages only yield more positive attitudes and intentions when ambivalence is low (vs. high) (study 1). However, in study 2, we show that this perverse effect of ambivalence in two-sided messages can be resolved by including a refutation. In other words, a refutation can persuade ambivalent individuals. Study 3 shows this only works if the refutation is on the same product attribute-level. While it is known that ambivalent individuals evaluate relevant stimuli more deeply to resolve their ambivalence, further research can explore whether refutation based on the same (vs. different) product attributes is perceived as more salient, more complete, or more successful in reducing anticipated conflict, allowing ambivalent individuals to form stable attitudes and intentions.
REFERENCES

Can Packaging Color Influence Consumers’ Willingness To Pay? 
Evidences of the Au Naturel-Colored Packaging Effect

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the concept of Au Naturel Color and investigates the relationship between packaging color and consumers’ willingness to pay (WTP). Drawing on color theory (Giles 2000), we define Au Naturel Color as a color that brings to mind something that comes from the soil, is not dyed or not artificial, untreated or unprocessed, and expresses authenticity, that is something genuine and not altered. We include shades of beige in this color domain.

Consistent with dual process theories (e.g., Elaboration Likelihood Model - Petty and Cacioppo 1981; and Heuristic-Systematic Model - Bohner et al. 1995), packaging color can be considered as a heuristic. We propose that au naturel-colored packaging (vs. non au naturel-colored packaging) will work as a heuristic and produce positive associations with the product, thus leading to an increase in consumers’ WTP (H1). Moreover, the use of feelings falls in the category of heuristic processing (Chen and Chaiken 1999) and may influence consumers’ responses based on the feeling-as-information model under peripheral route condition (Schwarz and Clore 1988). We maintain that the relationship between au naturel-colored packaging and consumers’ WTP is explained by an emotion-based mechanism.

We expect that au naturel-colored packaging (vs. non au naturel-colored packaging) will evoke low arousal emotions, mainly consisting in sensations of tranquillity, serenity and relief, that we call safety emotions. In turn, such kind of sensations will produce higher consumers’ WTP (H2). We also propose that perceived dangerousness for consumers’ health of product category moderates the effect of au naturel-colored packaging on consumers’ WTP. When facing a product category featuring low dangerousness consumers keep using color packaging as a heuristic. Under such conditions, the positive effect of au naturel color on consumers’ WTP will hold. Instead, the effect disappears for product categories featuring high dangerousness for which heuristics are no more relevant (H3). Additionally, the effect of au naturel-colored packaging on consumers’ WTP may depend on cognitive load. Indeed, under conditions of high (vs. low) cognitive load such effect may be stronger because consumers have fewer cognitive resources available which limit their ability to process information and prompt them to use heuristics. (H4).

We first validated the proposed definition of Au Naturel Color. Results of two preliminary studies (A and B) suggested that seven items aimed at measuring the characteristics of au naturel color converged onto a common latent factor, allowing us to obtain an overall score of Au Naturel Color Scale (ANCS). Additionally, findings allowed us to conclude that shades of beige reflect the characteristics of the au naturel color better than other colors in a large majority of product categories. Study B also allowed us to select stimuli for the subsequent experimental studies. Then we tested our hypotheses in four experimental studies.

In study 1 (N = 97; 55.1% females; ModeAge = 36-55), we found that respondents are more willing to pay for the au naturel-colored packaging than for the non au naturel-colored packaging, providing support to H1. A mediation analysis (Preacher and Hayes, 2004) allowed us to support the idea that safety emotions mediate the effect of packaging color on willingness to pay (H2).

In study 2 (N = 198; 38.9% females; Mage = 34.78; SDAge = 10.67), we found a significant main effect of packaging color, supporting again H1. Consistent with H3, we found a significant two-way interaction between packaging color and product category on consumers’ WTP. Planned comparisons showed that WTP for butter was not significantly different in the two color conditions, whereas WTP for rice was significantly higher for au naturel-colored packaging than for non au naturel-colored packaging. Building upon the results of planned comparisons, we conducted the mediation analysis considering only data collected on rice (N = 100; 32% females; M Age = 32.88; SDAge = 9.44) and a moderated mediation analysis on the whole sample (N = 198). Results further support H2.

In study 3 (N = 176; 52.3% females; M Age = 22.35; SDAge = 1.88), we found a significant main effect of packaging color, supporting again H1. Consistent with H4, we found a significant two-way interaction between packaging color and cognitive load. Planned comparisons showed that in the high cognitive load condition, WTP for au naturel-colored packaging was higher than WTP for non au naturel-colored packaging. A similar pattern was observed in the low cognitive load condition, replicating results of study 1. As predicted, however, the effect of packaging color on consumers’ WTP is significantly larger in the high cognitive load condition than in the low cognitive load condition.

In study 4 (N = 212; 50% females; M Age = 35.86; SDAge = 11.56), we expect to find the packaging color effect on WTP irrespective of the fit between product color and packaging color. Results showed a significant main effect of packaging color, supporting again H1. The interaction effect of packaging color and product color was non-significant. Planned comparisons showed that WTP for rice was significantly higher in the au naturel-colored packaging condition than in the orange-colored packaging condition. The same pattern holds for carrots. Thus, our results can be explained by the characteristics of au naturel-colored packaging, but not by the fit between product color and packaging color.

Our research provides deeper insights on how consumers perceive packaging featuring products featuring au naturel-colors, showing that they associate to these hues of colors specific features that positively influence their WTP. Based on our results, public policy makers may favour an “au naturel color” (vs. non au naturel color) system only for packaging of product categories that really reflect the consumers’ associations in terms of genuineness and non-artificial features. If the au naturel color system becomes a common practice, adopting an ethical perspective and a social fair conduct, food manufacturers may use the au naturel color system (being a heuristic) to communicate the value of their offerings and distinctiveness from the competitors.

REFERENCES

When High Failure, Risky Technology Leads to Market Expansion: The Case of the Fertility Services Market
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
This paper explores how risky innovation in the fertility services market impacts legitimation dynamics and marketing expansion. Taking institutional theory as an enabling theory, we introduce scientific legitimacy as key pillar in the legitimation of risky, biomedical technologies. Prior research identifies several actors who play key roles in the legitimation process of consumption practices. For example, Humphreys (2010) highlights how casino managers achieve a sense of legitimacy by successfully navigating regulatory, socioeconomic, and normative conventions that underpin the industry. Additionally, Giesler’s (2012) analysis of Botox marketplace activity illuminates how brands strategically engage with other stakeholders to facilitate the legitimation of new markets. Three main legitimacy-driving actors emerge in the literature: decentralized groups of consumers (e.g. Martin and Schouten 2014; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013), centralized marketplace actors such as a brand (e.g. Giesler 2008; Humphreys 2010a), and news media (e.g. Humphreys and Thompson 2014).

Whilst the aforementioned research has significantly advanced our understanding of market evolution and legitimating processes, several questions remain. First, Martin and Schouten (2014) emphasize that legitimation efforts include “a process of multiple translations wherein consumers mobilize human and nonhuman actors to co-constitute products, practices, and infrastructure” (p.855). Therefore, our research considers how other types of nonhuman actors can be central in legitimation process, especially ones that originate outside the control of marketplace players (e.g. firms or managers). Studies on role of technological innovation are limited. For instance, Giesler (2012) focuses on a technology-centered brand and emphasizes that market creation and development evolves with consumers’ perceptions of technology. We argue that technological innovation itself can substantially affect legitimacy dynamics concerning consumption practices.

Furthermore, previous related studies often focus on empirical contexts in which producers and consumers are relatively clearly defined and the risk of consumption is minimal or predictable. Thus, there is an impetus to examine issues pertaining to the legitimation of consumption processes, in relation to contexts where the subject positions of consumer and producer may shift, and where consumption risks are uncertain or the risk of failure exceed those of success (Fischer, Ottes, and Tuncay 2007).

Existing work which explores the part played by communication technologies as intermediaries of legitimation processes, has focused on the results of centralized industry efforts, such as within one industry, brand, or a set of managerial or expert systems (Humphreys and Thompson 2014). We advance that research is needed to analyze the role of communication technologies, including mass-media, in selecting and disseminating information within decentralized markets to a variety of consumer segments. This is important because in decentralized markets, news media coverage can widely advance technological progress and reflect the type of consumers adopting these innovations. This can help us to distinguish legitimation efforts from centralized industries, versus those stemming from decentralized industries.

Taking a meso-level approach to market expansion driven by high-risk technological innovations, we seek to address the outlined research gaps, by analyzing the marketing of fertility services in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). Innovations in Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) have revolutionized fertility services and how reproductive problems are solved, and have facilitated the quest for parenthood for various consumer demographics. We address two research questions: How and why does technological innovation impact the legitimation of consumption? Under what circumstances does this change in legitimacy dynamics result in market expansion? Qualitative methods and automated content analysis were used to analyze a set of visual and textual data, which includes articles from two newspapers (The Guardian and The New York Times) and three magazines (Elle, Cosmo, and New Scientist), as well as marketing material from US and UK fertility clinics and related health organizations.

We find that decentralized technology innovation which relies on scientific legitimacy impacts normative legitimacy (parenthood norm) and socio-affective legitimacy (in contrast to socio-cognitive), while regulatory legitimacy plays a secondary role. The socio-affective mechanism is fueled by how media and marketers frame mythologized parenthood and time scarcity in order to minimize implications of risk failure. Last, despite high probability of technology failure, this market has expanded rather than contracted over time. From our frame analysis, we see that, while ART were heavily adopted by infertile couples and single women when it entered the mainstream, in recent years the use of ART has been expanded to individuals seeking fertility preservation from cancer treatment, gay couples, couples in need of gestational surrogacy, and single, young women seeking egg preservation to name a few.

Our research contributes to literature on institutionalization, by showing that technology innovation is a distinct determinant of consumption-related legitimacy, whilst differentiating between decentralized and centralized technological innovation. Finally, we link scientific legitimacy to the emotional facet of social legitimacy, and its influence on consumption in a market characterized by moderate success in helping consumers reach their goal of parenthood. Lastly, we hope that this work may have implications for providers looking to promote services in contexts where high hopes and high risk surround complex technologies, which may include a variety of medical services.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

As authenticating acts and authoritative performances (Arnould and Price 2000), tourism has provided researchers with fertile ground to examine the pursuit of authenticity through consumption. MacCannell (1973) indicates that modern tourists, who are concerned about the shallowness and inauthenticity of their lives, are motivated by the hope of discovering and experiencing authentic cultures. Although—as Cohen (1988) suggests—authenticity is a socially negotiable concept perceived by individuals based on their own personal experiences and expectations (Leigh, Peters, and Shelton 2006), prior research has established that objects and experiences that are perceived inauthentic may not have the ability to authenticate one’s individual and communal identity. However, the present study attempts to put on the weight to the other side by showing that through cynicism, perceived inauthenticity could authenticate consumers’ individual and communal identities, based on an examination of consumption in the traditional cultural district of Insa-dong in Seoul, South Korea. Insa-dong is an ideal empirical setting because about 100,000 domestic and foreign tourists visit the district every day (Insa Traditional Culture Preservation Association 2012), but many Koreans often criticize it as inauthentic and overly commercialized.

While early studies on cynicism tend to view it as a psychological defect that needs to be corrected (Fleming and Spicer 2003), more recent research shows that cynicism is not necessarily unethical and does not lead to negative outcomes for organizations, employees, and consumers, emphasizing its role in social critique (Karfakis and Kokkinidis 2011) and consumer resistance to the consumerist marketplace (Mikkonen, Moisander, and Firat 2011). However, both negative and positive cynicism often have an effect on individuals’ identity construction as protection against aggressive marketing practices (Helm 2004; Odou and de Pechpeyrou 2010) and overwhelming managerial controls (Casey 1995; Kunda 1992). As seen in Mikkonen et al. (2011), cynicism is also part of the consumer identity project by allowing people to take the moral high ground to disillusioned consumers of society and organizations. However, it does not necessarily lead to reforming actions that help change society or organizations (Bloom 2008) because while cynical individuals may dis-identify with cultural prescriptions of a given society or organization they still perform them (Fleming and Spicer 2003), and, arguably, one such case in modern society is nationalism.

While nation and nationalism have long been discussed as a contingent outcome of modernity (Gellner 1983) based on artificial invention of tradition (Hobsbawm 1983), recent studies on nationalism examine everyday reproduction of nationhood. They highlight that the seemingly declining importance of national identity, as commonly claimed by postmodernists, may be based on the fact that people take national identity for granted in their everyday life. Billig (1995) calls this taken for granted national identity banal nationalism. In their everyday life, the citizens of a nation are reminded of their national place in a world of nations, but this reminding is taken for granted national identity banal nationalism. In their everyday life, the citizens of a nation are reminded of Korean national identity regardless of whether they enjoy or criticize the offered commodities and experiences. Rather than mindless acceptance and enjoyment, criticism on the authenticity of the place and the offered commodities may engange these consumers more strongly in the matter of whether the commodity/service is truly Korean. In this process, Korean identity may be reproduced even though they are not directly involved in actual consumption of such inauthentic commodities. Therefore, while criticizing or talking about national tradition and its authenticity, nations can be discursively constituted (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008).

The primary data for this research project were collected in 2013 through qualitative interviews with 24 native Korean consumers who had prior experiences in visiting Insa-dong. Materials and photos obtained since 2004 through multiple observations in the location were used as supplement data for our project. Other supplementary data include websites of Insa-dong-related entities, government promotional materials, newspaper articles, documentaries about Insa-dong, movies about Korean tradition, among others. Data analysis entailed an iterative process of coding and categorizing. Provisional understandings of consumers’ experiences were formed, challenged, and revised in multiple readings of the individual transcripts and the data set as a whole in conjunction with emerging themes, including cynicism on Insa-dong and the relation between the consumption of Insa-dong and the consumer self.

In contrast to a typical description of the place as “a museum alive with the lives, histories, and cultures of Korean people” (Insa Traditional Culture Preservation Association 2012), the research participants perceived Insa-dong as an inauthentic representation of Korean traditional culture despite its official christening as a traditional cultural district. Data analysis demonstrates that despite its contested authenticity, however, consuming the place brand of Insa-dong authenticates the individual consumer self and reproduces a national identity as Korean through engaged cynicism on commercialization, governmental control, and the static view of tradition that the government and businesses in the district take in constructing the place.

Through our analysis, Korean nationalism, which incorporates both banal and hot nationalism based on the historical trajectory of Koreans who experienced both brutal colonialism and rapid economic development after the Korean War, has emerged as a condition that makes consumers engage in the consumption of the place despite their perceived inauthenticity of the themed place. This reinforces the association of Insa-dong and Korean tradition and ultimately the reproduction of Korean national identity for the consumers of the place.

By examining the consumption practices in a traditional cultural district of Insa-dong, this study has illustrated the role of cynicism as an important mechanism to authenticate the self for modern consumers who often face inauthentic market offerings. This study also shows that socio-cultural ideology such as nationalism is an important condition for consumers’ ongoing engagement in inauthenticity.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Relative comparison suggests that presenting very different (v. very similar) items sequentially should accentuate the stark differences among the items such that a hedonic, pleasurable item should seem much more pleasurable following the presentation of a functional, utilitarian item as opposed to following the presentation of a hedonic item.

Indeed, previous research, such as the two-factor model on assimilation and contrast (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1993) would suggest that stimuli that have little overlap should produce contrast effects granted plenty of cognitive resources are available. Otherwise, assimilation is predicted. Other research exploring the juxtaposition of two or more products in a market share similar effects of dominance (Huber, Payne, and Puto 1982), contrasted preferences, and even surprising consequence on choice (Wilcox et al. 2009).

However, the prior research focused primarily on the rational, logical considerations of product comparisons and less, if at all, on the metacognitive experience of fluency that can arise from observing products in choice contexts. In the current research, we propose that the presentation of heterogeneous or homogeneous sets of products can affect an individual’s metacognitive experience of fluency and, in turn, affect the individual’s evaluation of a product. More specifically, we propose that the presentation of homogeneous products in a given set will be experienced as fluent and, as such, result in more heuristic, extreme evaluations. The presentation of heterogeneous products (i.e., varying on even just one dimension) in a given set will be experienced as disfluent and, as such, result in more deliberative, conservative evaluations, thereby attenuating the evaluations of the products.

To test our theory, we conducted three studies using products selected from the famous SkyMall magazine each pretested to be either utilitarian or hedonic. In study 1 (n = 122), utilitarian products presented with other utilitarian products (i.e., fluent) were rated as significantly more usefulfunctional than when they were presented with hedonic products (i.e., disfluent). In study 2 (n = 125), hedonic products presented with other hedonic products (i.e., fluent) were rated as significantly more funfunny than when they were presented with utilitarian products (i.e., disfluent). These findings are contrary to what the two-factor theory would predict regarding stimuli, overlap, and the likelihood for contrast or assimilation. In study 3 (n = 118), we use products within the same product category (i.e., shirts) to rule out the possibility that effects in the first two studies were due to product variation as opposed to the varying utilitarian/ hedonic attributes of the products. Study 3 replicated the findings of the prior studies by showing that utilitarian shirts (i.e., dress shirts) are perceived to be more usefulfunctional when presented in a series with other utilitarian shirts, hedonic shirts (e.g., a Hawaiian shirt) are perceived to be more funfunny when presented in a series with other hedonic shirts, and the heterogeneous presentation of shirts mitigates their usefulnessfunctionality (for utilitarian shirts) and their funfunniness (for hedonic shirts).

With respect to theory, the studies contribute to the prior research on contrast effects, the two-factor model on assimilation and contrast, and other, more rational approaches to understanding comparisons between stimuli by adding a metacognitive, “feelings as information” perspective to the literature. Although rationally the presentation of two very different products should highlight their differences and result in more extreme evaluations, particularly on the dimension on which the stimuli differ, the metacognitive experiences of fluency and disfluency that arise from homogeneous and heterogeneous product presentation yield more extreme and more conservative evaluations, respectively. Thus, prior rational theorizing that suggests heterogeneous presentation should lead to greater contrast in evaluations does not explain the muted findings found within the heterogeneous presentation evaluations herein. More work can be done to explore the relationship between the prior research and the current findings, specifically with respect to when consumers are more likely to rely on rationality versus their metacognitive experience.

With respect to practice, the presentation of product options and varieties has been an important cornerstone of marketing communications for decades but plays an even more important role in online markets where customers can scroll through hundreds to thousands of products on a website. Whether it makes sense to feature similar products or different products in sequences may depend on the marketing objective of a company, as there may be instances in which differences should be highlighted (e.g., comparing with a competitor’s products) or minimized (e.g., offering alternatives for an out-of-stock option). Equally important, understanding the mindset of consumers matters, as customers engaging in more rational, deliberate decision making may exhibit contrast and assimilation effects consistent with the prior literature whereas other customers engaging in less rational processing may be more likely to rely on the metacognitive experiences shown here.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Marketers often use limited-time offers to attract customers. For example, retailers make offers that are for “one week only”; flash sales websites make offers stating “today’s deal” or “deal expires in one hour”; and online shopping portals make limited-time offers with a countdown clock ticking down the remaining time. Given the popularity of limited time offers, it is important to understand when these offers do or do not work in terms of improving product evaluation. Past research has found that putting any kind of restriction on offers – such as time restriction or quantity restriction – tends to increase product evaluation because restrictions prompt consumers to make inferences of product value (Inman et al. 1997; Parker and Lehman 2011). The present research extends this literature by applying the theoretical lens of reactance to limited time offers, and showing that the positive effect of limited time offers on product evaluation is moderated by factors related to reactance.

Reactance has been defined as the motivational state aroused when individuals perceive threats to their freedom of action (Brehm 1966; Levav and Zhu 2009). We propose that limited time offers can prompt reactance when consumers perceive that their freedom to buy the product whenever they want is being overly restricted. For example, compared to the offer “20% off regular price” which has no time restriction, a limited-time offer stating “20% off regular price, deal expires in one hour” gives consumers lesser freedom regarding when the offer can be accepted. We suggest that such restrictions on one’s freedom of choice timing can prompt reactance, which in turn can reduce the positive effect of limited time offers on product evaluation. We verify this proposed reactance mechanism in series of four studies by showing that a set of factors related to reactance – trait reactance, an experimental manipulation of reactance, and time to expiry of the offer – moderate the positive effect of limited time offers on product evaluation. We also show that negative reactance responses to limited time offers can be overcome by reminding consumers of future regret if they miss the offer.

Study 1 tested the hypothesis that individuals high in trait reactance are likely to experience greater reactance to limited time offers than those low in trait reactance, which in turn should reduce the positive effect of limited time offers. One hundred and eighty student participants read an advertisement for a new brand of digital camera which manipulated the presence versus absence of a limited time offer by including or omitting the phrase “one day only, buy now!” Participants then indicated their intent to purchase the advertised camera, and responded to a multi-item scale for trait reactance (Hong and Faedda 1996). Consistent with a reactance mechanism, spotlight analysis showed that the presence (versus absence) of the limited time offer increased purchase intent for low trait reactance respondents, but not for high trait reactance respondents. Study 2 tested the hypothesis that experimentally increasing reactance will reduce the positive effect of limited time offers on product evaluation. Two hundred and forty seven participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk evaluated an advertisement for a pair of headphones which manipulated the presence versus absence of a limited time offer, as well as reactance to the limited time offer. Consistent with a reactance mechanism, the limited time offer increased purchase intent in the control condition but not in the high reactance condition. Further, reduction in purchase intent due to the reactance manipulation was found to be mediated by the manipulation check for reactance.

Study 3 tested the hypothesis that decreasing the time to expiry will increase reactance to limited time offers, and thus reduce the positive effect of limited time offers on product evaluation. One hundred and thirteen student participants evaluated an advertisement for a spa package with or without a limited time offer, featuring short or long expiry times. Consistent with a reactance mechanism, the limited time offer increased purchase intent for longer expiry times such as one week and one day, but not for shorter expiry times such as one hour and one minute. Finally, study 4 investigated whether negative reactance responses to limited time offers can be overcome by reminding consumers of future regret if they miss the offer. Two hundred and fifty nine student participants evaluated an online advertisement for a backpack with a short-horizon limited time offer. The advertisement manipulated the presence versus absence of a limited time offer, as well as the presence versus absence of an anticipated regret reminder. Results showed that the presence of an anticipated regret reminder was sufficient to overcome reactance responses and restore a positive effect of the limited time offer on purchase intent.

In summary, our findings make three theoretical contributions to the literature on limited time offers. First, we identify a new reactance mechanism underlying the effect of limited time offers on product evaluation. Second, we identify new reactance-based moderators of the effect of limited time offers on product evaluation, i.e., trait reactance, an experimental manipulation of reactance, and time to expiry of the offer. Third, we show that reminders of future regret can overcome reactance and restore the positive effect of limited-time offers on product evaluation. Methodologically, we present convergent evidence across four studies using different product categories and measures of product evaluation. Managerially, our results give new insight into when the widely used promotional technique of limited time offer is likely to be effective for increasing product evaluation.

REFERENCES


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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The effect of financial education interventions is limited (Fernandes, Lynch, and Netemeyer 2014). Financial literacy has a very small effect on financial behavior. The effect of financial literacy is even lower among low-income groups who are the ones most in need for interventions to improve their financial health. Financial matters are a problem for many consumers. The Pew Research Center (2015) reports that 55% of American households can replace less than one month of their income through their savings, and a 2016 PWC study found that 45% of employees stated that personal financial matters cause them the most stress in their lives; more stress than their jobs, health, or relationships combined.

Therefore, consumer researchers need to develop interventions and nudges that improve financial well-being. However, very little is known about what drives financial well-being and downstream implications posing a problem for policy makers about how to improve financial well-being of people.

The lack of an accepted definition of this construct and little systematic examination of its antecedents and consequences hampers efforts to address financial well-being and its role in general well-being. From a narrative qualitative procedure and five survey-based studies, the objectives of this research are to: 1) define the construct of financial well-being; 2) posit a framework of its antecedents and its relationship to the consequence of general well-being; 3) develop and validate a measure of financial well-being (Studies 1-3); and 4) empirically test the framework (Studies 4 and 5).

We had access to qualitative research from the CFPB (2015). They interviewed 59 adult consumers. Interviews were transcribed, sorted, coded, and then catalogued using computer-aided qualitative data analysis software. Building from existing literature and this qualitative data, we conceptualize financial well-being as two separate, but related, constructs: 1) stress related to the management of money today (current money management stress); and 2) a sense of security in one’s financial future (future financial security).

Using three survey studies, we developed measures of these constructs and demonstrated predicted correlations with other constructs in the nomological net. We reduced the number of items to 10 (five for each construct of the scale).

With two additional studies (Study 4 and Study 5), we offered and supported a model of potential antecedents and consequences of current money management stress and future financial security. Importantly, we demonstrated that current money management stress and future financial security are influenced by different antecedents, but shared the same outcome of well-being. As such, the primary thesis of this paper relates to the interplay of stress about money matters today and a sense of security about a financial future in producing feelings of financial well-being and, ultimately, emotional / psychological well-being.

Current money management stress was predicted by traits and behaviors that are negative and more short-term oriented: making only minimal payments, lacking in self-control, and being materialistic. Behaviors and traits that reflect longer-term thinking, such as planning for money long-term and a willingness to take investment risk, were related to future financial security. Current money management stress and perceived future financial security had the predicted effects on well-being. Finally, we found that within the battery of controls in the model, financial literacy showed a small negative partial effect on perceived future financial security, and had no effect on money management stress. This finding is consistent with existing literature on the lack of relationship between financial knowledge and financial outcomes.

The measures we developed are reliable, valid, and brief. These measures could be used by a variety of agencies and firms specializing in savings and retirement to gauge how consumers are feeling about their current and future financial situations, relate these measures to what consumers are actually doing, and then advise those who feel stressed or insecure about their financial future. The constructs and measures developed here would allow prioritization of interventions based on the relative opportunity with the present and future dimensions of financial well-being.

The results raise the issue of whether interventions aimed at reducing materialism and improving self-control would reduce current money management stress. In addition, whether training in planning for money, self-efficacy / ability, and willingness to take investment risk would enhance future financial security. The answer is “possibly”.

Though materialism is a trait/value likely internalized early in life (Richins 2004, 2011), there is evidence that some traits like self-control are malleable into early adulthood (Moffitt et al. 2011). Thus, school-based training / interventions designed to increase self-control with money may be worthwhile (Pathak, Holmes, and Zimmerman 2011). Similarly, financial skill, willingness to take investment risks, and planning for money are skills that can be acquired (Hader et al. 2013; Perry and Morris 2005).

Financial education efforts in these domains may be at least as effective, if not more so, than acquiring content knowledge about interest rates, bonds, etc. (Fernandes et al. 2014). Thus, designing and testing programs to increase financial skill, willingness to take investment risks, and planning for money leading to intended changes in future financial security seem to be worthwhile undertakings for academics and policymakers alike (CFPB 2015).

The measures developed in the present research – future financial security and money management stress collectively explained 33% (Study 4) and 39% (Study 5) of the variance in well-being. Recall that prior to our studies, we found little evidence examining the financial well-being / psychological well-being linkage. We also observe that the effect of current money management stress on well-being is stronger for low-income individuals, and that the effect of future financial security is stronger for younger individuals. Therefore, specific interventions aimed at current money management for low-income individuals or future financial security for younger individuals are more promising at improving the well-being of these individuals.

This study represents only an initial investigation of what traits, behaviors, and circumstances produce higher or lower levels of well-being and the implications of financial well-being for overall well-being. It is our intent that the concepts and findings presented here will instigate additional work and ultimately lead to a working model driving policy and program decisions.