The ACR-Asia Pacific 2006 Sydney was a very well attended and lively conference very much in keeping with the ACR tradition of questioning boundaries and examining shifting borders. A truly International group of consumer researchers descended on the beautiful harbour city for a conference filled with examining new consumption phenomenon and re-examining old issues from new perspectives and using new methodologies.

The conference saw delegates from the Asia-Pacific (Hong-Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, China, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Australia) as well as from Europe (Denmark, Germany, France, Norway, England, Ireland and Scotland), N. America (USA and Canada) and South Africa. A truly borderless forum followed in exchange of ideas and the social events around the conference.

The competitive papers, special session summaries and abstracts are presented in this volume. We have had a wonderful (if sometimes stressful!) time organising and running this conference. We would like to thank the three universities who made this possible (University of New South Wales, Auckland University of Technology and The University of Sydney). Help from numerous support people must be mentioned- Ms Nadia Withers of UNSW whose support knew no bounds and Maree Magafas who helped edit the proceedings – Thank you! To Cathy Kim Sewell a big thank you for the design logo of the website and proceedings cover.

The help on the ground of the wonderful volunteer Doctoral students of UNSW and USYD who were great ambassadors for their universities (especially Jane Scott and Jeffrey Lim for the seamless management of equipment and registration)!

A very special thank you to all those people who were involved in the Doctoral Colloquium (Mark Uncles UNSW, Donnel Briley and Elizabeth Cowley USYD, Margaret Hogg University of Manchester, Sammy Bonsu York University and of course Russ Belk and Andy Mitchell who inspired the doctoral students and Catherine Sutton-Brady of USYD who managed and co-ordinated the 30 doctoral students and the Faculty experts!

The three heads of Marketing Schools involved Prof. Paul Patterson (UNSW), Prof. Chris Styles, Prof. Sid Gray (USYD) and Prof. Roger Marshall (AUT) for giving in to our many requests for support and help. We are particularly grateful to these people for sponsoring the spectacular social events – the Welcome Cocktail party (Australian Graduate School of Management (AGSM) and Auckland University of Technology) and Conference Dinner at St. Andrews (University of Sydney).

To Professor Russ Belk we owe a very big thank you – his involvement on so many levels in and around the conference made it very special.

To all those whose papers and abstracts appear within, you helped make this conference what it was- Thank you!

Best Regards,

**CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS:**

**Margaret Craig Lees,** Auckland Institute of Technology

**Gary Gregory,** UNSW

**Teresa Davis,** University of Sydney
2006 ACR –Asia Pacific Conference

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Gary Gregory, UNSW and
Teresa Davis, University of Sydney

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Giana Eckhardt, Australian Graduate School of Management
Paul Henry, University of Sydney

Doctoral Colloquium
Catherine Sutton-Brady, University of Sydney (Coordinator)
Panel of Research Experts:
Russ Belk, University of Utah (Qualitative Stream Team Leader)
Andrew Mitchell, University of Toronto (Quantitative Team Leader)
Sammy Bonsu, York University
Donnel Briley, University of Sydney
Alexander Chernev, Northwestern University
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Michael Beverland, University of Melbourne, Australia.
Namita Bhatnagar, University of Manitoba, Canada.
Sammy K. Bonsu, Schulich School of Business, York University, Canada.
Suzan Boztepe, Middle East Technical University, Turkey.
Donnel Briley, University of Sydney, Australia.
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Darren Dahl, Sauder School of Business, Canada.
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Amir Abbas Zadpoor, Department of Biomedical Engineering, Amirkabir University of Technology, Iran.
Xin Zhao, University of Hawaii, USA
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Warat Winit UNSW
### Association for Consumer Research Asia Pacific Sydney 2006 Conference (draft)

**Program**

**Thursday the 15th June 2006, **Doctoral Colloquium** at Novotel Darling Harbour**

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<tr>
<td>8.30am-12.20pm</td>
<td>Doctoral Colloquium morning session</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.30pm-1.30pm</td>
<td>Lunch Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.30pm -5.30pm</td>
<td>Doctoral Colloquium Afternoon Break out sessions</td>
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<td>5.30pm-6.30pm</td>
<td>ACR Conference Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.30pm -9.30pm</td>
<td><strong>ACR Asia Pacific Sydney University of New South Wales/Australian Graduate School of Management Sponsored Cocktail Reception at Terrace Rooms Novotel</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.30am -9.30am</td>
<td><strong>Welcome and Keynote address by Prof. Russell Belk</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| ACR Registration desk open (8.00am-5pm) | **Special Session: Beyond Brand Equity**  
Chair: Dawn Iacobucci University of Pennsylvania,  
Discussant: Seshan Ramaswami Indian School of Business  

*Nation Equity: Incidental Emotions in Country-of-Origin Effects*  
D. Maheswaran, New York University, USA  
Cathy Chen, Singapore Management University, Singapore  

*The Dynamic of Brand Equity*  
Krittinee Nuttavuthisit, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand  

*The Impact of Co-Branding on the Ingredient Brand: An Information Processing Perspective* |
| Session 1.2  
(10.30am-12.00 noon) | Competitive Session: Exploratory and Qualitative Inquiry  
Chair: George Moschis, Georgia State University, USA  
Approach-Avoidance conflicts in Consumer Behaviour: Towards a Conceptual Framework  
Margaret Hogg, Lancaster University, Management School, UK  
Elfreide Penz Vienna University f Economics and Business Administration, Austria  
An Exploratory Investigation into Outcomes of Impulse Buying in Vietnam, A Transitional Economy  
Mai Thi Tuyet Nguyen, National Economics University, Hanoi, Vietnam  
Jerman Rose, Washington State University, USA  
Values and Self-Esteem  
Fredric Kropp, Monterey Institute of International Studies  
Multitheoretical Perspectives on Cognitive Responses of Older Adults  
George P. Moschis, Georgia State University, USA  
Anil Mathur, Hofstra University, USA |
| --- | --- |
| Session 1.3  
(10.30am-12.00 noon) | Competitive Session: Understanding the Consumer’s Patronage  
Chair:  
The Ultimate Service Failure: An Investigation of Consumer Responses to Rejection  
Kelley Main, York University, Canada  
Laurence Ashworth, Queen's University, Canada  
Tread Softly: Using Videography to capture shopping behaviour  
Daniela Spanjaard, University of Technology, Sydney - Australia  
Lynne Freeman, University of Technology, Sydney - Australia  
Why Retail Therapy? A Preliminary Investigation of the Role of Self-Concept Discrepancy, Self-Esteem, Negative Emotions, and Proximity of Clothing to Self in the Compensatory Consumption of Apparel Products  
Jennifer Yurchisin, Iowa State University, USA  
Ruoh-Nan Yan, Colorado State University, USA  
Kittichai Watchravesringkan, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA  
Cuiping Chen, University of Arizona, USA  
Why we give: An investigation of the donor decision process  
Carolyn Ujcic, The Ohio State University, USA  
Katherine Beaulieu, The Ohio State University, USA  
Nicole Votolato, The Ohio State University, USA  
Rao Unnava, The Ohio State University, USA |
| Session 1.4 (10.30am-12.00noon) | Special Session: Obesity and Adolescent Consumer Behavior: Why Are Young People Getting Fat?  
Chair: Mariam Beruchashvili  
Discussant: Patricia Kennedy  
The Role of Body Image and Self-Esteem in Adolescent Consumers' Use of Marketing Communication Messages as Input for Food Choices  
Patricia Kennedy, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, USA  
Mariam Beruchashvili, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, USA  
Socially Constituted Food Consumption of Adolescents: The Retail Environment  
Tim Burkink, University of Nebraska - Kerney, USA  
Energy-dense high-fat foods and sugared beverages have become meal replacements for many adolescents in the United States.  
The Effect of School Food Policy on Adolescent Obesity  
Bree Dority, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, USA  
Mary McGarvey, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, USA |
| Session 1.5 (10.30am-12 noon) | FILM FESTIVAL  
**Quest for a Story**, Shelagh Ferguson, University of Otago, 28 mins.  
**Festival Frenzy: On the Streets with Arts Festival Attendees**, Kate Daellenbach, Victoria University of Wellington, Richard Seymour, University of Sydney, and Cynthia Webster, University of Newcastle,  
**Opportunity Identification through Observational Consumer Research: Behind Closed Doors**, Cynthia Webster, University of Newcastle, Richard Seymour, University of Sydney, and Kate Daellenbach, Victoria University of Wellington, 9 mins.  
**Why Don’t Consumers Behave Ethically? The Social Construction of Consumption**, Giana Eckhardt and Timothy Devinney, Australian Graduate School of Management, and Russell Belk, University of Utah |
| LUNCH (12.00Noon – 2PM) | DISH RESTAURANT |
| Session 2.1 (2pm-3.30pm) | Competitive Session: Pushy Sales People and Shelf Displays: The Retail Environment  
Chair: Kelley Main, York University  
Routinization of Grocery Shopping Behavior  
Adeline Ong, RMIT University, Australia  
Harmen Oppewal, Monash University, Australia  
David Bednall, Deakin University, Australia  
The effect of fashion store layout and visual merchandising on female consumer walking patterns: a systems perspective  
Elizabeth Kempen, Department of Consumer Sciences, North-West |
| Session 2.2 (2pm-3.30pm) | Competitive Session: Do Borders Matter to Consumers?  
|                         | Chair: John Thogerson, Aarhus School of Business |
|                         | The consumer amity influence on foreign product purchase in the U.S  
|                         | Jean-Francois Ouellet, HEC Montreal, Canada |
|                         | When Borders Matter: Australian Consumers Blaming and Forgiving France  
|                         | Louise Heslop, Sprott School of Business, Carleton University, Canada  
|                         | David Cray, Sprott School of Business, Carleton University, Canada |
|                         | Cross-National and Lifestyle Differences in Consumer Choice Criteria and Motives with Regard to a Processed Organic Food  
|                         | John Thogersen, Aarhus School of Business, Denmark  
|                         | Lone Bredahl, Aarhus School of Business, Denmark  
|                         | Caterina Presi, Leeds University Business School, United Kingdom |

| Session 2.3 (2pm-3.30pm) | Special Session: Just for Fun: The Social Dynamics of Fantasy, Play and Fun  
|                         | Chair: Linda Price University of Arizona  
|                         | Discussant: Russell Belk University of Utah  
|                         | Creating and Negotiating Collective Fantasy and Play at Modern-Day Renaissance Festivals  
|                         | Clinton D. Lanier, Jr., University of Nebraska, USA  
|                         | Eric J. Arnould, University of Arizona, USA  
|                         | Negotiating Work and Play On and Off the Soccer Field  
|                         | Tandy Chalmers, University of Arizona, USA  
|                         | Linda L. Price, University of Arizona, USA  
|                         | Patricia Kennedy, University of Nebraska, USA  
|                         | Fun Experiences of Young Consumers  
|                         | Sayantania Mukherjee, University of California Irvine, USA  
|                         | Alladi Venkatesh, University of California Irvine, USA |

<p>| Session 2.4 | Special Session: Anti-consumption: Rejecting, refusing, and resisting the market. |</p>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>(2pm-3.30pm)</td>
<td><strong>Chairs:</strong> Karen Fernandez and Michael S W Lee, University of Auckland</td>
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<td><strong>Discussant:</strong> Margaret Hogg, University of Lancaster</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Anti-Consumption Research: Exploring the Boundaries of Consumption Michael S W Lee, The University of Auckland Business School, New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You don’t have to be paranoid to shop here but being sceptical helps:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Empowered New Zealand consumers, past and present?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ian Brailsford, University of Auckland, New Zealand</td>
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<td>Deirdre Shaw, Glasgow Caledonian University, United Kingdom</td>
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<td>Exploring the symbolic universe of the Rainbow: A framework for doing</td>
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<td>Joseph Rumbo, James Madison University, United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 2.5</td>
<td><strong>FILM FESTIVAL</strong></td>
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<td>(2pm-3.30pm)</td>
<td>Prosuming Multiple Gendered Selves: A Multi-country Study of Young Female Achievers, Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sydney, Ingeborg Kleppe, Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Paul Henry, University of Sydney</td>
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<td>What is Authentic Culture? Hyperreality Strategy at Santa Village in Finland, Junko Kimura, Hosei University, 20 mins.</td>
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<td>Headbanging as Resistance or Refuge, Marylouise Caldwell and Paul Henry, University of Sydney, 26 mins.</td>
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<td>AFTERNOON</td>
<td><strong>FOYER OF TERRACE ROOMS</strong></td>
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<td>TEA BREAK</td>
<td>(3.30PM-4PM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 3.1</td>
<td><strong>Competitive Session: Close Encounters of the Service Kind</strong></td>
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<td>(4pm-5.30pm)</td>
<td><strong>Chair:</strong> David Fortin University of Canterbury</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Customer satisfaction with customer service and service quality in</td>
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<td>supermarkets in a third world context</td>
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<td>Nadene JMM Marx, , Republic of South Africa</td>
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<td>Alet C Erasmus, , Republic of South Africa</td>
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<td>Service Encounter Interaction Model</td>
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<td>Tony Ward, Central Queensland University, Australia</td>
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<td>Leonce Newby, Central Queensland University, Australia</td>
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<td>Store Atmosphere effects on Customer Perceptions of the Retail Salesperson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Natalie Hedrick, Department of Marketing, Monash University, Australia</td>
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<td>Harmen Oppewal, Department of Marketing, Monash University, Australia</td>
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<td>Michael Beverland, Department of Management, University of Melbourne,</td>
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</table>
Free entrance comes at a price. An exploration of some perceptions of museums and monuments audiences
Le Gall-Ely Marine, Universite de Rennes 2, France
Urbain Caroline, Universite de Nantes, France
Bourgeon-Renault Dominique, Universite de France-Comte, France

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<th>Competitive Session: The Material, the Spiritual and the Symbolic Chair: Shelagh Ferguson, University of Otago</th>
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<td>A Categorization Approach to Analyzing The Global Consumer Culture Debate</td>
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<td>Michael A. Merz, University of Hawai`i at Manoa, USA</td>
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<td>Yi He, University of Hawai`i at Manoa, USA</td>
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<td>Dana L. Alden, University of Hawai`i at Manoa, USA</td>
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<td>Duality of Material and Social Life: An Ethnography of Consumers' Goods and Finances</td>
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<td>Ada Leung, University of Nebraska at Kearney, USA</td>
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<td>Disposing Meaningful Possessions to Buyers with a Shared Self</td>
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<td>John Lastovicka, Arizona State University USA</td>
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<td>Karen Fernandez, University of Auckland NZ</td>
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<td>Consumer Spirituality and Marketing</td>
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<td>Sudhir Kale, Bond University, Australia</td>
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<tr>
<th>Session 3.3 (4pm-5.30pm)</th>
<th>Special Session: The Search for Authenticity in a Borderless World: Case Examples</th>
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<td>Chair: Michael Beverland University of Melbourne</td>
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<td>Discussant: Linda Price, University of Arizona</td>
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<td>Defining authenticity: an Ethnographic Study of Australian Hip Hop</td>
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<td>Damien Arthur, University of Adelaide, Australia</td>
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<td>Pascale Quester, University of Adelaide, Australia</td>
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<td>Aesthetic Consumption as Extraordinary Experience: No Raft Required</td>
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<td>Lisa Hoffman, Monash University, Australia</td>
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<td>Francis Farrelly, Monash University, Australia</td>
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<td>Michael Beverland, University of Melbourne, Australia</td>
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<td>Intracultural Variation: Reactions to Authentic Communications within the Distance Running Subculture</td>
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<td>Tandy Chalmers, University of Arizona, USA</td>
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<td>Linda Price, University of Arizona, USA</td>
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<tr>
<th>Session 3.4 (4pm-5.30pm)</th>
<th>Competitive Session: The Body, Stigma and the Public Gaze Chair: James. W. Gentry, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Let Them Eat Cake - If They Want To': Consumer Experience of Self-Control in Dieting</td>
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<td>Mariam Beruchashvili, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA</td>
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<td>James W. Gentry, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 3.5</td>
<td>Special Session: Seeing is Believing ? Visual Data and Representation in Consumer Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3.30pm-5.30pm)</td>
<td>Chairs: Mary Louise Caldwell and Paul Henry, University of Sydney</td>
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<td>Discussants: Len Tiu Wright, Leicester Business School and Giana Eckhart Australian, Graduate School of Management</td>
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<td>Applying Systematic Combining Using Abductive Logic to Video-Ethnography</td>
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<td>Paul Henry, University of Sydney, Australia</td>
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<td>Mary Louise Caldwell, University of Sydney, Australia</td>
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<td>Singing, Seeing, Believing: An Analysis Of Religious Expression</td>
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<td>Jeaney Yip, University of Sydney, Australia</td>
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<td>Alternative Roles For Documentary In Consumer Research</td>
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<td>Giana Eckhardt, Australian Graduate School of Management</td>
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</tbody>
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| 7.30PM-10.30PM | Conference Banquet Dinner at St. Andrews College, University of Sydney. Sponsored by University of Sydney, Discipline of Marketing, School of Business |
| Buses leave at 7pm from hotel lobby |

| Session 4.1 | Competitive Session: Its All About Brands: Extensions, Replications and Licensing |
| (9am-10.30am) | Chair: Chris Styles, University of Sydney |
| | The Role of Brand and Product Knowledge in Consumer Evaluations of Brand Extensions |
| | Yun Ma, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand |
| | Mark Glynn, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand |
| | Examining the Effects of Brand Licensing |
| | Klaus-Peter Wiedmann, University of Hanover, Department of Marketing and Management, Germany |
| | Dirk Ludewig, University of Hanover, Department of Marketing and Management, |
| Session 4.2 (9am-10.30am) | Special Session: Fast Forwarding Consumer Experience: The Use of Information Acceleration to Predict Future Consumer Preferences  
Chair: Harmen Oppewal, Monash University  
Discussant: Timothy Devinney, AGSM  
Modelling Demand for Radical New Technologies and Services  
Tim Coltman, Wollongong University, Australia  
Timothy Devinney, AGSM, Australia  
Jordan Louviere, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia  
Consumer Modelling in Space Tourism: An Illustration of Information Acceleration  
Geoffrey Crouch, La Trobe University, Australia  
Timothy Devinney, AGSM, Australia  
Jordan Louviere, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia  
Tim Coltman, Wollongong University, Australia  
Decision States and Information Acceleration: Effects of Acceleration on Information Search and Product Preferences  
Mark Morrison, Charles Sturt University, Australia  
Harmen Oppewal, Monash University, Australia  
David Waller, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia  
Paul Wang, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia |
| Session 4.3 (9am – 10.30am) | Competitive Session: Deal or No Deal? The Games Consumers Play  
Chair:  
Am I Really Having a Good Deal? The Impact of Self-Construal on the Roles of Internal and External Reference Prices in Price Evaluations  
Cathy Y. Chen, Assistant Professor, Singapore Management University, Singapore  
Meaningless Differentiation and Purchase Incidence  
Piyush Kumar, University of Georgia, USA  
Measuring the Influence of Involvement and Other Contextual Variables on Interest and Selling Price in Online Auctions  
Justine Brown, Christchurch College of Education, New Zealand  
Peter Rhodes, University of Canterbury, New Zealand  
David Fortin, University of Canterbury, New Zealand  
The Games Shopper Play: Differential Effectiveness of Game based promotions across consumers  
Donnel Briley, University of Sydney, Australia  
Shai Danziger, Ben-Gurion University |
| Session 4.4  
(9am-10.30am) | Competitive Session: Putting the Consumer Back in Consumer Research: Poverty, Healthcare, Risk and Stigma.  
Chari: Janet Hoek, Massey University |
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| Feel-Good Medicine: How the Customer Metaphor is Undermining the American Healthcare System  
James Hutton, Fairleigh Dickinson University, USA |
| Effects of Cigarette On-Pack Warning Labels on Smokers' Perceptions and Behaviour  
Hoek Janet, Massey University, New Zealand  
Maubach Ninya, Massey University, New Zealand  
Gendall Phil, Massey University, New Zealand |
| Understanding Risk Taking and Protection Intentions Among Youth  
May Lwin, Nanyang Technological University  
Siok Kuan Tambyah, National University of Singapore |
| Keeping Up Appearances: Low-income Consumers' Strategies Aimed at Disguising Poverty  
Kathy Hamilton, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland  
Miriam Catterall, Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland |

| Session 4.5  
(9am-10.30am) | Competitive Session: Transition, Liminality and Transformation: Migration and Cultural in –betweens  
Chair: Bettina Cornwell, University of Queensland |
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| Advertising Liminality: Advertising as Liminal Space of Social Transformation in China  
Xin Zhao, University of Hawaii, USA  
Russell W. Belk, University of Utah |
| Immigrant Acculturation as a Dialogical Process  
L. Wakiuru Wamwara-Mbugua, Wright State University  
T. Bettina Cornwell, University of Queensland |
| Exploring Generational And Cultural Change In The Consumption Patterns Of Korean Migrant Families  
Mary Jung, University of Sydney  
Catherine Sutton-Brady, University of Sydney  
Teresa Davis, University of Sydney |

| Morning Coffee/Tea Break  
(10.30am - 11.00am) | FOYER OF TERRACE ROOMS |

| Session 5.1  
(11.00am-12.30pm) | Competitive Session: Meaning Creation, Narratives and the Grammar of the Marketplace  
Chair: Darach Turley, Dublin City University |
### Session 5.2 (11am-12.30pm)

**Competitive Session: Using Advertising Experiments: Voices, Laughter and Embarrassment**  
**Chair: Lars Bergkvist, University of Wollongong**

- Provocative sexually appealing advertisements: the influence of embarrassment on attitude towards the Ad.  
  Virginie De Barnier, France  
  Pierre Valette-Florence, University Pierre Mendes-France

- Different Effects of Humor Advertising by Expression Type  
  Myung-Ho Park, Keimyung University, South Korea  
  Huiuk Yi, Yeungnam University, South Korea  
  Tae-Gil Ha, Keimyung University, South Korea

- Hearing Double: The Effect of Voice-Overs in Informational Messages  
  Juliana Renovato, San Jose State University, USA  
  Erica Medina, San Jose State University, USA  
  Therese Louie, San Jose State University, USA  
  Kurt Le, San Jose State University, USA  
  Cynthia Enriquez, San Jose State University, USA  
  Prabha Chandrasekar, San Jose State University, USA

- Methodological Issues in Advertising Laboratory Experiments  
  Lars Bergkvist, Marketing Research Innovation Centre, University of Wollongong, Australia  
  John R. Rossiter, Marketing Research Innovation Centre, University of Wollongong, Australia

### Session 5.3 (11am-12.30pm)

**Competitive Session: Comparative, Competitive and Deceptive Advertising: Responses in Consumers**  
**Chair: Nicole Stegemann, University of Western Sydney**

- The structural effect of indirect comparative advertisements on consumer attitude, when moderated by message type and number of claims  
  Na WoonBong, Kyunghee University, Seoul, Korea
| Session 5.4 (11am-12.30pm) | **Competitive Session: Things Children Do: Brands, Television and Food**  
Chair: Sarah Todd, Otago University |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            | Kids Commercials and Commercial Kids in The Asia Pacific: Whose Responsibility is it Anyway?  
Monali Hota, IESEG School of Management, Lille Catholic University, France  
Robyn McGuiggan, College of Law and Business, University of Western Sydney, Australia |
|                            | Children Learning Brands  
Roger Marshall, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand  
Na WoonBong, Kyunghee University, Seoul, Korea  
Son Youngsoek, Hallym University, Seoul, Korea |
|                            | Putting Brands in the Picture: Children’s drawings of their favourite things  
David Marshall, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK  
Robert Aitken, University of Otago, New Zealand |
|                            | Children and Snack Foods: Is there a Relationship between Television Viewing Habits and Nutritional Knowledge and Product Choice?  
Lesley White, Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Australia  
Teresa Davis, University of Sydney |

| Session 5.5 (11am-12.30pm) | **Special Session: Genetically Modified Foods -- Suddenly, Everyone Has a Border!**  
Chair: Louise Heslop Sprott Business School, Carleton University  
Discussant: Louise Heslop, Sprott Business School, Carleton University |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            | Consumers’ Response to Transgenic Pork: The role of information  
David Castle, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Guelph, Guelph, ON, Canada  
Karen Finlay, Marketing and Consumer Studies, University of Guelph, |
| Session 6.1 | Competitive Session: Body, Gender and Person Effects in Communications and Persuasion  
Chair: Roger Marshall, Auckland University of Technology  
How Do We Love This, Let Me Count the Ways: Attribute Ambiguity, and the Positivity Effect in Agent Evaluation  
Ashesh Mukherjee, McGill University, Canada  
Andrew Gershoff, University of Michigan, USA  
Anirban Mukhopadhyay, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong  
Rana Sobh, The University of Auckland  
Christina Lee, The University of Auckland  
Graham Vaughan, The university of Auckland  
Understanding Adolescent Beliefs and Intention to Smoke: The Effect of Antismoking Information  
Nina Michaelidou, University of Birmingham UK  
Haider Ali, Open University UK  
Sally Dibb, Open University UK |
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| Session 6.2 | Competitive Session: Attitudes to New Products and Service Contexts  
Chair: Mark Spence, Bond University  
Predicting Consumers’ Adoption of Really New Communication and Entertainment Products  
David L. Alexander, Duke University, USA  
John G., Jr. Lynch, Duke University, USA  
Qing Wang, University of Warwick, UK  
Effects of Customer Beliefs on Relationship Marketing Tactics and Customer Attitude on Switching Intention in a Competitive Service Industry |
| Session 6.3 (2pm-3.30pm) | Competitive Session: Consumer Preference, Regret and Disagreement on Choice  
Chair: Subimal Chatterjee, Binghamton University |
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| Session 6.4 (2pm-3.30pm) | Competitive Session: Friends, Acquaintances and Netizens: Identities and Interactions Online  
Chair: Fredric Brunel, Boston University |
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| Session 6.5  
(2pm-3.30pm) | **Special Session: Values Research: Past, Present, and Future**  
Chair and Discussant: Fredric Kropp, Monterey Institute of International Studies, U.S.A.  
A Brief History of the Measurement of Consumer Social Values  
Lynn R. Kahle, University of Oregon, U.S.A.  
Guang-xin Xie, University of Oregon, U.S.A.  
Gregory M. Rose, University of Washington, U.S.A.  
Consumer Values: Correlates and Current Uses  
Anne M. Lavack, University of Regina, Canada  
Lisa Watson, University of Regina, Canada  
New World of Consumer Values: Conflict and Why Nothing Works  
Fredric Kropp, Monterey Institute of International Studies, U.S.A. |
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| Session 6.6  
(2pm-3.30pm) | **Meet the Editors session**  
*Journal of Consumer Psychology: Durairaj Maheshwaran*  
*Journal of Consumer Policy: John Thogerson*  
*Journal of Customer Behaviour: Margaret Craig-Lees* |
| Afternoon Coffee/Tea Break  
(3.30pm-4.00pm) | **FOYER OF TERRACE ROOMS** |
| Session 7.1  
(4.00pm-5.30pm) | **Competitive Session: Pleasantness, Guilt and Well-Being- The Many Faces of Affect**  
Chair: Elizabeth Cowley, University of Sydney  
Do Pleasantness and Goal Related Appraisals Work in Concert to Drive Emotions? Evidence from two Empirical Studies  
Lisa Watson, University of Regina, Canada  
Mark T. Spence, Bond University, Australia  
Consumer Guilt: Preliminary Construct Assessment and Scale Development  
Sammy Bonsu, Schulich School of Business, York University, Toronto, Canada  
Kelley Main, Schulich School of Business, York University, Toronto, Canada  
Do Experts Feel Differently than Novices? A Re-Examination and Extension of the Duality Hypothesis  
Reto Felix, University of Monterrey, Mexico |
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<th>Session 7.4</th>
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| Session 7.5 (4.00pm-5.30pm) | Competitive Session: Multiple Methodologies in Data Collection  
Chair: Patrick Vargas, University of Illinois |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                             | Armed only with paper and pencil: “Low-tech” Measures of Implicit Attitudes  
Vargas Patrick, University of Illinois, USA  
Sekaquaptewa Denise, University of Michigan, USA  
von Hippel William, UNSW, Australia |
|                             | Media Mood Manipulation: Examination of Mood Changes in a 24-Hour Activities Diary  
Ronald Faber, University of Minnesota  
Xiaoli Nan, University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Brittany Duff, University of Minnesota |
|                             | The Effect of Counterproductive Time on Online Task Completion  
Jacques Nantel, HEC Montreal, Canada  
Sylvain Senecal, HEC Montreal, Canada |

| End Of Conference (optional) Event (7.00pm-10.00pm) | Harbour Cruise (optional) with Majestic Cruises *(Seafood Buffet Dinner and Drinks)* |
SESSION OVERVIEW

The objective of this session is to present multiple theoretical perspectives to examine the concept of brand equity. Extant research has mostly focused on individual brand equity, but relatively little is known about equity associated with variables that extend beyond the brand such as the country-of-origin or about multiple brand equities such as brand alliances. Recent research has identified the importance of going beyond individual brand equity. For example, with the decrease in trade barriers and increase of contemporary borderless consumption, there is a rising need to further understand the meaning and the impact of brand equity when consumers’ evaluations towards a brand go beyond the product perceptions and brand attributes, and are highly influenced by global brand equity. For example, the image of the country of origin will be closely linked with a brand in a global market and becomes an embedded component of brand equity. Similarly, recent research on brand alliances, where two brands combine to create a joint brand (e.g. brand alliances, co-branding and ingredient branding) with the intention of improving the joint brand equity, has shown that co-branded products are evaluated more favorably than single-branded products. However, the findings on the impact of co-branding on individual brands are not well understood. There is a need to better understand the effect of co-branding on constituent brands given the growing use of co-branding strategies. The proposed session builds on the brand equity literature, country-of-origin literature and co-branding literature by demonstrating the dynamic nature of brand equity and by introducing an important concept “Nation Equity” and examining its antecedents and consequences and investigating.

All three papers included in this session present completed empirical work. Each paper in the session examines a different facet of brand equity. In addition, each paper adopts and develops a different theoretical lens to study the concept. Specifically, the three papers examine 1) the multiple dimensions of brand (nation) equity of Thailand; (2) impact of incidental emotions on nation equity (3) the impact of co-branding on ingredient brand equity.

Nuttavuthisit’s paper explores the concept of a country's brand equity (i.e. Thailand) and the way in which consumers around the world perceive the notion of Thai-ness via the essential qualities of Thai products and services. Focus group and in-depth interviews, together with an online survey, were conducted over a period of one year, resulting in the following four major descriptions of Thailand’s brand equity: Fun, Fulfilling, Friendly and Flexible. The proposed framework of Thai-ness demonstrates the dynamic of brand equity and moves beyond the previous concept that emphasises the consistency and reliability of brand equity.

Maheswaran and Chen’s paper focuses on the impact of incidental emotions and the cognitive appraisals associated with these emotions on country-of-origin effects. Two experiments examined the effects of a series of discrete emotions: anger, sadness, and frustration. Experiment one examined the use of country-of-origin information under two emotions, anger and sadness, that differ in their cognitive appraisal dimensions, agency control. In the angry condition where human control was high, country-of-origin information influenced evaluations. Alternately, in the sad condition where situation control was high, country-of-origin did not have any effect on evaluations. Experiment two, uniquely identified the effects of agency control in the context of a different emotion, frustration. Country-of-origin influenced evaluations only when human (vs. situational) control was high. These findings suggest that like brands, countries also have equity associated with them, termed “Nation Equity” that go beyond product perceptions and may also have an emotional component. “Nation Equity” may be vulnerable to incidental emotions and agency attributions arising from events that are beyond the immediate purview of a company.

Maheswaran and Mathur focus on the impact of co-branding on the constituent brands. They investigate the case of ingredient branding, where an ingredient in the product is branded (e.g. Betty Crocker cake mix with Hershey’s Chocolate Chips, Dell with Intel processor). They find that the level of information processing impacts the evaluation of the ingredient brands. Under low motivation conditions that engender heuristic processing, ingredient brands are evaluated more (vs. less) favorably when they are co-branded with a more (vs. less) favorably evaluated host brand. Under conditions of high motivation that engenders systematic processing, ingredient brands are evaluated more (vs. less) favorably evaluated host brand. In Study 2, they show that this effect holds for search attributes (vs. experience attributes). Their findings suggest that being associated to a favorably evaluated host brand may not always enhance ingredient brand equity. Taken together the three papers provide new insights into the impact of brand equity, nation equity and brand alliances on brand evaluations.

NATION EQUITY: INCIDENTAL EMOTIONS IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN EFFECTS

D. Maheswaran, New York University
Cathy Chen, Singapore Management University

The effect of country-of-origin on product evaluations has been well documented. That is, favorable or unfavorable evaluations of a country associated with a product leads to a corresponding favorable or unfavorable evaluations of the product (Girhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000b; Hong and Wyer 1989, 1990; Maheswaran 1994). In
addition, past research show that motivational (e.g., involvement) or cognitive (i.e., capacity) factors moderate country-of-origin effects. For example, Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000b) demonstrate that the processing goal and the type of information would determine whether country-of-origin is utilized in evaluations. Yet, there is evidence suggesting that the emotions consumers feel may also influence the use of country-of-origin in product evaluations (e.g., Klein, Ettenson and Morris 1998).

To understand the impact of emotions on the country-of-origin effects, we build on the incidental emotion literature that examines the cognitive appraisal dimensions associated with these emotions (Lerner and Keltner 2000; Tiedens and Linton 2001). Previous research has demonstrated that the agency control dimension related to an incidental emotion influences the weight given to human factors (vs. situational factors) in a subsequent judgment (e.g., Keltner, Ellsworth and Edwards 1993). Thus, emotions varying on the dimension of agency control (human-control or situation-control) can influence the use of country-of-origin on evaluations differently. Specifically, if the emotion a consumer experiences makes one feel that someone else (human factors) should be responsible for the situation, the consumer is more likely to attribute product performance to the people who think are responsible for manufacturing the product and thus, the country-of-origin effect should be stronger. Two experiments are conducted to examine this hypothesis by comparing three discrete incidental emotions.

In the first experiment, we examine anger and sadness, two emotions that differ in terms of agency attribution (Smith and Ellsworth 1985). People who feel angry feel strongly that other people can influence the situation or are responsible for the situation. Hence, angry people tend to blame someone else (human factors) for the negative consequences. In contrast, sad people tend to believe that the event is beyond human control and are more prone to attribute the negative consequences to the situational characteristics. Therefore, we expect that in the anger condition, participants should be influenced by country-of-origin information more and will evaluate a product more favorably when its country-of-origin information is favorable (vs. unfavorable). Whereas in the sad condition, country-of-origin information would not affect their evaluations.

Two hundred and ten participants received partial course credit and were run in small group sessions. They were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (emotion: sad vs. anger) x 2 (country-of-origin: Japan vs. Taiwan) x 2 (description: superior vs. inferior) between-subject design. They learned that they would be participating in two unrelated studies. The first study manipulated emotion by asking the participants to write down an emotional experience. The second study featured a new digital camera (model SDM 1500) ostensibly manufactured either in Taiwan or in Japan. The participants subsequently read a report prepared by an independent agency that depicted the camera as being either superior or inferior to two leading brands. Then, the participants proceeded to complete the dependent measures that asked them to evaluate the digital camera. We found a significant emotion by country-of-origin interaction on the product evaluation. Consistent with our hypothesis, the evaluations were significantly higher when the country-of-origin was Japan (vs. Taiwan) for angry participants but did not differ for sad participants. In order to uniquely identify the agency control as the underlying cognitive appraisal dimension that explains the impact of incidental emotions on the country-of-origin effect, we use only one emotion in experiment two: frustration. Frustration is found to be in the middle of the agency control dimension and can be accompanied by either a high situational (impersonal) control or a high human control. One hundred and eighty-one participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (agency control: situation vs. human x 2 (country-of-origin: Japan vs. Taiwan) x 2 (argument strength: strong vs. weak) between-subjects design. The experimental procedures and major dependent measures were identical to those in experiment one. Supporting the findings of the experiment one, experiment two again revealed a significant control by country-of-origin interaction. Consistent with our hypothesis, human agency participants evaluated the target product more favorably when the country-of-origin was Japan (vs. Taiwan). However, country-of-origin did not influence the evaluations of the situational agency participants.

This research extends current literature on the country-of-origin effects and also enriches our understanding about the cognitive appraisal dimensions associated with incidental emotions. Our findings also suggest that like brands, countries also have equity associated with them, termed “Nation Equity”. Nation equity can go beyond product perceptions and may have both a performance and an emotional component. More important, we show that incidental emotions that are unrelated to the product performance may lead to a focus on the nation where the product originated. This implies that “Nation Equity” may be vulnerable to incidental emotions and agency attributions arising from events that are beyond the immediate purview of a company.

THE DYNAMIC OF BRAND EQUITY

Krittinee Nuttavuthisit, Chulalongkorn University

In a world of borderless production and consumption, the role of branding has become more essential with competition between products and services from different places. The branding concept is applied to many things, ranging from businesses to places, people, and even nations. Country branding may refer to the identification of competitive positioning, or to a promise to deliver a specific set of benefits and values to the global market. A country’s brand equity can be reflected in the way in which consumers perceive the quality of products, services, and their countries of origins.

In 2001, the Government of Thailand initiated a Branding Thailand project with the objective of finding out about Thailand’s brand equity from the perceptions of prospective consumers towards Thailand and its major industries, namely cuisine, fashion and tourism. The goal of the project is to enhance current understanding of Thailand’s brand positioning in the global market and ultimately contribute to the development of a more comprehensive national marketing strategy.
The research for the Branding Thailand project was carried out over a one-year period (April 2002 – May 2003) on a diverse consumer base that may or may not be users of Thai products or services. This was done to capture as many different experiences and perceptions as possible and also to represent the true nature of the market. Through one hundred focus group and in-depth interviews in the United States, and 1,000 online surveys with consumers in thirty countries that yielded a 12% response rate, the Branding Thailand research provided a detailed qualitative account of consumer perspectives toward the essential qualities of the country.

The differing responses elicited the four emergent themes of Thailand’s brand equity: Fun, Fulfilling, Friendly, and Flexible. As an example, one participant mentioned the notion of Thai-ness as being flexible: “I think Thailand is about freedom. Because I see a contrast between high-rising businesses and very poor circumstances there” yet “people don’t seem to be that agitated”. He stated, “I was pretty amazed with this relaxed attitude in Thailand. It seems to me that they feel free to live as they like.”

Another participant remarked on the nature of Thai food, which “can represent the warmth of Thai family” as “they have a meal together with a lot of foods in the center.” These four major themes of Thailand’s brand equity are somewhat represented in products or services, such as in tourism where there is a variety of fun entertainment, fulfilling natural scenes, friendly home stays, and a flexible spirit of adventurous discovery.

It should be noted that Thailand’s brand equity appears in a “fusion” form, rather than as rigid beliefs, opinions or attitudes, because of the multi-layered meanings of Thai individuality, history, society, and culture. This juxtaposition of fun, fulfilling, friendly and flexible illustrates a mix of the active and passive traits of the Thai people’s lifestyles and places in Thailand. By using a “structuralist approach”, similar to that of Hirschman (1987) and Levy (1981), this article proposes a “Thai-ness” framework that incorporates these interrelated concepts of people (lifestyle) and places. During the research project, consumers mentioned the values that defined Thailand as a brand by referring to the eclectic place (e.g. “a city of life”) and the peaceful place (e.g. “a soothing vacation destination”). Moreover, they illustrated the lifestyle in Thailand by describing the dynamic living (e.g. “a constant negotiation everywhere”) and the relaxed lifestyle (e.g. a “laid-back” people). Crossing these two dimensions yields the four major themes of Thailand’s brand equity [figure 1].

![FIGURE 1](image)

Within this framework the dynamic of Thailand’s brand equity is emphasised, as consumers perceive the differences of values ranging from excitement to tranquility and from tangible to intangible. Triandis and Gelfand (1998) elaborated on the contradictions and tensions of the values seen to define Thai culture, while Fieg (1976) and Gannon (2001) also associated Thailand with being a land of diversity. Moreover, the dynamic of Thailand’s brand equity denotes the case where each consumer can perceive different values depending on how they interact with each context (i.e. place and people). One participant noted “Thailand is an amazing place. Amazing in a sense that you have this juxtaposition of everything” and he claimed “I can’t just pick one thing and have that be representative of Thailand because that’s not. The notion of Thailand is diversity. For me, that’s an amazing sensation.”

One outcome of this research project has been that not only does it illustrate the underlying structure of consumers’ perspectives towards Thailand’s brand equity, but also promotes a greater insight into the concept of branding. The dynamic of Thailand’s brand equity demonstrates a development beyond the traditional concept of brand equity that puts an emphasis on the consistency and reliability of values in order to promote strong brand awareness and loyalty. The proposed framework of Thai-ness represents broadening, interactive and integrative attributes in the contemporary world of borderless consumption. Moreover, the dynamic of brand equity enhances the individual experiences of co-creative consumers, who appreciate the diversity that Thailand has to offer based on the inter-related influences of their own demands and local, national and regional factors.
Co-branding is a marketing strategy that is being extensively used by marketers to enhance the equity of their brands. Co-branding can exist as brand-alliances, ingredient branding and joint-promotions. Extant literature has found that co-brands are evaluated more favorably than single brand products (Park et al. 1996, Janiszewski & van Ossalaer 2000, Washburn, Trill & Priluck 2004), especially in the case of brand alliances where the co-brand comprises of favorably evaluated constituent brands and the composite brands are familiar to the consumer (Simonin & Ruth 1998). Although extant literature investigates the factors that affect the evaluations of co-brands, there is limited insight available on how co-brands affect the constituent brands. More so, there are discrepant findings in the literature regarding the impact of co-branding on the constituent brands. For example, Park et al. (1996) find that ingredient brands are evaluated more favorably when they are associated with a complementary high quality host brand, but not when they are associated with a low quality co-brand, especially in the case of complementary brands. Janiszewski and van Ossalaer (2000) find that ingredient brands will be evaluated more favorably only when the joint brand performs more favorably than expected. Therefore, the impact of co-branding on ingredient brands is not clear.

We reconcile these discrepant findings by demonstrating that these differences in the impact of co-branding on the constituent brands result due to the differences in the processing of co-brand information. Using the dual-processing model, we look at the case of ingredient branding, where an ingredient in the product is branded (e.g. Betty Crocker cake mix with Hershey’s Chocolate Chips, Dell with Intel processor).

In two studies, we find that the type of processing impacts the evaluation of the ingredient brands. In study 1, we presented participants with co-brands where the host brand is either favorably evaluated or unfavorably evaluated. We also manipulated their motivation to process information by manipulating involvement (based on Maheswaran, Mackie and Chaiken 1992). Stimuli were prepared after pre-tests. We present participants with information about a new co-brand of chocolate-chip cookies where Cookie World (fictitious brand name) is the host brand and Choco-Choc (fictitious brand name) is the ingredient brand. We manipulated the favorability of the host brand by presenting favorable information that establishes it as being more (vs. less) favorable than two competitors. Under low motivation conditions that engender heuristic processing, we found that the ingredient brand is evaluated more (vs. less) favorably when it is co-branded with a more (vs. less) favorably evaluated host brand. However, under conditions of high motivation that engender systematic processing, we found that the ingredient brand is evaluated more (vs. less) favorably when it is co-branded with a less (vs. more) favorably evaluated host brand because the high quality of the co-brand is attributed to the host brand and not to the ingredient brand. We found further support for this contention in a content analysis of open-ended thoughts and found that under the low-motivation condition, more co-brand related thoughts were generated, whereas under the high-motivation condition, more attribute related thoughts were generated.

In Study 2, we demonstrate that this effect holds for search attributes but not for experience attributes. Search attributes are attributes that can be verified before purchase, consumption or experience, such as calorific value, whereas experience attributes are those that can be verified only after purchase and consumption, such as taste (Jain, Buchanan & Maheswaran 2000). In a 2 (involvement : high vs. low) X 2 (host brand evaluation : high vs. low) X 2 (Type of attribute : search vs. experience) between subjects design, we provided participants with information about the co-brand based on both either search or experience attributes and found for search attributes, we replicated the results of study 1. We argue that because consumers should be able to verify the search attributes, under conditions of systematic processing, participants will be able to verify the validity of the attribute information and correctly attribute it to the host or the ingredient brand. However, for experience attributes, participants will not be able to verify the benefits associated with the attributes, and hence, will evaluate the ingredient favorably as long as it is associated with a favorably associated host brand, irrespective of level of processing.

We suggest that being associated to a favorably evaluated host brand may not always enhance ingredient brand equity and identify conditions under which ingredient brand equity will be enhanced. We find that when consumers systematically process the co-brand information and arrive at favorable evaluations for the co-brand, they are likely to attribute the favorable evaluations to the host brand and not to the ingredient brand. We conclude the investigation with suggestions for future research and a discussion about the implications for co-branding and its impact on constituent brands, especially in the case of ingredient branding.
Approach-avoidance conflicts have attracted significant attention in psychology but rather less interest in consumer behavior, except for some studies in retail environments. Very little attention has been paid to how the combination of personal, environmental and product features generate approach-avoidance conflicts for consumers. This is the gap which we seek to address.

Literature Review Consumers’ decisions can have both positive and negative consequences. This means that purchase decisions often involve a psychological conflict (Miller, 1944, 1964) caused by a ‘competition between incompatible responses’ within an individual (Miller, 1944, p. 431). Donovan and Rossiter (1982, p. 37) used Mehrabian and Russell’s (1974) model to distinguish four aspects of approach or avoidance (AP-AV) in a retail environment. Whilst considerable research has been undertaken using the M-R model to understand approach-avoidance behaviors in response to environmental factors, rather less attention has been paid to the interactions between the nature of the product or service or the consumer’s disposition.

Methodology
We applied theoretical sampling (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 28) to achieve cross-national comparability and homogeneous samples to examine young adult consumer behavior (18+) in Austria and the U.K. We collected written stories (Hopkinson and Hogg, 2007), employing the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954; Hopkinson & Hogarth-Scott, 2001). A series of questions were used to evoke associations with regard to past online and offline purchase situations. 41 offline stories (20 U.K. and 21 Austrian) and 37 online stories (17 U.K. and 20 Austrian) were collected. All the stories were content analysed to establish aspects behaviors in approach-avoidance conflicts.

Findings
We begin by drawing some direct comparisons between the different sources of approach-avoidance conflicts generated by the online and offline retailing channels. From here we describe an example of approach-avoidance conflict, illustrating the interactions amongst the environment; the product; and consumer’s disposition.

Sources of potential approach-avoidance conflict
Environment: In the online environment all respondents mentioned the importance of clear interfaces and easy navigation. The offline shopping environments evoked uncertainty and approach-avoidance conflicts which were characterised by the atmosphere (e.g. over-bright lights) and the social situation (represented by friends, fellow customers or the service personnel).

Nature of product or service: The online purchases which provoked uncertainty and discomfort usually involved buying subscriptions or tickets, accommodation or travel packages. The offline purchases which provoked discomfort revolved around mainly ‘adult’ products (male respondents); and predominantly around ‘technical’ products; gifts and fashion or clothing (women respondents).

Consumer dispositions: Emotions amongst the online customers showed a mixture of positive and negative reactions, with some differences between men and women. The online stories reported more excitement and arousal in general, compared with the offline stories. Offline customers overwhelmingly described negative feelings when writing about the emotions that they experienced in relation to the potential approach-avoidance conflicts. Some offline customers reported positive feelings as well, such as trust.

Perceived risk: varied between offline and online situations, both in terms of different types of risk, and the stages within the purchase cycle at which perceived risk was experienced. In online stories perceived risk was usually strongest towards the end of the purchase cycle just before the goods were received. Amongst the offline stories perceived risk varied across the consumption cycle. Psychosocial risk was one of the most important characteristics of offline purchases, especially for men. For women, offline issues were linked either to technological risk; or psychosocial and monetary risk (e.g. purchasing gifts and services).

Consumers were regularly confronted with ‘fight or flight’ pressures (roughly equivalent to approach versus avoidance behaviors). Consumers were motivated to purchase for either personal (e.g. buy a product or service for personal use and consumption) or social reasons (buy a product or service for someone else, often, but not always, as a gift). Where there was an important social context for the purchase then consumers were more likely to stay and complete the purchase (approach behaviors) rather than succumb to the often overwhelming personal desire to flee (avoidance behaviors).

Approach-avoidance conflicts: Approach-avoidance conflicts included, firstly, the desire to please someone else; secondly, the desire to stay and complete a purchase on someone else’s behalf; thirdly, the desire to complete the purchase (because of personal need for the goods).

Our participants’ stories illustrate the interaction between product, environment and consumer disposition and the difficulties of separating these into independent constructs. The experience of Carl, for example, demonstrates the importance of combining these when investigating behavior in approach-avoidance conflicts. Carl felt uncomfortable because of the nature of the product (he was very unfamiliar with lingerie; was embarrassed that there were so many bras and knickers on display; felt that his product choice would communicate his taste (or lack of it)). He was also uncomfortable with the shopping environment, notably the atmospheres (e.g. shop was very busy); fairly bright lights (he would have preferred a darker room); and lots of lingerie on display. He had mixed feelings about his fellow customers (he was pleased to see so many men, but felt that they were all expert shoppers); and he was very uncomfortable with the sales staff. Finally,
Carl’s story illustrates the importance of the psycho-social risks which were perceived to be attached to this type of purchase.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Our study examined behavior in approach-avoidance conflicts in relation to the product, the situation and the individual and their complex interaction. Results also indicated a multi-dimensionality of behavior in approach-avoidance conflicts, supporting Babin et al.’s argument (1998), and revealed different drivers of these conflicts. Based on these results we propose a conceptualization which captures the multi-dimensional aspects of approach-avoidance conflicts.

**SELECTED REFERENCES**


AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION INTO OUTCOMES OF IMPULSE BUYING IN VIETNAM, A TRANSITIONAL ECONOMY
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ABSTRACT
This paper presents a qualitative exploration focusing on the outcomes of impulse buying behavior in Vietnam, a transitional economy. While identifying both positive and negative aspects of impulse buying, we find evidence that the negative consequences of this behavior seem to be salient for many Vietnamese. The findings suggest that Vietnamese consumers, while expressing some differences, share many attitudes with the consumers in more developed countries when it comes to impulse buying. The implications and areas for future research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION
In the past several decades, the world has witnessed the historical transition of a number of nations transforming their economies. In Asia, China started economic reform in the late 1970s, followed by the countries in Southeast Asia like Vietnam. Vietnam began Doi Moi, or “economic renovation” in 1986, shifting the economy from a centrally planned to a market-based system. As a result of Doi Moi, there have been dramatic changes in all aspects of Vietnamese society. These changes include changes in the retail environment, consumer values, attitudes, and consumption behaviors. Many Vietnamese consumers, particularly in urban areas, have abandoned traditional habits of saving and planning dominant before the Doi Moi, and now engage in impulse buying (Nguyen et al. 2003). It has been suggested that when the economy achieves a certain level of development, consumers in transitional economies such as Vietnam might exhibit tendencies and behaviors similar to those of consumers in more advanced economies, including impulse buying. (Nguyen et al. 2003). The way that consumers operate on impulse may also be influenced by unique conditions associated with local market, social and cultural forces (Shamdasani and Rook 1989). Therefore, there may be both similarities and differences in Vietnamese consumers’ impulse buying behavior compared to that observed in more developed economies.

Impulse buying has long been associated with a failure in self-control, fast and emotion-based decision making. This purchase behavior is almost certainly less effective and less efficient, and apt to lead to unsatisfied and unhappy consumers in the long run (Baumeister 2002; Rook 1987). Due to its importance and pervasiveness, impulse buying has been extensively studied in the established western markets, especially that of the U.S. (Nguyen et al. 2003). Many previous studies have investigated the antecedents of this buying behavior (e.g., Baumeister 2002; Beatty and Ferrell 1998; Bellenger et al. 1978; Kaufman 1978; Rook 1987; Zhou and Wong 2003). Despite the potentially negative consequences associated with impulse purchases, only modest empirical research effort has been directed at the outcomes of this important buying behavior.

The transition of centrally planned economies to a market-based system is considered one of the most significant and interesting economic phenomena of the last century that have impacted almost everybody around the world including Vietnam (Allan et al. 2002). It is necessary and important both for scholars and practitioners to examine marketing issues, in general, and consumer buying behaviors in particular in these changing markets. Because the situation is still relatively new in transitional economies, impulse buying, specifically the consequences of this buying behavior have received, to date, very little research attention. This article, through a qualitative study, explores several aspects of the outcomes of impulse buying for urban consumers in Vietnam, one of the transitional economies.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND
The Concept of Impulse Buying. Impulse buying is considered an important and pervasive phenomenon in consumer behavior that has been investigated for over fifty years. Impulse buying has traditionally been defined simply as unplanned purchasing (e.g., Cobb and Hoyer, 1986). Rook’s (1987) research provided a notable lift to the study of impulse buying (Burroughs 1996) by redefining it as occurring “when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately. The impulse to buy is hedonically complex and may stimulate emotional conflict. Also impulse buying is prone to occur with diminished regard for its consequences” (p. 191).

The definition of impulse buying was extended slightly by Beatty and Ferrell (1998), who define impulse buying as “a sudden and immediate purchase with no pre-shopping intentions either to buy the specific product category or to fulfill a specific buying task” (p. 170). The definition includes the idea of impulsiveness, which involves acting spontaneously without full consideration of the consequences (Gerbing, Ahadi, and Patton 1987). Building on the conceptualizations of previous research, we employ the definition of impulse buying as an unplanned purchase that is characterised by 1) relatively rapid decision-making (Rook 1987; Rook and Hoch 1985), 2) being hedonically complex and more emotional than rational (Bayley and Niancarrow 1998; Rook 1987; Rook and Hoch 1985), and 3) not including the purchase of a simple reminder item such as buying a gift for someone that fulfills a planned task (Beatty and Ferrell 1998).

Impulse Buying in Vietnam.
Transitional economies are “going through a period of transition from a planned economy, where consumption was prescribed, to a market economy, where consumers are free to pursue their acquisition fantasies” (Lasco et al. 1994, p.92). Vietnam is considered one of the most dynamic developing countries in the world (Ohno and Nguyen 2005). It has been experiencing high growth rates of more than 8 percent between 1992 and 1997 (World Bank 2000). In 2004, it hit 7.7% which, after China (8.8%) and Singapore (8.1%), is among the highest growth rates in the region (Nguyen 2005). With a population of around 80 million and a large and growing urban population with an increasing standard of living, the Vietnamese market shows potential for both local and international firms (Nguyen 2003). Particularly important is the burgeoning...
Impulse Buying and its Outcomes

In social and psychological literature, impulsive behavior has been associated with negative terms such as immaturity, primitivism, foolishness, defects of the will, lower intelligence, and even social deviance and criminality (see Crawford and Melewar 2003 for review). Similarly, consumer researchers have long referred to impulsive behavior using such terms as irresponsibility, immaturity and carelessness (Kaufman-Scarborough and Cohen 2004).

In consumer behavior literature, impulse buying is often referred to with a negative overall tone (Wood 2005). It is more likely to be perceived as ‘bad’ than ‘good’ (Rook 1987). Kaufman-Scarborough and Cohen (2004) note that “impulse buying is highly spontaneous, reactive, unplanned, and frequently linked with producing unsatisfactory choices” (p. 639). Baumeister (2002), while proposing self-control failure as an important cause of impulse buying behavior, suggests that consumers may cope with the “I really shouldn’t” dilemma. They may spend too much and get home with things they do not really want or need. Although the process of purchasing may make them happy, at least in the short run, this behavior is likely to be regretted later because of inconsistency with long-term goals. Hence, in the long run, impulse buying may lead to more unsatisfied, unhappy consumers although it may bring higher profits to manufacturers.

Several recent studies (e.g., Crawford and Melewar 2003; Dittmar et al. 1996; Haushman 2000; Wood 2005), from a ‘modern’ view ‘I don’t get this reference or why it is in single quote marks’, suggest that consumers may buy for hedonic reasons, and therefore, impulse buying can be viewed in a positive light as a valued pastime or a way to enrich life experience. Buying impulses are in this way not necessarily bad. This contradicts extant research, which often links impulse buying behavior with negative outcomes. Rook (1987) notes that everyday impulsive behavior can result in distinctly negative consequences. The findings from his empirical study show that over 80% of the sample had incurred problems as a result of their impulse buying. Negative consequences following impulse purchases include financial problems, disappointment with the purchased product, guilt feelings, and other’s disapproval. Similar findings were also found for consumers from UK and Singapore (Dittmar and Drury 2000; Shamdasani and Rook 1989).

A recent study by Kaufman-Scarborough and Cohen (2004), which generally presents a kinder and gentler picture of consumers who engage in impulse buying because of problems in information processing, proposes some negative postpurchase effects of impulse buying behavior. Specifically, since impulse buying is often associated with making unnecessary and unplanned purchases, it may result in unintended inventory of certain products. In addition, many impulse purchases are undesirable, and consumers still keep them but just do not use them. It is concluded that at some point in their lives, consumers are likely to make an impulse purchase that will probably make their behavior less efficient and effective.

Socioeconomic context has impact on the consumer’s view of impulse buying (Wood 2005). How do consumers in the context of a transitional economy, such as Vietnam, view impulse buying and how do they perceive the consequences of this behavior? Are there any differences in impulse buying behavior and outcomes for Vietnamese consumers compared to those in more developed countries? A recent study by Nguyen et al. (2003), exploring impulse buying behavior in Vietnam, mainly focused on testing the hypotheses pertaining to antecedents of impulse buying including cultural orientation, demographics and regional differences, but the consequences of this buying behavior remain to be investigated. The answers to the above questions will contribute to better understanding impulse buying behavior in the important and relatively new context of a transitional economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The major objective of this study is to explore the outcomes and consequences of Vietnamese consumers’ impulse buying behavior. In this study, we collected data through in-depth interviews. The data were obtained from a convenience sample of 29 respondents in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. The interviews were designed to elicit diverse opinions from a demographically heterogeneous sample of participants (cf. Dittmar and Drury 2000). We recruited 29 consumers (11 men and 18 women) who varied in several dimensions (e.g., age, income, occupation, education, and family circumstances). Participants’ ages ranged from 17 to 67 years. All participants were working people with the exception of one participant who was a high school student and another who was retired. Educational qualifications ranged from none to postgraduate. Our participants included single and married individuals, as well as people with and without children.

The interviews were conducted in participants’ homes or other locations of their choice (e.g., the researcher’s office or places of work). We started our interviews with several questions pertaining to general purchasing behavior to get participants’ interest and also to see if impulse purchasing was mentioned in their answers. Before asking specifically about participants’ impulse buying experiences, we provided a brief definition of impulse buying to establish common understanding. We also reminded participants of this definition when necessary during the interview. The first question to participants regarding impulse buying was “Do you sometimes buy things on impulse?” Participants with impulse buying experience were then asked whether they had ever incurred negative experiences following their impulse purchases. Then they were asked to evaluate the positive and negative consequences of their impulse buying (cf. Rook 1987; Shamdasani and Rook 1989). Finally, we asked them to describe (in general) whether they were likely to feel more satisfied or dissatisfied with their impulse purchases, and identify their intention with respect to future impulse buying.

Since participants expressed discomfort about having the interview audio-taped, the researcher took detailed notes of the participants’ opinions. The data analysis process was implemented following methods
positive aspects of their impulse experiences, many participants showed little enthusiasm when talking about the positive aspects. Some found it difficult to describe any good results or experiences of impulse buying. However, a number of participants indicated that the process of buying on impulse made them feel good and happy although the feeling was often short-lived. These participants may have enjoyed the process of acquiring the product more than they enjoyed the product itself (cf. Baumeister 2002). This view seems more salient among the Vietnamese sample compared with Singaporean counterparts who valued task accomplishment and need satisfaction (Shamdasani and Rook 1989). The following excerpt illustrates this point.

…I feel relaxed whenever I go shopping. I often have very good moments when seeing and buying [on impulse] nice things in shops. I feel excited and even delighted when my eyes suddenly catch some product that I really like, and it is really a happy experience to be able to take it. It doesn’t matter that I may not use them [impulsively bought items] later on. They are often just low-valued items. (female 42)

The above example may reflect the change in Vietnam resulting from the lack of product availability before Doi Moi. Many people simply enjoy the sudden increase in availability of consumer goods, like “a drought meeting a rain storm” (Beresford and Dang 2000; p. 154). Also, as indicated in the quote, the things they often buy on impulse are more likely small-ticket items that may not cause any seriously negative financial consequences. Therefore, the good feeling of the impulse buying process may be more salient in their evaluation.

Similar to the findings of previous studies (Dittmar and Drury 2000; Shamdasani and Rook 1989), several of our participants said they found many products they bought impulsively were acceptable (i.e., something they need and can use) and some actually quite nice. A few participants mentioned that impulse buying helped them reduce stress. The following quotes demonstrate these positive aspects of impulse buying.

…I use most products that I’ve bought on impulse so far [smile]. Recently, I just bought [on impulse] a very cute made-in-Japan tool in the supermarket. It’s expensive but really nice indeed, and I felt lucky to see and buy it. (male 29)

Life is tiresome sometimes. It would be good to do something fun to make us feel better. When I get stressed, if I could go to shopping center or supermarket with my family it would help a lot. Going with people you love and buying something you suddenly see and like [on impulse] are really pleasant. (female 38)

Negative Aspects of Impulse Buying

When asked to evaluate negative aspects of impulse buying, our participants often referred to impulse buying as unwise, wasteful, irrational and even ‘bad’ behavior. The literature has suggested negative consequences of impulse buying in the areas of 1) personal finance, 2) disappointment with an impulsively purchased product, 3) regret and guilty feeling, and 4) other’s disapproval (Dittmar and Drury 2000; Rook 1987). Our participants, while expressing similar areas of negative consequences, showed some differences. The negative aspects most frequently mentioned by our participants pertained to ‘regret/guilt feelings’, about their impulsive purchases. The following illustrates this point.

“In the past (before the economic reform), we didn’t have many things to buy. Anything we could get would be good, and people often had to share with each other. Now, we can see and purchase many interesting things in the market. Sometimes I buy things spontaneously, often clothing for myself. I feel guilty sometimes that I just see things for myself, but not for my family members. I can’t explain why. When I see something attractive, there seems to be a match between the need inside myself and the product. The product just catches my eyes.” (female 42)

Recently, I bought [on impulse] two trousers that I never wear. Sometimes, I can’t understand myself; why I did what I really shouldn’t [buying them spontaneously]. I thought I’d look good in them but when trying them at home I knew immediately that I made a big mistake. I don’t want to see them anymore but sometimes it is not easy to find an appropriate person to give them to. I feel regret for having purchased them. (male 24)

Sometimes I feel regret about my impulse purchases. They don’t cause any financial problem for me, but it breaks the routine of planning in my family. (female 25)

These opinions suggest regret or guilt after the purchase were perceived as the foremost negative consequence of impulse buying. This could stem from the collectivist nature of Vietnamese consumers. As mentioned above in the first quote, the participant felt guilty when she mainly bought things (on impulse) for herself, but not for her family members. In collectivist societies such as Vietnam, individuals are encouraged to suppress their own hedonic desires in favor of group interests and goals (Kacen and Lee 2003). It has also been suggested that personal-use products are more frequently bought on impulse than are collective-use products (Nguyen et al. 2003). Accordingly, there may be more chances for impulse shoppers to experience guilt when buying things for themselves. In addition, in Vietnam such traditional values as planning and the thrift that dominated before Doi Moi still exist along with modern social values. Engaging in impulse buying could violate these traditional values leading to consumers’ regret or guilt. This feeling could be even more salient when they receive others’ disapproval or criticism.
disapproval’. They reported the disapproval or criticism of their family members, relatives, and friends. One participant, a newly married person, expressed her opinion on this issue as follows.

I enjoy shopping and I buy quite a lot of things on impulse. My uncle had complained a lot about my wasteful purchases [she lived together with her uncle’s family before getting married] and I felt a little uncomfortable about that. However, it’s very difficult for me to curtail my enjoyment of buying things spontaneously. People [her relatives and friends] often tell me that I should change my habit of buying [on impulse] when I have children. At that time, I may need to use money to buy milk and toys for my children instead of buying many things for my own-use. I think they may be right to say so. (female 26)

Nguyen et al. (2003) found that although personal-use products are more likely to be bought on impulse than collective-use products, many Vietnamese consumers engage in impulsive purchases of both types. Many of our participants reported ‘others’ disapproval’ as a negative consequence of impulse purchases of both personal-use and collective-use products. The following quotes show the negative impact of impulse buying of personal-use products.

We [her family] have two wardrobes full of clothes. Yesterday, my husband told me when he opened them he saw only my clothes [sad]. Actually, sometimes I buy for him and my son, but I know I’ve bought too many for myself, and many of them are the result of my impulse buying. I’ve given away some, but there is still a lot. He [her husband] just mentions it sometimes and in a soft voice, but I know he’s not happy at all with what I’m doing [buying]. (female 45)

I’ve bought things on impulse only sometimes, but my sister has done it a lot. The shoe-shelves in her house are full of her shoes. Some shoes just stay there since being bought [never been used]. Her husband is not happy with that and sometimes complains to me about that [not to his wife]. He wishes my sister could change her buying habit. (male 25)

With regard to buying collective-use products, our interviews showed that consumers may encounter ‘others’ disapproval’ causing negative consequences to both ‘buyer’ and ‘receiver’. This is illustrated in the following.

“My Dad was a person who didn’t pay attention to appearance at all. One time, when I stopped by a shop I saw nice sandals. I happily decided to use some money from the first month’s salary of my working life to buy the sandals as a gift for my father. The sandals fit my father’s feet well but he didn’t like the style. He said “too young for me”, and he didn’t use them. I thought my father was an easy going person but...I had to wear the sandals because I didn’t want to throw them away but the sandals were a bit bit smaller than my foot size. I felt not very comfortable. I think it’d be better for him to buy for himself.” (male 24)

Actually, I did hesitate for a while but she [the salesperson] tried to persuade me and quickly I decided to buy it for my husband [a 15-year-insurance policy]. I have to admit that she was so good at persuading me. I thought my husband would be very happy when knowing that I’ve bought it for him. However, the fact is quite opposite. He is not happy at all. Sometimes he tells me “15 years is quite long time”. I feel uncomfortable, but I know I can’t cancel the contract now (female 47).

Product disappointment was also indicated by a number of participants as a negative consequence of their impulse buying. Similar to consumers in more developed countries (Dittmar and Drury 2000; Shamdasani and Rook 1989), our participants mentioned reasons for product disappointment including poor quality, and not liking or being able to use the product. Some participants reported that, on average, 20% to 30% of the items they bought on impulse were not used. In some periods, the figure was as high as 50%. Although product disappointment was not as salient as feeling regret and others’ disapproval, many consumers expressed unhappiness with some of their impulsively purchased items when talking about the other negative consequences of their impulse buying.

Very few participants indicated financial problems as a result of their impulse purchases. The few cases often related to buying big ticket items, or low income. The following shows this.

On an excursion with my classmates I saw a paperweight that caught my eye from the first glance because of its new style and cute design. The saleswoman seemed to know that I liked it very much. She used many nice words to talk about the paperweight and finally told me that the price was twenty thousand [VND]. I made an attempt to bargain for a lower price but I was not successful. I decided to buy it quickly with the entire amount given by my Mom for the trip. Later, my friends told me that I did pay twice its price. I regretted my haste and felt repentant about buying it. Ten thousand [VND] difference is a lot for a pupil like me. I feel I was cheated by the saleswoman. Actually, I should have consulted my friends before buying it.” (male 17)

While financial problems and product disappointment appear as the foremost negative consequences of impulse buying in developed countries (Shamdasani and Rook 1989; Rook 1987), many of our participants indicated ‘no big problem’ with their impulse buying in terms of finances. This could stem from the development of the business environment. In the developed economies, product availability and variety, consumers’ wide use of credit cards in buying things, and the return policies in retail practices has contributed to the perversiveness of impulse buying behavior. In addition, consumers in individualist cultures such as in the US should be less constrained when exposed to impulse buying stimuli (Nguyen et al. 2003). Therefore, even with modest means, they are more likely to make impulse purchases including buying big-ticket items. Accordingly, financial problems could be a salient outcome of their impulse buying. In Vietnam, consumers though enjoy new shopping environment thanks to Doi Moi are still “conscious” and able to control emotions when experiencing the urge to buy impulsively. In the absence of a developed credit buying system, the items that they buy on impulse are often small-valued, and they can afford them. This could explain why financial problems were not salient in our participants’ expressions. Another negative consequence of impulse buying mentioned by several participants is the unintended inventory or the ‘no-use’ problem. This is consistent with Kaufman-Scarborough and Cohen (2004)
and could lead to guilt and regret, and others’ disapproval.

When sharing their evaluation of their impulse buying experiences, participants also suggested for unsatisfactory impulse purchases, or rather, their ‘mistakes’ in buying. Reinforcing the literature (Baumeister 2002; Kaufman-Scarborough and Cohen 2004) these include lack of self-control, problems with information (e.g., lack of information, unclear information, and/or overload information), as well as salesperson’s or other’s influence. In the context of Vietnam, these may be rooted in the new retail system in which many salespersons lack skills and knowledge, and shopping system design is still under development. Many Vietnamese consumers with new consumption motivation enjoy the new shopping environment that may make self control more difficult and ‘making mistakes’ easier. From our observation it seems that the more the participants engaged in impulse buying the more negative experiences they had. Experience in the case of impulse buying seems not much help in avoiding negative consequences.

Postpurchase Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention

When asked to describe whether they were likely to feel more satisfied or dissatisfied with their impulse purchases, few participants clearly indicated either. Most said “no big deal” with their impulse purchases, and further indicated that sometimes they were satisfied and sometimes not. However, during the interview, when participants talked about the impulse buying experiences of others they knew or about impulse buying in general, they often expressed their belief that impulse shoppers would not be satisfied with most of their impulse purchases. The following quote illustrates this point.

…I only buy some small things on impulse when I go out with my daughters. Some people I know; however, buy many things [on impulse]. How can they be satisfied later on with what they’ve bought mainly based on their irrational purchase without consideration. They may not touch many products that they had bought on impulse [no-use]. I know that sometimes they may want to give away these no-use items for their better feeling [don’t see the product anymore], but they may still not feel happy because it’s not charity in purpose. In many cases, the receiver may also not be happy because what they receive may not be what they really need or want. I personally believe generally it’s not good to make impulse purchases (female 30).

When asked to identify intention for future impulse buying, most participants expressed hesitation. Previous studies in the context of more developed countries suggest that a large proportion of respondents wished to decrease their impulse buying, while others wished to increase this behavior (Wool 2005). Very few our participants expressed clear intent to curtail buying impulsively and none mentioned any interest in increasing their impulse buying. Few said that they would maintain their habit of buying things since there was “no big problem” with their impulse purchases so far; and because they “don’t worry about it although it [impulse buying] is not positive in many ways”. Many of our participants, while admitting no serious consequences to date, said that they may continue to engage in impulse buying, but will try to be wiser by controlling their buying impulses/urges better, being more cautious, obtaining more information, and being more conscious of salespersons’ influence. These findings may reflect the fact that many Vietnamese consumers while enjoying new shopping environments are still conscious of buying things (Nguyen et al. 2003). Novelty, excitement, fashion, status, and escape from routine that are important motives for consumers in more developed countries (cf. Wool 2005) may still not be a salient motive in Vietnam.

Several participants indicated specific strategies that they believed to be helpful for future buying. One of the strategies is getting ‘help’ from others, such as shopping with a ‘good’ partner who is more controlled emotionally, and who has good ‘eyes’ or more experience in choosing products. Another strategy is bringing less money when going window shopping. Several shared that they often checked the price before making any purchase decisions. If it was expensive they would remind themselves to reflect more carefully before buying. A few participants indicated that they may not return to a shop where they made the mistake of buying something on impulse under the shop owner’s influence. They also may tell friends and relatives not to shop there. Despite all these efforts, many participants lacked confidence that they could use the strategies successfully. They noted that they may make mistakes again in future impulse buying, and it may be difficult for them to deal with strong buying impulses, ‘talented’ salespeople, and unclear information. This is reflected in the following quotes from two participants.

I’ve promised myself many times that I would try to give up my impulse purchases. I’ve made too many mistakes in buying things and have experienced deep regret many times. I know it’s not good at all, but whenever I go out with my friends I’m always so attracted by something in a shop that I can’t resist buying. Perhaps, I’ve become addicted to buying things [smile]. (female 43)

I know I should control myself and shouldn’t continue doing that [buying things on impulse], but it’s really difficult. I’m easily influenced by salespeople. I think many of them understand customers’ psychology well, and they know how to make people buy their products. (female 27)

DISCUSSION

In this paper, we present an in-depth interview study, which provides a qualitative exploration of the outcomes of impulse buying behavior in Vietnam. Both positive and negative aspects associated with impulse buying identified in the literature are found in our study. However, the findings from this study suggest some differences between consumers in the transitional economy of Vietnam and those in advanced economies such as in the US with regard to the outcomes of impulse buying behavior. Previous studies show that consumers in developed countries tend to value task accomplishment, need satisfaction, and saving time and money when it comes to impulse buying. Financial problems and product disappointment appear as the foremost negative consequences of this buying behavior for them (Shadmasani and Rook 1989; Rook 1987). The most salient negative outcomes of impulse buying reported by our participants, however, pertain to the feeling of regret or guilt and others’ disapproval, while financial issues were not considered the foremost problems. Cultural values and the level of development of the business environment could be the reasons contributing to these differences.

This study also provides evidence that the negative consequences of this behavior, although still not considered serious, seem to be salient for many Vietnamese. This provides implications for public policy in an attempt to make things better for both individual consumers and society. Public policy makers should
design policies and education programs to help consumers understand about the potential negative consequences associated with impulse buying behavior, possible reasons for their ‘mistakes’ in buying and strategies to avoid these mistakes. It is also helpful for consumers to be aware that those who make many impulse purchases are more likely to engage in compulsive buying behavior which is seen as a negative social and cultural phenomenon (Shoham and Brenneis 2003). Educating and guiding consumers in how to be more responsible in their buying decisions and to be ‘better’ buyers are necessary and important to help minimise the negative affects following their impulse purchases. This is especially meaningful for consumers in transitional economies such as Vietnam, who may not have much experience in buying things in the newly developed market system with so many product choices and different levels of price.

Another concern relates to the low standard of living in Vietnam. Although it has been much improved following Doi Moi, especially in urban areas and among emerging middle-class consumers, the income per capita (GNI) of USD 480 is still low (cf. Nguyen 2005). Many Vietnamese consumers still earn a relatively modest amount of income. In this study, many participants reported that they had experienced “no big deal” with regard to financial problems mainly because of the affordability and the small value of the impulsively bought items. However, there could be potential problems especially for the group of lower income consumers if they frequently make ‘unwise’ buying decisions. This serious problem could also affect those who buy big-ticket items on impulse, even though they buy them less frequently. This practice suggests the necessity and the importance of educating and guiding these groups of consumers.

An important group of consumers who are more likely to engage in impulse buying is young consumers (Nguyen et al. 2003). This group accounts for a large percentage of the Vietnamese population and they are becoming opinion leaders in terms of consumption (Shultz et al. 1998). They are more likely to be influenced by modern, non-traditional values and consumer culture. Many of them, however, may not be able to earn their own income (Nguyen 2003). More attention should be paid to this group of consumers to help them to be able to better foresee the negative consequences of impulse buying.

Although marketing managers can increase sales and profits by attracting more consumers to buy things on impulse through implementing in-store promotional and selling techniques, and our participants suggested that the influence of salespeople could be one reason leading to their impulse purchase mistakes. Consumers may not come back to the shop or may tell their friends and relatives to do the same if they experienced negative consequences from buying something in the shop. The findings from this study suggest that it would be useful to provide consumer with comprehensive information, and have that information presented in a clear and understandable way to help them in their decision making process. This provides some managerial implications in educating and training the salesforce with regard to selling knowledge and skills, and in providing consumers with better information. The policy of allowing consumers to return purchases within a set period of time would also be a useful practice for managers to consider in the effort of increasing customer satisfaction and thus contributing to the success of the business.

Areas for Future Research
This research contributes to understanding the outcomes of impulse buying in Vietnam, a transitional economy. Several avenues should be considered for future research. First, there are some limitations associated with our current sample. Using a larger and more representative sample is suggested for further study to capture better the consequences of impulse buying behaviors in Vietnam. Second, there is a widening gap between urban and rural areas in Vietnam. It would be useful to examine the differences in outcomes of impulse buying between these markets. In addition, the findings from this study could serve as an important source of information for developing measure of the outcomes of impulse buying. It would be interesting to conduct a national survey investigating the outcomes of impulse buying in Vietnam, as well as to compare this buying behavior among consumers in different countries representing different cultures and different levels of economic development. Thanks to Doi Moi there have been many changes in all aspects of society in Vietnam, including changes in the economic environment and in consumer values. This contributes to the increase of impulse buying behavior in Vietnam. Together with some positive aspects, there are many negative aspects associated with this buying behavior that should receive more attention from both scholars and practitioners.

REFERENCES
ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examines the relationships between values, using the List of Values (Kahle 1983) and Tafarodi and Swan’s (2001) two-dimensional conceptualization of self esteem. Based on a sample of 311 students at a major Canadian university, the self liking and self competency components of self esteem are positively correlated to the internal and interpersonal dimensions of values. Neither component of self esteem is correlated to external values. People who place a higher weight on internal values tend to have higher self liking and self competency. This pattern was not found for external or interpersonal values. Study limitations, implications for marketers and future research directions are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Substantial research has been conducted over the past two decades to determine the role that values plays in marketing, especially in attitude formation and in consumer behavior. As higher order social cognitions, values shape consumer attitudes and behaviors (Homer and Kahle 1988). Researchers have established relationships between values and food consumption, fashion, brand choice, gift-giving, mall shopping, car ownership, travel and tourism, pet ownership, and risky consumer behaviors (Kropp 2003). Values also influence salesperson performance (Swenson and Herche 1994), ethics (Rallapalli, Vitell, and Szeinbach 2000), and international business (Soutar, Grainger, and Hedges 1999). Kropp, Lavack, and Silvera (2005) found that values were significantly associated with consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Batra, Homer, and Kahle (2001) also found that values were associated with general susceptibility to normative influence. Both Kropp et al. (2005) and Batra et al. (2001) call for further exploration of values and other psychological constructs that could be antecedents to consumer attitudes and behavior. This paper is part of an ongoing research stream to explore the relation between values and other psychological correlates.

As there is an increasing large exploration of self esteem and a variety of consumer behaviors --- e.g., self esteem and materialism, self esteem and conformity, and self esteem and impulsive/compulsive behaviors --- we explore the relationship between values and self esteem. Tafordi and Swann’s (2001) two-dimensional construct self liking and self competence is used. Self liking is defined as the “valuative experience of the self as a social object” (Tafordi and Swann 2001, p. 655). Self competence is defined as “the valuative experience of one as a causal agent, an intentional being that can bring about desired outcomes” (Tafordi and Swann 2001, p. 654).

The research question addressed in this paper is the relationship between values and self esteem. The List of Values (Kahle 1983, 1991) is used to measure values. Self esteem is measured using the Self Liking and Competence-Revised Version (Tafordi and Swann 2001). A better understanding of the relationship between values and self esteem can potentially help marketers understand of consumer attitude formation and consumer behavior.

Values

Values are cognitive representations of universal human requirements (Schwartz and Bilsky 1987). Rokeach described values as “enduring beliefs that a particular mode of behavior or end-state of existence is preferable to opposite modes of behavior or end-state.” (Rokeach 1973, 5) and operationalised behavioral modes with 18 instrumental values and end-states with 18 terminal values. Since values provide an abstract set of behavior-guiding principles, values can explain and predict attitudes and subsequent behavior (Rose et al. 1994; Williams 1979).

As a higher order social cognition, values shape attitudes and consumer behaviors (Kahle 1983). Relationship between values and consumer behaviors include brand choice (Dibble and Baker 2001), food consumption (Goldsmit, Freiden, and Kilshheimer 1993; Homer and Kahle 1988), clothing and fashion (Rose et al. 1994), gift-giving (Beatty et al. 1993), mall shopping (Swinyard 1998), car ownership (Sukhdial, Chakraborty, and Steger 1995), travel and tourism (Madrigal 1995; Madrigal and Kahle 1994), and pet ownership (Kropp et al. 1992). In the social marketing domain, values affect smoking behavior (Lavack and Kropp 2003a), drinking behavior (Kropp, Lavack, and Holden 1999), cause-related marketing (Kropp, Holden, and Lavack 1999; Lavack and Kropp 2003b), and ethics (Nonis and Swift 2001; Rallapalli et al. 2000). Values also affect stereotyping in international business (Soutar et al. 1999) and salesperson performance (Swenson and Herche 1994; Weeks and Kahle 1990).

Kahle (1983) developed the List of Values (LOV) as a parsimonious alternative to the 36 values contained in the Rokeach Value Survey. LOV contains nine basic values: sense of belonging, fun and enjoyment in life, warm relationships with others, self fulfillment, being well-respected, excitement, security, self respect, and sense of accomplishment. These values can be grouped into three categories. Internal values --- self fulfillment, self respect, and sense of accomplishment --- are internally validated and do not require the real or imagined presence of an “other” (Madrigal and Kahle 1994; Swenson and Herche 1994). External values --- security, sense of belonging, warm relationships with others, and being-well respected --- generally require the presence, judgments, or opinions of others (Homer and Kahle 1988; Kahle 1983; 1991). Interpersonal values---fun and enjoyment in life and excitement---combine aspects of internal and external values, focusing upon interactions between people (Kahle 1991). Kropp, Lavack, and Silvera (2005) explored values and collective self esteem as predictors of the normative component of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII). They found that both external and interpersonal values are positively related to the normative component of CSII and that internal values are negatively related to the normative component of CSII. Batra, Homer, and Kahle (2001) also examined the relation between values and individual susceptibility to normative influence (SNI). They conceptualise external and interpersonal values as a positively related antecedent to SNI, and internal values as a negatively related antecedent to SNI.

SELF ESTEEM

Self esteem refers to a personal judgment of one's own worth (Rosenberg, 1965). Although the concept of self esteem is over 100 years old (Cooley 1902), substantial research over the last 20 years identifies self esteem as a two-dimensional construct. Harter (1990), amongst others, conceptualised one dimension of self esteem being derived from positive regard from one's social environment, with a second dimension derived from assessment of one's own abilities. Tafarodi and Swann (1995) developed the Self...
Liking and Competence Scale (SLCS) to measure these two dimensions. They describe the first dimension, self liking, as "the valuative experience of the self as a social object (Tafarodi and Swann 2001, 655)." The second dimension, self competence, is defined as "the valuative experience of oneself as a causal agent, an intentional being that can bring about desired outcomes" (Tafarodi and Swann, 2001, p.654). Subsequent research (e.g., Silvera et al. 1998) reinforces the utility of this distinction. In response to psychometric problems with the initial scale, Tafarodi and Swann (2001) developed a revised version of the scale, the Self Liking and Competence Scale-Revised Version (SLCS-R), which is used in the present research.

Self esteem has been well researched in psychology, e.g., its relation to depression (Dori and Overholser 1999), reactions to success and failure (Dutton and Brown 1997), and adult attachment (Roberts, Gotlib, and Kassel 1996). Self esteem is also examined in the marketing literature, e.g., its relation to susceptibility to influence from others (Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel 1989; Cox and Bauer 1964), the purchase of specific esteem-enhancing products (Arndt, Solomon, Kasser, and Sheldon 2004), a positive association and satisfaction with material possessions (Jackson 1979), and how increasing the salience of mortality can induce esteem building behaviors (Ferraro, Shiv, and Bettman 2005). Low self esteem relates to impulse buying (Verplanken et al. 2005) and to compulsive buying behavior (O’Guinn and Faber 1989; Roberts and Martinez 1997).

VALUES AND SELF ESTEEM

The research question of this exploratory research is what is the relationship between values and self esteem? Although hypotheses or preliminary propositions could be developed intuitively, this study represents the first stage in a multi-stage research process. As exploratory research, no research hypotheses are developed at this point. Rather, the results are analysed, findings are presented, and implications discussed.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study were collected from a convenience sample of 311 undergraduate students at a major English-speaking Canadian university. The questionnaire, administered during class time, took approximately 15 minutes to complete. It contained the 9-item LOV scale, and the 16-item Tafarodi and Swann (2001) Self Liking and Competence Scale-Revised Version (SLCS-R), 8 of which measure self liking (e.g., "I have a negative attitude toward myself") and 8 of which measure self competence (e.g., "I am highly effective at the things I do"). The survey contained demographic questions (e.g., age, sex, and income) and measures not related to the current study.

Although respondents could opt out of the survey, all of the subjects completed the surveys. In terms of age, 79.4% of the sample was under 25, 20.6% over 25. The sample was evenly split with 50.4% males and 49.6% females. As students, 73.7% of the sample had an income under $20,000 and 26.3% of the sample was single. Approximately 88% of the sample was born in Canada, and the 12% coming from other countries had a high level of English proficiency.

MEASURES

A composite index was constructed for both the self liking and self competence dimensions of the Tafarodi and Swann (2001) of the SLCS-R scale. Each item was evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale, with semantic markers corresponding to 1 ("strongly disagree") and 5 ("strongly agree"). Where appropriate reverse items were recoded and the 5-point Likert-like aspect of the scale was maintained, therefore, a higher number indicates higher self liking or self competence. The self liking scale has a mean of 3.82 (s.d. = 0.71, α = 0.88). The self competence scale has a mean of 3.57 (s.d. = 0.57, α = 0.88). The Cronbach alphas for both scales indicate high reliability.

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine that self liking and self competency are measuring different dimensions of self esteem. As is common for a measurement model with a large sample, the Chi-square of 386.49 has a probability of .000 which is most probably a function of the sample size. Notably, normed-χ² was 3.75, lower than the level of 5.0 advocated by Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998). Additionally, both IFI and CFI were .85, which are at the marginal level of acceptability. Finally, although the RMSEA of .09 exceeds .08, it still satisfies the upper threshold of 0.1 (Hair et al. 1998). Given that some of the fit measures are at marginal levels of the acceptable range and that the correlation between the two dimensions was .565, the discriminant validity of the two scales was assessed. A 99% confidence interval for the correlation coefficient of the two dimensions was constructed. The confidence interval [.49 -.74] did not include the value of 1.0, providing support to the two dimensions’ discriminant validity. Therefore, the two dimensional construct of self liking and self competency is used in this paper.

Three indices for the internal values (self fulfillment, self respect, and sense of accomplishment), external values (security, sense of belonging, warm relationships with others, and being-well respected), and interpersonal values (fun and enjoyment in life and excitement) dimensions of LOV were developed based on theory (Kahle 1983). The mean for the internal dimension is 7.57 (s.d. = 1.59, α = 0.81), the external dimension is 6.76 (s.d. = 1.60, α = 0.86), and the interpersonal is 7.09 (s.d. = 1.69, α = 0.68). All the alphas exceed or are close to the .70 criteria for reliability specified by Nunnally (1978).

RESULTS

The results were developed using correlation analysis, independent sample t-tests, and covariance analysis. The self liking and self competency components of self esteem both had significant positive correlations with the internal dimension of LOV, r = .277 (sig. = .000) and r = .243 (sig. = .000), respectively (see Table 1).

Next, in order to further flesh out the relationships a series of independent sample t-tests were conducted. An approximate median split for each of the three dimensions of LOV was created, where the mean for low internal values is 6.38 (s.d. = 1.70, n = 124) and the mean for high internal values is 8.54 (s.d. = 0.39, n = 152); the mean for low external values is 5.97 (s.d. = 1.72, n = 124) and the mean for high external values is 7.44 (s.d. = 1.04, n = 152); and the mean for low interpersonal values is 6.36 (s.d. = 1.94, n = 124) and the mean for high interpersonal values is 7.72 (s.d. = 1.10, n = 152). T-tests were then conducted for the self liking and self competency components of self esteem.
The research question for this exploratory study involves the relationships between values and self esteem. The analysis indicates that there are relationships between these constructs. There are significant positive correlations between internal and interpersonal values and the two components of self esteem, there are no significant correlations between external values and self esteem. The results are promising and further research is indicated.

Both the self liking and self competency dimensions were statistically different for high- versus low-internal values. For self liking, $X_{low} = 3.66$ (s.d. = 0.63), $X_{high} = 3.97$ (s.d. = 0.73), $p = .000$; for self competency, $X_{low} = 3.46$ (s.d. = 0.55), $X_{high} = 3.68$ (s.d. = 0.59), $p = .002$. In other words, people who rate internal values more highly tend to have higher self liking and higher self competency.

The pattern was different for external values and interpersonal values. There were differences in self liking for external values, $X_{low} = 3.73$ (s.d. = 0.63), $X_{high} = 3.92$ (s.d. = 0.75), $p = .015$, and for interpersonal values, $X_{low} = 3.72$ (s.d. = 0.72), $X_{high} = 3.91$ (s.d. = 0.69), $p = .028$. There were no significant differences for self competency, for both external values, ($p = .077$) and for interpersonal values ($p = .144$).

A multiple analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to determine if the were effects for gender and for age. The model was not significant (Wilks’ Lambda $F_{age} = 1.086$, d.f. = 2, $p = .339$; Wilks’ Lambda $F_{gender} = 1.971$, d.f. = 2, $p = .141$). Furthermore, both ANOVA models were not statistically significant ($p > .08$). Given that both age and gender were not multi- or uni-variate significant, we did not proceed to examine the two ANOVA models and concluded that neither demographic variable was associated with the outcome variables. Accordingly, the discussion below is based on the results reported earlier.

**DISCUSSION**

The research question for this exploratory study involves the relationships between values and self esteem. The analysis indicates that there are relationships between these constructs. There are significant positive correlations between internal and interpersonal values and the two components of self esteem, there are no significant correlations between external values and self esteem. The results are promising and further research is indicated.

It is especially interesting to see the differences in the relationships between internal values and external values with self esteem. By their nature, internal values do not require a real or imagined other for validation whereas external values require external validation. People who place a higher weight on internal values have higher self esteem and self competency than people who place a lower weight on internal values. These relationships are not mirrored in external values. As interpersonal values can be viewed as a combination of internal and external values, it is not surprising that there is a relationship with self esteem.

An understanding of the relationships between the constructs potentially offers marketers strategic insights in developing product offerings and promotional approaches. It may be possible to use self esteem as part of a segmentation scheme for ego-expressive products, i.e., products that appeal to high internal values, and target the high self esteem segment. Firms can then position their product offerings and develop synergistic promotional campaigns congruent with both internal values and self esteem. The positioning and campaigns would emphasise internal rather than external validation. For example, a promotional campaign for a *self esteem* product could stress the intrinsic attributes of the product or service, coupled with a message like, “you enjoy what you do, you’re good at it, and you don’t need to show anyone else, do it for yourself.” This type of campaign would also be in line with previous findings that consumer who stress internal values are less susceptible to interpersonal influence than consumers who stress external values (Batra, Homer and Kahle 2001; Kropp, Lavaack, and Silvera 2005).

In the realm of social marketing, several destructive consumer behaviors have been associated with low self esteem. Although pleasurable in low to moderate levels, in the extreme, impulse behavior can be harmful or even self destructive (Verplanken et al. 2005). Similarly, alcohol consumption can be destructive in the extreme. A better understanding of the relationships between values and self esteem can lead to the development of more effective campaigns to limit the destructive behaviors.
LIMITATIONS/FUTURE RESEARCH

The research has several limitations. First, a convenience sample of university students from a major English-speaking Canadian university was used. It is important to use a wider and more representative sample in future research. This would include both more representative samples in English-speaking Canada and in French-speaking Canada, as well as samples from other countries and cultures.

Second, it would enhance understanding if relationships with other conceptually related psychological constructs were examined, for example, subjective well-being, satisfaction with life, social identity and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence. As was shown in this study, internal and interpersonal values are related to both the self-liking and self-compentency dimensions of self-esteem. A structural equation model could not be developed to link these constructs because the values did not explain enough of the variance in the structural relationship. In simple terms, it appears that there are missing explanatory variables. Inclusion of other psychological constructs would enhance the explanatory power of the model and increase the probability of constructing a structural equation model.

In order to develop a more thorough understanding of the relationships between values and self esteem, attitudinal measures and consumer behaviors also need to be modeled. In the normative marketing domain, possible behaviors could include, brand loyalty, value expression versus utilitarian purchase, and reward programs, to name a few. In the social marketing domain, impulse or compulsive buying, stereotyping, alcohol and tobacco consumption, and unsafe sexual behaviors are interesting possibilities.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

When studying age-related differences in consumer behavior of older adults, researchers tend to attribute the observed differences to the person’s declining abilities in mental capacity that accompanies biological aging. However, recent research in cognitive psychology suggests that cognitive functioning in general and declining abilities in particular might not be a matter of cognitive deficits due to biological aging, pointing to additional explanations for age-related declines. This paper extends previous research by presenting explanations beyond biological declines. It suggests a multitheoretical framework and presents the results of qualitative research that can be interpreted in the context of a more comprehensive model of cognitive functioning in later life.

INTRODUCTION

Models of cognitive aging have been widely used by consumer researchers to explain age-related differences in information processing and decision making (e.g., Cole and Balasubramaniam 1993; Cole and Gaeth 1990). The processing resources framework is generally used to explain age-related differences in such cognitive responses. In this framework, age-related deficits in memory, intelligence, problem solving, and reasoning are conceptualised in terms of deficits in processing resources - i.e., resource deficit models (John and Cole 1986; Salthouse 1991). These models assume that mental operations require varying amounts of cognitive resources, which tend to be limited in early and late life and show a wide variation across individuals. While many cognitive deficits in early life have been attributed to stages in cognitive development (e.g., Piaget 1983), declines in processing resources that characterise late stages in life are generally attributed to biological aging that causes the central nervous system to slow down (e.g., Axclord 1963; Salthouse 1985).

Many scholars in the fields of cognitive psychology and consumer behavior have documented age-related differences in cognitive responses (e.g., Lambert-Pandraud, Laurent, and Laperonne 2005; Marsiske and Willis 1995; Phillips and Stemhal 1977; Salthouse 1991). However, the causes of these differences are not well-understood in part because there are no formal theories of cognitive aging (Light 1988; Salthouse 1991). What is available is a set of ideas at the framework level that “...has not yet been formulated in sufficient detail to be considered a true theory or model” (Salthouse 1991, p. 349). Based on a review of research on cognitive aging Salthouse (1991) concluded:

As it currently stands, the processing resources perspective attempts to specify the most appropriate level (i.e., specific or general) for characterizing what the age differences are, but it ... leaves unanswered the fundamental questions of why the reduction in resources occurs, and how that reduction results in lower levels of cognitive performance (p. 349).

Recent studies have shown that it is possible for aging persons to continue improvement of existing cognitive skills and acquire compensatory and new cognitive skills throughout life (Fillit et al. 2002; Perlmutter 1988; Willis and Schaie 1986). Evidence to support this phenomenon (also known as “plasticity” of the cognitive system) comes from demonstrations of cultural and historical effects on adult intelligence (cf. Perlmutter 1988). Furthermore, this improvement in cognitive functioning may reflect higher education, changes in societal roles, increase in the level of intellectual stimulation in one’s environment, and other factors (Perlmutter 1988).

Evidence presented by Salthouse (1991) supports the notion that environmental, experiential and cohort-related factors are important in understanding cognitive functioning. Similarly, several studies in the field of consumer behavior show that cognitive performance can be enhanced with training (Cole and Gaeth 1990; Gaeth and Heath 1987), pointing to the importance of the environmental factors. These as well as studies in the field of cognitive psychology (e.g., Perlmutter 1988, Salthouse 1991 and 1999) suggest that biological, psychological, socio-cultural and environmental factors have an impact on cognitive functioning.

There are also issues regarding appropriate measures of cognitive activity. Schaie (1987), for example, criticised commonly used measures of cognitive activity and information processing paradigms for predicting competence across age groups, arguing for a contextualistic approach where different behavioral situations demand alternative combinations of intellectual abilities for their competent mastery. According to Schaie (1987), such situational demands impinge on an individual’s cognitive performance, and may vary markedly depending on the relevance of the task in a given stage of life; and individual responses may also be determined by the perceived attributes of a given situation, with such perceptions also likely to differ by life stage. He concludes: “It is necessary therefore to specify life-stage-specific situational taxonomies and to provide instruments that allow the appraisal of observed and perceived competence in specific situations” (p. 52).

In a parallel vein, some consumer researchers have observed that the methods that have dominated research on information processing and cognitive psychology in general may be incomplete, and have suggested the existential-phenomenological view for studying human cognitive activity (e.g., Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989). According to this view, the world of lived experiences does not always correspond with the world of objective description because objectivity implies one can separate an event from its contextual setting. Thus, although both younger and older adults may be exposed to the same stimuli (e.g., products, experimental treatments) one cannot assume that these are perceived in isolation from one’s lived experiences.

To summarise, resource deficit models may not completely account for all age differences in cognitive functioning. Consumer researchers might benefit from using additional variables deriving from competing or complementary models.

The present research explores a number of factors related to the individual’s cognition. It uses Perlmutter’s (1988) definition of cognition, which refers to “...the psychological ability that accounts for all mental life” (p. 250). This definition includes, memory, problem solving, reasoning and, therefore, mental operations required in decision making. Unlike previous studies that have used quantitative data to examine cognitive responses, the present study uses qualitative data in an effort to explore and understand cognitive processes among older adults. Specifically, it uses a multiple-tier model of cognition as a framework for interpreting data regarding older consumers’ responses to a new technological innovation.
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to integrate the various cognitive psychological perspectives and summarise evidence about cognitive functioning, Perlmutter (1988) proposed a multidisciplinary framework that takes into account biological factors, environmental factors (both physical and social), and cognitive factors in a three-tier model of cognition. The first tier incorporates basic mechanisms, primary mental functions, and fluid abilities. These are basic processing components of cognition that have been the focus of psychometric and experimental studies (e.g., Salthouse 1991) susceptible to deterioration associated with programmed biological aging and health problems. Resource deficit models assume the presence of this tier, which is also the basis of many consumer information-processing studies (e.g., Phillips and Sternthal 1977; Yoon 1997). The second tier of the cognitive system incorporates what has been known as world knowledge and crystallised abilities it includes the pragmatics of cognition (e.g., vocabulary) that are the focus of ecological studies (cf. Perlmutter 1988) or what Thompson and his associates (1989) refer to as “the individual’s world of lived experiences.” This tier derives from environmental experiences and is assumed to be a psychological addition to the biological layer. It is immune to deterioration associated with programmed biological aging, but is capable of adapting to the environment. Gaeth and Heath (1987), for example, found that older consumers’ susceptibility to misleading advertising can decrease with appropriate training, while a study by Cole and Gaeth (1990) showed that older people can improve their ability to use complex decision rules. The third tier incorporates what has been referred to as strategies and higher mental functions, activities well-mastered (e.g., expertise) due to, for example, one’s occupation or hobbies. This tier is also immune to biological fluctuations and emerges or improves with age as a result of the organism’s cognition about its own activity (internal experiences of the cognitive system), possibly directed by social interaction. The 55 SeniorNet Learning Centers and their members who subscribe to various information services accessed via personal computer (Thompson 1994) attests to the possible presence of this tier. This last view focuses attention on factors that mediate change in cognitive functioning, specifically on variables such as health, personality, attitudes, social roles and lifestyles. Although Perlmutter postulates only three tiers, she does indicate that it is possible to speculate a fourth or possibly fifth cognitive tier, with such tiers deriving from the cognitive system’s emotional or biological experiences.

THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to identify and validate the presence of the three types of cognitive tiers related to home-information technologies, in line with Perlmutter’s conceptual framework. Specifically, skills identified to decline due to physical deterioration of the bodily systems would be classified under Tier I; those that remain constant or modified by the individual (through experience) to adapt to new circumstances (e.g., products, services) as skills related to Tier II; and those skills that appear and improve in later life would be relevant to Tier III. In addition, the model provides opportunities for exploring the presence of additional tiers.

Research by Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) suggests the usefulness of various methods of introspection, including guided and syncretic introspection, for interpreting informants’ comments. This study used one form of guided introspection (focus group interviews) as well as a combination of introspection methods, including analysis of other researchers’ conclusions (syncretic introspection). While the data used in the present study are neither purely introspective nor phenomenological, they provide interesting insights.

The study was based on comments of focus group participants and researchers from two waves of focus groups conducted within a period of approximately ten months as part of a large-scale qualitative research program on information technologies directed by the senior author. The first wave consisted of ten focus groups (N = 109) conducted in five cities. Criteria used in participant selection included age, sex, income, type of impairment, living arrangement, and employment/retirement status. Participants were presented with a wide variety of new or emerging products and services, many of which are available via the Internet today. Some of the services were being offered through the Internet on a trial basis to participants of three focus groups in one city. Group discussions focused mainly on the needs of older consumers. The participants of the nine focus groups were over 55; and one focus group included participants of different age groups. Comments from older participants are most relevant in identifying the presence of skills related to all three tiers under investigation, since the accumulation of life experiences and biological declines tend to be associated with age (Perlmutter 1988, p. 263).

The second wave consisted of seven focus groups (N = 78) conducted in three cities. Six of the groups comprised a matrix of small business managers and consumers, with and without PCs. The seventh group consisted of persons who were already subscribers to Internet services. All the services presented to these groups had been available through the Internet. There was a minimum income criterion ($30,000) but no age requirement. The participants in these groups tended to be younger and employed, representing diverse groups of households and small businesses. Information from these focus groups was sought as it might relate to different needs, competence, and expertise of householders and business professionals.

Thus, participants of the seventeen groups were very diverse with respect to their present and potential needs, experience with and expertise in using the Internet. Two experienced moderators conducted the focus groups. One had an MBA degree and the other a Ph.D. in Psychology. Both moderators were very familiar with Internet services. The interviews were recorded, transcribed by the two researchers independently, and summarised. Because syncretic introspection includes analysis of other researchers’ conclusions in order to achieve confirmability (Hirschman 1986), the researchers’ reports were also audited (evaluated) by the authors whose experience with the Internet is comparable to that of the two researchers.

RESULTS

Biological Declines

One approach to investigating biological declines in cognitive functioning is to examine deficits in the various components of the information-processing system (Schaie 1987). Thus, for example, with respect to the biological effects on the perceptual system, one can examine the physiological declines in the sensory system (vision, hearing, etc.) as it relates to the person’s ability to make quick perceptual discriminations; the effects on the cognitive system as deficits in memory span or ability to retain numerical symbols and meaningful words in short-term memory; and motor performance system could be influenced by changes in the biomechanical system due to factors such as declining strength, loss of flexibility in joints and the onset of chronic conditions (e.g., arthritis).
Participants in focus groups were asked to describe their experiences with existing products or services that have been or could be incorporated into Internet services (e.g., telephone directories that could be replaced with an electronic telephone directory), and to comment on such new products and services that were described (in writing and orally) to the participants.

Several of the older participants in the focus group discussions made comments that suggest biological influences on information processing and cognitive functioning. Specifically, informants made comments about the Internet service that would alleviate the need to see at night. For example, several informants reacted positively to a security system that would use special equipment to read hand prints and automatically unlock the door. Several of them with severe vision impairments made comments such as "... have trouble with the keys at night" and "... would be convenient at night." Younger informants, on the other hand, saw little or no value in this technology. Older informants also made comments on other products and services that suggest deficiency in other components of the sensory system. For example, with respect to hearing, several participants reacted favorably to technologies that enhance their ability to hear or reduce background noise. All these comments are consistent with data that show increasing deficiency in the sensory system (i.e., information-processing abilities) in later life (e.g., Salhouse 1991).

Informants also made comments on existing and new products and services that reflect declines in deficit resources and adverse affects on the cognitive and motor performance systems. For example, many older respondents reacted positively to the idea of having an electronic calendar or telecommunication service that would remind them to do certain things (e.g., take medications). One older respondent indicated preference for verbal messages rather than a beeper, suggesting that a beeping may not serve as an adequate reminder (the person would still have to remember why the occasion for the beeping). Another older informant responded to the idea of having an electronic directory by saying that verbally-delivered listings could not be remembered. As another older informant put it: "... sometimes I don’t remember a complete name; ‘I’d need a form of reference to help me.’

One informant’s comments on the idea of getting information about such new products in the mail can be interpreted as preference for internally-paced (as opposed to externally-paced) information (John and Cole 1986; Phillips and Sternthal 1977?): ... if you wanted to go to a place to see the thing itself you, at least, are familiar with what you’ve seen in the catalog and you are reasonably intelligent. I know I went by one of those telephone places not long ago about a touch tone... and I am telling you ... by the time that girl got through talking to me, I didn’t know what I can buy or what about anything else... I was so totally confused ... so I just won’t buy (F, 73).

Decline in the motor performance system is manifested in longer times that could express or reach an object from those intended, perhaps due to slowing down of the central nervous system as well as deficits in manual dexterity. This deficit is reflected in comments on new phone designs made by older informants with arthritis: “desk model is easy to dial; trimline is difficult because the numbers are too close together” and “...because fingers are more inflexible, more than one number may be punched simultaneously.”

Collectively, these comments can be interpreted in the context of physical or biological deficits, which may affect cognitive functioning in general and information processing in particular. Since such comments were made by older informants, they suggest the presence of biological deficits in older adults. Many of the comments were made on products and services concerning everyday activities that are essential for adaptive functioning in given life circumstances (e.g., use of telephone). Biological declines do not only appear to affect cognitive processes but also the outcomes (products) of such processes (Schaie 1987).

Compensatory Skills

The second tier of cognition is subject to physical deterioration but capable of adapting itself to environmental circumstances it encounters. Experience acquired over time (primarily from one’s environment) is believed to be incorporated in thought and decision making, capable of compensating for processing limitations due to biological declines. Studies have shown that in some domains older adults can acquire compensatory skills that enable them to perform complex tasks with the same competence as younger adults (e.g., Perlmutter 1988). For example, a study reported by Salhouse (1991) found that although basic reaction time of older typists generally was slower than that of younger typists, older typists were able to maintain comparable typing speed by reading farther ahead. A similar type of study of bridge players concluded that older players developed some skills that compensate for speed they had lost (cf. Perlmutter 1988).

Evidence for compensatory skill development was also sought in comments made by our older informants. One unsolicited comment in particular stands out as an example of a compensatory skill due to failing vision and declining ability to read small print at places where there is less than adequate lighting.

Some years ago, I found out ... you know, I normally do not need glasses ... but if I get in a dim light in some phone booth, it’s difficult to see. This fellow said: “Take a business card, take a sharp pencil like that and punch a hole and hold it up (a bit higher from the printed material), and it acts like a magnifier, and it’s great ... its like a lens ... and ... any way, for what’s worth. You probably can use it because I got stuck like that a couple of times in an airport or something like it (M, 65+).

This comment can be interpreted in the context of the second tier of the cognitive system. First, the skill was developed to compensate for visual declines (inability to focus and see in dark environments). Second, it is based on external experiences (compared to Tier III which is internal-experimentally based) -- i.e., the informant learned this skill from others.

Improvement of Existing Skills

Perlmutter makes reference to one specific kind of cognitive skill, expertise, which seems to have the potential to develop and improve throughout life, referring to skills underlying an activity that is especially well-mastered due to factors such as one’s occupation or hobbies. In studies of expertise, the knowledge base and performance characteristics of experts and novices typically are compared. Regardless of age, an expert’s knowledge base in his or her area of expertise is quantitatively larger, more organised and operative than that of the novice’s (Perlmutter 1988). The cumulative experience with work and leisure, according to Perlmutter, could make an older person a universal expert, “with advance organisations of knowledge and general strategic operations” (p. 255). She also explains the role of mediating factors in improvement of existing skills over the life span:

...because the mediating effects of factors such as personality, attitudes, and life-style accumulate across time ... the impact of mediating factors should be most apparent
in that age (very old) group. For example, if a life of cognitive challenge enhances cognitive function, cognitively challenged individuals should appear increasingly different with age. The individual who maintains a life habit of extensive reading may enter old age with an exceptionally intact cognitive system, and the emeritus professor who continues active research and teaching past retirement may stay mentally sharp to his or her last days (Perlmutter 1988, p. 263)

We interpreted researchers’ conclusions and informant comments in the context of presence or absence of background characteristics (lifestyles, profession, hobbies, etc.) rather than age. One researcher’s conclusion based on focus group participants’ cognitive responses to the Internet was as follows:

Households and businesses without computers did not perceive the need for a computer in their everyday lives. Many of the householders (and some of the business managers) simply did not see worthwhile applications for computers in their lives and did not consider (the Internet) to be sufficiently interesting to warrant the purchase of a computer to be able to use (the Internet) ... The computer use by the home and business PC-using participants tended to be simple and unsophisticated, and neither group had elaborated informational needs ... PC-using households and businesses ... were easiest to educate about the system ... they were also more aware of the real costs of accessing databases.

The researcher’s conclusion highlights points that can be interpreted in the context of Perlmutter’s third tier of cognition. Those whose profession or lifestyles included the use of the information technologies were also likely to be the most knowledgeable and interested in learning about, and to respond favorably to the new home-information system.

Additional Cognitive Tiers

Although Perlmutter postulates only three tiers, she suggests that additional system might be present, she indicates that:

it almost surely includes and experientially-based control system that ever more adaptively reviews, plans, and manages activity. Such a control system is likely to reflect increasing awareness, mediation, and integration of emotion and thought ... Such a system may ... perhaps account for the as yet vague quality of wisdom (Perlmutter 1988, p. 256).

Comments made by informants on an existing custom calling-telephone service (call-waiting) suggest the presence of a layer that integrates cognitive and emotional responses, in line with a possible fourth cognitive tier. We have it ... but as the guy on the other end of the line I resent it because once somebody tells me, “I’ve got another call coming,” and puts me on hold, I hang up ... But it’s, I think, it’s an insult to the people you are talking to when that happens (M, 65+).

I object to it ... like my son calls me, and he’s got two teenagers in their home, and we never can carry on a conversation ... its constantly beeping, and we’ve got to stop it ... somebody ... it, it, it annoys me (F, 65+).

My husband would call me from the office and I’d be on the phone, and he’d try several times ... and when finally got through to me he was furious because he couldn’t get me ... And now, with call waiting ... you know ... it beeps, ... and I talk to him ... he is happy, and I am happy, and everybody gets along fine ... (F, 55-64).

These comments illustrate emotions beyond cognition, a mixture of emotions (anger, affection) and cognitions, and the meaning of such a service in the person’s life. At least for these older consumers, their responses are filled with emotions because of the way the service has affected their lives, creating life experiences that go beyond their ability to perceive, understand, and use such a service.

To summarise, comments made from focus group participants and conclusions reached by moderators provide some evidence that can be interpreted in line with the multitheoretical model presented by Perlmutter.

DISCUSSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results provide some support for the multitheoretical model of cognition. Collectively, the results of the present and previous studies raise interesting questions to be addressed in future research. First, we need to understand specific consumption-related cognitions that decline in later life and the reason(s) some older people maintain certain cognitive skills longer than others. Are these declines due to biological processes, or are there early-life social and environmental factors that contribute to the observed differences? Second, we need to know more about strategies older people may use to compensate for cognitive declines. Informant comments and findings of other studies (Salthouse 1991) suggest that older adults may develop new strategies to compensate for cognitive declines.

Some evidence from this study also suggests the possibility of additional tiers that integrate cognition with emotions, in line with Perlmutter’s speculations. Emergent themes that describe these additional tiers could also be the focus of future research. For example, we need to answer questions such as: Are there age differences in consumption experiences with products and services? What meaning(s) do different age groups attach to specific commercial stimuli? How do emotional responses to age-stereotypes in advertisements and other age-segmented stimuli affect cognitive orientations toward the firm’s offerings? How do biological experiences due to, for example, declining health affect the perceptions of commercial stimuli? Does education contribute to the older person’s inclination to resist certain commercial stimuli (new products, persuasive messages, etc.), as the findings of the Gaeth and Heath (1987) study suggest?

Future quantitative research in this area should also be guided by findings and recommendations in related fields, especially cognitive and developmental psychology. For example, Salthouse (1991) recommends three important kinds of information should be obtained from participants: (a) various experiential factors as moderators of age-related declines in cognitive functioning; (b) multiple measures representing several theoretical constructs; and (c) health-related symptoms or measures of neurological and physiological variables should be used to tap biological processes. The present study attempted to follow the first two suggestions, while the latter could be addressed in future research. The last suggestion also appears to be the most challenging, since there is no agreement on how to conceptualise and measure biological declines (e.g., Dean 1988; Salthouse 1991), and how to incorporate them into multitheoretical frameworks (Moody 1988).

REFERENCES


THE ULTIMATE SERVICE FAILURE: AN INVESTIGATION OF CONSUMER RESPONSES TO REJECTION
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

While increasing attention has been devoted to managing service failures (Smith and Wagner 1999; Tax and Brown 1998; Tax and Chandrashekar 1998), there has been less examination of more negative consumer experiences. One exception is research on consumer penalties (McCarthy and Fram 2000), the assignment of a fee to consumers who fail in some aspect of their service agreement with the company. Commonly cited examples include the leveling of late fees for movie rentals, administration fees to change airlines tickets or charges for missed dinner reservations. Kim and Smith (2005) argue that the use of consumer penalties is a form of economic punishment to discourage undesirable behavior on the part of the consumer and can range from financial penalties to the removal of privileges or denial of service. In addition to signaling to the consumers about their undesirable behavior, Kim and Smith (2005) argue that the use of consumer penalties can also serve to discourage undesirable consumer segments from seeking future services.

Despite the strides that have been made in exploring consumer penalties, research has not examined the ultimate negative service experience, rejection by the organisation. In the current research, consumer rejection is defined as the denial of membership, service or privileges by the organisation to an individual. Examples of consumer rejection can include being rejected for credit, denied membership to certain clubs, or refused service by health practitioners. There is plenty of evidence that individuals react badly to interpersonal rejection (Baumeister and Leary 1995), but this issue has not received attention in consumer research.

When individuals are faced with negative or surprising experiences such as rejection, they need to decide the reason that event occurred and make a causal explanation for their experience, an attributional judgment (Kelley 1973). Attributional research has long demonstrated that individuals are motivated to explain their behavior or experienced outcomes in such a way as to maintain a positive impression (Silvester, Anderson-Gough, Anderson and Mohamed 2002). For example, if an individual experiences a negative event such as the denial a promotion and he/she attempts to maintain a positive image, he/she may conclude that the denial was due to the manager not liking them or unfair organisational practices thereby making an external attribution. Individuals making an internal attribution for the promotion denial might acknowledge that the reason was their lack of leadership. It is these judgments of locus of control within or outside the individual or internal/external attributions that we of most interest to the current research. It is expected that consumer rejection will lead to greater external attributions as consumer blame the organisation for their rejection.

The independent variables of interest stem from the literature on attributional antecedents. Kelley and Michela (1980) maintain that there are three antecedents to attributional judgements: motivation, information and prior beliefs. The current research focuses on information and prior beliefs and their subsequent impact upon consumer attributions. In the first study, consumers are surveyed about their own rejection experiences. The second study uses the information antecedent of causal attributions to examine consumer responses to rejection by manipulating the difficulty of the application process. The third and final study investigates consumer’s normative beliefs regarding fairness to determine the impact upon responses to rejection. Because rejection or approval typically involves an assessment of whether an individual meets certain criteria, consumers are likely to make their own judgments about whether or not they meet the criteria for approval or acceptance. Rejection coupled with consumers’ perceptions that they met the criteria is likely to be considered unfair.

The results of the first study serve to illustrate powerful effects that rejection has upon consumer reactions. Rejected consumers had significantly more negative attitudes towards the organisation, were more likely to report negative WOM intentions and less likely to ever seek service from the organisation again in the future. The second study demonstrated that consumer reactions to rejection were negative and rejection influenced future purchase intentions and attitudes through negative affect. Surprisingly, while information antecedents did influence the type of attributions consumers were making, these attributions did not mediate their response to rejection. Finally, results of the third study demonstrated that fairness does mitigate the negative effect somewhat but is still not sufficient to overcome the strength of the negative response to rejection.

There are a number of contributions to the current research. First, despite the attention given to service failure and recovery, research has not addressed the issue of consumer rejection. The current work defined the construct and investigated attributional antecedents that might influence consumer responses. Second, this work investigated consumer rejection in a variety of settings from loan applications (study 2) to entrance into a nightclub (study 3) and increases the external validity of this work. The final contribution of this work lies in the illustration of the extreme negativity of consumer reactions to rejection, even when such rejection was fair and reasonable given the circumstances. Despite several attempts, there was little that could be done to mitigate the powerfully negative responses of consumers who have been rejected from an organisation. Future research needs to more fully explore ways to lessen the sting of rejection for consumers such as examining the motivational antecedent to attributions.

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TREAD SOFTLY: USING VIDEOGRAPHY TO CAPTURE SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Rather than relying on participant recall or manual observations, videography was implemented to monitor supermarket shoppers as part of larger project investigating the influence of emotions on brand loyalists. It revealed that whilst there are obvious advantages in capturing real-time activities, there are limitations as well. Depth interviews viewing the recording were held to discuss the reasons behind shopping activities and this actually limited the conversation rather than expanded the topics. When the video was taken from the interview, a broader exchange resulted and revealed richer results. This doesn’t negate the benefits of videography, rather, it provides a complimentary methodology which be translated into discerning research that develops consumer understanding.

INTRODUCTION

It seems like the answer to a researcher’s prayer, a technology that can enable us to capture all of those non-verbal cues at the moment of purchase, not just the smile or the hovering hand but also the aisle plan and the direct influence of others. The implementation of videography allows researchers to capture this. But can it deliver to all that it appears to offer? The focus of this paper is on the adaptation of videography necessitated by the realities of using it in the field.

Capturing Consumer Behaviour and Attitudes

Success of any study in consumer behaviour is often dependent on an informant’s ability to recall their actions and the researcher’s ability to capture that moment. For many years, consumer behaviour has been reliant on recall measures to comprehensively record both the behaviour and the environment in which it takes place. Videography benefits both as there is less reliance on memory based retrieval systems when attempting to understand consumer actions. Luce & Bettman (2001) assert that whilst most consumer behaviour is goal orientated, utilising a memory system, individuals have their own processing ability based on the situation of choice and the characteristics of their choice at time of purchase. These decisions are often influenced by a myriad of judgments from the latent, subconscious through to the conscious, active decision processes. Including, identifying the underlying stimulus for consumer purchasing the above factors will be influenced by the functional utility of the product, the social association of the purchase, the emotional link between the product and the consumer, the need for knowledge, and finally the conditions under which the product is bought (Sheth, Newman, Gross, 1991).

This challenges traditional recording methods. With recent improvements in technology and increasing affordability, observations via the use of a video (or videography) as a means of providing hard evidence of consumer behaviour is gaining popularity. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that any methodology employed in the exploration of this consumer-brand interaction is the one most suitable to allow the capture of this complexity. It is this that has lead to the increasing adoption of new technology as a means of reaching across existing barriers to understanding.

Quantitative measures of how consumers behave are complemented by our understanding the reasons why, and our having greater insight into their underlying motivations. This in turn, will provide a more holistic approach to the field under study. This increasing popularity in the ‘why’ of research has customarily been completed through the use of focus groups or depth interviews (personal, phone, diary and more recently, internet). And yet, regardless of method of choice, the bulk of the results have been based on the participants’ recall of the purchase within the purchasing environment. In some cases, this may not have been the most reliable alternative in terms of research outcome. For example, Wind and Learner (1979) found that only 28% of participants, in a phone interview, correctly identified their purchased brand when it was compared to the details in their purchase diaries. Likewise, Schumann, Grayson, Ault et al (1991) discovered that only 4-6% of shoppers were able to recall the shopping cart advertising at the point of purchase. This is not to say that research employing recall techniques is outdated, but rather careful consideration on the research outcome needs to be encouraged.

An alternative to the recall approach has been the use of observation combined with an interview at the point of purchase (McIntyre and Bender, 1986). This amalgamation tends to capitalise on the increased accuracy of observational procedures with solid evidential reasons why specific products were chosen. The adoption of videography in this situation is an attractive choice as it allows the researcher to focus on understanding rather than the data capture.

The use of photographs and video images is not a new concept in the field of qualitative research (Heisley & Levy 1991, Donnenfeld & Goodland, 1998, Underhill, 2000, Belk & Kozinets 2005.). Historically, focus groups have been the main driver of video usage because the expense of implementing this technology outside this formal environment has been inhibitive to its popularity of application. However with the advent of increasing affordability, portability and accessibility, the potential for videography is removing these limitations in consumer research.

Videography has also allowed for the recording of other methodologies such as depth interviews from a purely written or audio perspective to one where the informants’ non-verbal cues can also be captured relatively easily. Thus by not only listening to what people say, but by having visual evidence, the non-verbal cues will provide an increased richness to the results. Direct imagery of consumers is also seen as a way to capture more detailed information about emotions, motivations, and underlying value systems that previously relied on more survey based methods. (Heisley & Levy, 1991, Heath, 1997, Belk & Kozinets, 2005). These topics are often difficult to articulate, however the visual images often reveal so-called ‘hidden’ meanings which may be the main driver behind the research study. And whilst videography may increase the amount of research involvement and data analysis, this is outweighed by the fact that there is permanent record of what actually happened rather than relying on traditional observational methods, survey data or consumer recall. Researchers now have the ability to scrutinise people in their naturalistic environment, and in this instance, to further understand the interactions between consumers and their brands (Heath, 1997, Underhill, 2000).

It is with this premise in mind that a study was undertaken to further investigate the relationships that consumers have with specific brands within non-durable...
consumer goods, primarily fast moving consumer goods (FMCG). This particular market was selected due to the perceived transient nature of the consumer-brand relationship. For example, brand substitution doesn’t involve a high financial risk to the consumer, and the market is highly competitive with an abundance of brand choice offering plenty of opportunity to switch. The line of investigation discussed in this paper took an ethnographic format using the benefit of visual records as well as the traditional written and audio transcripts. The focus was on understanding how consumers react to in-store conditions, and in particular to brands regularly purchased.

It should be noted that the use of video revealed the emergence of positivistic elements within the study, however it was only one data collection method within the early stages of a larger project. At the culmination of the endeavor, it is expected that a greater adoption of an interpretive approach will be implemented.

Interpretive studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them. These interpretive assumptions rely on the role of language and comprehension within the social sciences. Chua (1986) uses Shulz (1967, 1966, 1964, 1962) to explain that these assumptions include a belief about the physical and social reality, to make sense of human actions, and that by showing what people are doing we enable greater understanding between theory and practice. Interpretive research involves challenging reality with the involvement of human subject and where the researcher interacts with these subjects (Walsham 1995). These are key factors playing an important role in final outcome of our study, however, for our videographic stage there is greater emphasis on the practicalities of capturing the data in order to provide quality interpretive based results further on.

**Methodological Selection**

It was proposed that capturing visual evidence of the purchase occasion would provide solid evidence for future review and analysis not only on the part of the researcher, but also on the part of the informant. The assumption was that by providing this kind of verification, accurate and detailed discussions for the reasons of choice would be possible which then provided precise findings.

Prior to taking the camera into the field, a focus group of grocery buyers was held to understand what were the key influences about choice of brand. The result of this was then transferred into a depth interview format for pre-testing with further grocery buyers prior to the actual video fieldwork. Once this had been completed, and minor adjustments made to the interview, a further group of twelve grocery buyers agreed to take part in the videographic element. The sample selected was chosen to maximise heterogeneity so that it included a wide range of age groups, household unit and other demographic factors (eg: income, postcode). Before videography was decided upon to capture the observational component of the study, other methodologies were investigated. These included:

1. Completing surveys immediately post-shop
2. Participant involvement with an audio tape during the actual shop
3. Observations making skeleton notes which were to be expanded upon immediately post shop
4. In-home pantry observations were also suggested, however, this would not provide the circumstances under which the product was bought.

The majority of these methods did not allow for a similarly accurate recording of non-verbal cues which were a key component of the research. Belk & Kozinets (2005) discuss the possibility of ‘autovideography’ in this emerging field – where the informant is responsible for the filming of their actions and environment. Under the conditions of our study - shopping in a supermarket - it was foreseen that it wouldn’t be practical for the consumer to select their preferred brands, and at the same time capture this on video. Hidden cameras were not considered because of the degree of difficulty for the informant to gauge their own emotions and motivations combined with potential ethical issues. The alternative of an ‘external’ camera for autovideography would most likely require the presence of an additional family member or friend, who may not normally participate in the shopping visit. And whilst it could be argued that the attendance of a familiar person may reduce any undue influence from an observant researcher, the quality of the final result may not be to expected standards.

There have been other studies where consumers were accompanied during a shopping visit without the presence of a video camera (Lowrey, Otnes, McGrath, 2005) but as our focus was on the underlying motives of the consumer, it was agreed that video, by the researcher, was the most appropriate tool for data collection. To enhance this, it was also decided to maintain a non-participant observational role rather than becoming actively involved during the actual shop. By doing so, this allowed for the informant to maintain as much ‘normal’ shopping behaviour as possible. If the researcher became concerned with the purchasing of the product, then there was a greater risk of informant distraction, possible introduction of bias, and increasing the actual time taken to complete the task. Participants often have difficulty in defining the parameters of their relationships without the need for aided recall and the use of videography provides this without unnecessary bias. Accordingly, all discussions between the researcher and informant could be kept until the end of the visit.

Although videography has the potential to reveal so much more about consumer behaviour, it is also this revelation that raises the importance of strict ethical guidelines. Belk & Kozinets (2005) highlights the importance of this when deciding to use videography as the key methodology. In our study, a small hand-held camera was being used to track the informant through the shop, which, whilst it remained as unobtrusive as possible, also meant that other shoppers were inadvertently captured on film. Generally, these were only for a brief moment as they were not the subject of focus and given the position of the researcher, it was rare that any person was identifiable for a long period of time.

**Fieldwork Process**

The proposed field collection process was a two stage modus operandi – the first step was to silently follow and observe the informant completing a normal shop. This non-participatory role of the researcher was to encourage a pattern and format familiar to the informant. During this time, several key behavioural patterns were noted. These included:

**1. The time taken to select a brand:** in some cases the informant picked up the desired brand immediately with little or no investigation of any other product. In other cases, two or three brands were picked up and compared, whilst in other instances, visual comparison was made before the final choice was made, or even after a detailed judgment no product was selected at all.

**2. The interaction of other family members at the time of shop:** in some cases there was general discussion about the selection of brands, in other cases, it
was the secondary member who made the final choice whilst at other times, it was the informant who made the final choice regardless of the input from other members.

3. The impact of in-store promotional activities: in some cases the informant totally ignored the large displays (and even suggested they were a hindrance), at other times, they paid great attention to the promotion and bought several items of the one brand.

4. The aisle pattern: Some informants only focused on the aisles that contained the brands they sought and ignored all other aisles. Other informants followed a regular pattern of visiting every aisle, even though brands were not scrutinised or even bought in many of these.

5. The number of times shopping lists or advertising material were referred to in relation to brand selection.

Utilising videography made data collection of the first stage extremely easy in comparison to other methods. There was no need to constantly take note of what the shopper was doing, which section they were looking at, how many products they picked up and so on. The interactions between the informant and in-store conditions were easily identifiable, again without relying on skeleton notes which may have missed a cue. There was little burden on the informant, all mannerisms and interactions were accurately captured at the time of occurrence, and the resulting replay would provide easier future data analysis.

It has been said that the presence of a camera can skew the behaviour of those being filmed (Heath, 1997, Smallbridge 2003) – and yet we found that this was not a significant factor in any of the recordings. After the initial self-consciousness, the informants’ attention was focused on fulfilling their shopping requirements. The researcher also ensured that they were a comfortable distance from the informant so as not to feel intrusive to any ‘personal space’.

Even the children, after only a few moments of surveying the camera, became more interested in providing input to the selection of brand rather than the presence of a third person. This may also have been partly due to all informants being aware of the methodology and their level of participation well before the event. This prepared them for how the fieldwork was going to be conducted and set a specific level of expectation. To do otherwise in future research would not be recommended.

The second stage was to then play back the video with the informant and encourage a detailed interview as to the reasons why certain products were selected and the resultant attitudes based on specific behaviour. This was to occur immediately after the shop to ensure that all activities were top of mind and easy to recall. It also aimed to reduce the number of drop-outs if subsequent interviews were required from the informants. This second interview was also audio recorded to provide a complimentary source of information to the visual appearance of themselves.

The informant had the freedom to select and discuss brands that they felt were important to them and not the researcher. This incorporated important attitudes and motivations that may not have necessarily been uncovered if the video recording had been solely relied upon.

Rather than referring to the video playback, they were instead asked to select a small number of key brands that they had just bought. The purpose of this was twofold – the brands chosen were to be an ice-breaker topic to open the discussion and the brands selected were familiar to the informant and tended to make a meaningful contribution to their everyday lives. Also, by asking the informant to select the brands for discussion this would be another instance where there would be a reduction of bias on the part of the researcher. An audio recording of the interview was maintained as part of the interview, mainly to lessen the need to make too many field notes and attention towards the informant was maintained.

The outcome of having a frank discussion without the presence of a video resulted in several key benefits –

1. The informant wasn’t distracted by any visual appearance of themselves.
2. The informant had the freedom to select and discuss brands that they felt were important to them and not the researcher. This incorporated important attitudes and motivations that may not have necessarily been uncovered if the video recording had been solely relied upon.
3. It allowed much broader topic digression away from the activities on the video, thus revealing hidden meanings behind their reasons for brand choice.
4. Greater flexibility to discuss the influence of intangible factors on brand choice such as familiarity, memories of childhood and trust, how they use the products, how others use the product, the perception of the different supermarkets, the integration of the brands into lifestyle and community involvement.

However, one of the most important outcomes was the consistent response that whilst there were important brands bought at the time of the shop, often there were other brands that contributed to a strong relationship regardless of how frequently they purchased them. Without the video, the informant had the freedom to move the discussion in this area and openly talk about which brands were really important to them, and why.

This adaptation to the final methodology is not to negate the advantages of using videography. The resultant techniques ultimately provided two sources of data for further analysis – both complimentary to the outcome. That is, the video captured the confirmed behavioural component of the study, whilst the interview encapsulated not only opinions and attitudes towards the brands bought during the shop, but it also encouraged open candor about their overall repertoire of brands. The results of this stage of the research will provide a good source of reference as the study progresses onto the next stage.

CONCLUSION

So where does this leave the field of videography for consumer qualitative researchers? As with any other research method, it is not recommended to be used as a sole source of information for interpretation because the limitations of videography should not be ignored. And as we found in our fieldwork, there are considerable ethical issues which need to be recognised, especially those where children are involved. Access in areas to use a video camera may be limited without degrading the quality of the recording and in some cases, if a camera would be permitted at all. We also found that immediate playback restricted the focus of the topic under discussion as the informants were more interested in their physical appearance rather than the meanings behind their actions. This provided excessive distraction during the interview process.

And yet, there is still so much potential contribution for videography. It has improved our ability to watch what people are doing within the context of their reality. This ultimately aids a researchers’ ability to develop interpretive research. As discussed by Chua (1986), we seek to understand how people interact within their natural environment with emphasis on observation and careful attention to the details. If we can gather this level of interpretive knowledge we can then enrich our understanding of the meanings behind consumer behaviour and attitude. With videography, we are accurately able to capture people in their naturalistic environment as it occurs rather than relying heavily on recall.

Taking this into perspective and the purpose of this study, we are now able to move onto the next stage of our research. This fieldwork has provided solid evidence of non-verbal cues which adds to understanding the deeper meanings behind consumer-brand relationships. All of which can be translated into discerning, actionable research that ideally, develops our potential to reach across the borders of consumer understanding.

REFERENCES


WHY RETAIL THERAPY?
A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF LIMINALITY, SELF-ESTEEM, NEGATIVE EMOTIONS, AND PROXIMITY OF CLOTHING TO SELF IN THE COMPENSATORY CONSUMPTION OF APPAREL PRODUCTS

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Compensatory consumption, or retail therapy, occurs “when an individual feels a need, lack, or desire which they cannot satisfy with a primary fulfillment so they use purchasing behavior as an alternative means of fulfillment” (Woodruffe-Burton 1998, 301). Compensatory consumption tends to occur when individuals have low self esteem and are experiencing negative emotional states (Kacen and Friese 1999; Woodruffe-Burton 1998). Low self esteem and negative emotional states often accompany liminal states (Noble and Walker 1997). During liminal states, individuals are likely to feel a significant gap, or a self concept discrepancy (Eastburg, Johnson, Woo, and Lucy 1988), between who they believe they currently are and who they would ideally like to be. Liminal individuals may use consumption to ease the psychological discomfort experienced with self concept discrepancies (Belk 1992; Mehta and Belk 1991). Because two of the three participants in Woodruffe-Burton’s (1998) study indicated that a trigger for their compensatory consumption was a significant life-altering event that left a “gap” in their lives, it seems likely that a relationship exists between liminality and compensatory consumption behavior. However, rather than being a direct relationship, it seems more likely that the relationship would be an indirect one through various factors (i.e., self esteem and emotional state) that are affected by liminality and, in turn, affect compensatory consumption behavior.

While individuals are engaged in compensatory consumption, they tend to purchase apparel (Kacen 1998). This is not surprising, given the fact that most compensatory consumers are females (Woodruffe 1997), and females tend to be more interested than men in apparel (Shim and Bickle 1994). Compensatory consumers’ interest in apparel suggests that they may feel a close proximity of clothing to self. Proximity of clothing to self describes the degree to which individuals believe apparel products are “a significant symbol of one’s identity, mood, or attitude” (Sontag and Lee 2004, 161). Because individuals engage in compensatory consumption of apparel to improve their self esteem and emotional state, it seems likely that compensatory consumers would possess a high degree of proximity of clothing to self.

The purpose of our exploratory study is to investigate the personal factors that are related to the compensatory consumption of apparel products. Based on previous research, the following hypotheses were developed: H1: The degree to which an individual is experiencing a liminal state is positively related to low self esteem; H2: The degree to which an individual is experiencing a liminal state is positively related to negative emotional state; H3: Considering all other variables in the model, low self esteem is positively related to compensatory consumption of apparel products; H4: Considering all other variables in the model, negative emotional state is positively related to compensatory consumption of apparel products; H5: Considering all other variables in the model, proximity of clothing to self is positively related to compensatory consumption of apparel products.

METHOD
Undergraduates (N = 301; 88% female; 84% Caucasian American; 20.77 = mean age) from universities in four states (Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, and North Carolina) completed a questionnaire. College students were selected as possible participants in order to obtain a sample of individuals experiencing a range of liminality (Noble and Walker 1997). Liminality (Noble and Walker 1997), self esteem (Heatherton and Polivy 1991), emotional state (Scherhorn, Reisch, and Raab 1990), proximity of clothing to self (Sontag and Lee 2004), and compensatory consumption behavior (Woodruffe 1997; Woodruffe-Burton 1998) were assessed using items presented in a seven-point Likert-type scale format. Demographic information was also assessed.

MAJOR FINDINGS
Results from a series of regression analyses using liminality as an independent variable showed that liminality was significantly and positively related to both low self esteem ($R^2 = 0.21$, $F = 73.71, p < 0.0001$; $\beta = 0.45, t = 8.59, p < 0.0001$) and negative emotional state ($R^2 = 0.12, F = 38.51, p < 0.0001; \beta = 0.35, t = 6.21, p < 0.0001$). Therefore, $H_1$ and $H_2$ were supported. A multiple linear regression model was created to test $H_3$ through $H_5$ using compensatory consumption behavior as the dependent variable and low self esteem, negative emotions, and proximity of clothing to self as independent variables along with gender as a covariate. The effect of gender on compensatory consumption behavior was significant ($\beta = 0.12, t = 2.27, p < 0.05$). Results showed that the overall model for compensatory consumption behavior was significant ($R^2 = 0.20, F = 18.24, p < 0.0001$). Compensatory consumption behavior was predicted by low self esteem ($\beta = 0.16, t = 2.36, p < 0.05$) and proximity of clothing to self ($\beta = 0.29, t = 5.36, p < 0.0001$), lending support to both $H_3$ and $H_4$. When controlling for the effects of self esteem and proximity of clothing to self in the multiple linear regression model, negative emotions did not significantly predict compensatory consumption behavior. Post hoc regression analysis using compensatory consumption behavior as the dependent variable and negative emotions as an independent variable indicated that negative emotions alone had a significant effect on compensatory consumption behavior ($R^2 = 0.10, F = 17.07, p < 0.0001; \beta = 0.25, t = 4.52, p < 0.0001$). Thus, $H_5$ was partially supported.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION
A possible indirect link between liminality and compensatory consumption was identified. A positive relationship was found between the compensatory consumption of apparel products and both low self esteem and proximity of clothing to self. While negative emotional
state was independently related to compensatory consumption behavior, self esteem issues seemed to have more impact on participants' compensatory consumption behavior because negative emotional state was not a significant predictor of compensatory consumption behavior when included in a regression model with both self esteem and proximity of clothing to self as independent variables. Compensatory consumption behavior may not be especially harmful to consumers, particularly if it occurs temporarily during times of liminality. Compensatory consumption could become problematic, however, if the desire to purchase apparel products to improve one's emotional state or to increase one's self esteem does not subside and, instead, becomes a chronic consumption method (e.g., compulsive consumption). Future longitudinal research on compensatory consumption and compulsive buying is needed to address this issue.

REFERENCES


WHY WE GIVE: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE DONOR DECISION PROCESS
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ABSTRACT
Nonprofit agencies seek to make valuable contributions to society as providers of public services, but in order to continue their good works, nonprofit organisations need to take a strategic approach to fundraising that uses their limited resources to effectively target donors. Critical to this approach is an understanding of the donor decision process and donor motivations. What are the differences in the thought processes of donors and non-donors? What motivates a donor to give to a specific nonprofit organisation? Unfortunately for these agencies, little relevant research exists to answer these questions because fundraising is not a recognised academic discipline. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the importance of two motivational factors, relevance and recognition, and to evaluate the thought process of the individual donor to provide implications specific to the nonprofit sector. The results of two studies confirm that personal relevance is a significant predictor of donation behavior. Personal relevance can be established by the donor himself (i.e., measured), or personal relevance can be instilled by an organisation (i.e., manipulated). This suggests that fundraising appeals can be tailored to increase the relevance of the nonprofit agency’s mission to the audience, thus creating an increase in donations. These studies also support a cognitive-based approach to understanding donor thought processes, offering nonprofit organisations practical insights for fundraising. Within our findings, individuals with high relevance to a cause were more likely to believe that cause was a major problem in our society, that a solution could be found, and that their personal contribution could make a significant difference in attaining that solution.

REFERENCES
SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARIES
THE ROLE OF BODY IMAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM IN ADOLESCENT CONSUMERS’ USE OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION MESSAGES AS INPUT FOR FOOD CHOICES
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SPECIAL SESSION OVERVIEW
In 2000 for the first time, the number of overweight people in the world matched the number of undernourished people at 1.1 billion each (Nestle 2002), and in 2004, the number of overweight adults reached 1.7 billion worldwide exceeding the number of the undernourished populations (WHO 2004). The escalating obesity epidemic (Handy 2003) has become global in scope, afflicting affluent nations such as the United States, but also developing countries (Witkowski 2005b). In the United States, the most alarming aspect of the epidemic is the increasing obesity levels among vulnerable groups such as children and adolescents. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that 30 percent of all adolescents aged 12 to 19 years are obese (Seiders and Petty 2004).

Given these alarming statistics, it is imperative for marketing researchers to study the possible marketing-related causes for the increasing incidence of obesity (e.g., Mick 2003). Adolescence is a particularly important time of life; consumption habits and skills acquired and reinforced during this lifetime have a lasting effect on individuals’ long-standing tastes and preferences (Ganley 1989; Shepherd 1999). In order to begin exploring some of the marketing-related issues that may be involved in the increasing obesity among adolescents (e.g., Witkowski 2005a), this study examines the role of body image and self-esteem in adolescent responses to food-related marketing communications messages, and how those messages impact adolescent consumers’ food choices.

Based on the work of Coley (1902) on the “looking glass self,” and James’ (1982) conception of self-esteem as captured by the ratio of one’s successes to one’s pretensions, Harter (1991) defines self-esteem or self worth as “the level of global regard that one has for the self as a person.” Harter (1982, 1985, 1986) has determined that children develop domain-specific evaluations, in addition to a global concept of their self-worth, at about eight years of age. Harter (1991) also found that the relevant domains for children included scholastic competence, athletic competence, social acceptance, physical appearance, and behavioral conduct. Body image falls within the domain of “physical appearance.” Cash (2004) defines body image as “subjective perceptual and attitudinal experiences about one’s body, particularly one’s physical appearance.” Thompson and Hirschman (1995) contend that the “…mind observes its body, critiques its appearance and form, and engages in activities – such as exercise, surgery, dieting – to transform the body into a more desired form.”

Many researchers in various disciplines, primarily in psychology and sociology, have investigated self-esteem and body image across different contexts and with a range of samples. The role that self-esteem and body image play in consumer choices has been given much less attention by marketing researchers. In addition to the Thompson and Hirschman (1995) study, marketing researchers have examined how self- and body-esteem moderate indulgent food choices when mortality is made salient (Ferraro, Shiv, and Bettman 2005). Bloch and Richins (1992) explored the relation of adornment usage to evaluations of attractiveness; and Schouten (1991) explored the motives and self-concept dynamics underlying the consumption of plastic surgery to alter aspects of physical appearance. A few studies examined interactions between social comparison and body image through advertising contexts (Bearden and Rose 1990; Martin and Kennedy 1993, 1994a, 1994b; Richins 1991, 1992). Based on the existing theoretical and empirical work, our study fills an important gap in the research addressing the relationship between adolescents’ self-esteem and body image and their food consumption choices. Our investigation is guided by the following research questions: 1) How does body image affect adolescents’ food choices? 2) How does self-esteem affect adolescents’ food choices? 3) How does marketing communications mediate these relationships?

Adopting a multi-method, multi-stage research approach, in the initial stages of the research, surveys are administered to both junior high-school and high-school students in four separate regions of the U.S. The surveys consist of a section on eating habits, a section on advertising influences, the Harvard Medical School Eating Survey, a self-esteem section (DuBois et al. 1996), and various demographic questions. At the end of the survey the researchers ask for volunteers to take part in an extended ethnographic study (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Students in the extended study take part in in-depth interviews (McCracken 1988); are given disposable cameras to take pictures of food-related situations and marketing messages; and take part in various on-line activities such as chat rooms, a body-image questionnaire, and additional questioning by the researchers. Additionally, parents of the participating students and school officials are surveyed concerning food, advertising, and related issues.

Preliminary results suggest that there is a relationship between body image, self-esteem, adolescents’ use of marketing communications messages, and their food choices. Adolescents’ more realistic and favorable perceptions of their body image are positively related to higher self-esteem. The higher self-esteem adolescents are less reliant on marketing communication messages for information about food, and the healthier their food choices. The preliminary findings are compelling, and will shed new light on the relationships underlying adolescents’ food-related consumer behavior.
The rising rate of obesity is a major threat to public health and increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and numerous other serious illnesses (Kennedy and Offut 2000). Approximately 30 percent of adolescents in the U.S. are overweight (National Center for Health Statistics 2004). There are many reasons being proposed for this weight increase, but food producers and retailers must be examined for their potential role in this escalating problem.

Convenience and time constraints are two key determinants driving these adolescent food choices (Story, Neumark-Sztainer, and French 2002). One place adolescents make food choices is at school, but adolescents have many other opportunities for eating outside the home (Brownell and Battle 2004). Many of the places where adolescents have access to food are where they gather socially, such as fast food restaurants and convenience stores. When adolescents gather in these places, eating and drinking are usually part of the social experience. The food industry has provided increasing availability and promotion of energy-dense foods and increasing portion sizes, often in these locations (Brownell and Battle 2004). Given that adolescence is the first time that disposable income allows them to consume what they want without parental supervision, this can lead to overconsumption of fast food and other high-fat foods and underconsumption of foods considered more nutritious (Dietz and Stern 1999; Lin et al. 1999; Lino et al. 1998; Munoz et al. 1997; Neumark-Sztainer 1998; Subar et al. 1998).

Existing guidelines and messages that promote healthy eating compete with food industry marketing and the social situations that promote “grab-and-go” eating and congregation at fast food outlets and convenience stores. Eating healthy is a lifestyle, and adolescents may be learning that it is acceptable to buy fast food or products from convenience stores or vending machines for a meal. The food industry is aware that adolescents purchase beverages and food independently of their parents. With adolescents, “if it goes into their mouth, it needs to get past their defenses” (Siegel et al. 2001). Target marketing and marketing communications are the methods used to achieve this. Marketing is a major expenditure for the food and food-service industry. In 2000, the food industry spent 11 billion on direct media, advertising in magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and billboards (Schlosser 2001). Therefore, research is needed on adolescents’ independent purchases of food outside the home. Clearly, “research on environmental influences is needed” (Booth et al. 2001), and an objective of the United States Department of Health and Human Services “Healthy People 2010” (USDHHS 2000) is to “Improve Child and Adolescent Health by reducing the number of children and adolescents who are overweight or obese from 11 percent in the year 2000 to 5 percent.”

This paper describes a part of a comprehensive multi-stage, multi-method research project designed to clarify the social aspects of adolescents’ nutrition behavior outside the home and the influence of food marketing. The long-term goal of this study will help produce conceptual models of food and nutrition behavior so that strategies can be designed to improve the nutrition education of adolescents. In phases one and two, respondents participating in surveys and photo-elicitation, provide data on their food consumption behavior, including where food is purchased and/or consumed. Retail establishments near schools include convenience stores, restaurants, and grocery stores, or “food opportunities,” as labeled by University of Pennsylvania researchers in a recent obesity study (Omaha World-Herald May 31, 2005). A random sample of these establishments is included in this phase. Video cameras and/or written documentation is used to record in-store merchandising techniques, including point-of-purchase displays and signage, store and shelf layout, and other merchandising practices. In addition, personnel in these retail stores are interviewed about their perceptions about adolescent food purchasing behaviors and marketing techniques targeting adolescents. Preliminary results indicate that students do frequent many retail establishments for food purchases, and these purchases often include high-fat, high-sugar choices. Analysis of the data is ongoing.

THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL FOOD POLICY ON ADOLESCENT OBESITY

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According to a recent study, the proportions of overweight children in North and South America and in the European Union are expected to increase from one third to one half and from one fourth to one third, respectively, by the year 2010 (Wang and Lobstein 2006). This worldwide obesity crisis shows an obvious imbalance between the energy children consume and expend with an estimated 155 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 as overweight and 30 to 40 million of those being obese (International Obesity TaskForce). Further, studies have shown that overweight and obese children lead to overweight and obese adults (see Bouchard 1997; Dietz 1991, 1997; Vuille and Mellbin 1979). This cause for concern has spurred many public health groups to advocate policies aimed at promoting healthy eating and increased physical activity among children.

The causes of obesity range from genetic, metabolic, and hormonal to environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic. Because childhood obesity is more prevalent in the United States with approximately 31 percent of children ages 6 to 19 overweight and 16 percent obese (Hedley et al. 2004), many studies have examined the risk factors using U.S. data. Authors have documented the influence of the types of foods children eat on obesity (Birch and Fisher 1998; Klesges et al. 1991), the relationship between fast food and body weight (Binkley et al. 2000; Chou et al. 2004; French et al. 2000, 2001), and the connection between school finances and availability of junk food in schools (Anderson and Butcher 2005). This paper focuses on the influence of the school environment on childhood obesity. Since schools are one of the primary locations where children make their food choices, those choices should reflect the education children receive about nutrition. Although many state legislatures are considering
the imposition of bans on the sale of junk food in schools to control the growing obesity problem of today’s youth, there is no empirical evidence that shows that these bans actually decrease student obesity. This paper fills that void in this important policy debate. If school food policy has a measurable effect on obesity, we can use our results to estimate the payoff from targeting policy dollars to influence school food policy.

We utilise a unique matched child-parent data set and employ econometric techniques to examine whether school food policies affect students’ body-mass index (BMI). The BMI is defined as the weight of a person in kilograms divided by the square of the person’s height in meters. This measure is frequently used by researchers as a proxy for indicating whether a person is overweight or obese. The data set is obtained through surveys of students and parents throughout schools across the United States. Specifically, the student/parent surveys are administered to 7th and 10th graders in different schools in four states. The states were chosen to allow variation in national health rankings as well as school food policies. The schools within each state were selected to ensure the student population is representative of the state demographics and to allow variation in school food policy, and health and physical education curriculum. It is the variation in school food policy that allows us to identify the effect of the specific school policy on the student’s BMI. The effect is isolated as our data allow us to control for the student’s activity level, food and drink intake, genetics, cultural environment, socioeconomic status, and the accessibility to different foods.

One problem with using cross-sectional data to estimate the effect of a policy on student obesity is the potential endogeneity of the policy variable. It is possible that more health conscious parents will provide wholesome food choices at home and also will advocate for an environment conducive to nourishing food options for their children at school. If these parents are successful at lobbying the schools, we would expect to observe those schools with potentially beneficial food policies to also have more fit students. On the other hand, in financially strapped school districts, schools are likely to engage in vending contracts that provide additional funding and low income and less educated parents are less likely to advocate for healthful school food choices. In this case, we would expect to observe those schools with potentially harmful food policies to also have less fit students.

Our unique data set provides us with information that can be used to mitigate this potential statistical problem. To isolate the effect of the policy, we need to control for the differences in the parents’ health awareness across schools. We can do this by using an instrumental variable such as parents’ employment in the health service industry for the school’s food policy. This is a valid instrument because those in health service jobs are more likely to be health conscious and are more likely to lobby for healthy school food policies. Also, the health consciousness of the parent does not directly affect the child’s BMI but only affects the BMI through the food choice environment provided by the parent.

Preliminary results based on five small rural schools in Nebraska suggest that school policy does exert an influence on children’s BMI. Students attending schools with stricter physical and health education requirements tend to be less obese than similar students attending schools without such requirements. Schools with relatively smaller vending contracts also tend to have less obese students, on average. These results are based on the pilot study data of a three-year research project and thus should be interpreted with caution. Even though these results are based on a small sample of schools that exhibit relatively little variation in the full range of school food policies that we will consider in the full study, they are encouraging. We expect that the results based on the full sample of schools will provide useful information that can be used to guide policy makers on the effect of school food policies on adolescent obesity.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Anecdotal evidence suggests that routines are inevitable in human lives. Despite their significance, routinisation of grocery shopping behavior is underexplored in consumer behavior literature. This research aims to explore and characterise routines and routinisation from a goal-oriented perspective. Four factors are identified that support the re-enactment of routinised consumption scripts, namely, goal-centeredness, situational contexts, anticipated temporal conditions, and repetitive value. These factors present a basis for the development of a preliminary theory of behavioral Routinisation.

An understanding of the nature of routines, and effect of disruptions on routines remains rather limited in consumer behavior literature (Kahn and Schmittlein 1989). While extensive study has been undertaken in related areas including habitual behaviors (Knight 1999), multidisciplinary research including psychology, economics, and management (Betsch, Fiedler, and Brinkmann 1998) has predominantly contributed to the multifaceted aspects of this dimension. This research aims to characterise routines and Routinisation from a goal-oriented perspective. As a commonly repeated consumer behavior involving various routines, the present study focuses on grocery shopping behavior. Also, this area of study is considered appropriate as little is known about key components supporting grocery shopping routines. Thus, it is important to understand key factors contributing to routinisation in grocery shopping, particularly the factors characterizing routine perpetuation in the face of disruptions.

This study targets routines from a structural perspective, that is as sequences of behavioral activities, rather than a single behavioral performance (Tranfield et al. 2000). Routinised behavior describes behavioral aspects or performance of routine activities, while Routinisation involves the establishment and maintenance of routines over time. A working definition of routines culminates from this study; operationalizing routines as:

- Goal-driven or value-guided heuristic strategies utilised for instrumental reasons. They are regarded as repetitive patterns of personal and private behavioral activities, dependent on situational contexts and anticipated temporal conditions.

Owing to the dearth of research on routines, a qualitative focus was adopted. Longitudinal in-depth interviews, in which a laddering approach of questioning adopted from means-end chain theory (Guinan 1997) was utilised. Respondents were probed on end goals as described in the List of Values (LOV) (Kahle and Kennedy 1988). Participants reported real life accounts of their shopping routines, providing rich insights for model testing and building. Projective techniques involving story completion were also utilised to uncover constructs associated with the process of routinisation. Data interpretation procedures involving case studies and template analyses (King 1998) were carried out, which to current knowledge, has not been utilised in this field of inquiry.

Qualitative analysis showed that goals are an integral element of routinised behavior, providing direction for behavior, and influencing actions. Specifically, routinised grocery shopping are enacted for the purpose of fulfilling focal or peripheral goals. They are formed and maintained over time by situational contexts and anticipated temporal conditions. These two factors work in tandem with positive feedback of repetitive value, which provide viable solutions to decision problems, reinforcing routine reoccurrence. Examples of affirmative repetitive value include familiarity, expertise, and convenience. The concept of scripts (Schank and Abelson 1977) is used to explain structural aspects of routines, providing a first step towards the development of a theory of behavioral routinisation. That is, goal-centeredness, situational contexts, anticipated temporal conditions, and repetitive value contribute to the re-enactment of routinised consumption scripts, leading to routinisation over time.

On the basis of present empirical findings, this study proposes a conceptual model of which several important interrelationships are evident. Findings suggest relationships between four key themes: goal-centeredness, situational contexts, anticipated temporal conditions, and repetitive value. Goal-centeredness determines behavior and their contexts, while personal values (i.e., high-level goals) influence and sustain routinised behavior through goal-centeredness. This position implies that goals are determinants of behavior itself, and also of behavioral contexts. Fundamentally, the presence of each construct (i.e., goal-centeredness, situational contexts, anticipated temporal conditions, repetitive value) leads to re-enactment of routinised consumption scripts, which determine maintenance and perpetuation of routines.

The unique contribution of this study lies in the development of a conceptual framework, with an interest in key factors supporting establishment of grocery shopping routines (i.e., routinisation). The present research suggests a theoretical framework analyzing routinisation, with a focus on goal-centeredness, supported by situational contexts, anticipated temporal conditions, and repetitive value. Research has focused on the importance of goals in other recurrent patterns of behavior, such as habits (Aarts and Dijkstra 2000). Other studies (Knight 1999; Brotherton 2001) have modeled repetitive consumption patterns. However, only a limited number of studies (Bargh and Bamdollor 1996) have explored effects of goals on routinised behavior, incorporating all elements proposed in the present conceptualization. Furthermore, the conceptual framework proposes relational directions within and between constructs, which extant research has not identified. This framework is extended using script theory (Schank and Abelson 1977), demonstrating the structural aspects of routines. Scripts are developed by consumers to achieve their repetitive goals (Pervin 1989). A number of practical implications emerge from this study. Findings, for example, suggest that, for retailers, consumers’ goals and values are integral components of routinised behavior, this understanding of which is useful for the development of segmentation strategies. This framework requires empirical verification. For example, future research could focus on defining structural aspects of behavioral goals. Studies also
need to go beyond reliance on anecdotal evidence, and emphasis should be placed on examining questions concerning how routines are maintained and what is the impact of disruptions on routine development and maintenance. This knowledge is important in explaining the intricacies of consumer behavior from various marketing aspects including brand switching and new product adoption.

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THE EFFECT OF FASHION STORE LAYOUT AND VISUAL MERCHANDISING ON FEMALE CONSUMER WALKING PATTERNS: A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Newman et al. (2002) argues the importance of research focusing on walking patterns in retail stores, as being an integral part of understanding consumer behavior and how store layout affects this behavior. This argument may also be relevant within the South African context, although such research has to date not been undertaken. According to Evans et al. (1996) an association exists between store layout and walking patterns of consumers and the layout could affect the duration of the consumers’ experience in-store and the number of products they are exposed to.

Newman et al. (2002) states that the consumer is either attracted or repelled by the shopping environment and/ or merchandise. Furthermore, Underhill (1999) defines a good fashion store, as one that maximises the fashion consumer’s exposure to fashion merchandise and invites consumers’ consideration of fashion items by displaying merchandise in their path and field of vision (Underhill 1999). Additionally, aisles and fixtures are placed with the intention of guiding the consumer through the store (Swanson and Everette 2000). It is also suggested that factors such as the accessibility, visibility and attractiveness of the merchandise in combination with the store layout may promote fashion purchases.

From a systems perspective, theorised by Whitchurch and Constantine (1993) and Spears and Gregoire (2004), it can be argued that by applying a particular store layout and certain visual merchandising techniques as inputs, consumers will automatically be directed through the store. In turn, this may deliver certain outputs, such as encouraging fashion purchases, or making it more accessible for the fashion consumer to obtain the necessary items. One way of gaining an in-depth understanding of the fashion consumer’s behavior, as a subsystem of the store system, is through studying their walking patterns through fashion stores. In order to do so the following objectives were proposed: To determine consumer walking patterns through fashion stores by evaluating the routes, direction and floor space covered in the free-flow, grid and combination layouts and the effect of certain aspects of visual merchandising and store layout on consumer walking patterns was determined.

A qualitative research design of a descriptive and exploratory nature was applied in this study. A non-probability sampling technique, namely convenience sampling that was purposive in nature, was used. Three major fashion stores, representing three different types of store layout, namely a grid, a free flow and a combination layout (Newman and Cullen 2002; Peter and Olson 1990; Walters and Bergiel 1989) were used as observations of targeted female consumers’ walking patterns were traced onto these floor plans. Field notes were made of all consumer behavior occurring at certain points. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with female consumers at the exit of the fashion store until the point of data saturation. A total of 60 consumers were interviewed and interviews were audio recorded in order to capture all comments for data analysis. The data gathering instruments used in this study, were pre-tested through a pilot study.

Audiotapes were transcribed verbatim to perform content analysis through coding of the data. During this coding procedure concepts and themes from the text were identified that sufficiently described the responses. Since the researcher becomes subjective to the research in qualitative studies through his/her involvement in data collection and analysis, Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for trustworthiness used in combination with the four criteria provided by Krefting (1991) were applied to the study.

Three consumer categories were identified by means of a comparison of all the different walking patterns across the three types of fashion store layouts, namely the total image, the category specific and the purpose-driven consumer. The interaction between the in-store behavior of the total image, category specific and the purpose driven consumer and the different store layouts resulted in a variety of consumer experiences. It was found that consumers’ shopping intentioned influenced their walking patterns and shopping behavior.

The first theme that the total image, category specific and the purpose driven consumers all verbalised, in terms of the free-flow layout, was departmental features. All three groups of consumers pointed out that departments of the free flow layout store were well-distinguished and well-organised. Secondly, all three consumer categories identified the easy access to merchandise the free flow layout allowed as theme.

Only the total image and the purpose driven consumer categories were identified in the grid layout store. A single theme of departmental features represented the experience of the total image and purpose-driven consumer in these stores. These consumers did however have different opinions, expressed as concepts, on the departmental characteristics. Once more, the departmental characteristics of the combination layout were a specific theme raised by two of the consumer categories, namely the total image and category specific consumers. However, discrepancies in their opinions of this store aspect were found.

The total image, category specific and purpose driven consumers experienced a common theme of visual attractiveness, through which visual merchandising was expressed in the free-flow and the grid layout. Nevertheless, the concept used to describe the theme differed between the different consumer categories, as an indication of their experiences of the visuals from these different layouts. Contrary to these two layouts, the combination layout rendered different themes to consumers’ experiences of the visual merchandise. The total image consumer identified a theme of elevated visuals as an attractive aspect of the visual merchandise, while the purpose-driven consumer was attracted by the visual appearance.

From these consumer opinions it is clear that both store layout and visual merchandising as subsystems within the store system have a prominent role to play in consumers’ in-store behavior and walking patterns, as the different consumer categories notice visual merchandising...
in different ways. This needs to be addressed if the consumer is to be attracted to merchandise. A mutual relationship or interrelatedness between the retailer as a system and the fashion consumer as a subsystems exist. This results from the fact that through the visual merchandising and store layout, the consumer’s purchasing behavior is influenced. In addition to this, the retailer also benefits from the consumers’ purchases and store patronage as influenced by the store subsystems.

REFERENCES
THE EFFECT OF WAITING AND ‘PUSHY’ SALES STAFF ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
Nicole Hartley, University of Sydney
Tony Ward, Central Queensland University

ABSTRACT
This paper examines the impact that waiting time and sales pushiness have on service quality and customer satisfaction in a retail setting. The study was conducted on a random sample of 537 customers who were interviewed immediately after engaging in a customer service encounter in which some customers were exposed to having to wait to be served and others to sales pushiness. This research found that sales pushiness had a significant impact on customer perceptions of service quality and customer satisfaction, while the effect of waiting was small.

CUSTOMER SERVICE QUALITY
Researchers have highlighted the need to further investigate service quality domains to facilitate and enhance relationship development between customer service providers and customers within the field of services marketing (Gummesson 1987; Svensson 2004). This paper aims to examine the marketing implications of the sociological impact of waiting and sales pushiness on consumers thereby identifying possible consumption boundaries in service encounters.

Studies encompassing the dimensions of service quality have defined the construct as, ‘perceptions resulting from a comparison of customer expectations with actual service performance’ (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1985, 42) and identified it as a critical driving force in facilitating these relationships and their associated customer service outcomes.

Researchers have acknowledged the multidimensionality of service quality (Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz 1996; Grönroos 1982; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1985, 1988; Rust and Oliver 1994) with an extensive amount of service literature devoted to both the conceptualisation and empirical measurement of service quality (Cronin and Taylor 1992; Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz 1996; Garvin 1987; Grönroos 1982, 1984, 1988, 2000; Gummesson 1987; Lehtinen and Lehtinen 1991; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1988; Rust and Oliver 1994; Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry 1990). Within the service industry, Grönroos (1984) categorised service quality into two dimensions—technical service quality and functional service quality. Broadly speaking, technical service quality focuses on the benefits received by the customer while functional service quality focuses on the actual service delivery process (Grönroos 1984). This form of service quality categorisation translates well to the retail shopping industry. For example, a study conducted by Bishop-Gagliano and Hathcote (1994) undertaken in a retail context operationalised technical service quality as: in-store credit, returns/exchanges, variety, quality and dependability of service and price of after-sale service and functional service quality as: attitude, courteous, knowledgeable and helpful staff, prompt attention, prompt processing of transactions and individual attention to service. In addition to these service quality dimensions other auxiliary factors have been identified as influencing the customer service encounter, including: dimensions such as waiting time, politeness of customer service staff; pushiness of sales staff trying to make a sale, and experience of service staff as determinants of service quality in a retail setting (Mayer and Morin 1987).

For the purposes of this research, two particular service quality dimensions were assessed. Firstly, waiting time—or the experience of waiting, as perceived by the customer. This dimension is receiving increasing attention in the literature under the domain of queuing theory—which purports that the perceptions of service quality have the potential to be influenced by the consumer’s experience of waiting (Soloman, Bamossy and Askegaard 1999). For this research, waiting is defined as: ‘a wait that is perceived by the customer as a wait prior to being served’. The second dimension is the possible effect of pushiness of sales staff on customer outcomes of the service encounter. The justification for this focus on waiting and pushiness is the empirical gap in the literature using the Grönroos typology in a retail context. Within this study pushiness is defined as: ‘actions by a service provider that the customer perceives as pushing for a sale’.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
There is evidence in the service literature to suggest that customer satisfaction is a prerequisite for other customer service outcomes, such as customer retention and customer loyalty, not to mention tangible gains such as sales/profitability and market share for service organisations (Hackl and Westlund 2000; Reichheld 1996). Specifically, losing a customer results not only in the immediate loss of sales and continuing long term profits, but also the costs associated with the replacement of that customer (Reichheld and Sasser 1990), and the potential for negative word-of-mouth.

Previous customer satisfaction research undertaken in relation to customer satisfaction outcomes—specifically, customer reactions to both waiting and pushy customer service providers—has indicated that a number of anecdotal relationships may exist, including: 1) customer satisfaction levels as influenced by waiting in certain (unspecified) situations; 2) instances where customers could see that staff were ‘doing their best’ to serve people quickly they would be more forgiving than if it was due to inefficiency; and, 3) reactions to pushy sales staff have been mixed, with some customers disliking it intensely and others being quite tolerant (Ward and Acutt 2000).

In review, this research focused on the impact of waiting and pushiness in a service encounter (in a retail setting) on both functional customer service quality (FCSQ), technical customer service quality (TCSQ) as well as customer satisfaction levels.

HYPOTHESES
Figure 1 shows the theoretical framework for the research which identifies that there are two independent variables, the *reason for the wait* and the *persuasiveness of the pushiness* of making a sale, two moderating variables,
the acceptability of the wait and pushiness as perceived by the customer and three dependent variables, FCSQ, TCSQ and customer satisfaction.

As a result of the review of the service quality and customer satisfaction literature, the following hypotheses were formulated:

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a waiting period to be served, as perceived by the customer, with functional service quality, and as moderated by the reason for the wait.

**H2:** There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a waiting period to be served, as perceived by the customer, with technical service quality, and as moderated by the reason for the wait.

**H3:** There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a service provider trying to push a customer into making a purchase, as perceived by the customer, with functional service quality, and as moderated by the persuasiveness of the service provider.

**H4:** There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a service provider trying to push a customer into making a purchase, as perceived by the customer, with technical service quality, and as moderated by the persuasiveness of the service provider.

**H5:** There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a waiting period to be served, as perceived by the customer, with customer satisfaction (CSAT), and as moderated by the reason for the wait.

**H6:** There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a service provider trying to push a customer into making a purchase, as perceived by the customer, with CSAT, and as moderated by the persuasiveness of the service provider.

**METHOD**

**Measurement of Service Quality**

The test instrument, in the form of a questionnaire, was developed from the literature (Brown and Swartz 1989; Grönroos 1982; and, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1982) and previous research conducted by the research team into customer service over the past ten years (for example, Preece and Ward 1999; Ward and Smith 1998). Different attributes of each of the dimensions were measured (otherwise known as multi-attribute measurements), representing a widely accepted method of measuring perspectives of customer service quality, as follows:

- **technical service quality** (Grönroos, 1982), a measure of the technical aspects of the customer service provision as perceived by the consumer, they included three scale items: professionalism, efficiency and provision of the exact service required (scale: very poor to very good). This aspect is identified as Technical Customer Service Performance (TCSP) in this study;

- **functional service quality** reflecting the manner in which the customer service providers’ services were performed, they included six scale items: being friendly, helpful, understanding, listening, communicating and giving full attention (scale: very poor to very good).
aspect is identified as Functional Customer Service Performance (FCSQ) in this study;

- ancillary aspects – whether the customer had to wait to be served (Yes/No), how acceptable the wait was to the customer (scale: very Unacceptable to very acceptable) as well as the reason for the wait as perceived by the customer either due to understaffing or inefficient staff (scale: very Unlikely to very likely). Also, whether the staff tried to push a sale (Yes/No), the manner in which the customer perceived the ‘push’ (scale: very Unacceptable manner to very acceptable manner) and the impact this ‘pushiness’ had on the customers’ propensity to purchase (scale: very Unlikely to very likely).

All scale items were measured on a bi-polar semantic differential seven-point scale from one to seven that provided interval data.

Measurement of Customer Satisfaction

Conceptually, customer satisfaction is recognised as a distinct and eminent marketing construct. However, there are disparities in the literature as to how best to operationalise it (Bitner and Hubert 1994; Cronin and Taylor 1992; Crosby and Stephens 1987; Price, Arnould and Tierney 1995; Suprenant and Soloman 1987; Westbrook and Oliver 1981). However, in keeping with the parsimonious approach of previous researchers such as Cronin and Taylor (1992) this study adopted a one-item scale asking the overall customers satisfaction with the customer service encounter they had just experienced (scale: very poor to very good).

Survey administration

As there were a number of variables to be measured to test the hypotheses, a quantitative test instrument was selected as the best way of gathering data. It was determined that customers should be interviewed in situ for the fieldwork as: 1) the consumer perceptions of the customer service encounter would be fresh in their minds, and; 2) mail and phone surveys would not be likely to solicit good or accurate responses. The survey instrument was pilot tested and refined prior to the main data gathering fieldwork commencing. The survey was then administered in two self-contained shopping centres in Queensland. This administration was conducted on different days of the week and at different times to ensure that a representative and random sample of members of the general public was obtained. Respondents were randomly intercepted when leaving a variety of retail stores in the centres immediately after being served, thus ensuring that respondents had the service encounter fresh in their minds. Potential respondents who were not observed being served in each store were not intercepted. Thus, for every respondent a service encounter between service provider and customer had been observed to take place.

RESULTS

The final sample, once the data set had been cleaned, was 537 customers, who were served by 86 different service providers, in 29 different retail stores. A total of 220 females and 286 males were interviewed. The main measures of Functional Customer Service Quality (FCSQ), Technical Customer Service Quality (TCSQ) and overall Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) all tested negative for any significant gender effect.

Table 1 shows the descriptives for the customer service variables, FCSQ, TCSQ and CSAT for the sample. Overall, FCSQ had a mean of 5.69, TCSQ a mean of 5.46 and CSAT a mean of 5.66. All standard deviations were within an acceptable range.

### Waiting Time

From the sample of 537, 100 customers had to wait to be served, while 437 did not have to wait to be served. The FCSQ of respondents who had to wait and those that did not have to wait to be served showed a significant difference between means, 5.90 (wait) and 5.65 (no wait) (t = 1.99, df = 535, p = .046). The means of FCSQ for the customers who had to wait was thus significantly higher (.25) than those customers who did not have to wait to be served. For TCSQ a similar situation was found with means of 5.86 (wait) and 5.59 (no wait) (t = 2.24, df = 535, p = .025). The situation was common for both FCSQ and TCSQ, indicating consistency by the respondents. However, for customer satisfaction this effect was not found, as there was no significant difference (df = 522, t = 1.249, p = .212) between the means for customers who had to wait (mean = 5.58) and those who did not have to wait (mean = 5.39). Although significantly different statistically for service quality the size of effect for waiting time was small and did not have a significant effect on customer satisfaction. These are somewhat surprising results given that past research has demonstrated that customer satisfaction is significantly affected by waiting time. A study conducted by Lee (2004) indicated a significant 1.18 scale difference in customer satisfaction ratings between customers who waited for long periods of time and those that waited expected or shorter periods of time for service. Furthermore, researchers such as Tom and Lucey (1995), Davis and Vollmann (1990) and Davis and Heineke (1998) identified significant scale differences of 1.19, 1.6 and 1.8 respectively for ratings of customer satisfaction between waiting customers and non-waiting customers in

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS</th>
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<td>n</td>
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<td>FCSQ</td>
<td>537</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCSQ</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSAT</td>
<td>527</td>
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A histogram of CSAT is shown at figure 2, indicating that the customers perceived a full range of service satisfaction from very poor to very good, although very few respondents gave a customer satisfaction rating of less than four.

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various service settings. Previous research also highlights limited significant effects of waiting on customer service quality dimensions, with a study conducted by Lee (2004) identifying that only one of the five SERVQUAL dimensions (reliability) had a significant effect (with a scale differences of .43). The findings from this study suggest that further investigation is required as to the effect of waiting on service outcomes.

Pushiness

In the sample of 537, 31 customers perceived they were exposed to pushy service providers (16 different service providers), while 506 did not perceive they were exposed to such pushy sales tactics. The FCSQ of respondents who were exposed to pushy service providers and those that were not showed no difference between means, 5.68 (push) and 5.69 (no push) (t = .081, df = 535, p = .935). For TCSQ a similar situation was found with means of 5.77 (push) and 5.64 (no push) (t = .686, df = 535, p = .493). Thus, although there was no significant difference between respondents who were exposed to pushy service providers and those that were not, for both FCSQ and TCSQ there was an indication of consistency by the respondents.

The CSAT of respondents who were exposed to pushy service providers and those that were not showed a highly significant difference between means, 4.42 (push) and 5.62 (no push) (t = 4.69, df = 522, p = .000), indicating the degree of 'damage' done by pushiness to customer satisfaction.

For both wait and push situations there was no customer gender effect, although it should be noted that the sample size for the push situation was low (n = 31).

Hypotheses Testing

H1: There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a waiting period to be served, as perceived by the customer, with functional service quality, and as moderated by the reason for the wait.

This hypothesis was tested using an ANCOVA test, as were hypothesis 2 to hypothesis 6. As shown in table 2, the relationship was highly and positively significant with an adjusted $R^2$ of .365, indicating a moderately strong relationship between the acceptability of the waiting time to the customer and their perception of FCSQ, and as moderated by the reason for the wait. Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
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<th>Adj. $R^2$</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>FCSQ</td>
<td>7/97</td>
<td>8.96</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>TCSQ</td>
<td>7/97</td>
<td>14.22</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>FCSQ</td>
<td>7/30</td>
<td>0.558</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>TCSQ</td>
<td>7/30</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>.567</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>CSAT</td>
<td>7/95</td>
<td>9.313</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>CSAT</td>
<td>7/30</td>
<td>14.89</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.764</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The test was run without the moderating variable (reason for wait) and the result was significant, but with a lower adjusted $R^2$ $(df = 1/99, F = 34.65, p = .000, adjusted R^2 = .254)$. Thus, the inclusion of the moderating variable reason for wait improved the relationship between the acceptability of the wait to the customer and FCSQ.

H2: There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a waiting period to be served, as perceived by the customer, with technical service quality, and as moderated by the reason for the wait.

As shown in table 2, the relationship was highly and positively significant with an adjusted $R^2$ of .488, indicating a moderately strong relationship between the acceptability of the waiting time to the customer and their perception of TCSQ, and as moderated by the reason for the wait. Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported.

The test was run without the moderating variable (reason for wait) and the result was significant, but with a lower adjusted $R^2$ $(df = 1/99, F = 32.32, p = .000, adjusted R^2 = .240)$. Thus, the inclusion of the moderating variable reason for wait improved the relationship between the acceptability of the wait to the customer and TCSQ.

H3: There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a service provider trying to push a customer into making a purchase, as perceived by the customer, with FCSQ, and as moderated by the persuasiveness of the service provider.

As shown in table 2, the relationship was not significant, indicating no relationship between the level of acceptability of a service provider trying to push a customer into making a purchase and the customers’ perception of FCSQ. Thus, hypothesis 3 was NOT supported.

H4: There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a service provider trying to push a customer into making a purchase, as perceived by the customer, with TCSQ, and as moderated by the persuasiveness of the service provider.

As shown in table 2, the relationship was not significant, indicating no relationship between the level of acceptability of a service provider trying to push a customer into making a purchase and the customers’ perception of TCSQ. Thus, hypothesis four was NOT supported.

H5: There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a waiting period to be served, as perceived by the customer, with customer satisfaction (CSAT), and as moderated by the reason for the wait.

As shown in table 2, the relationship was highly and positively significant with an adjusted $R^2$ of .380, indicating a highly significant relationship between the acceptability of the waiting time to the customer and their perception of CSAT, and as moderated by the reason for the wait. Thus, hypothesis 5 was supported.

The test was run without the moderating variable (reason for wait) and the result was significant, but with a lower adjusted $R^2$ $(df = 1/129, F = 10.23, p = .003, adjusted R^2 = .235)$. Thus, the inclusion of the moderating variable reason for the wait improved the relationship between the acceptability of the wait and CSAT.

H6: There is a positive relationship between the level of acceptability of a service provider trying to push a customer into making a purchase, as perceived by the customer, with CSAT, and as moderated by the persuasiveness of the service provider.

As shown in table 2, the relationship was highly and positively significant with an adjusted $R^2$ of .764, indicating a very strong relationship between level of acceptability of a service provider trying to push a customer into making a purchase, as perceived by the customer, and their perception of CSAT, and as moderated by persuasiveness of the service provider. Thus, hypothesis 6 is supported.

It should be noted here, however, that this result is from a sample size of only 31 respondents.

The test was run without the moderating variable (reason for wait) and the result was significant, but with a lower adjusted $R^2$ $(df = 1/29, F = 10.23, p = .003, adjusted R^2 = .235)$. Thus, the inclusion of the moderating variable persuasiveness of the service provider considerably improved the relationship between the acceptability of the service provider pushing for a sale and CSAT.

Testing the model

From the results of testing hypotheses 1, 2 and 5, the model at figure 1 was refined, as shown at figure 3, and tested relating the acceptability of the wait to the customer, coupled with the customers' perceptions of FCSQ and TCSQ, and as moderated by the reason for the wait, for predicting CSAT.

The model shown at figure 3 was tested using a MANCOVA (Multivariate Analysis of COVAriance) test, and the results are presented at table 3. As shown in table 3, the independent (predictor) variable is very strongly positively related to FCSQ, TCSQ and Customer Satisfaction, and is moderated by the reason for the wait, with a model significance of $p = .000$, and an adjusted $R^2$ of .745. Thus, the acceptability of the wait to the customer, coupled with the customers’ perceptions of FCSQ and TCSQ provide a very strong positive relationship with CSAT, and as moderated by the reason for the wait. Unfortunately, the model relating pushiness and the acceptability of pushiness with CSAT could not be undertaken due to the small sample size.

DISCUSSION

Six particular contributions of main interest emerged from the research:

1. The effect of waiting time on customers’ perceptions of FCSQ was positively related to the acceptability of the wait to the customer and moderated by the reason for the wait. Thus, if customers were willing to wait without it being unacceptable to them (for example, they were not in a hurry) then the wait did not adversely affect their perceptions of FCSQ dimensions. If the reason for the wait was due to there being insufficient staff available, as opposed to the inefficient operations of the staff, then customers’ perceptions of FCSQ were further improved. A similar relationship was found for TCSQ. The strength of the relationships found was high in both cases (adjusted $R^2 = .365$ for FCSQ and adjusted $R^2 = .488$ for TCSQ), indicating the importance of the effect of the
acceptability of the wait to the customer and the reason for the wait;

(2) The effect of waiting time on customers’ perceptions of customer satisfaction was positively related to the acceptability of the wait to the customer and moderated by the reason for the wait. Thus, if customers were willing to wait without it being unacceptable to them (for example, they were not in a hurry) then the wait did not adversely affect their perceptions of customer satisfaction.
If the reason for the wait was due to there being insufficient staff available, as opposed to the inefficient operations of the staff then customers’ perceptions of customer satisfaction were further improved. The strength of the relationships (adjusted $R^2 = .380$) found was high, indicating the importance of the effect of the acceptability of the wait to the customer and the reason for the wait on customer satisfaction;

(3) The effect of acceptability of pushiness and the moderating variable of the persuasiveness of that pushiness did not relate to either FCSQ or TCSQ;

(4) The effect of pushiness on customers’ perceptions of customer satisfaction was positively related to the acceptability of the pushiness to the customer and moderated by the persuasiveness of the pushiness. Thus, if customers found the pushiness acceptable to them then it did not adversely affect their perceptions of customer satisfaction. As the persuasiveness of the service provider increased then customers’ perceptions of customer satisfaction were further improved. The strength of the relationship (adjusted $R^2 = .764$) found was very high, indicating the importance of the effect of the acceptability of the pushiness to the customer and persuasiveness on customer satisfaction. It should be noted however, that this finding for pushiness was based on a sample of only 30 respondents and thus needs further support from a replicated study;

(5) The customer satisfaction of respondents who were exposed to a pushy service provider and those that were not showed a highly significant difference between means, 4.42 (push) and 5.62 (no push) ($t = 4.69, df = 522, p = .000$), indicating the degree of “damage” done by pushiness to customer satisfaction. This is an important issue that theorists and practitioners should be fully aware of, and ensure that their staff are also fully aware of this effect;

(6) The model in figure 3 provided a very strong relationship indicating how Functional and Technical CSQ and customer satisfaction are affected by the acceptability of the wait and moderated by the reason for the wait (adjusted $R^2 = .745$).

In conclusion, this study shows clearly that waiting time and pushiness do have different effects on customers’ perceptions of Functional CSQ, Technical CSQ and customer satisfaction. Further research is required on the pushiness issue as these results clearly indicate the negative impact of such sales actions. The results show that customers are generally more tolerant of waiting time, especially if the reason is due to staff being overloaded, rather than inefficient operations. It is recognised however, that this study was limited by the sample size of pushiness sales actions, indicating that such tactics are relatively uncommon in general retail environments. A specific simulation study aimed at pushiness in order to acquire a larger sample is clearly required. Additionally, it would be useful to undertake similar research in other service environments (for example, banking and finance organisations, hospitality, healthcare, transport services) to investigate how the effect of waiting and pushiness vary between consumer environments. Further studies could also investigate the effect of waiting and pushiness on other outcome variables, such as, image of a service provider, repeat purchase intentions, relationship development and word-of-mouth activities.

REFERENCES
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The grocery industry has a vast influence on the South African economy, as is the case in most other parts of the world. This industry includes all forms of outlets, predominantly focused on the reselling of groceries, toiletries and confectionery. Within the South African context, these outlets have been estimated at a total of 69 771 stores with a turnover of close to R64 729 million in 2002 (ACNielsen 2002). Considering the impact of this industry, it stands to reason that grocery shopping and the retail environment in which it occurs has been studied extensively from several different perspectives. An aspect that has however received far less attention, is the shelf-edge signage (also referred to as “shelf-edge labels” or “shelf talkers”) used in the grocery retail environment. Most grocery outlets make use of shelf-edge labels, primarily to communicate product and price information (Food Marketing Institute 2001). Piemonte (2001) defines it as a printed card designed to be attached to the shelf, carrying a message about the product. Although grocery retailers’ use and application of shelf-edge signage seem to revolve around the communication of information to the consumer, the question posed is whether consumers indeed use the information included on shelf-edge signage in their selection of grocery items. Empirical findings suggest that consumers either engage in nominal or limited decision-making during the acquisition of grocery items (Burgess 1998). These types of decision-making involve low purchase involvement and low perceived risk, resulting in limited or no external search for information. The value of shelf-edge signage as an external source of information is therefore questioned.

Yet, various studies have in fact highlighted the significant impact of signage in retail stores and in particular the value it has as cues for information about products (Inman et al. 1990 and Jansson et al. 2003). Inman et al. (1990) conclude that some consumers would pay more attention to signage and cues surrounding the product, than the product itself in their decision-making processes. Considering the fact that most decision-making processes occur within the store environment (Kahn and McAlistier 1997, Iris 2002, Hui 2004) some might argue that the use of in-store information such as provided by shelf-edge signage is inevitable. In this regard, organisations such as the Food Marketing Institute (2001) argue that the use of shelf-edge signage is not without problems. A typical example would include the occurrence of pricing discrepancies that may cause dissatisfaction among consumers. The above research findings (derived from countries other than South Africa), reflected some of the initial ideas on the possible influences of shelf-edge signage on urban consumer decision-making processes within South African grocery retail outlets. The ideas were however mere speculation, since no empirical research had been conducted on the topic within the South African context prior to this study. The lack of empirical findings inspired a qualitative naturalistic research design (Fouche and Delport 2002), during which data were collected in the context-specific settings of grocery retail outlets. In applying a phenomenological approach, data collection techniques were used with the intention of exploring and describing the consumer’s point of view.

To address the limitations within existing empirical research findings, the present study was focused on exploring the influence of shelf-edge signage in the decision-making processes that accompany urban consumers’ acquisition of grocery products within a South African context. The first objective was to determine the informational value of shelf-edge signage in consumers’ nominal and limited decision-making when selecting grocery items. Secondly, problems that consumers’ may incur in their use of shelf-edge labels were investigated. Consumers’ recommendations on how shelf-edge signage could be improved to better facilitate their selection of grocery items were included as a third objective. The findings of this study proved that shelf-edge signage is of value as an external source of information to consumers who engage in limited decision-making. These consumers require product-, price- and retail-related information when for example switching brands or trying new products. During nominal decision-making, such as in the case of brand loyal or repeat purchases, consumers tend to rely on internal sources of information to guide their purchasing decisions. In these instances shelf-edge signage had no significant role in influencing the purchasing decision.

The study also provided clarity on the problems that consumers may incur in the use of shelf-edge labeling. Certain blocking mechanisms were identified which included incorrect information on the shelf-edge signage, incorrect positioning of the signs, illegibility and consumers’ time constraints. These aspects inhibit the potential informational value of shelf-edge signage in consumers’ search for relevant information, albeit limited in nature. Of particular interest to retailers and marketers are consumers’ reactions to these blocking mechanisms. Some consumers would demonstrate no response to these obstacles whereas others would simply ask for assistance and continue their search for relevant information. Yet, some consumers indicated that blocking mechanisms influence their behaviour to such an extent that they would not purchase the product or walk out of the grocery store. Clearly, these situations tarnish the retailer’s reputation and have a detrimental effect on retailers’ as well as manufacturers’ sales and revenues.

Most of these blocking mechanisms can be controlled by the retailer as it is often caused by human error. The implementation of electronic shelf-edge labeling may be considered beneficial in this regard, as it would enhance data integrity, provide more accurate information and enable more secure positioning. Consumers emphasised the importance of these aspects in their recommendations on how shelf-edge signage could be improved. It was concluded that the type of information currently communicated by shelf-edge signage is important, but consumers suggested that retailers could further develop the informational value of such signage by adding information pertaining to product ingredients and nutritional value. This would however depend on the retailer’s ability to maintain accurate descriptions and correct placement of the signage.

REFERENCES

Southern Africa.
THE CONSUMER AMITY INFLUENCE ON FOREIGN PRODUCT PURCHASE IN THE U.S.
Jean-François Ouellet, HEC, Montreal

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Cross-cultural research has introduced such concepts as ethnocentrism, product-country image, and animosity in order to better understand consumer behaviors towards foreign products. While most focus on their negative effects on product judgments and intention to buy—for example, consumer animosity may prevent consumers from buying products otherwise perfectly suited to their needs and tastes—a question is raised as to whether or not similar positive influences may occur. Indeed, recent studies have shown that people do have friendship-like feelings towards foreign countries: for instance, according to a Canadian survey, American citizens view the United Kingdom as their best nation friend. Therefore, in addition to animosity-like feelings that may hold one from buying otherwise perfectly suited-goods, could a feeling such as amity felt towards a country drive one to select and buy a product otherwise not necessarily well suited, or perhaps not as well suited as other products? In an international context, how would such a thing fit in a model of foreign product evaluation encompassing product-country image (PCI)? To answer these questions, we first briefly review the PCI literature and theoretically differentiate this construct from that of consumer amity and come up with two basic hypotheses about the expected impacts of consumer amity on product judgments and willingness to buy. Following a scale development and validation process (not reported in this article), we describe a first test of the model conducted in the Boston metropolitan area in the U.S. in which 238 American consumers had to provide evaluations of, and willingness to buy 4 products from either the United Kingdom, Canada, or Japan. Stimuli development and sample recruitment are described, along with measurements of product-country image for each product category as well as amity towards each of the 3 countries, which were also gathered. To test the model, two regression analyses are conducted to explain product judgment and willingness to buy based on our data. Pooled data as well as category-specific data analyses all show that product evaluation is positively influenced by PCI but not by consumer amity. Willingness to buy, however, is demonstrated to be mainly influenced by product judgments but also by consumer amity and only slightly by PCI. Both our hypotheses are thus supported, précising and confirming the role of amity in consumer behavior. Implications for international marketers are multiple, given the growing competition on the global marketplace. First, exporting firms associated with a country whose past and current international actions are positively positive should consider administering research surveys that measure levels of amity in select target markets. These studies could be included as part of the international market research carried out by these firms or that carried out by their national governments. It should also be noted that one country’s actions may be viewed differently from one country to another and thus have different commercial repercussions. For instance, it is likely that the decision by the U.K. to go to war in Iraq raised this country’s level of consumer amity in the U.S. but may have decreased it—perhaps even replaced it with consumer animosity—in other countries. Second, firms that aim at exporting to a country where no particular amity (or where animosity is felt may find it useful to partner with another company from a nation characterised by high amity in the target country. For instance, Japanese and Canadian companies may find it useful to have their products and services sold in the U.S. through a British partner while British and Japanese companies might consider partnering with U.S. firms to penetrate the Canadian market. Third, governments may consider the usefulness of promoting their positive actions and decisions through public relations in order to boost consumer amity in select countries. Future studies should aim at researching the antecedents and potential dimensions of consumer amity in order for companies and governments to be better able to manage it. Moreover, while significant effects were found in the U.S., future research should investigate whether consumer amity has the same effects in other countries and settings. Most importantly, however, this study raises the question of extending the animosity and amity constructs and merging them into a dual valence (positive-negative). Indeed, as they stand, both scales only allow for either positive (amity) or negative (animosity) measurements. Future research should investigate whether these are distinct concepts.

REFERENCES


When companies make major mistakes and anger their customers, there is lots of guidance for what they can do to recover from customer anger and restore customer support and loyalty. However, when countries anger international customers, relatively little is known about the consequences and means to recovery. The following sections will review the study of country-product image research. It will then turn to the specific topic of animosity resulting from actions of a country that are reflected in buyer behavior, both as a concept and through the actions of boycotts. Since animosity is an emotion, it is important to place its study in the wider study of the role of emotions in consumer behavior towards countries and their products. Finally, the review will turn to the subject of forgiveness as a possible process for recovery in country and country-product images.

Country-Product Image Research

Country image research has a long history with over 700 published works in the field. It is arguably the most research field in international marketing. Many important conclusions have been drawn from this body of research. Recent and thorough reviews of country image research have recently appeared by Papadopoulos and Heslop (2003) and Srinivasan and Jain (2003). Country image effects can be measured and can impact consumers at both the level of individual products, at the product category level, and across a wide range of product categories Country images act as an extrinsic cue and affect consumer purchases but not for all products in all circumstances. Their effects vary in intensity across products, buyers, and circumstances. In some cases, country image effects have been found to be stronger than brand effects. Country images affect the decisions of consumers, business buyers, investors, and likely immigrants. Country image effects are multidimensional and include both images of the countries themselves and images of products produced or associated with the country. Finally, country images are often strongly held but can change over time and across product categories in response to long-term developments or as the result of major events. The final point above is of particular interest in this paper. In some cases, countries have been remarkably successful in improving their country image. The most noted example of this is Japan whose product images have improved dramatically over the last 50 years. Some countries have had rapid increases in their product-country profiles, e.g., in the case of several South East Asian countries, such as South Korea, the home of LG electronics and of remarkably strong car quality (J.D. Power and Associates 2004).

In some cases, the views of countries have declined. However, the fall has not usually been based on declining product quality, but rather in response to changes in attitudes towards the people or policies of the country. For example, the recent war in Iraq resulted in several instances of discrimination against products made or associated with several countries, particularly American products in Muslim countries and even products with French names (French fries) in America.

Animosity

In an effort to understand country image downturns based on activities of governments, such as war, economic rivalry, or political disagreements, several researchers (Ang et al. 2004; Amine 2005; Brunner et al. 1993; Ettenson and Klein 2005; Klein and Ettenson 1999; Klein, et al. 1998) have studied the effects of animosity towards countries and the impact of animosity on attitudes towards purchasing products from these countries. Klein et al. (1998) have defined animosity as “the remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events” that are perceived as “grievous and difficult to forgive.” (p.90). They included this construct in a model to predict the willingness of Chinese consumers to buy products of Japan, along with other measured constructs of consumer ethnocentrism and product judgements. The animosity of the Chinese consumers towards Japan for atrocities in China during the Second World War was negatively related to willingness to buy Japanese products and was independent of product judgements. The same construct was tested in a study of Australian consumers’ response to products of France Ettenson and Klein (2005). They again demonstrated evidence of animosity impacts on willingness to buy that were independent of product judgments. This two-part study compared responses of Australian consumers collected in 1995 when France was carrying out nuclear testing in the Pacific and again one year later after France had declared they would do no more testing. They concluded antipathy decreased over time. However, animosity effects remained, and in the longer term appeared to have spillover effects to product judgements.

Animosity, as portrayed, is clearly an emotional response. The position of the studies of Klein and Ettenson is that this emotion has effects which act directly on willingness to buy and, in their most recent study, may ultimately impact product judgments.

Boycotts

Boycotting is a form of consumer protest behaviour. Traditionally it is used to describe organised behaviour activities targeting entities, e.g., corporations, countries, whose actions are perceived to be offensive, immoral or egregious. The actions may be directly related to product quality, or to other marketing activities, (e.g., promotion or advertising campaigns), or to non-marketing business activities, (e.g., environment or worker related offences). More and more, consumer boycotts are being used to advance political agendas rather than consumer agendas (Friedman 1999) The actions are not based on beliefs about the product quality, but rather about the political or social...
positions of the producers.

Animosity may be directly expressed by consumers in the form of boycotts. In the case of boycotts of products from countries, the effects of the actions are felt by producers in the targeted country. As a result, the normal marketplace associations between beliefs and emotions associated with product performance and brand associations are not translated into willingness to buy. Rather, the political beliefs and emotions override beliefs and emotions about the product.

In some cases, consumer boycotts are organised by groups directly or indirectly representing the aggrieved party. However, boycott actions may arise as a spontaneous pan-consumer response. In such cases, it is highly likely that emotional responses, e.g., indignation, anger, hostility, animosity, will be at the root of the action, i.e., the response will be emotionally driven. Cognitive elements of attitudes need not and likely do not change.

**Emotions in Country-Product Image Effects and the Place of Animosity**

The literature on country-of-origin effects broadly refers to attitudes toward products made in or otherwise associated with (manufactured in, assembled in, designed in, ingredients from) a country. Attitudes are conceptualised as having three components – cognitive (beliefs), affective (emotions or feelings) and conative (response). (Hawkins et al. 2004, p. 387) Most research on country effects deals mainly with the cognitive components or beliefs about product quality, reliability, innovativeness, attractiveness, performance, etc. Country image effects on behavioural response elements (e.g., intentions to buy, willingness to buy, buying, rebuying, willingness to pay) should be studied from both a cognitive and an affect base. Views of a country may impact purchase behaviour through several routes, some of which involve product beliefs and some of which involve emotion-related responses, (e.g., liking, trusting, pride) and overall evaluations and judgements (e.g., preference, satisfied with, value, and ideal).

Country-product image research has documented the role of emotion-based and evaluative impacts of country images on consumer responses. Of note are recent models of country-product image effects by Knight and Calantone (2000); Heslop et al. (2004) and Orbaiz and Papadopoulos (2003). In these studies, more general measures of beliefs and feelings about countries and their people have been measured, and their effects on product beliefs, judgements and attitudes/willingness to buy have been modelled. In all cases, positive impacts of country and people emotion-based responses and evaluations were found to be significant, usually serving as independent predictors of product responses, even when product beliefs and evaluations are also shown to have effects.

While animosity studies have focussed on this one emotional response, they have not contextualised the understanding of this emotion. Moreover, their questionnaire designs have been seriously flawed, since respondents were asked questions about attitudes to the country’s offensive actions before questions about product judgments and buying intentions. As a result, reactive effects of the animosity measure were unavoidable and inseparable from any pre-existing, animosity or its effects. Better insight regarding the impacts of major events, such as war, political disagreements, etc., on consumer reactions and possible boycotts would be forthcoming from research designed in ways that take a wider view of emotional responses. This richer view of consumers’ emotional landscape would also better facilitate the tracking of responses over time and would not be so event-specific as the current measures of animosity.

**Recovering from Disaster – the Possibility of Forgiveness**

Can a company or country recover from a public image disaster? Can consumers reengage with the product or the producer after a transgression? Such reengagement may happen if consumers “have” to buy the product, for example, if they need the product and no alternative supplier is available or prohibitively priced. Some boycotts last because consumers do not feel they can avoid purchasing the product (see Friedman 1999). In such a case, emotional responses may not change or at least not prior to repurchasing. However, can emotional reengagement occur, i.e., can the consumer forgive?

Chung and Beverland (2005) propose that the study of forgiveness has value to both marketers and consumers in understanding recovery from breakdowns in relationships resulting from consumers’ perceptions of transgression on the part of the marketer. Forgiveness covers a range of emotional responses and involves the release of negative feelings associated with a transgression and overcoming resentment (Sells and Hargrave 1988). Forgiveness involves the release of negative emotions and often the development of empathy towards the transgressor. However, the construct has received little attention from consumer researchers.

**OBJECTIVES**

The applications of animosity and forgiveness constructs are made in the context of a longitudinal study of Australian consumers’ attitudes and behaviors towards France and French products in the period of 1992 – 2005. In 1995 France conducted nuclear testing in the Pacific north of Australia. Australians widely and vociferously protested this action. In 1996 France dismantled their nuclear testing program, but as late as 2003, Jacques Chirac, President of France, was still defending the program as having increased the safety of those living in the region (The Tocqueville Connection, 2003).

The objectives of the study are to:

1. track views of France, the French and French products over a period of time involving a significant international disagreement
2. assess changes in the relative importance of views of France and the French people, including emotion-based reactions and beliefs, vs. views of French products on Australian consumer responses to French products during the period.

**METHODOLOGY**

There are few opportunities to study the formation of consumer animosity towards a country and its possible resolution through forgiveness. The French testing of nuclear weapons in the South Pacific region was a good example of a political decision that had dramatic reaction from citizen-consumers in other countries. Australians were outraged by the actions, and there is evidence of considerable spontaneous boycotting of French products in Figure 1, which tracks French imports between 1988 and 2005. While there is no period of declining sales, there is a clear plateauing around 1995 and several years following after a long period of sustained growth prior to 1995. The dashed line in figure 1 shows what could have been projected from the trend in import growth in the five years preceding the year of testing, 1995. The area under the dashed line above the actual import levels line suggests the
value of lost sales due to the boycott and that expected levels and upward trends in imports did not recover until about 2003. Table 1 provides further support for the impact on French imports to Australia with all imports. As can be seen in the table, French imports before 1995 are quite comparable to all imports. Immediately following 1995 there is a gap between French and all imports that closes on an annual basis by about 2002. However, the average increase over the post-1995 period for France still lags behind total imports at the end of 2004, suggesting the significance of the impact of the downturn in French imports has had an impact over most of the decade. While these import statistics and changes are general and may reflect other environmental factors at work, they certainly suggest that further study of consumer reactions to French products is warranted.

To study consumer responses at the attitudinal level, Australian consumers in a west-coast city were surveyed in each of 1992, 1995 and 2005. This range of time periods surrounds and includes the period of French testing of nuclear weapons in the South Pacific. Specifically, the 1995 data were collected after consumers were knowledgeable about French nuclear testing activities.

This study is one of the few in any consumer behaviour area that has repeated a study design in the same country across multiple periods over an extended period of time and particularly one that includes a major political event that seriously disrupted international relations.

A drop-off/pick-up questionnaire was distributed to randomly chosen neighbourhoods. Response rates were approximately 40% in all years and total responses for each round were approximately 300. The questionnaire contained 20 country-people and 24 product related 7-point bi-polar scales to provide multiple measures of each of the constructs. The scales were drawn from earlier studies by (reference supplied after review). The scales specifically solicited information about:

* beliefs about France as an advanced industrialised country, i.e., capabilities of the country and people - industrialised, rich, stable, Highly educated, hard working

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Total Percentage Change for the Period of Value of Imports from</th>
<th>Av. Annual % Change for the Period of Imports from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>France</td>
<td>All Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-1995</td>
<td>65.97</td>
<td>65.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1995</td>
<td>43.59</td>
<td>43.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-1995</td>
<td>51.87</td>
<td>46.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1995</td>
<td>39.84</td>
<td>47.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1995</td>
<td>26.80</td>
<td>55.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>27.21</td>
<td>22.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>7.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1998</td>
<td>12.53</td>
<td>23.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1999</td>
<td>15.82</td>
<td>28.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2000</td>
<td>21.86</td>
<td>43.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2001</td>
<td>32.32</td>
<td>44.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2002</td>
<td>57.76</td>
<td>52.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2003</td>
<td>75.88</td>
<td>54.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2004</td>
<td>91.69</td>
<td>65.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE 1

Comparison of French and All Imports to Australia, 1989-2004
- beliefs about the character of the country and people - democratic, many individual rights, peaceful, safe, trustworthy
- country evaluations - ideal country, like, aligned with our country
- product beliefs and evaluations - products are attractive, innovative, reliable, technically advanced, well serviced, good workmanship, good value for money, high quality, good overall
- response-related beliefs - willing to buy, proud to own, satisfied with.

**RESULTS**

Respondents in each of the three studies were compared on demographic characteristics to ensure cross-sample comparability. Chi-square analysis revealed no differences in the samples from different years on age or gender. 2005 had slightly higher proportion of university graduates than the earlier two samples and fewer high school graduates. To determine the possible impact of the education variance on ratings, responses on the ratings scales were tested for correlation with age. Since the number of tests was large, significance at \( p<.01 \) was used as a cut-off point. Only 7 of the 44 scales were significantly related to age and all correlations were at the \( r =.1 \) or less. These scales were scattered across different beliefs sets identified above. Therefore, the sample differences on education are likely to have a minor impact on overall cross-country beliefs comparisons.

The mean ratings of the respondents on the product and country scales are shown in table 2. The first column indicates the name of the characteristic measured by the scale. Columns 2-4 contain the mean ratings on the scale for each of the three time periods. The fifth column indicates the significance of the \( F \)-test for the ANOVA for year differences on individual scales. An overall MANOVA test was significant at \( p<.000 \). Therefore, individual scale between-year ANOVA values were examined. Since there were multiple ANOVA tests, the \( p<.01 \) was used as the threshold measure of significance. Post-hoc test significance results are reported in the last three columns indicating if significant differences were found between 1992 and 1995, between 1995-2005 and finally between 1992-2005. If the overall ANOVA was not significant, no post hoc test results are reported. Again, given the large number of measures, significance is only reported if \( p<.01 \) was found.

**TABLE 2**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (N)</th>
<th>Countrypeople industrialization/capabilities</th>
<th>Mean Rating (1 Disagree – 7 Agree)</th>
<th>F-test signif</th>
<th>Direction of belief change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard working</td>
<td>Hard working</td>
<td>Hard working</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrialised</td>
<td>Industrialised</td>
<td>Industrialised</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>5.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>5.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countrypeople evaluation</td>
<td>Countrypeople evaluation</td>
<td>Countrypeople evaluation</td>
<td>Aligned with us</td>
<td>Aligned with us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal country</td>
<td>Ideal country</td>
<td>Ideal country</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>Like</td>
<td>Like</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product ratings</td>
<td>Product ratings</td>
<td>Product ratings</td>
<td>Attractive</td>
<td>Attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technically advanced</td>
<td>Technically advanced</td>
<td>Technically advanced</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Significant ANOVAs for year difference test reported at \( p<.01 \) level only
\(^2\) Dunnett’s test for differences between means with variance equality not assumed; significance reported at \( p<.01 \) level only. Empty cells indicate no post-hoc tests were noted because the ANOVA results were not significant.
The results seen in Table 2 provide a rich view of the responses of Australian consumers to France and its products untainted by direct reference to French political activities and decisions. The first observation is that beliefs and evaluations did change, as did responses to the products across the time periods, in ways that could be perceived to be related to the events of 1995. However, the effects were not universal across all measures. The views of the performance of French products, by and large, did not change at all over the period. This finding supports Klein and Ettenson’s results for their 1995 survey of Australians but not their 1996 survey findings of a decrease in product ratings over time (Ettenson and Klein 2005). The only exception was the increase in the judgement of reliability of French products, which did not decline in 1995 but was higher in 2005 than in the previous two periods. Some views of France and its people did change dramatically. Images of France as an industrialised country did not change. However, views of the France regarding its aggressiveness, as being a safe country, and as being trustworthy dropped precipitously. However, by 2005 these ratings had recovered. What is particularly astonishing is that almost all ratings of France in 2005 were higher than 1992 ratings of the country, even for those characteristics that suffered significantly in 1995.

Finally, noting responses to French products, these paralleled views of the country and people character ratings, rather than ratings of the products or the country industrialization ratings. Response-related measures declined greatly in 1995 and suggest that Australian consumers were rejecting French products and would likely boycott them for the perceived sins of the country’s government. That these survey responses have external validity is supported by the actual import trends (figure 1 and table 1). However, by 2005 the perceived satisfaction, and pride of ownership had rebounded and the willingness to buy measure was even higher than 1992 levels. Again, these survey responses are reflected in and supported by actual import levels in 2005.

**Relationships Among Beliefs and Responses**

In the study of how people respond to products based on country images, a number of country image components can play a part. Responses can be based on:

- country-based beliefs about product performance
- beliefs about the capabilities of the country and its people to produce desirable products
- qualities of the country and people that make relationship-building desirable, i.e., what might be termed the “personality” of the country. Such “personality” characteristics are the basis of emotional-based branding for products (Holt 2004)
- overall evaluations of the country, i.e., a country-people composite attitude.

Using Principle Components Analysis to identify patterns of inter-item association and test for single dimensionality, construct measures were developed by combining individual scale measures. The product performance construct included the scales of attractiveness, service quality, innovativeness, reliability, technological advancement, and workmanship. The remaining constructs were formed from the scales listed for each construct in table 1. PCA analysis indicated that all constructs were unidimensional, and all scales loaded at .5 or above on their identified construct.

Figure 2 indicates the underlying relationships of interest to the study. The model is based on research by Heslop, Papadopoulos and others (see e.g., Heslop et al. 2004), which includes both country and people character and competency ratings in the formation of product country image effects. It indicates that evaluations of products from a country can be expected to be impacted mainly through beliefs about the country’s ability to produce desirable products as reflected by the relationship of images of the country and people industrialization/capabilities to product evaluation beliefs. However, a secondary effect (indicated with dashed arrow) from country-people character images is also possible. Country evaluations are formed primarily from images of the character of the country and its people. However, a secondary impact comes from country-people competency beliefs. In turn, country and product evaluations directly impact on the interest in associating with these people and country through purchase response mechanisms.

Regression paths were tested in a sequential study of effect patterns in figure 2. R-squares and beta weights for independent variables are indicated in table 3 and show an initial test of the combination of effects in the formation of product evaluations, country evaluations and response in each of the three years of testing. An overview of these results indicates a decline over time in the relative importance of the main pathway of beliefs about the capabilities of the country and people in contributing to an

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (N)</th>
<th>1992 (N=290)</th>
<th>1995 (N=298)</th>
<th>2005 (N=302)</th>
<th>F-test signif</th>
<th>Direction of belief change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good after sales service</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good workmanship</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy to find</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognizable brands</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>5.09</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Product evaluations</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good quality</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good value</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good overall</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>ns(.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfied with</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proud to own</td>
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<td>3.68</td>
<td>4.84</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willing to buy</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
understanding of product evaluations. There has been no change in the secondary path of influence from country-people character, but its relative importance has risen over time to surpass the influence of the capability beliefs.

In contrast, these capability beliefs are playing a more prominent role in country evaluations, while character of the country and people are contributing less although in this case, still playing the dominant role. Moreover, overall variance explanation for both product and country evaluations has declined.

The final response-related part of the model has the highest $R^2$ throughout the period. However, country evaluations figure more prominently in explaining ratings during the crisis but decline to pre-crisis levels during recovery, while product evaluations dip slightly during the middle period.

In summary, it appears the crisis has shifted the relative importance of country-people character evaluations in explaining consumer responses. During the crisis, negative feelings (animosity) towards the people-country of France rose, and the role of these country-people evaluations in explaining responses to products increased in their impact directly through overall country evaluations. Moreover, country-people character effects have come to dominate over country-people capabilities in explaining of product evaluations.

In the final period, the actual values of country and people characteristics have more than recovered. Also, these character beliefs now more strongly predict product evaluation assessments. These product evaluations have recovered their importance in explaining consumer responses. As well, country-people capabilities, which are strong and have not changed much during the period, are playing a greater role in explaining overall country evaluations, replacing some of the explanatory power of country-product character. Therefore, the recovery of French products seems based on improvement in evaluations of the character of the country and people. Moreover, these character evaluations play a relatively stronger role in product evaluations.

Since country-people capabilities ratings are less likely to be affected by political events, their rise in importance in explaining overall country evaluations is of benefit to France in improving ratings and also in stabilizing the ratings. The decline of country evaluations as an explainer of overall consumer responses to French products relative to product evaluations also works in favour of a recovery in France’s position with Australian consumers.

Overall, Australian consumers seem to have changed both their ratings of the French and French products, as well
as the ways they come to their response-based decisions about French products. In both cases, France is the winner. The shift in country ratings and the rebalancing of the use of ratings of the character of the French people may be explainable by reference to forgiveness mechanisms. Forgiveness works in many ways but four, in particular, provide insight into the recovery of the position of France in Australian consumer markets:

1. forgiving generates positive benefits for the forgiver, regardless of the reason for forgiveness (Witvliet et al. 2001). As Australians have come to forgive France, the forgiving process itself creates good feelings. Through the process of attribution, these feelings can be transferred to the object of forgiveness, improving assessments of the object itself. This mechanism would explain why ratings of France and French products have recovered to levels higher than those before animosity developed. This emotionally positive response is internally felt and indirectly attributed to France/forgiveness involves embracing benevolent, compassionate, loving views of the offender (Enright et al. 1998). In the process of forgiving, France is more loved. The findings show the feelings-related measures toward France have risen to levels higher than originally held. Here the response is largely affect or emotionally based and directly related to feelings about France and its people.

2. one route to forgiveness is through a more balanced view of the object of forgiveness. Gartner (1988) contends that the intellectual or cognitive side of forgiveness involves the integration of both the good and bad sides of the transgressor as a more realistic view of the nature of the transgressor. Applying the process of forgiving, France is seen as having both good and bad characteristics, rather than being either good or bad. As a result, beliefs about the character of French people and the country recover. This intellectual route would suggest the value of rebalancing views of the people-country character in country evaluations and product response.

3. forgiveness may be a necessary response to resumption of associativce actions. The recovery of trade may, in fact, be the basis for a shift in the beliefs and evaluations, i.e., the model may work in reverse. Over time, Australian consumers’ enthusiasm for actively avoiding French products may simply have dissipated. They may have come to feel that they have made their point and simply return to previous purchasing habits, buying French products when they see them as superior. The products themselves are rewarding in the experiences they provide and forgiveness arises from this rewarded association. People avoid non-fit between attitude components and may readjust their beliefs to coincide with their behaviour to maintain internal consistency. (Hawkins et al. 2004, p.391) This approach to forgiveness is behaviourally driven, as behaviour leads to readjustments in beliefs and feelings and may be a less stable form of forgiveness, one that is more likely to be withdrawn if offence is taken again.

While there is considerable support for the conclusion that Australian consumers have forgiven France, they may not have truly forgotten. The shift to greater reliance on country-people character in product evaluations suggests there is a new sensitivity to the more general nature of the country and its people by Australian consumers in thinking about doing business with France. If France does engage in activities that are offensive to Australians in the future, old animosities may be rekindled. Indeed, some evidence of this can be seen in the sharp downturn of French imports in 2005 shortly after the French President made remarks praising the Pacific for allowing nuclear testing and suggesting the nuclear testing were justifiable, clearly inflammatory remarks indicating no contrition for any wrongs inflicted.

This study is unique in its contribution to understanding consumer inter-country animosity and mechanisms for recovery, such as through forgiveness. Further work is needed in the area, but opportunities for repeated measures longitudinal study are fairly rare. Events with such enormous consumer reaction are extremely difficult to predict. However, the potential contribution to understanding the mechanisms in consumer country image formation and use are enormous. Further work on this data set will be directed to more in-depth cross-year comparisons and path analysis.

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**ABSTRACT**

Differences in consumer reasons and motives for choosing a processed organic food in four European countries are explored by means of a laddering study and controlled for food-related lifestyle (FRL). The main results are reported in the form of perceptual maps based on correspondence analysis. Choice criteria and motives behind choosing organic food differ markedly between countries and so does the use of organic as a choice criterion. The salience of specific associations to organic food is sensitive to the processing level of the food, but the core reasons and motives for choosing organic food seem not to be.

**INTRODUCTION**

When evaluating the quality of food products, modern consumers consider hedonistic, health-related, convenience, and even process dimensions (Bruno, Fjord & Grunert 2002). It is especially remarkable that consumers are interested in process dimensions when they buy food, even in cases where the specific process makes no perceptual difference in the product brought home from the retailer. While modern biotechnology, radiation and many other ways of modern industrial food production represent process characteristics that have largely led to the rejection of resulting products among European consumers, organic production methods is an example of nearly the opposite. Organic foods are generally regarded as natural products (Makatouni 2002; Zanoli & Naspetti 2002), as opposed to industrially processed or “high-tech” foods, which tend to be considered, if not unnatural, then at least less natural (Bredahl 1999; Holm & Kildevang 1996), and this seems to be just one of the reasons for the positive attitudes towards organic foods generally found in consumer surveys (Fotopoulos & Krystallis 2002; Hill & Lynchehaun 2002; Magnusson et al. 2001).

In this article, we take a closer look at the reasons why European consumers choose organic food products, and we investigate whether reasons and motives for doing so depend on the consumer’s lifestyle and/or country of residence. In recent years, studies have appeared that conceptualise reasons and motives behind consumer choices of organic food in terms of means-end chain theory and explore them empirically by means of the ‘laddering’ in-depth interview technique (Baker et al. 2004; Fotopoulos et al. 2003; Makatouni 2002; Zanoli & Naspetti 2002). This approach holds many merits. Means-end chain theory models the consumption-related part of consumers’ cognitive structures, that is, their mental associations between perceived product attributes, self-relevant consequences and personal values. It is assumed that individuals link these cognitive categories in hierarchically structured means-end chains, with attributes at one end of the chain proceeding over perceived consequences, to personal values at the other end (Gutman 1982; Olson 1989). Hence, it provides a theoretically satisfying and empirically actionable explanation to the question why consumers prefer one specific offer to others. Laddering is an interview technique using open questions of a particular format, which is developed specifically to uncover consumers’ personal means-end chains for a product (Reynolds & Gutman 1988).

According to extant means-end and laddering studies, consumers’ most common reasons for choosing organic food products are health, taste, and wholesomeness and the most important reason for rejecting organic foods is their higher price (Baker et al. 2004; Fotopoulos et al. 2003; Makatouni 2002; Zanoli & Naspetti 2002). These results are consistent with survey-based research finding that health concerns are the primary reason for buying organic food (Magnusson et al. 2001; Magnusson et al. 2003), and that higher prices are a major barrier to the purchase of organic foods (Brennan et al. 2003). In sum, both surveys and laddering studies seem to suggest that selfish motives are more important for the choice of organic foods than altruistic motives, such as concern for the environment and for animal welfare. Compared to surveys, the open-ended in-depth interviews of a laddering study give a richer and less researcher-controlled picture of what is on consumers’ minds. The fact that the results of studies based on laddering interviews are broadly consistent with what is found in larger surveys supports the validity of the laddering approach. On the other hand, the approach has important limitations. Means-end and laddering studies are typically based on small samples (less than 50) and convenience sampling, which limit our ability to generalise to the population at large, not to speak of ability to compare results across countries. With few exceptions (Baker et al. 2004), previous laddering studies of organic food choice are single-country studies, which make our ability to generalise across cultures even more limited. Finally, for resource reasons, these studies are typically based on a single or a...
few specific product(s) – in all organic food cases fresh or low-processed ones – thus limiting our ability to generalise across products and especially to more processed products. In the study reported here, we have challenged the boundaries of all of these three limitations.

Specifically, we explore the differences and similarities in consumer choice criteria and motives with regard to a processed organic food product in four Western European countries. Based on means-end chain theory and the laddering methodology, we (or our partners) have interviewed 100 consumers from each of the four countries: Denmark, Germany, UK, and Spain. Although to a lesser extent than with most other qualitative data collection techniques (due to the unique procedure applied to condense data, see below), the richness and heterogeneity of the data obtained by laddering interviews limit the sample size that can be handled in practice in a single research project. The restriction on sample size means that it is hardly possible to obtain a representative national sample for this kind of study. However, this does not mean that the sampling procedure is irrelevant. When sampling consciously from relevant groups with known size and characteristics, one knows much more about the generality of the found results and is much more able to compare results across groups.

Relevant groups for a study of consumers’ food choice could be, for example, groups with identical domain-specific lifestyles (van Raaij & Verhallen 1994), so-called food-related lifestyles (FRL) (Grunert 1993). Grunert and his associates have developed a FRL segmentation instrument that covers 23 dimensions, each of which are represented by three questionnaire items. The instrument builds on means-end chain theory to explain how consumers relate the acquisition and consumption of food products, as a general product category, to the attainment of basic life values. Five interrelated domains constitute the link between product-related attitudes and values: ways of shopping, cooking methods, quality aspects, consumption situations, and purchasing motives (Grunert, Brunso & Bisp 1997; Brunso & Grunert 1995). The instrument has previously been cross-culturally validated in a Western European context (Brunso, Grunert & Bredahl 1996; Brunso, Bredahl & Grunert 1996; Grunert, Brunso & Bisp 1997; O’Sullivan, Scholderer & Cowan 2005; Scholderer, Brunso, Bredahl & Grunert 2004), and has been found useful for explaining differences in patterns of food-related behaviours, both across and within countries (Bredahl & Grunert 1997a, 1997b; Buckley, Cowan, McCarthy & O’Sullivan 2003; Grunert, Brunso, Bredahl & Bech 2001; Reid, Li, Bruwer and Grunert 2001; Scholderer, Brunso & Grunert 2002).

Several FRL segments have been identified cross-nationally while others have been found to be country-specific (Brunso, Grunert & Bredahl 2001, Bredahl & Grunert 1997b). Cross-national segments share the same relative food-related lifestyle characteristics and, hence, can be expected to react in similar ways to marketing initiatives. However, because they are embedded in national food cultures, cross-national segments do not necessarily favour the same meals or products, nor is it necessarily advisable for food marketers to target them in exactly the same way. Previous studies have found that consumer choices of organic food depend on their FRL (Grunert, Brunso, Bredahl & Bech 2001). By combining FRL segmentation with laddering, we are able to investigate for the first time whether consumers’ choice criteria and motives also depend on their FRL.

Consumer food choice is not only contingent on lifestyle, but also on structural conditions, such as prices and availability, and on national food cultures and traditions (Askegaard & Madsen 1998). However, an important advantage of controlling for lifestyle – an important source of intra-national variation in choice criteria and motives – is that we can be more confident that identified cross-national differences are not only due to sampling variability, but are really the product of unique national conditions and cultures. This is why we suggest that domain-specific lifestyle is a useful basis for sampling in studies where the sample size is limited due to methodological constraints (including, but not limited to, studies based on means-end chain theory), and why we in the present case use FRL-based sampling as a means to increase the cross-national comparability of the results.

Due to the usual resource constraints, also this study is a single product case study, but contrary to previous studies, we analyse consumer associations to a processed organic food. Most organic foods in the market today are only minimally processed. However, since the demand for convenient foods is rising rapidly these years, while industrial processing and organic origin seem to be perceived as contradictions by some consumer segments, processed organic foods is a promising idea with obstacles and traps which need to be taken seriously by the food industry. This is the primary reason for focusing particularly on processed organic foods in this research and why we extend the range and types of organic food products studied in a means-end-chain framework.

In sum, the objective of this study is to explore consumer choice criteria and purchase motives with regard to processed organic food in a cross-national/cross-cultural setting, based on means-end chain theory and FRL segmentation. We expect to find choice criteria and purchase motives, which are universal across the four analysed countries, as well as some which differ among FRL segments and/or across national consumer cultures. We use laddering interviews with consumers in Germany, Great Britain, Denmark and Spain selected by means of a quota sampling procedure to meet these objectives. Respondents’ preference ranking of realistic product stimuli is used as the point of departure for the interviews.

**METHOD**

**Stimuli**

Pizza was used as stimuli, with altogether four pizza alternatives presented. The stimuli varied with regard to production method (organic vs. conventional), degree of industrial processing, and convenience as follows:

- **Ready-to-eat, organic pizza:** supplied by a pizza delivery service
- **Chilled, conventional pizza:** to be baked in the oven by the respondent
- **Homemade pizza:** to be prepared from scratch by the respondent out of ingredients of own choice
- **Frozen, organic pizza:** to be baked in the oven by the respondent

Stimuli were presented in the form of cards with photos of the choice alternatives along with a brief text outlining any preparatory activity requested by the consumer before consumption. The exact pictures were developed by a partner in each country to allow cultural differences to be taken into account. In order to control for differences in individual preferences, respondents were instructed to imagine a topping that they liked and to keep the topping constant across products. Real organic products were selected when they existed. In all other cases, conventional alternatives were presented as organic by adding an existing organic certification label that was regarded as both widely known and highly trusted in the
country. All materials (text on cards as well as interview guide and laddering forms) were translated into local languages and crossexhcked by groups of local bilingual researchers.

**Samples and data collection method**

Samples of 100 respondents were drawn among consumers in each of the four countries, Germany, Great Britain, Denmark and Spain, with quotas put on FRL segment membership. Data were collected in May and June 2004. Screening of FRL segments was done by adaptive Bayesian computer-assisted interviewing, using the Sophi@ABC software. All respondents had to be responsible or co-responsible for food purchases and cooking in their household and no more than 65 years old. At least 33% of those recruited in each country had to purchase one or more food items labelled as organic at least once a month, and all respondents had to consume pizza at least a couple of times a year. Finally, in order to get the most out of our limited sample, we restricted our research population to consumers that held neutral to positive attitudes towards organic food products, that is, the population of interest for the current marketing of organic food products. We did this by sampling consumers only from FRL segments that have been found to hold neutral or positive attitudes towards organic food in previous research. The objective was that included segments should be represented equally in the final national samples. Hence, the national samples are obviously not supposed to be representative for their countries. However, by controlling for FRL we achieve samples that are at least comparable across countries.

Three FRL segments were selected for inclusion in each country. Because segments had to be current or potential future buyers of organic foods, segments with low purchasing power were excluded, as were segments with negative attitudes towards organic foods. Still, the procedure resulted in at least two cross-national segments per country and one segment which has been identified in all four countries. Recruiting Danish rational food consumers that were also consumers of pizza (at least a couple of times a year, cf. above) proved immensely difficult. The quota of one-third rational food consumers in the Danish sample was therefore halved and the missing one-sixth replaced by impulsive food consumers. The two segments were analysed separately. In Spain, the neighbourhoods, where the recruitment took place, unexpectedly turned out to be short of rational food consumers. As a consequence, Spanish rational food consumers were under- and Spanish adventurous food consumers over-represented. The small sample sizes finally obtained for some segments require caution when interpreting the results pertaining to these segments. An overview of the included segments and of the final distribution of interviews on segments is shown in table 1.

In Germany, UK, and Denmark respondents were recruited by telephone. In Spain, to ensure that the quota on impulsive food consumers could be met, respondents were recruited from the street, with organic consumers being recruited in organic food shops. In all countries, the interviews were conducted as face-to-face in-home interviews by trained interviewers. All interviews were conducted in metropolitan areas.

During the interview, salient attributes were elicited by a ranking procedure where respondents were requested to rank the four stimuli according to likelihood of choice for next hot meal to be consumed in their home. After the ranking, the interviewer requested the respondent to give his/her reasons for the ranking of each stimulus, and, in a third step, conducted the actual laddering interview from the categories (reasons) elicited. A laddering interview starts from previously elicited choice criteria and probes for the reasons and motives behind each choice criterion at increasing abstraction levels (i.e., ladders) by repeating the question: “why is this important to you?”

**RESULTS**

First, we present some results relating the respondents’ general purchase patterns regarding pizza and organic food and their ranking of the four products (stimuli) to country of residence, FRL, and other background characteristics. These analyses provide a framework for the interpretation of the core data, i.e. the laddering interviews. Results of the laddering interviews were coded, condensed, and are presented in the following in the form of perceptual maps based on correspondence analysis. The focus of our analysis of the laddering interviews was to identify differences and similarities in reasons and motives for buying or rejecting organic food across segments and countries. We were less interested in how different reasons and motives were interlinked. For our purpose, correspondence analysis is superior to the more popular hierarchical value mapping procedure because it takes differences in the prevalence of categories and associations into account (Valette-Florence & Rapacchi 1991). The reason why hierarchical value mapping is still more popular than correspondence analysis and similar techniques is probably that it reproduces the actual means-end chains graphically, which has a strong communication appeal.

**Purchase of pizza and organic food**

Among our screening criteria were the frequency of eating pizza (at the individual level) and the purchase of organic food (at the sample level). Still, reflecting differences in prices and availability, in national food cultures and traditions, and in lifestyles, respondents vary considerably on both of these behavioural indicators. The amount of variation accounted for by country of residence and food-related lifestyle is shown in table 2.

Table 2 shows that the frequency of eating pizza depends on country of residence, but not on food-related lifestyle (when country of residence is controlled). The British respondents eat pizza most often, closely followed by the Germans (the difference between Britain and Germany is not statistically significant according to the Sheffe post-hoc test, $p = .297$). Respondents from Denmark eat pizza least often and those from Spain occupy an intermediate position in this respect. That pizza is apparently equally popular in all lifestyle segments means that answers that depend on the respondent’s familiarity

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4 Making this a conscious choice is a big difference from the usual situation when using convenience sampling where one suspect that people with an interest in and a positive attitude towards the object of study are over-represented, but don’t know for sure.

5 The means for Spain and Denmark are significantly different from all other countries, $p < .001$. 

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across German FRL segments. Frozen organic pizza was the preferred choice between the four variants of pizza. As one would expect from previous research, and also hedonistic food consumers, which is perhaps more surprising. The fact that the impulsive and the snacking food consumers buy less organic is also as expected, and so is the relative position of the rational food consumers. 

Rational food consumers buy less organic is also as expected, and so is the relative position of the rational food consumers.

Enthusiastic food consumers buy more organic (ranked first by 67% among Danish adventurous, Danish eco-healthy and Danish rational food consumers (ranked first by 87% in the segment). The frozen organic pizza was rejected by all FRL segments in both Spain and Denmark. In Denmark, the frozen organic pizza was typically the last choice, while in Spain, the frozen organic pizza was either third or last choice. An overview of the first and last choices among segments is shown in figure 1.

From this descriptive analysis, it seems that differences in choice patterns reflect differences in national food traditions and cultures more than food-related lifestyle. Remembering that we have restricted ourselves to a subset of the FRL segments in each country and thereby limited the variation in lifestyles, this should not be too surprising. We explored this question further by means of dummy-variable regression analysis. Individual rankings of each of the four stimuli were regressed on dummy variables for country of residence and FRL segment. The results of the four regression analyses are shown in table 3.

Table 3 shows that, together, country of residence and lifestyle account for a substantial share of the variation in choices of each of the four product variants. We will now look at the way participants chose between the four variants of pizza included in the research design. Frozen organic pizza was the preferred choice across German FRL segments (ranked first by 41% - 58% in the segments) and chilled pizza was the preferred choice across British FRL segments (ranked first by 52% - 66% in the segments). Throughout Spanish FRL segments and among Danish adventurous, Danish eco-healthy and Danish impulsive food consumers, homemade pizza was the most preferred (ranked first by 50% - 71% in the Spanish segments, and by 52% - 67% among Danish adventurous, Danish eco-healthy and Danish impulsive food consumers). Ready-to-eat organic pizza, finally, was the first choice among Danish rational food consumers (ranked first by 87% in the segment). The frozen organic pizza was rejected by all FRL segments in both Spain and Denmark. In Denmark, the frozen organic pizza was typically the last choice, while in Spain, the frozen organic pizza was either third or last choice. An overview of the first and last choices among segments is shown in figure 1.

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and .33). Both country of residence and lifestyle add to the variation in product choice, but country of residence (i.e., national conditions, food culture, and traditions) causes more variation in product choice than does lifestyle. FRL makes no difference for the choice of frozen organic pizza when country of residence is controlled, and in the other three cases the standardised beta values are substantially higher for country of residence dummies than for lifestyle dummies, again partly reflecting the limited variation in lifestyles.

We also controlled for a number of demographic background characteristics. Most of them do not make any difference when country of residence and lifestyle have been accounted for. This is true for gender, level of education, and income. Three demographic characteristics each contribute to the explanation of variance in one of the four cases, however. Homemade is more likely to be the preferred choice the larger the household size (Beta = -.13, t = -2.724, p < .01), older people have a higher preference for frozen organic pizza than younger people (Beta = -1.6, t = -3.726, p < .001), and ready-to-eat organic pizza is preferred more by singles than by married couples (Beta = -.12, t = -2.582, p = .01), in all cases given country of residence and FRL. Especially the first and the last of these results make intuitive sense, but since they are of little consequence for the analyses presented here, we will not pursue them any further.

When country of residence and FRL have been accounted for, preferences for frozen and for ready-to-eat pizza – the two organic options – are unrelated to the frequency of buying organic food. Not so in the other two cases. The preference for homemade is positively (Beta = .19, t = 3.591, p < .001) and the preference for chilled pizza negatively (Beta = -.22, t = -4.299, p < .001) related to the frequency of buying organic food. The result with regard to homemade makes intuitive sense remembering that previous studies have associated organic food with “natural” and that consumers may choose organic ingredients for their homemade pizza. Viewed in this light, a possible reason why chilled pizza, but not the other two processed options, is negatively related to buying organic food is that the other two processed options wear an organic label, something that we would expect increased their value for organic consumers and, hence, may have compensated for the (presumably negatively valued) higher processing level.

**Correspondence analysis.**

Correspondence analysis is an exploratory technique for analyzing two-way and multi-way tables containing a measure of correspondence between the rows and columns (Greenacre, 1984). Results are similar in nature to those produced by factor analysis. Correspondence analysis can be used to visualise the correspondence (in terms of a distance measure) of categorical variables in perceptual maps for ease of interpretation (Carroll, Green & Schaffer, 1986). The correspondence analyses reported in the following are based on contingency table information relating FRL segments by country to the mentioning of particular (more abstract) attributes, consequences, and values as reasons for and motives behind using organic as a choice criterion.

Two correspondence analyses are reported here. The objective of the first one, which consists of a series of four single-country analyses, was to obtain a more precise picture of FRL segment-related differences in the reasons and motives behind using organic as a choice criterion. The objective of the second analysis is the same, but with regard to cross-national (cross-cultural) differences. In both cases, we analyse tables of the frequency with which categories (attributes, consequences, or values) are linked, directly or indirectly, to organic (i.e., are part of a means-end chain involving this attribute), either by FRL segment (in the first analysis) or by country (in the second). The second analysis is limited to adventurous food consumers since this is the only one among the FRL segments which is present in all four country samples.

In order to reduce clutter, only categories mentioned by at least 20% of the respondents in at least one segment in one country are included in the analyses. In all analyses, dimension 1 (the x axis) generally captures twice as much of the variance accounted for as dimension 2 (the y axis). Results of the segment-based correspondence analysis are shown in figure 2.

It appears from figure 2 that many differences exist in reasons and motives behind using organic as a choice criterion among FRL segments as reflected in the distances in the perceptual maps. However, lifestyle differences explain only a small and non-significant share of the variance in reasons and motives in each country. Hence, the apparent differences between lifestyle segments in reasons and motives behind buying organic food are of no substantive importance. Remembering that the variation in lifestyle is limited to segments with a relatively positive attitude towards organic food, this is not a big surprise, though.

Given the non-significant differences on the FRL level, it would be justified to include the total national samples in the cross-national analysis. However, as an extra precaution against the risk of confounding substantive differences between countries with differences due to the constellation of segments present in each country, we kept FRL segments constant in the cross-national analysis. A perceptual map based on the means-end chains of adventurous food consumers in the four countries is shown in figure 3.

Note first that the perceptual map reported in figure 3 explains 27% of the variance (total inertia) in the analysed table. Further, country of residence is significantly related to the frequency of mentioning different categories, as the perceptual map in figure 3 indicates that, overall, Danish consumers have a larger number of associations from “organic” to consequences and values than consumers in the other three countries. Further, the abstract attributes and consequences that British consumers link most strongly to organic are also the most central reasons for choosing (or not choosing) organic overall in this group of countries: ‘taste and quality,’ ‘healthiness,’ and ‘naturalness and wholesomeness.’ A little less, but also quite central are associations to ‘price’ and security.

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6 The SPSS output regarding regression analyses including demographic background characteristics and/or frequency of eating pizza and buying organic food can be acquired from the first author.
TABLE 2
DIFFERENCES IN CONSUMPTION OF PIZZA AND ORGANIC FOOD BETWEEN COUNTRIES AND FRL SEGMENTS.
ANOVA/ANCOVA. N = 400

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Segment</th>
<th>Pizza M</th>
<th>Marginal M*</th>
<th>Organic food M</th>
<th>Marginal M*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-healthy</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonistic</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulsive</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacking</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>46.071c</td>
<td>0.936c</td>
<td>58.109b</td>
<td>10.574c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>p</strong></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
<td>0.253</td>
<td>0.252</td>
<td>0.301</td>
<td>0.390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 1
FIRST AND LAST CHOICES AMONG FRL SEGMENTS
### TABLE 3
NATIONALITY AND FOOD-RELATED LIFESTYLE AS PREDICTORS OF CHOICE OF PIZZA. N = 396.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Homemade</th>
<th>Frozen</th>
<th>Chilled</th>
<th>Ready-to-eat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonistic</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.042</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.220</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacking</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>4.012</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>3.994</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-healthy</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.737</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulsive</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.772</td>
<td>0.440</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>3.882</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>5.853</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td>0.557</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$ adj.</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dummy variable regression. Denmark is the reference case with regard to nationality and adventurous food consumers with regard to FRL.

### TABLE 4
LIST OF CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes:</th>
<th>Additives</th>
<th>Degree of processing</th>
<th>Freshness</th>
<th>Taste and quality</th>
<th>Organic/ not organic</th>
<th>Pesticides</th>
<th>Quality control</th>
<th>Ease of solution</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Informative packaging</th>
<th>Product appearance</th>
<th>Naturalness and wholesomeness</th>
<th>Familiar product</th>
<th>Storable</th>
<th>Protective packaging</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Italian style</th>
<th>Reliability of claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences:</td>
<td>Resources for other things</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Healthiness</td>
<td>Control of consumption</td>
<td>Decide on the ingredients</td>
<td>Preservation of nature</td>
<td>Try something new</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Value for money</td>
<td>Give others good experiences</td>
<td>Children assist in cooking</td>
<td>Enjoyment in the family</td>
<td>Good for the children</td>
<td>Children learn something</td>
<td>Moral concerns</td>
<td>Can indulge myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values:</td>
<td>Responsibility for nature</td>
<td>Long, healthy life</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Excitement</td>
<td>Social togetherness</td>
<td>Happiness and inner harmony</td>
<td>Family welfare</td>
<td>Independence and achievement</td>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>Socialization of children</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66
FIGURE 2
FRL SEGMENTS AND CONCEPTS LINKED TO “ORGANIC” BY COUNTRY


FIGURE 3
COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE AND CONCEPTS LINKED TO “ORGANIC,” ADVENTUROUS FOOD CONSUMERS
Some associations are especially characteristic for a single country, however. According to figure 3, the Spanish are more inclined than the others to associate organic with ‘additives,’ ‘enjoyment,’ and ‘living a long, healthy life.’ Germans are especially inclined to make associations to ‘reliability of the claim’ and ‘trust,’ and Danes to ‘benevolence,’ ‘happiness and inner harmony,’ ‘preservation of nature,’ and ‘family welfare.’ Finally, Danish and British consumers seem more inclined than Spanish and German to associate organic with ‘pesticides,’ ‘good for the children,’ and at the value level ‘responsibility for nature.’

Of course, the picture of cross-national differences may depend on which segment(s) is (are) analysed. However, the perceptual maps for the individual countries (figure 2) show (1) that differences between included segments are not statistically significant and (2) that associations that are particularly descriptive of a single country in figure 3 tend to be placed in the centre part of the map for that country in figure 2. For instance, (a) all covered German segments are equally inclined to make the association between organic and ‘reliability of the claim,’ (b) the included Danish segments are more or less equally inclined to give associations to ‘preservation of nature’ and ‘happiness and inner harmony,’ and (c) associations to ‘additives,’ ‘enjoyment,’ and ‘living a long, healthy life’ all appear in the centre part of the Spanish correspondence map. Hence, we may conclude that although the country differences reflected in Figure 3 are affected by the specific segment being analysed, they also express genuine cross-national/cross-cultural differences to a high degree.

**DISCUSSION**

This article reports results of a study conducted in four European countries in order to explore similarities and differences in consumer choice criteria (i.e., beliefs) and purchase motives (i.e., attribute-to-value chains) with regard to organic foods.

While analysis of variance/covariance and regression analysis were used to gain insight into differences between the samples regarding the importance of ‘organic’ for consumer choice, correspondence analysis was used to identify reasons and motives behind such choices that discriminate between FRL segments and countries.

Results point to marked differences in the propensity to choose organic food as well as in choice criteria and motives between countries. The chosen product category was ideal for the study of cross-national differences in that there were no differences among the included FRL segments in the consumption of this product and only slight differences among segments in their preference ranking of the four included product variants. Although respondents were screened with the aim to have at least a third regular organic buyers, there were significant differences between countries in how much organic was used as a choice criterion. Part of the variation was due to respondents in one of the countries, Spain, being recruited partly in health...
food stores. Another part was related to how regularly they had bought organic food in the past. Cross-national differences were also identified in how organic is related to self-relevant consequences and to the fulfillment of personal values. For instance, Danish consumers appear to have the most differentiated and British consumers the simplest structure of associations to organic food among the four countries. For German consumers, the issue of the trustworthiness of the organic claim seem particularly salient, whereas associations to enjoyment and to additives in foods are especially characteristic for Spanish consumers. Preservation of nature is a particularly important motive for Danish consumers.

The research suggests that what consumers associate with organic foods, that is, their reasons for buying or rejecting it, is affected by national conditions, food cultures, and traditions. Despite the identification of similar food-related lifestyles across countries, the beliefs and attribute-to-value chains associated with organic foods differ substantially between countries, even within the same cross-national segment. Hence, one needs to be extremely careful when generalizing conclusions about choice criteria and purchase motives across countries. Not even results based on cross-national lifestyle segments can be generalised directly to other countries than the one(s) where they were obtained. That said, this and other analyses indicate that there is a core of more or less universal choice criteria and motives regarding organic food. Notably, there is evidence suggesting that most consumers associate organic with higher prices and with healthiness, the latter appearing to be the most universal reason for choosing organic foods and the former the most universal reason for rejecting them.

Like most other studies based on means-end chain theory and laddering, this one was carried out in the context of choice within a specific product category. However, it differs from other studies of organic food in this tradition by focusing on processed rather than fresh foods. Most of the reasons and motives for buying organic food identified in this study have also been found in studies on fresh foods, however, which indicates that the basic motives and reasons are independent of the processing level of the foods. Still, it is likely that the fact that the organic attribute was presented in this particular context had some influence on the results. The complexity and differentiation of processed foods mean that the organic attribute competes for the consumer’s attention with many other self-relevant attributes, some of which (for instance the high processing level) may be perceived as dissonant with organic. Hence, it seems reasonable to assume that the context influences the salience of the organic attribute, that is, the likelihood that it is noticed at all by the consumer. Further, once the organic attribute is noticed (activated) in a choice situation, it is probable that the context influences the pattern of spreading-activation and, hence, which overall knowledge structure is activated. This is, of course, pure speculation since our design differs in too many ways from previous studies to make direct comparison possible. However, for instance the fact that we find quite weak associations to pesticides, compared to several other studies, whereas we find stronger associations to additives supports the assertion that the context in terms of product type do matter.

REFERENCES


The constructs of fantasy, play and fun represent many diverse happenings that permeate every sphere of consumer life (Sutton-Smith 1970). In the early 1980’s, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) argued the importance of consumers’ playful, hedonic consumption and urged attention to the interplay of consumers’ experience of the imaginary, fantasy, play and fun. Over the last decade or so, there has been an increase in consumer behavior research into various types of consumption experiences in which fun, fantasy and play are prominent (e.g., Arnould and Price 1993; Belk and Costa 1998; Kozinets 2001; Penalozza 1999; Sherry 1990; Sherry et al. 2001). Researchers have explored how consumers generate the imaginary and investigated possible motives for engaging the imagination in the consumption experience (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003; MacInnis and Price 1987; Martin 2004; Scott 1994). They have also examined the role of play in consumption, and the interplay between consumers and marketers in playful consumption (Grayson and Deighton 1995; Grayson 1999; Holbrook et al. 1984; Holt 1995; Kozinets, Sherry, Storm, Duhacheck, Nattavuthisit and Deberry-Spence 2004; Mathwick and Rigdon 2004). Finally, consumer researchers have uncovered the complexity of fun and invited inquiries into the interplay of fun with imagination, fantasy and play (Norman 2004; Celsi, Rose and Leigh 1993).

Despite recent attention to consumer fantasy, fun and play, the concepts remain under-theorised. Theoretically, play and fantasy occupy a liminal and paradoxical space between reality and unreality (Bateson 1955; Turner 1969). Nevertheless, researchers have paid scant attention to the dialectical relationship of these constructs with their opposition, for example, the boundaries between fantasy and real, fun and not fun, play and not play. Moreover, consumer research has not systematically explored relationships among fantasy, fun and play, although theory suggests that relationships are diverse and fraught with ambiguity (Sutton-Smith 1997).

Consistent with a conference theme that encourages crossing boundaries, the purpose of our session is to explicitly consider the interplay of fantasy, fun and play and their alternatives in the lives of consumers. Our session contributes not only to an improved understanding of the theoretical and empirical relationships among these constructs but how consumers negotiate their movements into and out of imaginary, fun and playful encounters and spaces. Explicit in our formulation is the way in which the experience of fantasy, fun and play are socially situated, informed by social norms and enacted by collectivities. Hence, our session stresses the ways in which these constructs are collectively created, shared, breached and negotiated (Bormann, Cragan and Shields 2001; Huizinga 1970).

We anticipate the session will have broad appeal to an ACR audience interested in consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson 2004). Further, it will have particular appeal to consumer researchers interested in experiential consumption, and/or consumer collectivities such as brand communities, families and consumer subcultures. The three specific contexts for research presented in this session are also likely to appeal to some consumer researchers including sports and soccer enthusiasts, renaissance and medieval fair buffs and new product development marketers.

We begin the session with a paper by Lanier and Arnould that investigates fantasy and play in the context of Modern-Day Renaissance Festivals. Similar to Kozinets et al. (2004) their research uncovers a blurring of the line between producers and consumers. Participants take an active role in dressing in costume, engaging with other participants and maintaining and chaining the various symbols of the festivals. The specific intent of Lanier and Arnould is to demonstrate imaginative heterogeneity around a collectively shared fantasy and to explore how the heterogeneity of play in this venue contributes to, detracts from or breaches the rules of play. As compared to prior work, this research highlights the interplay among consumers and with producers as it conditions play and fantasy within this venue. The second paper by Chalmers, Price and Kennedy investigates the paradoxical relationship between work and play as negotiated within teams and families in the context of children’s participation in soccer. Whereas the boundaries on the ESPN zone described by Kozinets et al., (2004) and the spectator status of participants depicted in Holt (1995) serve to highlight the ludic and playful aspects of sports participation, focus on sports as fully integrated into the work of daily life depicts the paradoxical tensions of play with “not play” and how this tension is negotiated in everyday life. As with the Lanier and Arnould paper, this paper contrasts with prior work in examining how consumers move into and out of play with attention to the porous boundaries and tensions that emerge. The final paper by Mukhkerjee and Venkatesh examines consumer fun as grounded in the everyday consumption practices of young adults. Similar to the previous papers this paper stresses the way in which the experience of fun is embedded in a social context and also highlights the tensions between fun and it’s opposite suggesting that consumers construct an optimal level of fun around the interplay between an ethos of fun morality and individual self-control. As with the other two papers, this paper also highlights consumers’ co-creative use of imaginative resources in the service of fantasy, play and fun. All three papers have completed data collection and analysis and are in working paper form. Hence, all papers are relatively complete but still at a stage where they can benefit from audience participation and feedback. The discussant for the session is ** who has a significant presence in the field of consumer culture theory and has done foundational work around which this session is formulated.
CREATING AND NEGOTIATING COLLECTIVE FANTASY AND PLAY AT MODERN-DAY RENAISSANCE FESTIVALS
Clinton D. Lanier, Jr., University of Nebraska
Eric J. Arnould, University of Arizona

Consumer research has explored various experiential, symbolic, and emancipatory aspects of collective consumption, as well as ways that consumers enact collective fantasies. A key feature of these shared experiences is consumer involvement in a collective vision, but prior research doesn’t examine the heterogeneity of these collective experiences or their boundary conditions. We investigate the role of heterogeneous fantasy within a collective fantasy venue drawing on participant observation at Renaissance festivals and depth interviews with participants of these events. We find collective consumption experiences contain multiple interpretations that are compatible, competing, and/or oppositional for participants. The interplay of consumers’ heterogeneous imaginative interpretations is useful in understanding the movement in and out of these imaginative spaces. We illustrate the interplay of consumers’ heterogeneous imaginative resources in the co-creation of collective consumer experiences.

NEGOTIATING WORK AND PLAY ON AND OFF THE SOCCER FIELD
Tandy Chalmers, University of Arizona
Linda L. Price, University of Arizona
Patricia Kennedy, University of Nebraska

Play may be paradox to play theorists but to good friends, “it’s a sure thing”. After Trevathan since at least the 1930’s theorists have explored the ambiguity and paradox that surrounds play. Our study investigates how playful activity is nested within everyday life. Specifically, we examine the rhetoric and activity of work and play in the context of youth soccer teams using a combination of non-participant observation and depth interviews with parents and children. Emergent from the data is a paradoxical relationship between work and play as negotiated within teams and families in the context of children’s sport participation. Consumers experience the tensions inherent in play and work and navigate the boundaries of this paradox by consuming within the confines of positively viewed collectives.

FUN EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG CONSUMERS
Sayantani Mukherjee, University of California Irvine
Alladi Venkatesh, University of California Irvine

Consumer fun is central to playful, hedonic and experiential consumption. Yet the concept of fun is under-theorized in the consumer behavior literature. This research investigates consumer fun as it is grounded within the everyday consumption practices of young adults. Based on projective exercises and long interviews, preliminary findings suggest that consumer fun is a multifaceted experience that blends mixed emotions, imagination and a sense of control and is primarily embedded in a social context. Findings also suggest that consumers enact an optimal level of fun constructed via an interplay between an ethos of fun morality and individual self-control.
ANTI-CONSUMPTION RESEARCH: EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF CONSUMPTION.
Michael S W Lee, University of Auckland Business School

The developed nations have become increasingly consumer driven—of this there is little doubt. Consumption, boosted during the post WWII economic boom, has now developed into an all encompassing way of life. Citizens of first world nations can be defined as consumers, while people of the third world are sold the dream of consumption. Every aspect of the former’s lives is directed towards the accumulation of possessions and hedonic experiences, while the latter strives to break free from ‘poverty’ and join the ranks of their more ‘fortunate’ cousins.

One could argue that this has always been the fate of human kind, a genetic urge to amass resources, attain status, and out-do the Jones’s. Now in the 2nd millennia, instead of safer caves, bigger clubs, and warmer furs; we covet grander houses, faster cars, and trendier accessories. The transition from prehistory to present may appear significant; however the psychology underlying these behaviors is fundamentally the same. The only difference being that our ability to ‘take’ in the last few centuries has grown beyond the earth’s natural ability to ‘give’. As our possessions accumulate at the expense of the environment and, sometimes, other people; the global rat race continues to perpetuate it self. The masses run ever faster on the treadmill of life, to fill a void many do not even know they possess, much less understand.

That being said, there has been a steady growth in awareness of over-consumption and its potential consequences; has human kind started to rise above its genetic predispositions? Are the more positive of our human specific abilities, reason and foresight, finally defying our inclination towards laziness and greed? Over the last half century as mainstream consumption has skyrocketed, so have counter-cultural movements, first in the 1960’s and more recently in the last two decades. Some people have realised that while some possessions are useful to have, and perhaps even necessary to modern life, there is much more to being human than ceaseless acquisition.

Marketing has grown hand in hand with the consumption driven civilization in which we live. From ancient merchants and traders, to modern brand managers and multi-national companies, the objectives remain similar though the scope has escalated. More recently, in response to consumer demand, government policy, or perhaps even, true conscience, an increasing number of companies have begun to conduct their operations in a less than traditional manner. Now, the focus for some is no longer on ever-increasing profit, productivity, and market dominance, but sustainability, work-life balance, and ethics.

In parallel, marketing academia has also followed a similar trend. Although the majority of past research (and indeed a large part of current research) focused on consumption, interest in anti-consumption has increased sporadically (Banister and Hogg 2004; Holt 2002; Kozinets 2002; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel 2006). Anti-consumption is a vast area in scope; some fields of inquiry range from the mere expression of preference for one brand over another, to the intense distaste and rejection displayed by activists against multi-national companies and the globalisation that they represent (Zavestoski 2002). In effect, anti-consumption research is the study of why a person might have simply failed to consume, through to why they might have actively chosen not to consume (Gould, Houston, and Mundt 1997). Anti-consumption encompasses the inert and incept set; choice and anti-choice (Hogg 1998). One example of contemporary anti-consumption research is the exploration of brand avoidance, which has highlighted the need for marketers to understand consumer’s negative behaviors and attitudes towards the brand, rather than simply focusing on the positive. Another anti-consumption area of great interest in Australasia and Europe, is the trepidation consumers have towards genetically modified products.

Nevertheless, anti-consumption remains an under-investigated domain when compared to its better studied counterpart ‘consumption’. As a strategic response to the growing desire from international academics to collaborate on anti-consumption related research, the International Centre for Anti-consumption Research (ICAR) was created in late 2005. ICAR comprises a network of marketing academics, practitioners, and social scientists from various universities. Members come from diverse yet complementary backgrounds and all share a common interest in anti-consumption. ICAR exists for two main purposes. The first is to investigate all aspects of anti-
consumption academically in order to understand the reasons underlying its existence. This involves the study of anti-consumption incidents, antecedents, consequences, and related phenomena. Second, though the knowledge gained could be used in some circumstances to assist practitioners in preventing or alleviating anti-consumption, our long term aspiration is to determine if a compromise is possible between the consumption driven society in which we live, and some of the legitimate philosophies behind anti-consumption. ICAR promotes the academic exploration of anti-consumption attitudes and behavior via a pluralistic approach and supports all research regardless of its relativistic or positivistic philosophical base, or its quantitative or qualitative focus.

YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE PARANOID TO SHOP HERE BUT BEING SCEPTICAL HELPS: EMPOWERED NEW ZEALAND CONSUMERS, PAST AND PRESENT?

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Reports of a growing consumer countercultural movement have been receiving increased attention both from academics (e.g., Holt, 2002; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Carducci, 2006) and the popular media (e.g., Klein, 2001; Schlosser, 2002). However, attempts to redistribute the power between consumer and supplier are not new. Rather than a contemporary phenomenon, examples of consumer empowerment can be found in the 18th century bread riots (Rudè, 1981) and the boycott of absentee landlords in the 1800’s (Brewer, 2003). As with contemporary consumer counterculture these acts of resistance occurred both as reactions to and within the extant market structure.

While much of counterculture is considered within an anti-consumption ideology, such as culture jamming (e.g., Rumbo, 2002; Carducci, 2006) and voluntary simplicity (Craig-Lees and Hill, 2002), the ability of individuals to eschew the market and consumption are brought into question. Indeed, much of counterculture is incorporated into consumer culture. This can be witnessed through the growing markets for ‘green’ and ‘ethical’ products across Western countries. Indeed, anti-consumption organisation Adbusters has themselves launched a consumer product in the form of the Black Spot sneaker (Walker, 2003) and Ettzioni (1998) pointed out that the practice of voluntary simplicity is one of living within consumer capitalism, not in complete opposition to it. Indeed, reports of growing consumer resistance and manifestations of power are often reported in terms of the growth in ethical markets (e.g., Doane, 2001; Williams, Taylor and Howard, 2005). Thus, while many in the anti-consumption movement view marketing and capitalism as part of the problem in over-consumption, many are using that very market system to find a solution. Shaw, Newholm and Dickinson (forthcoming) describe this as a consumer struggle for power in relation to the market where voice in the market through consumption votes was considered more powerful than traditional mechanisms including politics.

Reports of consumers seeking to engage and influence suppliers of products and services through their actions in the marketplace are well documented in marketing and consumer behaviour literature. Such acts of consumer resistance are mainly viewed and described in terms of ‘consumer empowerment’ (e.g., Rumbo, 2002; Carrigan, Smiggin and Wright, 2004; Shaw, Newholm and Dickinson, under review; Harrison, 2005). Increasingly viewed as a legitimate form of empowerment, consumer actions aimed at changing marketing and business behaviour can be manifested through, for example, boycotting and protesting against those suppliers deemed unethical and rewarding those displaying genuine ethical credentials through boycottting (e.g., Friedman, 1996). As we seek to understand this paradoxical relationship between countercultural consumers and their attempts to seek empowerment through marketplace actions, it is important to conceptualise consumer empowerment in a way that increases our understanding of the dynamics and complexities of consumer and market power relationships. Drawing on previous conceptions of power and empowerment a framework of consumer empowerment will be specified and examined in relation to resistant consumers past and present from Dunedin, New Zealand. This will enable an exploration of how contemporary conceptualisations of consumer empowerment have evolved historically. As consumer empowerment exists in relationship to market forces, we believe it is critical to understand how acts of consumer resistance have developed alongside market conditions in the same geographic area. This will allow the authors to speculate on how the current consumer empowerment phenomenon may develop in future.

EXPLORING THE SYMBOLIC UNIVERSE OF THE RAINBOW: A FRAMEWORK FOR DOING CONSUMER RESEARCH AT THE MARKET’S EDGE

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This inquiry examines conceptual and methodological issues involved in designing and conducting research on a loosely affiliated social formation known as the Rainbow Family of Living Light. Its unofficial website says that the group “means different things to different people” and that it is “…into intentional community building, non-violence, and alternative lifestyles” (Rainbow Family, 2005). At a remote U.S. location during the first week of July, roughly 10,000 to 20,000 of its members convene annually at what is known as the Rainbow Gathering. At the Gathering members build harmonious communities dedicated to embracing difference, pursuing pleasure, and enhancing understanding of self and others human and non-human.

A review of the existing literature on consumer resistance finds its frameworks inadequate for explaining phenomena such as the Rainbow Family that exist “at the market’s edge.” This literature is hard-pressed to “…investigate the underlying motivations and processes whereby communities of various forms resist and attempt to distinguish them from markets” (Kozinets 2002, 23). At issue is the extent to which consumers can liberate themselves from the market. Accordingly, the core aim of this inquiry is to understand how Rainbow Family members interpret (or discursively frame) their practices, attitudes/beliefs, relationships, and selves with respect to the marketplace. However, much literature on consumer
resistance has concerned itself solely with how consumers may emancipate themselves through consumption; whether by constructing identities that exist in tension with the logic of the market (Firat and Venkatesh 1995), or by pursuing “personal sovereignty through brands” (Holt 2002). Other strands of consumer research have framed consumer resistance as aligned against specific brands, products, or ads, or against advertising as a whole; but not against the entire logic of the marketplace.

In contrast, Rainbow consists primarily of marginalised social groups living “at the market’s edge;” or groups whose everyday lived practices and self-constructions can be situated 1) “beyond” (and often in opposition to); 2) “on the edge;” or 3) “inside” (Cf. Dobscha 1998, 93-95) the hegemonic logic of the marketplace (read: consumerism). As a de-commodified social space in which monetary exchanges are forbidden, and as an initiative that often articulates community- and self-construction in opposition to the market, Rainbow renders existing consumer resistance literature as inescapably etic, or as a limited “outsider” view of consumer resistance (Turner 1967). This is because Rainbow is largely an “off the grid” phenomenon that is as elusive to capture empirically as it is to conceptualise theoretically.

This essay merges critical theory and hegemony theory with interpretive/semiotic approaches to culture (Geertz 1973) in order to conceptualise and empirically investigate this novel and elusive instantiation of “consumer resistance.” Rainbow is theorised as an alternative socioeconomic formation that constructs communities based on de-commodified social relationships and non-monetary exchange systems, alternative symbolic universes consisting of meanings from the margins of consumer culture and the market, narratives of self that explicitly reject self-schema provided by marketers, and a radical embracing of difference and otherness.

To identify possible reasons for participating in the Rainbow Gathering, this inquiry outlines a flexible ethnographic research design and open-ended data analysis program that allows for emergent discursive frameworks, including those not expressed in relation to the market (Marshall and Rossman 1995). This design will be used to structure ethnographic interviewing and field study methods to be employed at the 2006 Rainbow Gathering in Colorado. Other research design issues include gaining access to key informants, recording observations in ways that do not contaminate the “naturalistic” setting in which they occur, engaging in empathic interviewing techniques while not fully “going native,” and gleaning observations from drug-impaired participants. By drawing upon the author’s experience with—and acceptance by—various counter- and sub-cultural groups, these and other delicate access issues will be addressed by carefully assuming Turner’s (1967) enic (or insider) perspective while explicitly acknowledging the subjective limitations that researchers face when encountering such a phenomenon.

By examining the Rainbow Family as a unique instantiation of a counter-cultural social movement dedicated to rejecting many of the core tenets of consumerism and consumer culture, the proposed study outlined herein aims to further the understanding of how such movements frame and articulate their actions with respect to the marketplace. Ethnographies of groups such as the Rainbow Family promise to deepen existing understandings of why certain groups and individuals opt to extricate themselves from the marketplace, including motivations behind doing so and the barriers they encounter along the way. These findings can be used to identify lifestyle congruencies for brands and goods that are integral to the construction of non-marketed or non-consumer selves.

REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

Despite an abundance of research on customer service (CS), service quality, and customer satisfaction, limited empirical evidence exists regarding context specific situations, for example, satisfaction with the customer service of supermarkets considering how situations in different countries and cultural backgrounds might determine consumers’ expectations, experience, and conceptualization of customer service. The aim of the research was to identify specific elements of CS that individually and/or collectively influence consumers’ evaluation of, and satisfaction with, CS in supermarkets and the consequent contribution towards repeat purchase behavior in a South African context. Noteworthy is the paradoxical situation that exists in the sense that attributes of a sophisticated first world as well as the reality of a developing third world country have to be acknowledged. Data collection was done in two phases and involved 386 participants. Factor analysis identified three elements of CS that were considered crucial in terms of consumers’ satisfaction with CS and these were presented in a model to indicate their inter-relatedness in terms of customer service, service quality, and store loyalty.

INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

“Customers want it all and they want it now!” Howardell’s remark (2003) reflects the experience of many retailers in the 21st century. Gone are the days when consumers could trust the friendly grocer on the corner of the street in terms of product offerings, prices, and even interest in their personal well being. Supermarkets now trade in a highly competitive marketplace, where competitors are located within walking distance of one another, knowing full well that if they fail to provide what customers want, these customers will very easily find another store that does (Codrington 2002). Despite greater sophistication and continual efforts to impress consumers through careful exemplification of the elements of the marketing mix, retail has come under heavy scrutiny in recent years. The main allegations stress the apparent emphasis on retail and marketing issues (Killbourne 2002) and the neglect of the well being of consumers, and suggest that marketing practices should be revisited (Weis 2002). A decline of 12% in customers’ satisfaction with CS in the retail environment in the U.S. between 1996 and 2001 (The American Customer Satisfaction Index: University of Michigan), supports these concerns. More than 69% of retail customers in the U.S. are reported to “shop hop” in an attempt to overcome frustrations due to unsatisfactory CS (Gowan et al. 2001). CS has received great attention in accredited journals in recent years. Unfortunately, the emphasis has often either been on individual elements of CS rather than service per se or on the relationship between consumer satisfaction, service quality, and store loyalty (Bennett and Rundle-Thiele 2004; Cronin et al. 2000; Shemwell 1998). Evidence of the collective contribution of various elements of CS towards service quality (SQ) deserves additional attention (Calif 2001; Erdem et al. 1999; Gowan et al. 2001), especially in terms of context-specific situations, for example, a specific country with specific cultural backgrounds that might affect consumers’ expectations, experience, and conceptualization of CS. Despite some evidence from countries such as China, Korea, and Japan, the bulk of the research on CS relies on theoretical frameworks and observations based on circumstances in Western societies. This perhaps limits our understanding of how customers from different countries and cultural backgrounds anticipate, experience, and conceptualise CS in various contexts.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

Countries across the globe have, in the last decade, witnessed the formation of prominent retail conglomerates that now dominate the retail scene. Five supermarket giants more or less dictate grocery shopping in South Africa at present, and in many areas these stores are located within walking distance of each other, although they generally stock more or less the same goods. This suggests a difference in their CS and consequent SQ that enhances store loyalty (Bell 2003). The relevance of excellent CS in terms of survival in a competitive marketplace has been discussed repeatedly in recent years (Du Vázquez et al. 2003; Malan 2003; Nielsen 2002; Oliver 1998; Saxby 2003a; Seybold 2001). Unfortunately, processes and policies implemented in retail in third-world countries are often guided by trends in Europe or America (Du Plessis et al. 1995). Clarity about consumers’ interpretation of SQ in specific contexts such as supermarkets, in terms of the various CS attributes, would be useful to understand why consumers tend to shop hop to complete grocery shopping although competitors generally stock the same goods. It would also be valuable in terms of adapting and improving CS in specific situations to attract and retain customers and to ultimately encourage store loyalty.

The aim of this study is to identify specific elements of CS that individually and/or collectively determine consumers’ evaluation of and satisfaction with CS in supermarkets, and these elements’ consequent contribution toward repeat purchase behavior in a South African context which paradoxically includes attributes of a sophisticated first-world and a developing third-world country.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Supermarkets

A supermarket is a large, departmentalised retail store that primarily sells food items (Marshall et al. 2001), while a department store is larger, divided into different departments, and also provides an extensive assortment of other goods and services (Thang and Tan 2003).

Customer Service (CS) in Terms of Service Quality (SQ) and Customer Satisfaction

CS is a complex offering that involves several interrelated activities/interactions (so called “moments of truth”) through which a business interacts with its customers. CS is intangible and therefore particularly
difficult to evaluate objectively (Levy and Weitz 2001). In a competitive marketplace, intentional effort is needed to improve CS in terms of SQ so that a shopping experience is perceived as more rewarding especially for discerning consumers (Ackermann 2002; Howardell 2003; Levy and Weitz 2001; Rajias 2003; Schwerdtfeger 2003; Zikmund and D’Admico 2001). CS is generally evaluated in terms of SQ (which is affective and feelings-based with an evaluative, objective component) (Shemwell et al. 1998; Spreng and Mackoy 1996) based on the premise that CS needs to add value to a purchasing experience to boost the perception of SQ with a prospect of customer loyalty. The need to conceptualise and measure CS in terms of SQ and consumer satisfaction has been much debated in the past (Bendall-Lyon and Powers 2004; Cronin et al. 2000; Cronin and Taylor 1992 in Spreng and Mackoy 1996; Iacobucci et al. 1995; Shemwell et al. 1998). Spreng and Mackoy (1996, 202) explain satisfaction in terms of evaluation within a framework of expectations to conclude a desires congruency, to conclude positive or negative disconfirmation. Several researchers agree that the situation will eventually determine whether the affective, feelings-based component of satisfaction or the cognitive component will eventually control a consumer’s evaluation. Consumer satisfaction with supermarket shopping that reflects high experience properties will probably thus be cognitive rather than emotionally based (Shemwell 1998). SQ on the other hand, is judged by what a consumer believes should be provided, that is, a customers’ evaluative, objective judgment of overall service excellence (Leong et al. 1997; Shemwell et al. 1998).

CS refers per se to an assortment of CS attributes that collectively constitute service as a phenomenon that is perceived in terms of SQ. Any single positive attribute of CS, for example, competitive prices, may therefore not necessarily ensure SQ or repeat purchase behavior. When judging CS, consumers mostly indicate their satisfaction with the service, which suggests that satisfaction is a prerequisite for SQ. From a business point of view, customer satisfaction implies consistently doing something of value for customers in the way they expect it to be done (Cronin et al. 2000; Levy and Weitz 2001). This could influence a consumer’s motives and attitudes during subsequent consumer decisions (Du Plessis et al. 1990 in Erasmus and Donoghue 1998) and enhance repeat purchase behavior and positive word-of-mouth communication. Consumer satisfaction is generally described in terms of SQ and value (where value refers to quality relative to price) (Cronin et al. 2000). Efforts to improve CS within the goals and vision of a specific company inevitably involve a revision of the various elements of the marketing mix, such as McCarthy’s (1964) product, place, price, and promotion, as well as Booms and Bitners’ (1981) people, processes, and physical evidence that collectively embody the resources or capabilities of a store.

CS in Terms of Store Loyalty
Retailers highly value loyal customers who intentionally choose their stores over others, irrespective of the offerings at other stores (Levy and Weitz 2001). A consumer’s behavioral intentions that may culminate in store loyalty should however be understood as complex, comprehensive processes that involve an evaluation of SQ as well as consumer satisfaction (Cronin et al. 2000). Although satisfaction is likely to increase store loyalty (Bennett and Rundle-Thiele 2004), it may not in itself be sufficient to ensure this loyalty (A Alonso 2000). Store loyalty is therefore defined as a non-random behavioral response expressed over time, which implies that one store is patronised rather than several others as a function of complex psychological (decision-making and evaluative) processes. No wonder then that retailers purposely invest in their CS through well-managed customer-retention programs (Malan 2003).

CS as a Collective Phenomenon
Cronin et al. (2000) emphasise that any evaluation of CS that considers only individual variables is likely to be incomplete. A systems perspective thus provides a useful vehicle for interpreting the interrelated elements of CS in a supermarket in terms of a total (whole) experience of SQ (Heylingen and Joslyn 2002). The systems perspective acknowledges the sequence, relationship, and interdependency of the fundamental elements of CS as determinants of SQ. Elements of CS are considered the inputs that are transformed into outputs, which are interpreted in terms of SQ.

The Elements of CS within a Systems Perspective
In this study, the elements of CS are defined as all of the operational, physical or human resources/elements that may affect customers’ perception of the SQ of supermarkets (Spears and Gregoire 2003) and which may incite a consumer consciously or subconsciously to patronise a specific store (Asseal 1993; Thang and Tan 2003). Consumers generally look for tangible evidence (contextual cues) of what they are about to experience in a given service encounter, which is intangible (Bittner 1991). These tangible cues include the following:

Products. The range, quality, and availability of product offerings in a supermarket are regarded as the core attraction to the store as a collection of need-satisfying utilities (Zikmund and D’Admico 2001). Packaging contributes to the decision-making process of a consumer because it determines product image, communicates product information, protects the product, determines shelf life, indicates affordability, etc. (Van der Walt et al. 1998).

Place/Physical Surroundings. The store itself in terms of design, appearance, and image provides a fertile opportunity for market differentiation (Levy and Weitz 2002). Criteria for success may, for example, be aesthetic in nature and involve attention to detail such as store safety or parking facilities (Bloemer 2002; Malan 2003): customers apparently also desire hedonic experiences to satisfy multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of consumption that extend beyond the purpose of acquiring merchandise (Arnold 2003; Thang and Tan,2003).

Price. Pricing strategies are implemented to attract consumers and to sway buyer decisions (Levy et al. 2004; Zikmund and D’Admico 2001). While price is often used to attract consumers, affordability (lower/reasonable prices) in conjunction with quality contributes to consumers’ experience of service value (Cronin et al. 2000).

Promotion. Vast amounts of money are spent annually on marketing communication with the intention of announcing stores’ offerings and boosting store images (Shiftman and Kanuk 2001; Zikmund and D’Admico 2001). Four of the prominent six supermarkets in South Africa are, for example, listed under the top 10 advertisers in 2004–2005 (Rapport 2005).

Sales Personnel. Sales personnel actually represent their employers, the retailers (Saxby 2003). Excellent customer-salesperson relationships contribute to pleasant shopping experiences and reduce risk perception, especially during the final stages of the decision-making process (Reynolds and Beatty 1999). A customer-oriented approach that signifies empathy, expertise, and competence enhances customer satisfaction and store loyalty (Clopton et al. 2002).
and encourages positive word-of-mouth communication (Bettencourt 1997).

**Processes and Policies.** CS in supermarkets involves a broad range of additional services such as complaint handling, reliability, availability of credit facilities, exchange policies and guarantees that contribute to consumers’ perception of the store (Dabholkar et al. 1994; Reppel 2003) as a supportive, empathetic, friendly, trustworthy organisation (Menon and Dube 2004). This may even encourage consumers to patronise a supermarket that is not necessarily the cheapest, the nearest, or the most impressive. It is more difficult for a supermarket to serve customers with different lifestyles from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in large urban areas than to attend to a smaller, homogeneous market (Du Vázquez et al. 2003).

**Transformation of the Elements of CS in Terms of SQ**

Although the importance of any elements of CS should never be underestimated, their collective contribution towards CS in terms of consumers’ perception of SQ has to be carefully defined. In terms of consumers’ experience of CS, the various elements of CS are interpreted or transformed through cognitive activity. Consumers thus interpret their experience of the various elements of CS (inputs) in a supermarket within established schemata in memory (previous experiences, expectations, knowledge) (Spear and Gregoire 2003) to comprehend the buying experience (Thang and Tan 2003). Within the systems perspective, it is postulated that changing one element of CS (e.g., price) will affect how another element (e.g., assistance from a salesperson) is interpreted. A lower price/bargain buy might, for example, counteract an experience with a rude salesperson. Consumers thus refer to previous experiences (memory an internal resources) to interpret or judge the elements of CS (external stimuli) as positive or negative. This process is facilitated by information-processing strategies that assist in the decision-making process on a subliminal level (Shiffman and Kanuk 2001). A consumers’ perception of CS (e.g., as superior) may not necessarily be derived from elements of CS that are considered in isolation (e.g., assuming that competitive prices would leave an impression of superior CS). Of greater importance is an understanding of the collective contribution, and the relative hierarchy, of the composite elements of CS in terms of SQ and store loyalty (Whitchurch and Constantine 1993). Although consumers generally comment on individual elements of CS, the collective contribution of these elements eventually determines the interpretation of SQ. Consumers’ evaluation of CS (e.g., as excellent) may also be the result of unexpected elements, for example, a combination of affordability and large product variety at the cost of store design and layout, as opposed to more expensive products and elaborate product ranges or convenient store design. The compensatory rule of consumer decision making thus applies (Shiffman and Kanuk 2001): a consumer values various elements of CS in terms of their perceived importance in a specific context to establish a final “score” for each store visited. The preferred store will thus be the store with the highest total score. Two stores might eventually both be rated as acceptable although individual “scores” for service elements might differ considerably. A store with a high score might thus eventually still fail to attract customers due to an unacceptable minimum condition (e.g., too expensive), which increases the contribution that every other element of CS has to make toward acceptable CS and SQ (Levy and Weitz 2001). If a consumer is satisfied with the consequences of a purchase experience, the probability of repeat purchase behavior increases. Feedback is therefore of utmost importance in searching for ways to improve SQ (Spears and Gregoire 2003).

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study is cross-sectional: data was collected in August 2004. The research approach is exploratory and descriptive in nature and integrates a qualitative technique (focus group discussions) with a predominantly quantitative approach (survey, implementing a structured questionnaire) to enhance the validity and reliability of data (Babbie and Mouton 1998). The research was conducted in Pretoria East, a more affluent geographical area in the metropolis of Tshwane, South Africa, where several supermarkets are located within close proximity. This area was chosen because consumers with higher discretionary incomes are expected to be more concerned about CS and SQ and more likely to visit different supermarkets to get a pleasurable shopping experience (Arnold 2003; Samson and Little 1993). Four trained field workers assisted with data collection. Based on the success of the technique in similar studies (Areni 2003), snowball sampling (chain referral) was used to recruit participants. An attempt was made to recruit an even distribution of participants from the 48 suburbs in the area (Neuman 1997). Participation required of individuals (no preconditions in terms of gender) to manage or co-manage their own households and to confirm a minimum of six personal buying experiences at least two of the well-known supermarkets during the three months preceding completion of the questionnaire (Thang and Tan 2003).

**Focus Group Discussions.** Two focus group discussions of 10 participants each were held on consecutive Saturdays at a private home with the intention of finalizing the construction of the scales as well as the wording of the questionnaire in terms of everyday knowledge and language (McQuarrie and McIntyre 1988). The venue was chosen to encourage discussions in a relaxed atmosphere (Keim et al. 1999). Simultaneous participation of friends, spouses, and family members was not allowed (Cook 1982). Participants were informed that the research was concerned with CS in supermarkets but no reference was made to specific stores or to characteristics of CS. Tape recordings of discussions were made with the consent of the participants to enable accurate transcription (Babbie and Mouton 1998). Discussions evolved from general to specific (Garrison et al. 1999), including prompts such as, “There are a number of supermarkets within close proximity in the east of Pretoria. Do you generally do grocery shopping at one specific supermarket or do you patronise different stores? Explain. Do you prefer certain supermarkets when doing your grocery shopping? How would you describe an excellent supermarket?”

**Survey:** The content and wording of the structured questionnaire was finalised after interpretation of the transcription of the focus group discussions. The questionnaire consisted of six sections:

1. Demographics and general buyer behavior: Answering simple questions such as, “How frequently have you shopped at each of the following supermarkets in the past three months?”; “Who does the grocery shopping for your household?”; “How frequently do they do it?”

2. Judgment of the importance of CS attributes: Using a five-point scale to respond to 34 statements such as, “How important do you regard the following elements of CS?”

3. A listing of intolerable attributes of CS:
Answering an open-ended question that enabled cross validation (Leong et al. 1997; Zikmund and D’Amico 2001)

4. An evaluation of well-known supermarkets:
Using a five-point scale to respond to questions such as, “Indicate your view of the customer service of the supermarket/s where you generally do your shopping.”

5. A rating of satisfaction with specific attributes of CS: Using a five-point scale to respond to 34 statements such as, “How satisfied are you in general with the following aspects of customer service of the supermarket/s where you generally do your shopping?”

6. Willingness to recommend supermarkets: Questions referring to all the supermarkets in the area, such as, “Would you recommend the following supermarkets to your best friend for regular purchases?”

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In the presentation of results, ethical concerns required the use of codes rather than disclosing the identities of the supermarkets/department stores included in the study, namely Checkers, Checkers Hyper, OK, Pick ‘n Pay, Pick ‘n Pay Hyper, Spar, Super Spar, Woolworths, and Woolworths Foods. Aa, Bb, Cc, Dd etc. refer to the hyper stores and/or the specialised food versions of the corresponding supermarkets A, B, C, D etc. (not necessarily in the order listed above).

Focus Group Discussions. Recordings of the focus group discussions were transcribed and crosschecked by the researchers immediately after every session. Conceptual analysis and relational analysis suggested an objective and systematic color-coding of the text in terms of attributes of CS that were relevant (Babbie and Mouton 1998) or contributed to those already contained in the questionnaire. Additional constructs that were mentioned were safety aspects with regards to location of supermarkets, personal safety in stores, poor service, and inefficiency of personnel. A popular department store was also suggested by the participants and eventually included in the list of supermarkets.

Questionnaire. Because at least 350 completed questionnaires were required, 500 were distributed. Of the 386 that were returned by the deadline, 99 were completed by males and 287 by females (no preference in terms of gender was specified). Because of the promise of confidentiality, it was difficult to trace questionnaires that were not returned in time. Considering that willingness would be more favorable in terms of reliable data, no pressure was exerted to retrieve the rest of the questionnaires.

Patronage of Specific Supermarkets. The results show that approximately 70% of the participants visit supermarkets C and B, twice or three times per month. Although some would prefer to do the majority of their grocery shopping at A, they admit that they cannot afford to do so. This is the first indication that one element of CS, price, prevents customers from frequenting a supermarket, although other elements of CS are highly valued. This supports comments that were made during focus group discussions.

Family Members’ Involvement in Supermarket Shopping. Participants (predominantly female) generally do the shopping themselves (table 1): 45.3% do their shopping weekly rather than 23.0% who do it monthly and 15.3% who do it daily. Only 16.3% indicate occasional shopping.

| Importance of Individual Elements of Customer Service in Terms of SQ. Participants’ rating of the importance of a list of CS attributes reveals that a clean store and strict control of freshness of products are required by more than 90% of the participants; products of excellent quality, short queues at the cashiers and store layout are valued by between 70 and 79% of respondents; while clean trolleys, friendly, enthusiastic staff assistance, clear signage of product location and in-store security were cited by more than 60%. An interpretation of the importance of specific elements of CS reveals that attributes that are considered very important by more than 60% of the participants are 1) place-related: a clean store, store layout, clear signage in store, safety/security, convenient and well-located parking facilities, good access to the parking area, and location of the store in a safe area; 2) product-related: strict control over the freshness of products, products of excellent quality, and large product variety; 3) personnel-related: enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and efficient staff; and 4) process-related: minimum waiting time at cashiers, clean trolleys, and availability of credit card facilities. Cleanliness/perceived hygiene was indicated as an important reason why consumers preferred supermarket A. In-store demonstrations and access to internet shopping were considered least important. Although this has become popular in supermarket shopping worldwide, it is apparently not considered a local priority yet.

Satisfaction with Specific Attributes of CS of Supermarkets. Participants’ indication of satisfaction with attributes of CS in supermarkets can be used as an indication of their interpretation of SQ. More than 75% of the participants were satisfied or highly satisfied with attributes that were 1) place-related: convenience of store location 97.3%; in-store temperature 85.2%; in-store layout 85.2%; cleanliness of store 85.2%; location of parking bays 85.1%; store appearance 85.0%; and 2) product-related: quality of products 85.0%. Participants seemed mostly dissatisfied with process-related aspects of CS that are personnel in kind. A significant percentage indicates that assistance and efficiency of both general frontline staff as well as management are often disappointing. A general satisfaction with product-related and place-related attributes may be due to the observation that must supermarkets stock the same goods and that differentiation between

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>FAMILY MEMBERS’ INVOLVEMENT IN SUPERMARKET SHOPPING (N=386)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant (self)</td>
<td>Husband/wife/partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>Missing</td>
<td>42</td>
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supermarkets may be attributed to other characteristics.

**Intolerable Attributes of Customer Service**

Intolerable attributes of CS that were mentioned in the open question were 1) personnel- and process-related: rude or untrained staff 70.2%; dirty trolleys 51.6%; and 2) product-related: unavailability of products 51.6%; poor quality 33.7%. These findings coincide with attributes that are cited as very important in supermarkets, thus suggesting valid and reliable responses and indicating that the attributes mentioned are worth taking notice of.

**Recommendation of Supermarkets**

Table 2 indicates a noticeable difference in participants’ willingness to recommend the various supermarkets, which suggests a difference in CS and consequent SQ.

Aa (the smaller foods version of A) is rated significantly better \( (p \leq .05) \) than all the other supermarkets, including A. A is however rated significantly better than B, C, Cc, D, Dd and E \( (p \leq .05) \). Participants however indicated that A and Aa are too expensive to patronise on a regular basis despite an indication of the importance of attributes other than price in terms of store loyalty. No significant difference was found between B (a hyper store), C, and Cc. Both C and Cc were however rated significantly better \( (p \leq .05) \) than D, Dd, and E.

**Attributes of CS that Seem Crucial in Terms of their Contribution toward SQ and Store Loyalty**

Factor analysis is used to identify the attributes and the relevant elements of CS that seem crucial for SQ. Squared multiple correlations acted as initial communality estimates with direct oblimin rotation. A Scree test suggested three main elements of CS, which were then used for rotation. An item loaded on a specific factor, when the loading was 0.3 or greater for that factor and less than 0.3 for the other, was used to interpret the rotated factor pattern. Sixteen items loaded on the first factor, nine on the second and three on the third. Table 3 reveals questionnaire items and corresponding factor loadings.
of CS. The first element, namely processes, contains 16 attributes that can be associated with hassle-free shopping and minimum frustration; the second, labeled value for money, consists of nine attributes that have relevance to the image of the supermarket in terms of image and value-for-money shopping; while the third element, personnel, contains three attributes. Instead of as many as seven elements of CS commonly discussed in the literature, only these three were identified as crucial in terms of judgment of SQ. Table 4 presents the factor loadings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Element 1</th>
<th>Element 2</th>
<th>Element 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V14</td>
<td>0.402</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V15</td>
<td>0.332</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V16</td>
<td>0.242</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V20</td>
<td>0.368</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V21</td>
<td>0.374</td>
<td>0.187</td>
<td>0.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V22</td>
<td>0.398</td>
<td>-0.151</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V23</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td>0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V26</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>0.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V29</td>
<td>0.399</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V31</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td>-0.037</td>
<td>-0.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V34</td>
<td>0.629</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
<td>-0.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V35</td>
<td>0.360</td>
<td>0.144</td>
<td>0.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V38</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>0.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V39</td>
<td>0.526</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V41</td>
<td>0.394</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>0.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V44</td>
<td>0.498</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>-0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V18</td>
<td>-0.094</td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V24</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td>0.062</td>
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<tr>
<td>V28</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>0.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V32</td>
<td>0.219</td>
<td>0.453</td>
<td>-0.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V40</td>
<td>0.244</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V42</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V45</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>0.332</td>
<td>0.125</td>
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<tr>
<td>V46</td>
<td>-0.189</td>
<td>0.886</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V47</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V17</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V25</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V27</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach Alpha</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td>0.794</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linear regression and calculation of Pearson correlation coefficients were used to determine whether the three identified elements of CS can be used to predict satisfaction with CS and willingness to recommend a supermarket to others. A small yet significant correlation is found between element 1 (processes) and consumer satisfaction, as well as between element 2 (value for money) and consumer satisfaction. There is also a significant correlation between element 3 (personnel) and consumer satisfaction. Thus two elements of CS, namely processes and value for money, make a significant contribution in terms of customer satisfaction with supermarkets, although the relationship is not strong ($r^2 = 0.1130$). None of the elements of CS have a significant contribution in terms of customers’ recommendation of supermarkets to others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor/element</th>
<th>Factor/element 1</th>
<th>Factor/element 2</th>
<th>Factor/element 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.28303</td>
<td>0.360469</td>
<td>0.10814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store recommendation</td>
<td>-0.06111</td>
<td>-0.0091</td>
<td>-0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2742</td>
<td>0.02719</td>
<td>0.04922</td>
<td>0.3787</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correlation coefficients reveal value for money to be of greater significance than processes. Figure 1 indicates the interactive contribution of the three elements of CS that signify SQ and probably store loyalty.

**CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The findings reveal a significant difference in participants’ satisfaction with different supermarkets. Participants, however, also admit that consideration of affordability prevents them from patronizing the stores that they are more satisfied with. Despite a significant dissatisfaction with one of the supermarkets, participants still shop there because of an apparent experience of value for money in conjunction with convenient location of the stores (processes), which apparently negates certain unacceptable attributes of CS. This confirms the initial notion that consumers will severely criticise a certain attribute of CS for a particular supermarket when this attribute is evaluated in isolation, but that they will nevertheless eventually still shop there. Participants tend to compromise in terms of a “whole shopping experience” which reinforces the belief that consumers’ rating of individual elements of CS should be considered less important than that of a collective of CS attributes in judgment of SQ and potential store loyalty.

Three elements of CS—namely value for money, processes, and personnel—can be eventually identified as crucial in terms of SQ that will enhance store loyalty in supermarkets. A significant correlation of value for money and processes with consumer satisfaction with CS indicates the importance of affordability in conjunction with product quality, as well as the need for an offering of additional services (processes) that will moderate frustration, for example, clean trolleys, comfortable environment, well-organised store, good shelf layout, in-store security, short queues at cashiers, and easy access to parking. The attributes that are used to describe two of the significant elements of CS, that is, processes and personnel, confirm the importance of context in a discussion of CS, and suggest that strategies specifically designed for the specific context could be beneficial to enhance SQ in a third-world country. Unique descriptors (in the South African context) that are included in the questionnaire after completion of the focus group discussions include safety issues and competence of sales personnel. The latter may be ascribed
to an application of so-called affirmative action in the work place that implies that job appointments are often based on race rather than on competence. In an article in a national Sunday newspaper (Rapport, 17 April 2005), a list of the top 10 South African spenders on advertising in the country during the preceding financial year included four of the five supermarket groups that were included in this research. Interestingly, the supermarket group that was rated best in terms of its CS was not included in this list. The worst-rated supermarket, however (in terms of CS and SQ), happened to be the top spender on advertising. The content of the advertisements of these supermarkets revealed strong emphasis on price while price per se, as an element of CS, was not identified as one of the most important elements of CS that was expected by customers in terms of SQ. It is suggested that the money spent on promotion and price (two of the universal elements of CS according to previous literature), could perhaps be better invested in terms of the training of personnel, an element of CS that was strongly criticised throughout the study. While this research specifically focuses on CS in supermarkets, similar studies could be done to examine CS in other retail contexts such as clothing retail and appliance sales where the importance of the elements of CS will most probably be interpreted differently. This study suggests that it would be worthwhile to explore the importance of well-trained, competent staff.

LIMITATIONS
Because of financial considerations, the research was done in a specific geographical area where well-known South African supermarkets are well represented and conveniently located. Another motivation is the demographics of the area, since Tshwane is one of the most affluent provinces in the country and consequent competition in the marketplace will probably ensure that the CS offered by the various supermarkets is better than average in terms of other areas in the country. Although the findings reveal aspects that deserve further attention, a more representative sample might be required before any generalization of the findings in terms of supermarkets' CS on a national level can be made.

REFERENCES
Keim, K. S., M. A. Swanson, S. E. Cann, and A. Salinas (1999), “Focus Group Methodology: Adapting the
SERVICE ENCOUNTER INTERACTION MODEL

Tony Ward, Central Queensland University
Leonce Newby, Central Queensland University

ABSTRACT

Despite academic discourse and practitioner rhetoric about the value and interactive nature of relationship marketing, many of the recent studies in the literature have investigated only one or two outcome constructs of the buyer/service provider interaction. This paper provides a conceptual framework that allows for a clearer understanding of the factors in operation in the context of a service encounter in which buyer/marketer interaction occurs. In identifying the influences acting on the buyer/marketer interaction, the framework supports practitioner optimisation of a customer relationship marketing strategy.

INTRODUCTION

A role theory perspective suggests that interactions between customer and service provider occur in a dyadic customer/provider exchange relationship (Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel and Gutman 1985). The ‘virtue of reciprocity’ as a driver of relational exchange which stabilises the exchange processes has been discussed by Pervan and Johnson (2002, p. 2462). By its very nature, customer interaction implies involvement with another participant. Both participants in the encounter, the customer and the service provider, must desire a positive outcome from the encounter and each participating actor needs to contribute to the interactive relationship developed in the encounter context (Grönroos 2000; Solomon et al. 1985). Cognisance of the reciprocal engagement of each of the actors involved in the act (the process of the interaction) needs to be acknowledged.

Service encounter research has been extensively undertaken for some time and in this mature phase can benefit from the development of a comprehensive model like many other models in marketing. We are not aware that such a service encounter model already exists and thus we are attempting to address a gap in the existing literature. The dyadic service encounter provides the context in which customer interaction occurs and therefore it is important to consider the dimensions of the service encounter from the perception of both the customer and the provider personnel to reach an understanding of the antecedents influencing the interaction occurring in the encounter (Chandon, Leo & Philippe 1997). By identifying the differences between the actors, potential sources of discord can be identified. Since the interaction in the encounter derives both from the customer and the provider, all the antecedents of the interactive incidents in a service encounter are of great interest to both marketing practitioners and researchers. Understanding the factors impacting on the interaction in an encounter is fundamental to ‘the search for a deeper understanding of customer relationships’ (Roos 2002, p. 193). A holistic approach thus provides insight for customer service managers and staff by showing them different aspects of the cyclic process at each stage.

With cognitive constructivism theory (Talja, Tuominen and Savolainen 2005) informing a conceptual analysis of the service encounter literature, a comprehensive antecedent classification model of the service encounter has been developed.

This paper formulates a model comprised of five parts by examining the encounter as a five phase process:

- Phase 1: The Pre-Encounter Stat (PrES);
- Phase 2: Service Encounter (SE);
- Phase 3: Post-Encounter Evaluation (PEV);
- Phase 4: Post-Encounter State (PES) and
- Phase 5: Post-Encounter Behaviour (PEB).

The benefits of this research are that:

- an inclusive set of models is developed to identify the stages of a service encounter;
- the main constructs of each stage are identified;
- the role of service encounters in changing customers’ and providers’ perceptions is acknowledged; and,
- the cyclical nature of the of service encounter situations is identified;

- the paper identifies different aspects and stages in the service encounter in order to raise awareness among researchers and practitioners of the complexity of the service encounter experience. By positioning specific empirical research findings in the broader context of the encounter, the model has ‘the potential to assist theorists and practitioners alike’.

THE SERVICE ENCOUNTER

For both the customer and the service provider, the purchase of a product, whether it is a good or service product, is a critical incident in the interaction between a customer and provider. The importance of the context in which this critical incident occurs has been recognised (Roos 2002) and the context in which the customer and service provider interaction occurs has been labelled the Service Encounter (SE). The proposition that social interaction in a purchase exchange between customer and provider is the heart of a service encounter was adopted from Surprenant and Solomon (1987). Therefore, in this paper a service encounter is defined as: an encounter between a customer and a service provider which entails interpersonal communication (interaction between people), either face-to-face or through another interface, which has the intent of enabling any form of customer service. All non-dyadic encounters where there is no element of interpersonal customer service are excluded from the discussion of service encounters in this paper. Because of their role in the purchasing process, the nature of service encounters is therefore of enormous interest to marketers. While the literature on customer service is extensive, most studies have investigated only one or two outcome constructs of service encounters. In practice, the actual situation is much more complex. Because the intensity of personal contact between providers and customers differs (Mittal and Lassar 1996), as well as visit frequency, customer/provider interactions differ (Roos 2002). Just as every customer has a different persona which consists of the combination of personality and personal values that are innate to the person at a given point in time (Ward and Newby 2004), so too, does every service provider. Customers and providers are dynamic beings who are responding to a dynamic environment, so neither the customer’s nor the provider’s persona and perceptions remain static. Furthermore, even if two customers could experience an identical encounter with a given service provider (an impossibility due to the dyadic nature of the
interpersonal interaction during such a hypothetical encounter), due to their different persona and perception of the encounter, the post encounter states of each participant would still be different.

The variability between and within service encounters is difficult to evaluate and quantify (Bitner 1990; Tansik 1990). However, it has been established that excellent quality interactions in customer service encounters contribute significantly to a service organisation’s competitive advantage (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996). A customer’s loyal purchase behaviour is often influenced by the quality of the interactions between the customer and service provider (Bitner, Booms and Mohr 1994). Since the interaction in the encounter derives from the customer and the provider, all the antecedents and outcomes of the interactive incidents between the customer and the provider in a service encounter are worthy of consideration by marketers.

**FIVE PHASE SERVICE ENCOUNTER MODELS**

There is a paucity of research that seeks to formulate a holistic model of a service encounter using all of the above constructs and including the persona of each participant in the encounter. Such a model of the service encounter would, of necessity, be complex; but nonetheless it would represent a valuable tool to better understand the customer’s and provider’s perspectives of the encounter, the product and the firm.

**Phase 1: Pre-Encounter State (PrES)**

The customer (C) will enter a service encounter in a certain state (PrES) which is defined as “the state of the customer being a combination of their persona (CP) and perceptions, which comprise such elements as expectations/needs and wants (of the product), prior product knowledge/cognition and mood and emotions”, as shown in figure 1. The customer’s expectations may be influenced by advertising messages and word-of-mouth communications (Harris, Baron and Ratcliffe 1995; Miller and Kahn 2005). Prior product knowledge has been extensively investigated (Bettman and Park 1980) and product knowledge has been found to be a determinant of consumer choice (Mitchell and Dacin 1996). The impact of mood effects on consumer behaviour has been well researched (Gardner 1985: Knowles, Grove and Pickett 1993; Yeung and Wyer 2004). Moods may not be attributable to a specific cause or directed toward any particular object and there is usually a specific time period attached to their occurrence (Russell and Snodgrass 1987), while emotions usually have an identifiable cause (Schwarz and Clore 1988). The customer’s pre-encounter state will have an effect on the encounter and its subsequent evaluation.

The provider (P) also enters a service encounter in a certain state (PrES) which is a combination of their persona (PP) and other elements, such as applied social skills, specialised skills/product knowledge, emotions and understanding of the organisational environment, as shown in figure 1. The relationship between the personality of employees and their job performance needs to be taken into consideration (Liu, Chiu and Hsieh 2001). Successful providers apply social skills to develop strong customer relationships (Erevelles, Srinivasan and Rangel 2003; Huffcutt, Conway, Roth and Stone 2001; Luk and Layton 2002; Orava and Tuominen 2002; Ward and Smith 1998). There is a relationship between the service employee’s emotional display behaviour and the customer’s level of satisfaction (Sönderlun and Rosengren 2004). Specialised skills and/or product knowledge are important in a changing business environment (Bandy 2003; Erevelles, Srinivasan and Rangel 2003). Emotional contagion and the co-production of emotional labour can impact on the provider’s emotions (Bailey, Gremler and McCollough 2001; Mattila and Enz 2002; Taylor 1996). The provider’s understanding of, and attitude toward, the organisational environment/culture will impact on the encounter (Bond 2004; Den Hartog and Verbult 2004; Hoogervorst, van der Flier and Koopman 2004; Parry and Proctor-Thomson 2003). The provider’s pre-encounter state will also have an effect on the encounter and its subsequent evaluation.

**FIGURE 1**

Pre-Encounter State (PrES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C Persona</th>
<th>P Persona</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior product knowledge/cognition</td>
<td>Applied social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood and emotions</td>
<td>Specialised skills or product knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotions activities</td>
<td>Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer’s Pre-Encounter State</td>
<td>Understanding of organisational environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phase 2: Service Encounter (SE)**

The service encounter comprises the interaction between the customer and service provider, either face-to-face or through another media. The factors impacting on the customer are shown in figure 2. The customer initiates the interaction but the service provider needs to react in such a way that they facilitate the desired experience for the customer. Although customers place different importance
levels on the service provider, service setting, and the other customers who are present, nonetheless all of these factors impact on the customer’s actions during the service encounter (Grove, Fisk and Dorsch 1998; Hui and Bateson 1991). Research suggests that the length of time of the interaction, the emotional content, and the location of the service provider in relation to the customer, are the dimensions that determine the way that encounters vary (Jones 2000; Price, Arnould and Deibler 1995; Price, Arnould and Tierney 1995; Surprenant and Solomon 1987). The desired characteristics of the service experience are formulated by the customer prior to the encounter (Namasivayam and Hinkin 2003) but, because of the interactions occurring during the encounter, the desired characteristics may change during the course of that encounter.

The factors impacting on the provider during the service encounter are also shown in figure 2. The customer’s initial action requires the service provider to show an understanding of the customer’s desired characteristics of the service experience, formulated by the customer prior to the encounter (Bebko 2001; Ingram and Daskalakis 1999; Luk and Layton 2002). However, these characteristics may change during the course of the encounter. Therefore, the provider’s cognitive and behavioural engagement is desirable and demonstrates provider interaction involvement (Ford 2001; Menon and Dubé 2000; Pugh 2001). Research suggests that time management, the length of time of the interaction, the emotional content, and the location of the service provider in relation to the customer, are dimensions that impact on encounter variation (Gutek 1995; Jones 2000; Price, Arnould and Tierney 1995). The service setting is also influenced by organisational properties, such as centralisation of authority, formalisation, the provider’s autonomy and their perception of empowerment. These properties affect the provider organisation’s effectiveness, and in turn, affect the service encounter (Grove, Fisk and Dorsch 1998; Davenport 2000; Lewis and Clacher 2001; Schmid 2002; Yagil 2001; Young, Corsun and Shinnar 2004). The provider’s familiarity with organisationally mandated scripts is necessary in order for the provider to be able to share information with customers (Le Poire and Yoshimura 1999; Manusov, Winchatz and Manning 1997). Other customers who are present can affect the provider during the service encounter (Grove, Fisk and Dorsch 1998).

**FIGURE 2**
Service Encounter (SE)

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**Phase 3: Post-Encounter eValuation (PEV)**

The customer’s PEV is defined as ‘the evaluation that a customer makes, either consciously or unconsciously, after the encounter’. The PEV thus incorporates the feelings, emotions and attitudes held by the customer after the encounter. When discussing the post-encounter evaluation, the marketer should be aware of purchasing/non-purchasing process effects, prior expectations, consumption anticipation (Nowlis, Mandel and McCabe 2004) and product usage (Churchill and Surprenant 1982) on the customer. The post-encounter evaluation will be influenced by the PrES that the customer ‘took’ into the encounter, the service encounter (SE) itself (largely the customer’s perception of service quality), the customer’s persona, whether or not needs and wants were met (Lemmink and Mattsson 2002), product quality (assuming that the customer has had time to use the product), and the customer’s perceptions of value (Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann 1994; Cronin, Brady and Hult 2000; Day 2002; Fornell 1992; McDougall and Levesque 2000), as shown in figure 3.

The provider’s PEV incorporates the feelings, emotions and attitudes of the provider after the encounter, as shown in figure 3. When discussing the PEV, the SE and purchasing/non-purchasing process effects will affect the provider (Churchill and Surprenant 1982). The PEV will be influenced by whether or not the customer’s needs and
wants appear to have been met (Lemmink and Mattsson 2002; Payne, Parry, Huff, Otto and Hunt 2002) and the internal mood (or culture) of the workplace (Bell, Mengüç and Stefani 2004; Melhem 2004). Environment is most important as any negative organisational culture is likely to adversely affect the provider’s evaluation of the SE (Domagalski 1999; Naylor 2003; Westbrook 2002).

**Phase 4: Post-Encounter State (PES)**

The customer’s post-encounter state (CPES) will result from the evaluation phase and the customer will emerge in a different state to that prior to the encounter with respect to the service provider organisation. The CPES is defined as: the cognitive and emotional state of the customer following a customer service encounter, based on the customer’s post-encounter evaluation. The customer’s state incorporates the degree of satisfaction (Chiu 2002; Fournier and Mick 1999; Spreng, MacKenzie and Olsahvsky 1996; Tsiros, Mittal and Ross 2004), perceptions of the firm (or supplier) (Smith and Bolton 2001; Smith, Bolton and Wagner 1999), strength of relationship with the supplier, loyalty and price tolerance (De Ruyter, Wetzels and Van Birgelen 1999; Oliver 1999; Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol 2002) and a commitment to a product or service, (despite negative influences having the potential to cause switching behaviour) (Bei and Chiao 2001), as shown in figure 4.

The provider’s post-encounter state (PPES) will result from the evaluation phase and the provider will emerge in a different state to that prior to the encounter. The PPES is defined as: the cognitive and emotional state of the provider following a customer service encounter, based on the provider’s post-encounter evaluation. The provider’s state incorporates the PEV, the degree of apparent customer satisfaction, a sense of contentment about the outcome of the SE (or otherwise if there were negative sequelae) and other factors impacting on the provider’s internal mood, as shown in figure 4. In an interactive working environment the main reward for contact personnel is professional satisfaction (Bei and Chiao 2001; Chandon, Leo and Philippe 1997).
Phase 5: Post-Encounter Behaviour (PEB)

In addition to the ever-present persona, the main areas have been identified that are related to the customer’s post-encounter behaviour (CPEB) (Bloemer, de Ruyter and Wetzels 1999), as shown in figure 5. The six components consist of the customer’s post-encounter state, repeat purchase behaviour, word-of-mouth referrals (File, Judd and Prince 1992; Fram and Callahan 2001; Gremler, Gwinner and Brown 2001; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman 1996), search for alternative supplier/product (Athanassopoulos, Gounaris and Stathakopoulos 2001; East, Lomax and Narain 2001; Ganesh, Arnold and Reynolds 2000; Reichheld 1994), switching behaviour which has been found to have as many as eight causal categories (Keaveney 1995), complaining behaviour and feedback to the supplier (Söderlund 1998) and the effect of new promotions activities.

The three areas of the provider’s post-encounter behaviour (PPEB) identified as important consist of the PES, review of organisational processes and retention/recovery strategies, as shown in figure 5. The PES will influence the provider’s subsequent PEB. Providers need systems which identify service strengths and failures (Brown 2000; Kini and Hobson 2002; Oliva, Oliver and MacMillan 1992). Collecting and using employee feedback, performance monitoring (Ford, Joseph and Joseph 1999), performance information, and, measurement of service loyalty can aid in the review of organisational processes (Bloemer, de Ruyter and Wetzels 1999; Chung 1997; Dean and Kui 2002; Luk and Layton 2004; Wilson 2000). Customer complaints can be used to improve the structure and process of service delivery (Powers and Bendall-Lyon 2002). As a retention strategy many companies try to adopt relationship marketing programs (Gremler, Gwinner and Brown 2001). Some offer loyalty program membership which may be of retention value (Bolton, Kannan and Bramlett 2000; Dowling and Uncles 1997). Analysing the causes of service failure and training empowered employees to utilise recovery mechanisms are necessary to resolve customers’ problems to their satisfaction (Boshoff and Leong 1998; Brown 2000; Colgate and Norris 2001; Hocutt and Stone 2000; Hoogervorst, Koopman and van der Flier 2005; Sparks and Bradley 1997; Swanson and Kelley 2001; Yagil 2002).

FIGURE 5
Post-Encounter Behaviour (PEB)
DISCUSSION

The five phase model presented here is a conceptual attempt to develop a more detailed appreciation of the complexity of variables involved in service interactions/encounters between customer and service provider. We argue here that it is necessary for marketers to consider all five phases when thinking about their operationalisation of customer service. In particular, we consider that the step-by-step approach here should lead to a greater understanding of the differences between each phase, the differences between the perspectives of the two primary participants engaged in the interaction in each phase, the complexity of the process when viewed holistically, and, assisting marketers who can profit from a deeper understanding of the service encounter. It is clear that for many service and goods providers (and in particular in consumer markets) customer service is often the main mechanism that marketers can utilise to differentiate themselves from competitors so they need to appreciate the areas of difference that this five phase model highlights. For the design of new services the model can be used to remind service designers that there are many factors impacting on different stages of the encounter, but that the encounter itself is a single critical incident.

With the increasing body of literature empirically connecting customer service quality with profitability the importance of high quality customer service in face-to-face interactions is paramount. The post encounter (retention/switching) behaviour of the consumers impacts directly on market share and profitability for the service provider (Hallowell 1996; Keaveney 1995; Reichheld, Markey Jr and Hopton 2000; Reichheld and Sasser 1990; Reichheld and Schetter 2000; Rust and Zahorik 1993). Unfortunately, and like many other models in marketing, this set of five models is so complex that it is for all practical purposes impossible to test. This limitation should not, however, stop theorists from developing such models as they have the potential to assist theorists and practitioners alike. One of the inevitable issues with holistic models is their completeness, or lack thereof.

Once there is a generally acceptable categorisation of

the components of the model, it will then be possible to explore the opportunities (or lack thereof) for co-creation of the relational factors, but this step is beyond the scope of this particular paper. By ordering the body of empirical research the model provides for a more comprehensive understanding, and demonstrates the complexity of the service encounter. We invite readers to forward suggestions for additions and refinements to further develop and improve each phase.

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STORE ATMOSPHERE EFFECTS ON CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS OF THE RETAIL SALES PERSON

Natalie Hedrick, Department of Marketing, Monash University
Harmen Oppewal, Department of Marketing, Monash University
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Store atmospheres have been at the centre of numerous discussions recently as a means of creating a pleasurable consumption experience; engaging and luring customers, with hopes that they will increase their likelihood to purchase, revisit and recommend to others (Baron, Harris and Harris 2001; Kozinets et al 2002; Schmitt 1999). Researchers have focused upon individual elements of the store, such as music, lighting and aroma and have found that they influence customer mood, satisfaction and patronage intentions. However, the role of the retail salesperson has been considerably ignored in the store atmospheric literature in determining how the two interrelate and work together to affect customer perceptions of the store. At present, the focus on relationship selling has been studied mostly in more upscale stores where these types of relationships are typically expected. Sharma and Stafford (2000) suggest that customers have a higher need to affiliate with salespeople working in nicer retail environments or ‘prestige ambience environments’ – which should lead to an increase in the perceived level of credibility for the salesperson, and subsequently a higher likelihood to purchase (Sharma and Stafford 2000). However, the ‘prestige’ and ‘discount’ ambience stores have been hard to define in the literature, with most researchers testing atmospheres in isolation, and not at a holistic perspective (Turley and Milliman, 2000). Baker et al (2002) first tested multiple environmental cues within the design, social and ambience clusters of atmosphere, and were found to effect customer perceptions of quality and time, with subsequent effects on patronage behaviour, however the interaction between the store atmosphere, its expectations on retail salespeople and patronage intentions were not explored.

Reynolds and Beatty (1999) state that future research should examine other retail store environments where customer-salesperson relationships may exist to increase understanding in this area. Furthermore, customer service quality measures typically given when examining low sales interaction stores should be compiled in conjunction with relationship selling and other measures that influence the customer experience to understand if relationship selling is necessary in these other retail settings.

Furthermore, while consumers form expectations of what a retail salesperson should be like within a retail context, there can be a difference between expectations and the perception of the actual delivery. If the salesperson does not live up to the customers expectations, the perception of the actual encounter may be negatively disconfirmed, leaving the customer feeling dissatisfied (Oliver 1977). If a salesperson meets or exceeds customer’s expectation, the customer will be positively disconfirmed, leaving the customer satisfied, which could increase purchase intent, loyalty, or spreading word of mouth.

This research examined and tested the direct relationships that the retail salesperson and store atmospheres have on patronage intentions, and explored the effects of store atmospheres on expectations of the retail salesperson, and its subsequent effects on satisfaction and patronage intentions. A factorial experimental design with two merchandise categories, two store atmosphere levels, and three sales person interactions was implemented to test the above described relationships. The study used written hypothetical choice frame scenarios and a subsequent questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. Respondents were told that they needed to purchase an item from the particular category (depending on the scenario given) and were given a description of a store that they would be able to purchase the product from. The experimental group read a scenario that included the interaction with the retail salesperson as well as the store atmosphere, merchandise type scenario.

Univariate ANOVA confirmed a significant difference in patronage intentions when respondents received a high level retail salesperson compared to a low retail salesperson, showing support that a retail salesperson’s orientation has a direct relationship on patronage intentions. In contrast, there was no significant difference in patronage intentions between the high and low store atmospheric levels. It is noteworthy to mention however that there were distinct differences in patronage intention results dependent on what treatment the respondent was exposed to. If in the control group, respondents were more likely to give a higher rating to patronage intentions that the experimental group, who received a scenario with a retail salesperson interaction.

Store atmospheres did have a significant impact on customer expectations of the retail salesperson but in behaviour only. A higher perceived store ambience resulted in higher expectations of a retail salesperson’s behaviour, but a higher store atmosphere did not result in higher expectations of a retail salesperson’s credibility. The findings from this study reconfirm the significance of the relationship between store atmospheres and the retail salesperson interaction upon re-patronage intentions. Store atmospheres manipulate customer’s expectations of the retail salesperson behaviour, subsequently affecting customer satisfaction if the retail salesperson does not match expectations. However, store atmospheres in isolation are not as powerful as first thought. This study has found the retail salesperson to be the dominant variable influencing customer behaviour. Future research will be directed into the exploration of characteristics of the salesperson and store atmospheres to determine the optimal blend for certain store environments.

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FREE ADMISSION IN MUSEUMS AND MONUMENTS: AN EXPLORATION OF SOME PERCEPTIONS OF THE AUDIENCES.
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Recurrent subject of discussions in the museums and monuments world, the issue of free admission is in the news again. The movement has begun in the United Kingdom and is spreading in all of Europe. In France, it has come in several stages: in 1996, the Louvre entrance became free of charge the first Sunday of each month. In 2000, the measure was implemented in all national museums and monuments. Numerous Thogersen towns adopted the measure in municipal museums, especially Paris in 2002. But there is still a question that paradoxically cultural managers rarely deal with as they take the answer for granted: “what does the audience think of free admission? Is this ideal of culture also supported by the audience? Facing the absence of theoretic research and institutional studies on that subject, the Département des Études et Prospectives (DEP) of the French Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication has financed research on this field of inquiry. The issue raised in that study is “in the French context, what perceptions of free admission in museums and monuments do the audiences have and how are these perceptions linked with their perceptions, their visiting project and patterns of behavior in museums and monuments? Results of the study have been published in a DEP report (Petr et al. 2004).

The consumer research literature on the issue of exemption from payment is very scarce. Despite extensive research on promotional tools, free trial offer (Scott 1976) or free gift (Raghubir 2004) is under-researched compared to coupons or price discounts (Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent 2000). Some recent research on non-price promotions show that these tools have different effects on sales than monetary ones. Palazon-Vidal and Delgado-Ballester (2005) and Liao (2006) conclude that these promotional tools could have a more long term impact on sales, could serve as a loyalty development tool. However, these works did not take into account how these promotional tools are perceived by customers. In the field of services, little research has been developed on that subject (Gorn, Tse, and Weinberg 1990) and finally the issue of permanent free offer seems not to be considered at all in marketing. In the context of museums and monuments, a review of the literature on free admission results almost exclusively in studies on visiting projects and patterns of behavior. The impact of free admission on attendance constitutes the focal, obstinately recurrent theme of the literature (Bagdali 1998; Bailey 1998; Dickenson 1993; Mc Lean 1997; O’Hagan 1995; O’Hare 1975; Spalding 1990). As for exemption from payment in general, no significant research exists on perceptions of free admission in museums or monuments by their audiences. Only a few institutional studies are available, sometimes made by researchers. This theoretical quasi-vacancy on perceptions of free admission by audiences is highly significant: debates on free admission, so important in the world of museums and monuments, rely on hypotheses of institutional actors on audiences’ perceptions. The audience itself is not involved when deciding on the visit.

The research aims at describing and understanding perceptions that audiences in general - visitors and non-visitors - have of free admission in museums and monuments, and to tackle their relations with perceptions of museums and monuments, visiting projects and patterns of behavior. To serve this exploratory goal, the research has used a strategy of multiangulation of the data production and of the data analysis (Gombault and Hlady Rispol 2004; Lewis and Grimès 1999; Weic 1989). The central data production mode includes 52 individual interviews (20 regular visitors, 19 occasional visitors and 13 non-visitors). Complementary methods consist in four focus groups interviews (two groups of regular visitors, one group of occasional visitors and one group of non visitors), 36 observations on-site (observation of visitors’ behavior with an interview in the middle of visit) and a quantitative study based on 580 questionnaires (311 regular visitors, 219 occasional visitors and 50 non-visitors). Individual and focus groups interviews have been led and questionnaires completed throughout different regions in France (the Paris region and other regions, urban and rural zones). Observations on-site took place in the Magnin museum in Dijon and in the Châteauneuf-in-Auxois castle comparing different pricing configurations (paying admission, free Sunday admission, free event admission during the “Heritage Days”).

Perceptions of free admission in museums and monuments that audiences express when they adopt an individual perspective can be summarised as follows:

- Free admission is seen as a price: it is considered as a removal of a financial cost and can modify the perception of non-financial costs related to the visit; free admission is never defined as totally free as it does not suppress certain other financial costs and efforts; in this sense, the visit is never free.
- Free admission abolishes the admission “visa” in museums and monuments that comes with the payment to enter, hence confirming the importance of payment as a mode of approval and participation.
- Free admission abolishes the monetary distance existing between museums and monuments and their audiences.
- Free admission also abolishes the formalization of the visitor’s commitment in the visit action.
- Free admission questions the widely discussed concept of value in museums and monuments, and of what they offer to their audiences: the risk of being downgraded by standardization and induced costs, but also their possible development with the creation of social ties and the latitude during the visit, or the disconnection between the value of the
visit and the admission fee.

Those conclusions lead us to say that free admission, regarded as the freedom to enter a museum or a monument or as an absence of admission fee, does not have the symbolic power lent to it by museums and monuments managers. From an individual perspective, perceptions of free admission are linked to perceptions of price and of money, are in line with the market trade framework. But like money, they fit into an ideology, or even morals which also bring the individual to consider free admission from a collective perspective. When considering free admission for oneself or free admission for the others as a collective entity, as a kind of price or as an audience policy for everyone, then exemption from payment becomes equivocal.

REFERENCES


A CATEGORISATION APPROACH TO ANALYSING THE GLOBAL CONSUMER CULTURE DEBATE

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

More than 20 years ago, Ted Levitt (1983) predicted the demise of local market customization. His provocative and frequently cited paper has stimulated a debate over whether globally standardised marketing is a viable strategy in today’s market environment. This debate has led to various theoretical positions along a continuum associated with managerial actions that range from worldwide marketing mix standardization to national customization with hybrid approaches in between, e.g., “glocalization” (Ritzer 2004). Along with this debate over the most viable marketing strategy to target global markets has evolved a discussion about whether consumer cultures are predominantly globalizing, glocalizing, or localizing. On one side of this globalization debate are scholars who have found support for an emerging global consumer culture (Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra 1999). On the other end of this globalization debate are proponents of local consumer culture. This group hypothesises that global forces drive the revitalization of local economies, politics, technologies, and cultures rather than promote one homogeneous consumer culture (Jackson 2004; Watts 1996). Still others have argued for increasing numbers of glocal consumer cultures, in which the global interacts with the local and produces unique hybrid outcomes (Ritzer 2004).

While each group on this globalization continuum finds empirical evidence to support its viewpoint, analysis of the literature indicates that the hierarchic categorization level is not always consistent. We believe that the strength of evidence in favor or against each form of consumer culture varies within this hierarchy. For this reason, an additional framework is needed, which will facilitate analysis by maintaining equivalent comparisons. Using Rosch’s (1975) categorization theory, we propose such a conceptual framework that we believe will enhance the analysis and subsequent understanding of whether consumer cultures are globalizing, glocalizing, or localizing. In addition, we demonstrate that the degree of globalization within a particular category level may differ depending on the category’s functional and symbolic meaning system.

Specifically, we demonstrate that all forms of consumer cultures exist, but that the evidence for their existence is relatively stronger or weaker depending on the level of categorization (e.g., superordinate, basic, subordinate) and the respective category’s meaning system (e.g., functional versus symbolic meaning). For example, we argue that evidence on behalf of global consumer culture (GCC) is more likely to be found across all levels of the categorization hierarchy for consumption-related factors that are associated with functional meanings. On the other hand, evidence for GCC from consumption-related factors that are associated primarily with symbolic meanings is likely to vary more depending on the level within the categorization hierarchy.

In this paper, consumption-related factors refer to different components of the marketing mix that directly affect consumers, such as products (fast food), distribution venues (shopping malls) and marketing communications (advertising). While arguments for GCC are most easily made using the superordinate levels for these consumption-related factors, argument strength at the basic and subordinate levels (versus glocal and local) is moderated by whether or not meanings associated with the consumption factor are primarily functional or symbolic. Specific examples of how and why this occurs are provided for each of the three consumption-related factors: fast food, shopping malls and advertising. We hope that this proposed conceptual framework will provide international marketing scholars and practitioners with a new tool, which helps structure the global consumer culture debate. Drawing on well-established categorisation theory, our framework is unique in that we approach this ongoing debate from a demand side rather than a production side. Ultimately, we hope to stimulate additional research based on this framework that will shed additional light on the ongoing evolution of consumer cultures.

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DUALITY OF MATERIAL AND SOCIAL LIVES: A STUDY OF TRANSFORMATION PRACTICES OF CONSUMERS’ GOODS AND FINANCES
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Many consumer researchers suggest that infungibility or scarification of possessions/wealth is largely due to the fact that consumers are active interpreters of their possessions and finances. Consumers are found to infuse their goods with different types of social, symbolic, and hedonic meanings (Belk et al. 1989; Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Richins 1994), and that their possessions often provide the fabric for social life as they often preserve memories of private kin relationships (such as pictures) or confer public meaning of authority and power to their owners in the society (such as houses and furniture) (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981). At the same time, personal/household finances are found to be perceived not only quantitatively, but also to have different shades of psychological and social meanings (Bernthal et al. 2005; Goldberg and Lewis 1978; Porter and Garman 1993; Zelizer 1989). The purpose of the current research is to enhance our understanding of material life holistically, and to demonstrate material life (both goods and finances) are socially embedded. In fact, I argue that material and social lives exist in duality with each other. I conducted several research activities for this research. First, I conducted 22 long interviews to understand consumers’ emic interpretations of material life. The interview lasted about one to two hours. Second, I conducted an interview with a debt counselor and participant observation during three finance management seminars to gain multiple perspectives about material life. I adopted an interpretive analytical stance, using the transcripts of the interviews and observations to identify systematic patterns of difference.

Based on informants’ accounts and my reading of the related literature, I come up with a theoretical model to frame my investigation. My model looks at how material and social lives permeate each other through various transformation practices. The material life components under investigation include everyday necessities, precious possessions, and personal/household finances. The antecedents that are found to influence transformation practices are resources (e.g. economic, cultural, and social capital), everyday concerns/envisioned ideals, psychological control, and marketplace. As for transformation practices, they are defined as consumption activities that consumers conduct to transform their resources, and cause structural ramifications in their social life, extending from personal connections, family’s social position, to community integration.

Findings that emerge from the data flesh out the structural duality framework by showing that the patterning of material life is simultaneously dependent upon the patterning of the social life. As seen in the findings, how students pay for college does not only depend on their own financial situation, it is also influenced by their parents’ social status, education, and income levels. At the same time, since student and credit card loans are often cosigned by students’ parents or guardians, this financial activity also reinforces kinship status structure, and implies social obligations towards the cosigners in the future. Therefore, the structural duality framework is dynamic and practice-based.

This paper also provides empirical support about the social embeddedness (non-rational aspect) of material consumption, which sheds light about other antecedents of infungibility in mental account theory. When possessions and finances are infused with personal and social meanings, consumers become reluctant to re-label the categories and subject the items to different mental accounts. Such phenomenon may have caused the imperfect fungibility of material resources in the realm of material life.

Under the structural duality framework, consumers are theorised to use different types of transformation practices to navigate between material and social lives. Moreover, since transformation practices often have long-term structural consequences, they are marked by consumers’ high level of involvement, and their careful mental calculation of expectations and outcomes that associate with these practices. The transformation practices that emerge from the data include possession acquisition (both for self and others), delaying gratification, transformative experiences, resource allocation, community work, and legacy giving. While acquisition for self (or specifically self-giving) has limited ramifications on social life, the rest of the transformation practices all cut across various levels of social structures. By delaying gratification, professional development and hence social mobility are achieved in the long run. As for acquisition for others, it helps make abstract social structures tangible, as goods and finances are often infused with social meanings. By creating transformative experiences with kin and friends during travels and gatherings, social ties are maintained. By allocating resources that are pivotal in getting training that is required at the current or desired social positions, social reproduction occurs. Lastly, through community work and legacy giving, community solidarity and community development are accomplished. Prior research has tended to examine possessions and finances independently. However, such conceptualization can hide the interplay between goods and finances in consumers’ material life, and can obscure the dynamic practices that permeate material and social lives. Our research is consonant with Bourdieu’s (1984) contention that consumers transform their asset-generating assets (e.g. cultural, social and economic capital) to compete for desired positions in the field. However, my work departs from Bourdieu in focus and contribution by showing that the world of finances does not merely exist quantitatively, but also attached with social and symbolic meanings. I propose by examining the material life as a whole, we can understand two types of transformation practices: between goods and finances, and between the material and social lives.

REFERENCES
DISPOSING MEANINGFUL POSSESSIONS TO BUYERS WITH A SHARED SELF
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ABSTRACT
There are several bases for a shared self among seller-buyer dyads. The literature describes shared selves rooted in interpersonal networks like friendship networks or family networks. For example, Goss (1984) demonstrates that shared selves, with overlapping schemas, exist in close friendships. Whereas friendships or families are common-bond groups defined through an interdependent social network, we examine anonymous sellers and buyers who only have just met in the marketplace. If such strangers sense a shared self, then both have likely discovered common identities from common memberships in groups providing an identity (Prentice et al. 1994). Thus discovery of a common identity may begin through what an owner’s possession communicates about group membership. When a potential buyer meets a seller divesting of a possession communicating common-group membership, then a seller-buyer dyad may discover a shared self. A shared self (rooted in common identity) provides some assurance for the seller that accurate meaning is communicated from seller to buyer. Accurate communication depends upon a shared field of experience and knowledge between sender and receiver. Thus, to convey a possession’s meaning, the buyer must share a field of experience with the seller. Common experience and knowledge from a shared membership allows a seller to more precisely transfer a possession’s meaning to a buyer. In many instances, sellers realise that only a few buyers will really understand a meaningful possession.

METHOD
A month’s listings of on-line, electric-guitar auctions for used instruments were examined to identify 50 original owners and 50 professional dealers selling vintage (pre-1975) electric guitars. Vintage guitars were appropriate for this research as those who play or collect these musical instruments often attach special meanings to their guitars. For example, buyers of electric guitars made in the 1950s and 1960s have been characterised as aging male baby boomers indulging in nostalgia or trying to re-capture lost youth with an old guitar (Blackburn 1992). And, when losing a special guitar, selling to an appreciative buyer can help make the separation easier. In Old Guitar Mania, clinical psychologist Bill Blackburn described the seller of a rare 1955 custom-color Fender Stratocaster as follows (1992, p 75):

Howard’s mother … transferred … devotion [from her deceased son] to …[her son’s] black [Fender] Strat[ocaster guitar] and protected it from harm or alteration over the years. She sold the guitar to its present owner comforted by the fact that the black Strat[ocaster] and the memory of her son would continue to be treasured.

Conversely, a seller attached to a guitar may not sell to an unappreciative buyer. This is reflected in journalist Tom Wheeler’s (1985, p 102) observation:

Sellers of vintage guitars vary as to their personal attachments to their instruments. Some [sellers] may well refuse to sell a guitar – even at an inflated price – to someone … who has acquired a reputation for abusing instruments or for not fully appreciating … [a guitar].

If a guitar’s auction listing made clear reference to original ownership, and made no reference to being an instrument dealer, then the seller was classified as a private seller. In contrast, when a listing was by a professional dealer, or made no original-owner claim, or the posting was one of several concurrent guitar auction postings, then the seller was classified as a professional dealer. E-mails were then sent to the 100 auction sellers from a potential buyer. The e-mail sent to all sellers expressed both an emotional connection to, and an appreciation for, the guitar by describing the experience of playing such a guitar decades ago when young. The e-mail also requested a sales concession in the event of winning the auction by requesting a time extension of 30 days to pay for the guitar. Unless stated otherwise, sellers required payment within 7 or 10 days and auction rules required payment within 21 days unless other arrangements have been made between the buyer and seller.

An e-mail sent to a dealer selling a solid bodied National “map” guitar read as follows:

RE: 1961 “Map Shaped” National Guitar  D

Back in the 60s I played a National guitar just like you are now selling on-line. I played that guitar when I had my first serious girlfriend. Of course, I then traded up and bought what I thought was a “better” guitar, but I still think about that National as the one that I should have never let slip away from me. I’d really like to hold and play that National again.

In any case, I am writing because I am determined to have the winning bid for the guitar. But there is a problem. I am not able to pay you within the short time you require in your auction posting. IF I do have the winning bid, would you please give me 30 days to pay you in full? I could overnight mail you a certified check for $50 within two days of winning the auction and then would pay in full within 30 days. I will only bid if you could accept full payment in 30 days.

I would really treasure the guitar. I’d play it and give it a good home. I would really appreciate it if you could help me out on this. I look forward to hearing from you.

To private-party sellers, the e-mail was expected to evoke a shared and common experience of playing such a guitar decades ago. Although the e-mail was designed to create a sense of shared self among private-party sellers, it was expected that little sense of shared self would be created among professional sellers. Dealers likely only value vintage instruments’ public meanings—the instrument’s condition and economic value—and were less concerned with emotionally charged private meanings. On-line sellers’ replies were obtained by email. These replies were coded to reflect if they accepted or rejected the proposed request for a concession. Replies also often
RE: RE: 1964 Gretsch Chet Atkins - Tennessean C

Thank you for writing. I am glad to hear that you can give my guitar a good home. I am hesitant to sell because of the sentimental value the guitar has to me. But I have never really learned how to play it like it like George Harrison did. For the last 25 years, my Gretsch Tennessean has just sat untouched in its hardshell case in the hall closet gathering dust.

And so, yes, I will be willing to wait 30 days for payment. I would however have to receive your $50 promptly. As you know the value of this guitar, the ending auction fee due right after the auction will be more than $50.

I have no problem waiting 30 days. I will monitor the auction. Good Luck! I hope you win. I would like to see this go to someone who could appreciate it.

In this reply, the owner conveys something of his private life story with his Tennessean guitar. Similar to that reported by Lastovika and Fernandez (2004), this research also shows sellers conveying the private meanings of possessions to a desirable buyer. In contrast, the majority of dealer replies were like this e-mail concerning a now-classic electric guitar (a Danelectro solidbody with a built-in sound amplifier in the case) once sold by Sears:

RE: RE: 1965 Silvertone / Danelectro with Amp in case D

Thanks for the offer, but I really need the cash and could not wait that long. Sorry.

Consistent with the likely priorities of a business-to-consumer sale, this vintage “Dane-O” guitar has no obvious private or special meaning to this dealer. To this seller, the “Dane-O”only has economic value (Greenwood and Hembree 2001).

IMPLICATIONS

We speculate that our research has direct implications for consumers (Bazerman 2000). These implications are primarily for consumers acting as sellers of their own possessions. In addition, we offer limited advice to consumers buying used items directly from owners. These suggestions are testimony to the practical worth of consumer disposition research. As our investigation has shown, and as this advice emphasises, disposition is not always a mundane and unemotional act. For consumers selling their own personal possessions, we suspect that some sellers do not realise the distress caused by selling personal possessions until it is too late. Emotional ties to meaningful possessions may never erode, even after physical separation from such items. Most popular-press advice to would-be sellers of personal possessions focuses on how to maximise cash-on-the-barrelhead sales (e.g., Pedgo 1993). There is little recognition of another currency, namely: the satisfaction in knowing that possessions have gone on to good homes. Accordingly, we believe that sellers should also be counselled that the satisfaction of placing special items with appreciative buyers might be as valuable, or more valuable, than any cash earned. Given all of this, then sellers should be encouraged to get to know their buyers and to consider treating appreciative buyers generously.

Consumers selling their own possessions need to realise that a trade-off exists between cash earnings and satisfaction from the knowledge that the new owner will care for and appreciate a special item. We believe sellers financial gains can be compromised when gaining utility derived by selling (at favorable terms) to appreciative buyers. Thus, if cash is the primary goal, then a consumer selling a large-ticket special possession (e.g., a house) may be best served with a third-party professional sales agent (e.g., a realtor). To maximise financial return, then as consumers selling their own large-ticket possessions negotiate with buyers, these sellers are advised to sever emotional ties with the item being sold. Otherwise, sellers risk being at a financial disadvantage.

For buyers, we suggest that it is often to their advantage to express genuine interest and excitement about special-to-the-owner possessions being offered for sale directly by the owner. As we show, those selling their own special possessions are likely to respond with more attractive terms for buyers exhibiting a shared sense of self. This is counter to Cialdini’s (1984) recommendation that it is in the best interest of the buyer to remain uncommitted and, at best, neutral in their enthusiasm about products when negotiating with a seller. So long as the seller’s goal is cash, we believe Cialdini’s advice is sound. However, in
the case of an owner selling a special possession, knowing that the possession will continue to be appreciated may be more important than any cash received. In the latter case, the buyer’s expression of enthusiasm for a meaningful possession is to the buyer’s economic advantage. Thus buyers are also advised to get to know the buyer’s attachment to an item before following this suggestion.

For both buyers and sellers, we point out that used possessions being sold have been transformed from interchangeable commodities into unique items because of the unique histories each owner has shared with each possession. Buyers who recognise and seek out these unique meanings will likely be seen as more desirable buyers and may reap favorable terms of sale. Sellers who enhance appreciativeness on the part of the buyer by relating a private meaning, may make disposition less painful for themselves.

Although the discussion in this section is clearly speculative, this advice has basis in the interpretations grounded in our data. We hope these modest speculations form the basis for future research aimed at assisting those consumers acting as sellers of their own possessions, and those consumers buying used items directly from their former owners.

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CONSUMER SPIRITUALITY AND MARKETING
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ABSTRACT
Over the last ten years, the topic of spirituality has inspired scores of studies in management and related disciplines. Marketing scholars, it seems, have shied away from discussing spirituality for far too long. This paper draws attention to the rising salience of consumers’ spiritual needs. A working definition of spirituality and preliminary guidelines for researchers are provided to kick-start research and dialogue in this important area. It is argued that spiritual utility urgently needs to be incorporated along with other utilities when considering product benefits.

CONSUMER SPIRITUALITY AND MARKETING
The concept of spirituality dates back almost two thousand years to St. Paul, but is only in the last two decades or so that it has been systematically researched in the social sciences. The American Heritage Dictionary defines human spirit as “the vital principle, the animating force traditionally believed to be within, and the essential nature of every human being.” While over two hundred articles have appeared on the topic of spirituality and management between 1999 and 2005, hardly any papers address how spirituality could be harnessed in the marketing context. The small amount of literature that does exist on spirituality and marketing tends to be largely been practitioner-oriented and seems confined to the marketing of churches or cults (Lyon 2000). This article contends that businesses are fast realizing the role of soul and spirit in human consumption and have begun to effectively capitalise on the spiritual needs of consumers even in marketing materialistic products such as sports cars and soft drinks. Marketing scholars, on the other hand, have been slow in exploring the phenomenon of spirituality and in assessing its impact on the marketplace.

Spirituality revolves around the key constructs of meaning and interconnectedness and should therefore from a natural field of inquiry for macro-marketing scholars as well as those interested in post-modern phenomena and marketing (Kale 2004). Spirituality has the potential to explain some of the dynamics between the self and consumption. However, research on spirituality within marketing cannot progress unless there is agreement on the constituents and correlates of spirituality.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?
Scholars in management, psychology, religion, philosophy, nursing, and counseling have argued for over two decades on the definition of the term spirituality. Confusion between the concepts of spirituality and religion is what mainly fuels this debate (Dialmy 2001; Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott 1999). In one of the first empirical studies on spirituality and management, Mitroff and Denton (1999a) uncovered some theoretically prescient observations: the respondents in this study differentiated strongly between spirituality and religion. While they viewed religion as a highly inappropriate topic of discourse in the workplace, spirituality was seen as a highly appropriate subject for discussion. Similar observations were echoed in the work of Roof (1993). In this study, a large number of interviewees felt that religion had an institutional connotation that manifested into the practice of rituals, adhering to dogmas, attending services, and the like. Spirituality, on the other hand, dealt with life’s deeper motivations and an emotional connection to God (or creation).

The word spirituality comes from the Latin root spiritus, meaning breath—the breath of life. Benner (1989) esoterically characterises spirituality as a human response to God’s gracious call to a relationship with Him. Beck (1986) and Goldsmith (1992) characterise spirituality as an inner state of being; the heart or force within a person. Schneider (1990) defines spirituality as “the experience of consciously striving to integrate one’s life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives,” while Myers (1990, 11) describes it as “a continuing search for meaning and purpose in life; an appreciation for the depth of life, the expanse of the universe, and natural forces which operate; a personal belief system.”

Based on an exhaustive review of interdisciplinary literature, spirituality has been defined in this article as an individual’s endeavors to explore — and deeply and meaningfully — connect one’s inner self to the known world and beyond. This definition somewhat parallels Clark’s (1958) concept of religion, which he characterised as “the inner experience of the individual when he senses a Beyond.” We shall now briefly explore the key components of this definition. An elaborate description of these components appears in Kale (2004).

Inner Self. Key to most discourses on spirituality is the idea of an inner life or inner self. Zukav (1990) characterises the inner self as the invisible realm in which the origins of our deeper understanding are located. Bartunek and Moch (1994) suggest that the notion of inner self involves a sense of one’s being or consciousness, and how that being relates to other beings. The inner self could also be visualised as the core from which our most valuable thoughts and feelings originate. It is only when we are in touch with this core that we act with authenticity (Kale 2004).

Meaning. The search for meaning in life permeates both spiritual as well as existential discourses. For example, Victor Frankl(1959) has discussed the noological dimension of mankind, the innate motivation to find an overarching meaning or purpose in life. Cremins (2000) characterises “search for meaning in life” as the most significant aspect of spirituality. Carroll (1997) views spirituality as a relationship that fosters meaning, purpose, and mission in life.

Interconnectedness. The term connectedness or its correlates have been used in almost all descriptions of spirituality (Benjamin and Looby 1998; Mitroff and Denton 1999a; Van Ness 1996). Sass (2000) suggests that
spirituality, throughout the literature, has been depicted as an emphasis on connection and integration. Such connection has been portrayed as the recognition of the ultimate unity of all beings, a sense that there exists an energy that transcends all material categories and concepts. Mitroff and Denton (1999b) acknowledge the significance of interconnection in conceptualizing spirituality as the basic desire to find ultimate meaning in life and to live an integrated life (emphasis added).

The Beyond. Inherent in most discussions on spirituality is the notion of a supreme power, a superior being, or a transcendental force that provides a sense of purpose for everything and everyone. It is in connection with this “Beyond” that a spiritual experience occurs. A spiritual experience is often accompanied with a sense of awe, wonder, amazement, and joy. Vedic philosophy maintains that experience of the Beyond is the end of duality; a deep realization of the unity of all things and beings.

Spirituality is an exploration of the inner self and a discovery of the interrelationships of that self with the broader reality. Self exploration and integration thus form the two main drivers of spirituality. Goods and services designed and promoted to facilitate this exploration and integration would therefore offer spiritual utility to consumers.

SPIRITUALITY AND THE MARKETPLACE

Spirituality has become big business. Oprah Winfrey, the popular talk-show host, helps millions of viewers “remember their spirit” on a daily basis. A USA Weekend poll conducted in July 1998 revealed that 47% of Americans viewed spirituality as the most important element of their happiness. Ray and Anderson (2001) found that over 50 million Americans—and the same number of EU residents—subscribe to new values and ways of relating when it comes to work, success, consumption, and spirituality. They call this trend “cultural creatives,” a group spread across the largest cities and the smallest towns, spanning all income and socioeconomic strata. Cultural Creatives care deeply about ecology and saving the planet, about relationships, peace, social justice, and about authenticity, self actualization, spirituality and self-expression. They tend to be both inner-directed and socially concerned; they are activists, volunteers and contributors to good causes more than other Americans (Ray and Anderson, 2001).

The aging of consumers in Western societies, coupled with their level of affluence, now permits them and the business community the luxury of seeking more meaning in their lives (Brandt 1996). Evidence of meaning-seeking is ubiquitous. A group calling itself the Conscious Business Alliance (CBA) has been set up in the U.S. for the soul purpose of providing spiritual nourishment through business activities. It is an international membership alliance of individuals, businesses, and organisations who share a vision and a commitment to develop a new paradigm for the meaning and nature of work. CBA explores the many ways in which the business community can both enrich and be enriched by the human soul and spirit. In regard to the increasing evidence of spirituality in the Western world, Mariana Caplan (1999, 117) writes:

Over the past 40 years, the West has been met with a massive influx of spiritual information, currently crowding the pages of popular newspapers, television programmes, and the glossiest mainstream magazines. Meditation classes are offered at the United Nations, Hillary Clinton uses visualisations and relaxation techniques, yoga is taught in many of the world’s largest corporations, and the spiritual lives of celebrities such as Richard Gere, John Travolta and Tom Cruise are the frequent subject of public questioning and curiosity. Not only has mainstream spirituality gained popularity, it has also become big business. The New Age is a multi-billion-dollar industry, and some of the most popular contemporary spiritual teachers and gurus are among the wealthiest men and women in the USA.

A Gallup poll conducted in 1999 asked the question, “Do you feel the need in your life to experience spiritual growth? 78% of Americans said yes, up from 20% in 1994. Clearly, the market is riper than ever before for offerings that would quench the spiritual thirst of consumers. Marketing scholars need to catch up with these market developments and incorporate spirituality as an important explanatory facet of consumer behavior.

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This article provides a working definition of spirituality which can be used as a starting point for studying the phenomenon within the marketing context. Scholars are encouraged to provide alternative definitions and to carry out a debate on the merits and drawbacks of the various definitions. Critical to this discourse should be a commitment to avoid the spirituality/religion controversy when it comes to definitions.

It would be interesting to explore the correlates of spirituality with other variables such as personality, nationality, culture, and age. Several interesting issues could be researched. For example, does the incidence of spirituality increase or decrease with economic development? What are the global macro-trends in spirituality and how would these trends impact consumer behavior and marketing practices? What is the relationship between spirituality and consumer identity? Is spirituality increasingly used as a means of identity preservation and as a reaction to deterritorialization?

To fully comprehend the spirituality phenomenon and to explain its dynamics in the marketplace would require considerable research, both qualitative and quantitative. Segmentation models may be designed by incorporating spiritual variables comprising of both beliefs and practices. Market diversification activities of spiritual and religious organisations such as the Vatican, the Hare Krishnas, and the Mormons as well as those of New Age punds such as Deepak Chopra and Wayne Dyer could be systematically studied to better understand market dynamics.

As mentioned earlier, it is puzzling that not many marketing scholars are interested in the topic of spirituality. Doctoral dissertations on spirituality are almost unheard of in the halls of marketing academia. There is hardly any scholarly research addressing the role of spirituality in the consumer choice process. These oversights are probably attributable to the slavish insistence on separating spirituality from other elements of life, a phenomenon brought to the fore by Mitroff and Denton (1999a). Given the paucity of research on the topic of spirituality, bountiful opportunities exist for those who wish to make their mark
in this exciting area.

A recommended starting point would be to comprehensively conceptualise the concept of spirituality and delimit its boundaries. Scholars will then need to devise acceptable scales that measure spirituality. While attempts have been made in the management and social psychology literature to develop such scales, (cf. Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Hays, Meador, Branch, and George, 2001; Sass, 2000, Hodge, 2001), the instruments appear lacking in analytical rigor and comprehensiveness. As of today, spirituality is still a slippery construct, and only a systematic program of inquiry will provide meaningful and actionable insights.

CONCLUSION

It seems that the world is smitten by the spirituality bug and marketing academics are oblivious of this development. Consequently, marketing scholars are largely ignorant about what has brought about the resurgence of spirituality and how this development plays out in the marketplace. Spirituality is increasingly impacting the beliefs and behaviors of consumers the world over. Spiritual motivations are not simply restricted to the choice of a particular sect, guru, or religion. Secular corporate firms are increasingly using spiritual appeals to identify and bond with consumers. The community of marketing scholars needs to urgently comprehend and research the role of spirituality in modern consumption. Management scholars have already taken cognizance of the significance of spirituality, as evidenced by the number of articles on workplace spirituality figuring routinely in contemporary management journals. Journal editors in the field of marketing could help accelerate theory development on spirituality and marketing by inviting and publishing papers exploring spirituality. Doing so will bring us closer to closing the gap between theory and practice.

REFERENCES


The objective of this session is to explore the concept of authenticity within the context of consumption. The search for authenticity is a common theme throughout history. The key motivator often involves consumers reacting against the perceived falseness or inauthenticity of industrial production, mass marketing techniques, and branding (Beverland 2005; Randall and Rose 2005). In recent times, the drive for authenticity is also a reaction against the inherent inauthenticity of postmodernism (Randall and Rose 2004, p. 286). Authenticity is believed to be central to modern marketing practice (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003) even though many argue that the market dilutes claims of authenticity (Beverland 2005; Holt 2002; Kates 2004).

The three papers within this session examine authenticity within a commercial context and identify the importance of the construct to sub-cultures and individuals. Arthur and Quester examine the tensions between individual identity construction and social perceptions of authenticity. Central to this tension is the desire to adopt an American musical form to an Australian context without compromising self-identity. For the consumers studied authenticity is a form of self-expression (Postrel 2003), whereby brands indicating authenticity must reflect deeper personal truths, rather than widely held (outside of the sub-culture) images of Hip Hop music (American brands). Nevertheless individuals are constrained by the sub-culture in their brand choice, with brands associated directly with American Hip Hop viewed as inauthentic regardless of whether they reflect self-identities.

Chalmers also examines the construction of authenticity within a sub-cultural context – in this case long distance running (a more ‘mainstream’ culture than Australian Hip Hop). In contrast to Arthur and Quester’s paper, Chalmers examines a context dominated by mass-marketed brand advertisements and direct appeals to images of authenticity. Chalmers challenges the notion of ‘one authenticity’ by examining intracultural variation in assessments of authenticity. In contrast to extant research on sub-cultures and brand communities (Kates 2004; Quester, Beverland, and Farrelly 2006) Chalmers identifies multiple forms of authenticity within a sub-culture and the moderating influence of involvement within the community. In this culture, authenticity is not a global construct and some runners are entirely comfortable with commercial authentic appeals whereas others reject such claims.

In contrast to the above two papers, Farrelly, Hoffman and Beverland examine the consumption of aesthetic value in commercial products. Rather than authenticity being constrained by sub-cultural influence, these authors identify the highly personalised nature of authenticity. For these consumers, the search for authenticity is part and parcel of their own identity project. For these consumers, products can be authentic if they reflect deeply held personal truths. These consumers place little value on the opinions of others, and are unconstrained by social influences when choosing brands.

Together these papers address the nature of authenticity, the mental and social processes involved in attributions of authenticity and inauthenticity, the tensions inherent in commercialised authenticity, and the goal directed nature of the search for authenticity. We believe the session will appeal to a broad range of researchers given the interest in authenticity and the focus on self-authentication among researchers focusing on goal directed consumption behavior (Arnould and Price 2000), tourism (Grayson and Martinez 2004), brand meaning and management (Beverland 2006; Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel, 2006), services (Arnould and Price 1993), experiential consumption (Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993), and post modern consumer researchers (Brown and Sherry 2003), among many others (see Journal of Management Studies special issue, 2005 Volume 42 Number 5; Randall and Rose 2005). All three papers report the results of completed research projects and all papers are currently in draft form.

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Together these papers address the nature of authenticity, the mental and social processes involved in attributions of authenticity and inauthenticity, the tensions inherent in commercialised authenticity, and the goal directed nature of the search for authenticity. Together the papers identified the oppositional nature of authenticity, the relationship between indexical and iconic sources of authenticity, and the importance of authenticity consumption as self-relevant act.

REFERENCES


DEFINING AUTHENTICITY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF AUSTRALIAN HIP HOP

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Pascale Quester, The University of Adelaide

Hip Hop is a quintessential American cultural export and its arrival in Australia, as in other places, relied heavily upon mass media. Hip Hop scholars researching this social phenomenon outside of the USA often describe how outsiders label Hip Hop as an American culture and equate any partaking in it by non-Americans as mere imitation (Mitchell 2001). However, our ethnographic research and earlier findings by Maxwell (2003), suggest that being a member of the Australian Hip Hop culture does not entail the slavish imitation of American Hip Hop style, nor the consumption of US Hip Hop brands. Instead, as global Hip Hop values mixed with the local conditions, Australian Hip Hop has become differentiated from its roots, creating a unique ‘glocal’ identity. This, combined with the consumption of other non-Hip Hop brands, has spawned a shared understanding of the symbolic meanings of brands by members of the Australian Hip Hop culture.

In this study of the consumption practices of the Australian Hip Hop subculture, three principal methods of ethnographic research were undertaken: participant observation, informal conversations, and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Ethnography can often yield better insights into the way people interact with brands than more modernist approaches (Goulding 2003). Participant observation and informal interviews took place between 2002 and 2004, when extended participation enabled the researchers to ‘learn the language’ of those under investigation (Elliot and Jankel-Elliot 2003). For one of the authors, becoming a member of a subculture meant entering as an ‘aspiring’ member and undergoing a socialisation process to obtain subcultural capital (Thornton 1995). Hence, the ethnographic process reported here was evolving, allowing the examination of different elements of the subculture and its signifying consumption practices.

Of particular interest was the central issue of authenticity, a core value in the Hip Hop culture, and one with increasing relevance for marketers seeking to understand the underlying relationship between consumers and brands. One way in which members of a ‘glocal’ culture can ascribe authenticity to brands is through the notion that their symbolic consumption represents its core values, whereas the consumption of mass-produced goods represents artificiality.

Australian Hip Hop members are often labelled ‘Homeys’, just as those observed by Andy Bennett (1999) in his ethnography of British Hip Hop were labelled ‘Wigger’, when clothed in typical African-American Hip Hop style. The notion of ‘blackness’ and the idea that only Americans can authentically experience Hip Hop is an issue often negotiated in the predominantly ‘white’ Australian Hip Hop culture. This is predominantly achieved by deriving authenticity not from colour or nationality, but from a notion of truthfulness to one’s self and place.

In the Australian Hip Hop scene, which includes consumers of Hip Hop music and followers of the Hip Hop lifestyle as well as more established Hip Hop artists, there is no problem with being ‘white’ and Australian as long as you don’t misrepresent who you are, and simulate blackness, or betray your origin and simulate ‘American-ness’. Pretending to be an African-American amounts to not being true to one’s self, or one’s place. Hence, Australian Hip Hop members would be regarded as fake if they were to consume brands, such as Fubu, associated with the African-American Hip Hop culture, because this would be expressing something they are not. Likewise, the brand Ecko, which is heavily associated with Hip Hop in the US, is considered inauthentic by hard-core Australian Hip Hop members as it represents everything that is ‘wrong’ with the commercialisation of Hip Hop. For members of the Australian Hip Hop culture, the company has not kept true to its roots, and has crossed over into the mainstream, a belief exacerbated by the fact that Ecko is distributed in Australia by Globe International, an Australian company licensing other non-Hip Hop youth culture brands such as Stussy, Mooks and Paul Frank.

Interestingly, although members of the Australian Hip Hop culture tend to frown upon the consumption of some US brands, this does not apply to all US brands. Hence, it acceptable to consume US Hip Hop brands within the Australian Hip Hop culture as long as the brand authentically represents who you are. For example, Hip Hop DJ Nixon would never consume brands that have meanings associated with African-American Hip Hop, such as Fubu, as this would clearly be a misrepresentation. He
does, however, consume other US brands such as Polo Ralph Lauren and Nautica. Although these brands have in the recent past began to coopt Hip Hop style, they have not grown from Hip Hop culture. Rather, they are products of mainstream fashion designers and hence their consumption could hardly be symbolic of Hip Hop authenticity. However, this is exactly what these products are for Nixon, representing his ‘white’ middle-upper class private school background better than the consumption of most other brands. Therefore, Nixon is truthfully representing himself through his symbolic consumption and his actions are consistent with the values of his subculture. Australian Hip Hop is not middle-class per se but its middle class members can remain true to their own sense of identity and be part of the Hip Hop subculture.

This research also found that the values of the Australian Hip Hop culture required members to represent their place. Hence, Australian Hip Hop brands were often favoured over US ones, consistent with previous findings of country of origin research (Phau and Prendergast 2000). Indeed, the competitive nature of Hip Hop, and the desire to represent one’s place, has created a situation where members even try to represent their place over other Australian places, by consuming brands with meanings associated with their home city. This constitutes a form of subcultural capital, ascribing higher membership status for those ‘in the know’. This has serious implications for US Hip Hop brands. As the Australian Hip Hop culture continues to mature, local Hip Hop brands will be deemed to represent its members’ place more truthfully and should be able to successfully leverage this greater perceived authenticity.

AESTHETIC CONSUMPTION AS AUTHENTICATING EXPERIENCE
Francis Farrelly, Monash University
Lisa Hoffman, Monash University
Michael B. Beverland, University of Melbourne

This study of aesthetic consumption involved twenty-one depth interviews with a sample of consumers known to be high in three categories - value, acumen and response intensity - each critical to the centrality of visual product aesthetics (Bloch, Brunel and Arnold, 2003). Biographical elements were included in the interviews (Huffmann, Ratneshwar and Mick 2000) as the aim was to reveal structures of personal and social action (Roberts 2001).

Respondent stories revealed the use of aesthetically pleasing products as expressions of an idealised sense of self. Authenticating acts are said to be self-referential behaviours consumers enact to produce the “true” self (Arnould and Price, 2000). Whilst pointing to a range of products (a polished metal photo album, a candelabra and a table) one respondent reflected on what she considered distinctive about herself. “Sometimes these products remind me how much worth I place in detail as really I think the beauty is so often about the effort put in by the designer and to get the most out of this type of product you really have to understand this effort and genuinely appreciate it. I suppose in some ways they [the various products] indicate what it is to get to know people well in that you must make a real effort, take the time to listen and appreciate what they have to say, and help them get to know you and use this positively in long term relationships with important people like partners, family and friends”.

As this and the following examples clearly demonstrate, the value in these products went far beyond their aesthetically pleasing exterior and often related to affirmations of individuality (“something I think I have always had in me”), personal growth and desired relationships. One specific authenticating act involved anthropomorphism where products were assigned human-like characteristics (DiSalvo and Gemperle 2003). Another respondent noted how her juicer had a child like shape.

“It is really interesting but at the same time really ugly and quite industrial too. It’s ugly but beautiful at the same time there’s no life to it, but then it almost looks like a person where there’s feet the stomach and the little body, it’s like a person. Sometimes the most beautiful person is the ugliest thing inside but then the ugliest person is the most beautiful thing inside. I think it’s the same with this. It’s so ugly but once you start using it, it becomes the most beautiful thing...I’ve just grown to love it”.

Price and Arnould (2000) note that products become highly valued when consumers nurture them as part of a self-narrative. For this respondent value increased over time as she transformed the product in accordance with her deeply held beliefs about appreciating people’s inner qualities. Claxton, Reid and Murray (1994) suggest that anthropomorphism is often used for objects that have particular salience in defining who consumers are individually or culturally. Another respondent spoke of her refrigerator (the door was glass) having human-like emotions, “Everything it changes according to what’s in my fridge...it’s got a lot of life to it if I’ve just been to the market...By the end of the week, it’s kind of sad because it’s empty”. In this study engagement was at the product level as the ambiguity in design (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Bloch 1995) stimulated the co-creation of value. In the context of this respondent’s story, this meant engaging in ways that reflected the importance she placed on being a responsible and caring mother.

Another significant finding was that the consumption experience was authenticating in ways commonly discussed in narrow contexts such as extreme sports (Celsi, 1992) or other physically challenging adventures like river rafting (Arnold and Price 1993). First sighting of the product often produced a sense of elation, and in some case their efforts to describe this experience had ineffable aspects in that they either suggested it was difficult to truly capture the feeling at the time of purchase or what the product meant to them now, or were loath to do for fear it may in some way deface the value of the product or experienced (Zaltman 1977). Respondents had far less trouble however in highlighting the significance of their acumen (Bloch 1995) to both the discovery and appreciation of the product, or in playing down external influences such as marketing communications or other consumers. On many occasions they described a fate-like connection with the product.
There are several explanations for these findings. Firstly, placing their indelible stamp on the product and consumption experience adds greatly to its authenticity as it "makes it their own" and confirms uniqueness (Arnold and Price 1993). Secondly, projecting the experience in this light reflects positively on personal control in that the experience was realised by and for the individual, and this is both intrinsically rewarding and empowering (Rudisill, 1989). Another explanation is that this is a reaction reflective of the historical, and somewhat narrow view that beautiful objects are appreciated intrinsically (Holbrook 1989).

For some the reaction to product aesthetics sparked a demanding quest in the authentication of self (Arnould and Price 1993). One respondent spoke of a seeing herself and being Italian (she is of English extraction) and of her need to gradually accumulate beautiful products before acquiring the "right architecturally designed house" to keep them in.

These products had indexical qualities (Grayson and Martinec 2004) in that they signalled progress toward a life goal associated with a capacity to appreciate, and being appreciated. In this instance goal attainment was to be celebrated by revealing the products and self at a point in the future when they would be fully appreciated - the products remained in boxes and were only taken out from time to time.

As in most cases this respondent made a point of noting that their expeditions in search of such products was something they had been doing for years, which points to another interesting dimension of these results. The purchase of products high in aesthetics is often described as being intense (Bloch 1995) and impulsive (Rook 1987), but what we witnessed here was less a matter of urge over reason and more a reflection of what could be described as assuredness, as this was typically one in a series of interconnected, authenticating experiences honed over time.

INTRACULTURAL VARIATION: REACTIONS TO AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN THE DISTANCE RUNNING SUBCULTURE

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In 1995, Coke proclaimed a return to their roots and implemented an authentic marketing strategy (Taylor 1995). In 1998, Advertising Age declared the key to marketing success is communicating brand authenticity (Jensen 1998). In 2002, Jeep struggled to expand their product line without compromising brand authenticity (Muller 2002) and Coke pursued a new authenticity-based advertising campaign (Sampey 2002). In 2004, Reebok declared authenticity to be the secret to marketing prowess (Williams 2004) while, in 2005, Coke once again focused on an authenticity driven brand strategy (Heim 2005). The prevalence of authentic messages in marketing practice is mirrored by academic interest in authenticity: consuming and communicating authenticity, in experiences (Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993; Cohen 1988), products (Beverland 2005), people (Guthey and Jackson 2005), places (Grayson and Martinec 2004), advertising (Holt 2004), and entertainment (Jones and Smith 2005; Rose and Wood 2005) is often explored in consumer research.

Authenticity, and its use in and relation to advertising, gives rise to three important questions. The first asks what constitutes an authentic advertisement. Stern (1994) posits that, even though advertisements are representations of reality, they are still considered authentic if they "convey the illusion of the reality of ordinary life in reference to a consumption situation." Rose and Wood (2005), in their study of reality television viewers, describe the negotiation that unfolds as consumers assess the authenticity of reality representations. Stern (1994) and Rose and Wood's (2005) conceptualizations of perceived authenticity parallel the notion of iconic authenticity (Grayson and Martinec 2004), whereby something is perceived to be authentic not only when it is real and original (indexical authenticity), but also when it captures the essence of things that are real. For subcultures, an authentic advertisement is one that is closely aligned with the core values of a subculture, values that are grounded in the ordinary life experiences of subculture members (Chalmers 2006). Subculture members pay close attention to authenticity when interpreting advertisements (Wheaton and Beal 2003) and base authenticity assessments on the advertisements' alignment with core values (Kates 2004; Quester, Beverland, and Farrell 2006). Further, authenticity is important to subculture identity (e.g. Fox 1987; Wheaton 2000) and subculture member consumption activities (Arthur 2006).

The second interesting issue addresses how authenticity is understood. Trilling (1972) conceptualizes authenticity as relating to "our true self, our individual existence, not as we might present it to others, but as it 'really' is apart from the roles we play." Handler (1986) expands this view, stating "an authentic culture is one original to its possessors, one which exists only with them: in other words, an independently existent entity, asserting itself against other cultures." Inherent in this conceptualization, authentic cultures are oppositional to those outside the culture. This is consistent with the treatment of subcultures as distinct from, and possessing core values distinct from, a dominant culture (e.g. Haenfler 2004; Hedgige 1979; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Thus, researchers often view subcultures as contained entities characterised by homogenous values (e.g. Cova and Cova 2002; Holt 2004). In contrast, other research suggests subcultures are characterised by intracultural variation (Kates 2002; Pelto and Pelto 1975; Quester et al. 2006; Roth and Moorman 1988).

The aforementioned inconsistency gives rise to the third question: how does intracultural variation impact the effectiveness of authentic advertisements? Research shows authenticity is important to subculture identity, that subculture members seek authenticity, and that subcultures exhibit intracultural variation. Not much is known, however, about how these three elements interact. This study examines the impact of intracultural variation on the manner in which subculture members interpret and react to authentic advertisements.

An analysis of the distance running subculture was conducted to address this issue. Subculture members at different levels of the subculture were isolated to examine...
their interpretations and responses to subculturally authentic advertisements. Utilising the findings of Chalmers (2006), a series of advertisements aligned with the core values of the distance running subculture were selected by an expert panel of three distance runners. These advertisements were used as stimuli in semi-structured depth interviews with self-identified members of the distance running subculture who vary in level and type of participation in the subculture. The interviews explored informant interpretations of advertisement meanings in relation to their life experiences (Mick and Buhl 1992; Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989). In addition, a cross-sectional survey was administered to a sample of runners that assessed their thoughts in response to the advertisements (Keller 1991) and measured advertisement liking, perceived alignment of the advertisement with core subculture values, and the runner’s level of subculture involvement.

Both the interview and survey data indicate individuals with varying levels of engagement with the distance running subculture differ in their reactions to authentic advertisements. Informant discourses surrounding the advertisements reveal a link between subcultural experiences and interpretations and reactions to authentic advertisements. It is, therefore, not surprising that different interpretations of the advertisements are revealed. What is perceived as authentic to hard-core members of the subculture is often viewed as inauthentic to lower level members, and vice-versa. Interestingly, a ‘linear’ relationship between subculture level and perceived authenticity in terms of advertising responses, is not revealed as some runners react negatively to advertisements that are perceived as being very closely aligned with the core values of the subculture. This is also shown in the survey analysis, which reveals that advertisements closely tied to subculture values are rated as less likable. This may be an indication that advertisements exhibiting more indexical authenticity than iconic authenticity are less effective: the representation may actually be more effective than the original. However, what is perceived as iconic or indexical is not consistent across runners with differing levels of engagement with the subculture.

This research examines a practical and theoretically important phenomenon, demonstrating a complex relationship between advertisements’ perceived authenticity and the intracultural variation of subcultures. This poses interesting implications for both researchers and practitioners. Future research should uncover the intricacies of this relationship and explore subculture reactions to advertisements deemed inauthentic, as well as the impact of these reactions on brands and subcultures.

All References Available on Request
‘LET THEM EAT CAKE – IF THEY WANT TO’:
CONSUMER EXPERIENCE OF SELF-CONTROL IN DIETING
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ABSTRACT
“Obesity in the U.S. has reached an epidemic level. Both consumers and society are trying to battle this problem; for consumers, the most common means is weight loss through dieting although the rate of achieving desired weight goal is discouragingly low. Lack of self control is often recounted as the most common reason for consumer failure in successful weight loss. This paper reports on the phenomenological exploration into the dieters’ lived experience of self control attempts with weight loss. Among the factors that undermine consumers’ self control attempts are treating food as comfort and its omnipresence, whereas social support and relative freedom from family responsibilities seem to aid successful self control.

INTRODUCTION
Although obesity among the U.S. population has been qualified as an epidemic (Handy 2003), it represents a rising problem on a global scale (Wadden, Foster, and Brownell 2002). Worldwide, 300 million people are afflicted by obesity, of which 115 million live in developing countries (Witkowski 2005). In the U.S., approximately 64% of adults are overweight or obese (Seiders and Petty 2004), and obesity remains one of the costliest medical conditions, with the increased risk of about 30 serious illnesses (Dellande, Gilly, and Graham 2004; Flegal et al. 2002). Consequently, excess body weight represents a problem that both the consumer and society are trying to fight. For consumers, the most common means of battling this problem is dieting, either independently or through various weight loss programs and products. Americans spend $35 billion on dieting programs each year (Vohs and Heatherton 2000), and according to a recent national consumer survey, 71 million U.S. adults are currently dieting (Hubrich 2004). But despite the expended physical and material efforts, the results are rather grim: out of about 50 million people who go on a diet each year, only 5% manage to maintain weight loss in the long run (FDA 1992). The significance of weight loss to overall consumer well being cannot be understated (e.g., Bagozzi and Edwards 2000), yet relatively little research is available in consumer behavior on the factors contributing to why losing weight and maintaining it successfully is so difficult.

This paper draws on the proposition that self control, and especially its failure, is the most common reason why majority of individuals are unable to succeed in weight loss pursuits (Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice 1994). Exercising self control is necessary for avoiding hedonic temptations (Kivetz and Simonson 2002), which in the case of successful weight loss includes managing the consumption of toodysome yet highly calorific foods. Consumers often find themselves conflicted between the long-term weight loss goal and the immediate gratification of the desire for foods they are not supposed to eat (e.g., Baumeister 2002b; Hoch and Loewenstein 1991). Struggle with self control is aggravated by the fact that a lot of eating occurs in social surroundings where there are a number of environmental conditions that can facilitate or inhibit consumers’ strivings (Bagozzi 1992). Our phenomenological exploration into the lived experience (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989) of 18 informants at various stages in the weight loss process focused on the understanding of the factors impeding and contributing to consumers’ strivings for self control in weight loss attempts. The insights into consumer experiences of self control uncover how personal and external factors interact in handling or succumbing to multiple temptations encountered on the way to achieving the desired weight goal.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The existing conceptualizations of self control in marketing and consumer behavior draw upon perspectives from economics and psychology. The economic perspective of self control focuses on the principle of time inconsistency in terms of fluctuating preferences between the immediate hedonic pleasures and the long-term rational goals (Schelling 1978; Thaler and Shefrin 1981). Yielding to temptation represents the failure of self control accompanied by the experience of inner conflict (Baumeister 2002b) because it does not maximise the individual’s long-term best interest. Thus, the problem of self control is construed as the clash between hedonism and rationality or between desire and willpower (Deily and Reed 1993; Hoch and Loewenstein 1991; Wertenbroch, Sonan, and Nunes 2004), and self control represents the type of mastery or skill at strategies that help battle desires and urges.

Applying the economic perspective, marketing scholars have examined the mechanics of the self rationing strategy (Wertenbroch 1998, 2001) as the means by which consumers try to impose limits on the “myopic” self who wants to be healthy in the long run but also wants to smoke a cigarette right now (Schelling 1984). The products examined in these studies represent the “vice” category (e.g., tobacco), products that contain inherent potential for producing undesired consequences for health (Hirschman 1992), or the overall well being as in the case of compulsive buying (O’Guinn and Faber 1989). Thus, although the economic approach suggests that avoiding unwanted consumption (Lawson 2001) requires the mastery of self control strategies (e.g., Hoch and Loewenstein 1991), why certain self control strategies work better than others and under what conditions it is more likely that consumers will be able to either manage or defect in self control attempts has not been examined. Also, there have not been longitudinal studies of how consumers try to control themselves over longer time periods. For example, Lawson (2001) used the diary method in which participants recorded their thoughts and behaviors over a two-week period. In their study on precommitment, Kivetz and Simonson (2002) asked informants about their preferences in terms of luxury option over a necessity.
Recent theorization on self control and its relevance to consumer behavior has evolved from studies in social psychology (Baumeister 2002b). In this view, self control, defined as the conscious effort to alter how the individual would otherwise feel, think, or behave, represents a type of resource (Baumeister et al. 1998; Baumeister et al. 1994; Muraven, Tice, and Baumeister 1998). The key assumptions of this view are that self control as a resource is an effortful attempt to alter behaviors, affect, or cognitions; that effortful exertion exhausts the self control resource and renders subsequent control less likely to be successful; and that the resource can be recharged after sufficient rest (e.g., Muraven, Baumeister, and Tice 1999).

The resource model of self control proposes that when consumers are emotionally distressed, tired, or preoccupied by making decisions, they will be more likely to yield, for instance, to the temptation of impulsive buying (Baumeister 2002b). In a dieting context, a study using the resource model found that dieters who had to control themselves not to eat candy gave up faster on a subsequent task of solving puzzles than non-dieters (Vohs and Heatherton 2000). The other relevant assumption of the resource model is that self control can be increased by continuous exertion in the long term (Baumeister 2002a; Schmeichel and Baumeister 2004). Despite the theoretical rigor, the resource model of self control does not specify the origin of this resource nor how it can be recharged, points especially relevant in contexts such as dieting where consumers have to exert themselves continuously in order to not only accomplish desired end-states but also maintain them. For example, if self control is a resource that can be improved as a muscle over the long haul, why aren’t chronic dieters better able to control conflicting desires? All of the social psychology research on the resource view of self control is experimental, and the only longitudinal study by Muraven et al. (1999) examined participants’ trials at improving self control over a two-week period.

Two main conclusions can be drawn from the above review of the literature on self control. First, self control has not been examined longitudinally in contexts where consumers have to exert themselves on a continuous basis, as in the case of dieting. Second, conditions that may play a crucial part in consumers’ self control attempts and the influence of those conditions on the likelihood of long-term success have not been investigated. Based on these conclusions, the study focused on the lived experience of the dieters and the factors that rendered their self control efforts either successful or likely to fail in their weight loss efforts.

**METHODODOGY**

Semi-structured interviews that emphasised consumers’ experiences with the weight loss process were conducted with 18 female informants (McCacken 1988). Informants were sampled by gender purposefully, as the existing body of research suggests that women are more likely to be preoccupied with body weight and existing body of research suggests that women are more preoccupied with body weight than men (e.g., Nichter 2000; Ogden 1992). Informants were recruited through flyers posted at three commercial weight loss centers (Weight Watchers, Diet Center, and LA Weight Loss). The interviews were conducted either in the homes of the informants or at locations of their preference. After the interview, the snowball sampling approach was used, asking the informants for the names of potential interviewees.

Twelve out of 18 informants had used commercial weight loss services before, although only nine of them were enrolled in any weight loss program at the time of the interview. The informants were at different stages of weight loss. Three informants were trying to lose weight independently; five were at the maintenance stage with an average time of five years of staying at their goal weight; one informant was considering gastric bypass surgery, and four informants were re-joining Weight Watchers for either the second, third or fourth time; these informants had regained all or almost all of the weight lost before. The rest of the informants were in the process of working toward their goal weight.

Following McCracken (1988), interviews began with “grand tour” questions about the informants’ past experience with weight loss in terms of the actual weight lost, the length of time involved, and personal importance of losing weight. After the general questions, the informants were asked to provide details about their current experiences with the focus on their actual weight loss activities. In the course of the data gathering, interview tapes were reviewed regularly in order to guide the focus of future interviews (Schouten 1991). The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim for the analysis.

The interview data were examined for common themes across informants in order to categorise the factors and conditions facilitating or inhibiting the informants in their self control attempts as well as the means they employed in overcoming difficulties encountered in those attempts (Spiggle 1994; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). Since all the informants talked about the relationship they developed with food in childhood, careful attention was paid to this theme and how it was integrated into the lived experience of the weight loss process (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1990). The findings are organised around common themes from the data readings and reflect perceptions, concerns, meanings, and reported activities that make up the informants’ overall experience of controlling themselves in striving for the desired weight.

**FINDINGS**

**Factors Impeding Self Control**

*Special Relationship with Food.* All informants in the study had prior experience with trying to lose excess weight, whether attempted independently or with the aid of commercial weight loss providers, and they unanimously agreed that without the discipline of controlling their urges for food, the accomplishment of weight loss was unlikely. Dieting as a way of losing weight primarily involves regulating food intake (Ruderman 1986). Consumers have to follow specific rules and guidelines in terms of what they eat, how much, how often, as well as incorporating exercise into the weight loss plan. All of these activities require expending self control in order to override an impulsive pattern of response. Since self control requires conscious effort to alter behavior, thought, or feeling (Baumeister et al. 1994), the biggest hurdle for consumers to overcome is changing the very special relationship that they have with food.
I love junk food. Cookies, cake, candy...that kind of stuff. I think that’s the worst because all of these tastes so familiar and good to me...we grew up eating meat, and cookies, and potatoes, and pies, and you know, you come to like those foods, and it’s that mentality instilled in us from way back...and my mother died believing that I got diabetes because I was a vegetarian at some point in life. (Jessica, 49)

In the account of the informants, this difficulty is primarily constituted by the fact that the love for food, especially food that is fattening or “junk,” was developed throughout their life course and many trace it back to childhood experiences. Informants report on growing up in the environment of abundance where food was lavishly available, and as a consequence, consuming food was disconnected with its primary function of satisfying hunger.

Because eating and hunger weren’t tied together when I was a kid. You never really got hungry there was always so much food. You just never did. And if something would happen and I would be upset, my mother would give me a cookie. And a reaction to just about everything was eating. (Lydia, 44)

Food as Comfort. Apart from abundance, as the quote above indicates, food was endowed with much emotional content. Often food became the substitute for important emotional needs not otherwise fulfilled by parents. As a result, food acquired a special status, as in the case of Lydia for whom motherly love or the absence of it was substituted through food.

My mother actually was a big contributing factor because she was a great cook, and a great baker, and not very capable of fulfilling emotional needs for the family. So, her solution was always, if you don’t feel well, eat something. And then if you were eating sweets, she would say, why are you eating that or don’t eat so much. And I learned from early on to treat food very differently than just the fuel for the body. (Lydia, 44)

The messages and uses of food learned in childhood become blueprints for perceptions and meaning that the informants ascribe to food later in life. These blueprints are so deeply internalised that the informants consult them to account for their own perceptions and interpretations of meanings ascribed to food.

You know it’s just...the message when I was a child was always, eat everything on your plate; you can’t leave the dinner table until your plate is clean; and if, if you want dessert you need to clean your plate. We were raised as kids with that message, eat your food, there’s children starving in Africa, don’t waste food, wasting food is bad. It’s very...hard to retrain your brain. Kinda like a record with deep grooves in it that plays itself over and over again. And for me, getting out of those grooves has been hard...with that message playing there. (Natalie, 35)

As the above quotes indicate, it is not surprising that the special attitude toward food as the source of comfort and substitute for emotional attachment becomes one of the most prominent associations that informants develop. The learned perceptions and reactions to food are traceable in the popular metaphor of “comfort food” that many informants mention, far from encompassing just the gustatory pleasure derived from consuming it. In the words of one informant, “food is just comforting...it’s the American way of life, it’s mashed potatoes and cheese and biscuits and gravy; things that are warm and gooey and yummy...and the need to comfort yourself is channeled through food...” (Natalie, 35).

This particular attitude toward food as the source of comfort and attachment continues to be reinforced, especially when the informants are undergoing stressful life situations. Hardships in college, work, family relationships, life transitions, or other less critical contexts represent commonly encountered stressors (Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1981). For the study’s informants, these are the situations when they are most likely to seek food as the channel to relieve feelings of stress and frustration.

Because food, it just, feels like food is more basic, and maybe food is...has been a replacement for you know some things. Like, I don’t have a family, I was thinkin’ about it before. I don’t have a family, and I think food, to some extent, is replacing that, replaces those kinds of things. You know the comfort that you get from a family. Say that you were married and you had kids. If something stressful happened, you would go talk to your spouse, or you’d go play with your kids, or you’d go you know do somethin’ like that. And for those things, when something bad happened to me, when something stressful happened to me, I would, I would eat...I remember when I was a couple years out of college, I taught in Stewart, Nebraska, and I was fired from that position. And I remember sitting up that whole night after I was fired and eating chips...I ate a whole bag of chips and a bunch of ice-cream, and when I got done I was full, and so...I was comfortable...I did not feel as bad about being fired any more. (Evelyn, 51)

Turning to food in the times of stress was routinely reported by all informants in the study. Regardless of the seriousness of the stressor, whether being in a bad marriage, dealing with co-workers, or an unexpected visit of the granddaughter, it serves as the sure trigger of seeking...
comfort in food over any other source of relief.

I really was tryin’ to keep track and pay attention to what I was eating yesterday. I did a very good job. I wrote down everything I ate. And then my granddaughter called and said that she was coming in two weeks, and I didn’t know she was coming. And all of a sudden I was stressing ‘cause my son didn’t know how he was gonna arrange to see her. It was just thrown into my lap and it was impossible to reason with him. I went right down to the refrigerator and got one of his [her son’s] little mini cheesecakes. And while I was talking to her on the phone, I ate it. So I know that’s how I deal with stress. (Sheila, 52)

Thus, for Sheila, who of her own account was regulating her eating by journaling and keeping track, this effort was aborted as soon as she had to encounter a situation that she interpreted as stressful. Eating cheesecake was the immediate response to dealing with the stressor, which was exacerbated by the lack of cooperation on the part of her son to settle the situation.

Omnipresence of food. Another factor that inhibits consumers’ self control attempts in the weight loss process is the availability and easy access to the types of food that they are trying to monitor. Many informants in the study reported on the state of heightened awareness of food in their surrounding environment. The abundance of stimuli can easily trigger an impulsive response (Dholakia 2000; Hoch and Loewenstein 1991), and for consumers who have to regulate continuously what and how much they are consuming, the most challenging control task is being exposed to such stimuli in all of their respective settings. They perceive lavishness of food as some type of intended “food bombardment” that constantly puts their regulating efforts to test.

You need the food in order to survive, right? And we’re constantly surrounded by it. It’s not like an alcoholic goes out there and sits here with beers just sitting right here, you know. I mean it…food taunts you, it’s there. It taunts you. You know it’s like you drive by, you smell McDonald’s, you see it on TV. There’s a Burger King commercial there; there’s a Pizza Hut commercial. You open magazines, there’s, there’s these two mixed messages that you get. On one page there’s an advertisement for a Snickers bar, and then on the other page there’s 20 tips on how to lose weight and keep it off. So we get all these mixed messages, and you know you have that constant struggle. (Angela, 46)

The informants in the study all acknowledge the importance of food as an indispensable part of their social environments and interactions. During the time of conducting the interviews, the biggest feeding feast of the year, Thanksgiving, was pending or had already been celebrated. All of the informants without exception were dedicating much mental and physical effort to how they were going to deal with the inescapable presence of their favorite foods at family gatherings, and how for a few of them, the need to control themselves marred the experience of enjoying the event. But apart from Thanksgiving or Christmas that are single occurrences of the type throughout the year, more mundane routines such as “food days” at work are equally challenging in terms of controlling food intake. The work setting, in general, seems to be the venue where consumers trying to lose weight have to exercise continuous vigilance, as it is often full of stimulating foods.

Probably the most tempting days that we have here at work are Thursdays, because Thursday is our clinic day, and we have several students that come from the university. And someone always brings a treat on that day for the students of course. And Elva is one of our nurses. She is a wonderful cook, and she will bring…those are terrible days for me, because she will bring these seven layer chocolate desserts, or these coconut macaroons, I love coconut; or when Peggy orders pizza that’s tough for me. She’ll order a vegetarian pizza and I like that. But it’s so bad. (Sheila, 52)

Thus, for the informants in the study, fighting the desire for foods they are trying to avoid is aggravated by the social environment that is perceived as not very conducive to healthy eating. “Junk food” is relatively cheap and easy to come by, whereas healthy alternatives require a lot more effort. For instance, Natalie complains about how, if she has not planned her day out in detail in terms of what she is going to eat, where she is going to get “proper” snacks, or when she is going to have them, locating those proper foods can be quite a challenge.

…I didn’t prepare. So, I’m hungry and instead of saying well I don’t want cookies; I really wanna have a salad, I have to walk all the way down the street. I mean where would I get a salad around here? I don’t know; across the street maybe. Then you’d have to have them keep the cheese off of it; and you know have some low fat salad dressing. There’s just not a whole lot of options for that, not to mention it doesn’t taste very good. So it’s a lot easier to be bad. I mean how many things are in that vending machine that are healthy for you? Like one thing. Like maybe those pretzels. Okay, there’s bananas and apples up there, so then I would go get a banana, ’cause that would be a wise choice. But look at how many things I had to go through in my mind, just to get to the healthy decision. Had to go to the cookies; I had to go to the vending machine; I had to think about getting something to eat it now. (Natalie, 35)
The safest environment for the informants to comply with the diet and not to be tempted to fail self control efforts seems to be the home. For the older informants in the study, home is where they are in relatively fuller control of what types of foods they will provide and consume. Since all informants acknowledged that the path to a sure downfall or breaking the diet is the presence of tempting foods at home, they try to not keep those foods around. While this proves an effective way of staying on the diet, it is not the case for some of the informants. Especially when the dieter’s spouse is not very sensitive or cooperative, home can become a challenging place for resisting temptations.

My husband is a huge junk food addict because he goes to the store and brings home massive amounts of junk food. Well when I shop for groceries, I will always buy, like he likes steak. I don’t like steak, I don’t eat steak. He likes deli meats, and he likes white bread; he will only eat white bread. And, and so I’ll have pot—he loves potato chips. He will come home with ten bags of potato chips. It’s just…. And so they’re in the house. And I try to stay away from ‘em; he loves doughnuts for breakfast and cinnamon rolls. And if I have that stuff around I’m probably gonna eat it, ‘cause I love pastries. (Jessica, 49)

As evidenced from the above discussion, the dieters have to battle on multiple fronts simultaneously. Compliance with the weight loss program requires that they continuously monitor food portions and types of food to consume, as well as consciously altering the impulsive responses to tempting foods in their environments. The availability, ease of access, and social contexts where food is routinely present exacerbates their perceptions of the difficulty of exercising continuous self control. At the same time, exercising self control in order to lose weight requires that they change the deeply ingrained approach to food as a source of comfort as well as a stress reliever reinforced over the course of life events and experiences. For the informants, these intertwined factors may undermine their striving for the desired goal.

Factors Facilitating Self Control

Even though a number of factors may inhibit consumers’ self control efforts to lose weight, and despite a modest success rate of maintaining weight loss results long term (e.g., Baumeister et al. 1994), successful attainment and maintenance of the weight goal is quite possible. In fact, five informants in the study have been maintaining their weight on average for five years, considered to be a long-term result (Wing and Hill 2001).

Weight Loss as an Exclusive Priority. In line with changing the approach to food as the source of comfort as reported by informants, the most important factor contributing to weight loss success is making it the top priority. By making it the priority, informants refer to the reality that weight loss requires continuous efforts, which is a major challenge given that these efforts have to be exerted in the midst of everyday life activities of making decisions, choices, or other concerns requiring the same self control resource (Baumeister, Muraven, and Tice 2000).

Learning to control yourself is hard and continuous work. Like a full-time job you know. One thing that, is, is the time that I had to devote to it also. Because when having children you’re so busy, you’re working full time. I’ve always had the cake decorating business, so that’s always been there. We delivered newspapers, so it was just not, I didn’t have time to really spend on myself, like to exercise or to even be wantin’ to worry about doing this. So the kids, you know they’re older, so, I have all the time, you know that I need to devote to myself. And I think that, that was one of the major things. (Sheila, 52)

Although important, the lack of availability of time is only one factor that inhibits integrating the regulatory efforts needed for weight loss. Many informants openly admitted to the fact that prior to losing weight, they never acknowledged the presence of a weight problem. Consequently, their prior efforts were not radical enough to help them in accomplishing the desired results because this would have meant life-time changes and commitment to actions required for weight loss and maintenance.

I realised that this is gonna be something I have
to do for the rest of my life. I’m constantly working on it so that I don’t lean on my food crutch. You know you’re never cured when get your weight off. You never are fixed. And so I make the effort...I’m constantly always dealing with it every day, with food issues. For the first time ever I just bought this gigantic bag of broccoli at Sam’s Club, you know. And it was like before, I would’ve gone to Sam’s Club and maybe purchased...cheese bites or something like that. But this didn’t happen overnight. I’m constantly evolving. (Nicole, 32)

As mentioned earlier, one of the challenges for self control is monitoring food intake. For some informants this means drastically altering how they treat food, such as throwing it away. Given the attitude towards wasting food ingrained since childhood, such measures are accompanied by feelings of uncertainty and tension.

I’m taking care of our two-year-old, and so I constantly have an open refrigerator and an open cupboard. And you know little kids eat a lot, and they eat a lot of junk. They eat macaroni and cheese, and they eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and they eat chicken strips. And they don’t eat much of it. And you’re thinking, I just made that perfectly good grilled cheese sandwich for you, and you’re not gonna eat it. And now I have to throw it away. It re—originally when he first started eating that kind of food, I found myself really struggling with, if I’m making him a grilled cheese sandwich, then I’ll make myself one. Or I’ll eat the rest of his. So I started throwing whatever he did not eat away. And it felt awful in the beginning. I was like, what are you doing? You know I’ve lost weight and kept it off, and here I was struggling again with another issue. So they constantly pop up, that’s why you have to stay on top of things; because just right around the corner is another issue. (Natalie, 35)

The Importance of Support. One contributing factor that the informants report as being essential in their continuous self control efforts is the various forms of support they receive from family, friends, and weight loss programs. The importance of social support to health outcomes and psychological well being has been extensively documented (e.g., Cobb 1976; Cohen and McKay 1984; Turner 1981). Support is crucial not only in the initiation of the steps necessary for weight loss but all throughout the process. The effects of stress, for instance, that can severely undermine self control are often mitigated by support from peers or family members. The informants who continued attending Weight Watcher meetings also recounted the relevance of sharing their self control struggles and getting ideas from other members. In times of frustration with the diet or following the breakdown or lapse, the support system plays a crucial role in providing incentives to continue striving.

I didn’t have a good support system when I joined. I didn’t have friends that were involved with it; I didn’t know anyone else that was doing it; and the people I worked with all were foodaholics, and how can you control yourself when we ate all the time together. And now I have these people at work who are doing it [dieting] with me, you know. And I remember one day, I was like I will eat this chocolate and that’s it, and she [a friend] literally dragged me to the meeting. And I was fine. And all of us at work are doing really good. And it helps, because okay, well everybody else is not fallin’ off the wagon so I’m not fallin’ off either you know. (Angela, 46)

Support also serves as a reminder for these informants to regulate themselves as the precursor for successful weight maintenance. Most importantly, support from affiliation with the weight loss program seems to be the key determinant for the likelihood of success. In their own accounts, without the bond of accountability designed by the weight loss programs (e.g., journaling food intake, weighing in, attending meetings, or talking to weight loss service providers), the informants would give up self control efforts more easily. All five long-term maintainers in the study were still very actively involved with their respective weight loss programs and reported readiness to continue doing so indefinitely.

I need that constant daily reminder, the accountability for my own actions, and I know I need them [Diet Center] to continue doing this. So I’m ready to pay and stay as long as I live… (Joan, 56)

Use of Self control Strategies. Finally, the informants recounted a number of strategies, referred to as “tricks of the trade,” that they use in order to control their urges. Akin to support, these strategies serve the same function of providing the means that consumers rely on in fighting temptations they perceive around them.

I mean some days I’ll literally hold onto the steering wheel and I say, you’re driving past it, you’re driving past it [McDonald’s]. You’re gonna drive past it. You’re not stopping there. You learn little tricks of the trade, like not to carry cash on you, ’cause if you don’t have cash then it’s not as easy to you know stop there. Even though the world of debit cards is changing things you know; but if you don’t have cash that helps. Put your purse in the back of your car in the trunk. That’s another little trick. (Nicole, 32)

The most difficult thing for me was to overcome junk food. So what I started doing
was I’d play a game called Let’s Make a Deal. And my deal is, if I want to have a cookie, I have to eat a bowl of vegetables first. If I want to have a cup of coffee, I have to have two cups of water first. And it works for me. I know that every now and then I want to eat junk food. And so if I’m gonna do it, I know I have to eat a bowl of veggies first, and sometimes that makes me not want the cookie then. So getting the vegetables in, and the water in, and the exercise in has been a real struggle for me. I just really have to force myself to do it. (Alice, 22)

Although these strategies are not always implemented, the key difference between the long-term maintainers and other informants in the study was that they continuously “updated” the pool of strategies by experimenting and utilising those that had proved to be the most effective.

**DISCUSSION**

With rising levels of obesity on the one hand and low success rates at losing weight on the other, it is critical to understand what contributes to the difficulty consumers have with weight loss. Many consumers with weight problems continuously try to learn how to control urges, overcome impulses, and acquire healthy eating habits. They struggle for self control, yet often fail at it. The statistics on dieting point to only a small number of consumers who are successful at controlling themselves to maintain weight loss long term (Baumeister et al. 1994). The existing theories in consumer behavior and marketing have not examined the conditions that are likely to help or inhibit consumers in handling temptations. The data from this study provide insight into why it is so difficult for consumers to exert themselves on a continuous basis even when it is in their best interest (Muraven and Baumeister 2000), and into what makes it possible to maintain weight loss results long term.

Trying to lose weight was a challenging task for all the informants in the study. Fundamentally, the biggest difficulty is overcoming the learned attitude towards food ingrained through childhood experiences and upbringing; food has become not only the way of satisfying hunger but also the channel for comfort and emotional attachment. The “emotional eating” phenomenon is connected to this particular aspect of the relationship that the informants develop with food. The reliance on food evolves into a dominant pattern for coping with stress, and in the course of various life events, this pattern is reinforced. Exertion of self control is further challenged by the omnipresence of food, which the informants found to be an inescapable part of their social reality. The availability and easy access to food inhibits dieters’ self control attempts. The centrality of food, around which many social interactions and activities occur, is perceived as a trial for self control. At the same time, it reinforces consumers’ alertness and serves as a reminder for vigilance they have to exercise in order to resist temptation.

On the positive side, it is possible to exert self control efforts on a continuous basis irrespective of the challenges associated with the weight loss process. The factors that most contribute to the likelihood of success are the ability to dedicate time and concentration to the goal, which makes the long-term maintenance of weight loss more likely. Support from family as well as from the social network and weight loss programs seems to be among the determining factors in strengthening self control efforts. Successful maintainers were able to not only summon but also actively utilise the support and strategies learned through the social networks in times of struggle with self control.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Countering obesity is an issue of tremendous concern and one that has implications on both societal and personal levels. It has also generated controversies like “hamburger laws” and debates about whether consumers are solely responsible for the health consequences of food choices they make (Wald 2003). Controlling food intake and altering behaviors that lead to weight gain are argued to be within the realm of personal responsibility (Klem et al. 2000; Wing and Hill 2001). Thus, the view that consumers do need to exercise self control in adopting healthy lifestyles seems to be uncontested. But how feasible is it that consumers will abandon the deeply ingrained attitudes and behaviors associated with food consumption, reinforced through years of experience and habit? As the data from the study indicate, exercise of self control represents a major struggle. Successful self control in weight loss is deeply contingent upon the resolution of multiple challenges, which consumers encounter in their lived realities. Apart from personal life circumstances, surrounding social environments in which they habituate often seem to undermine consumers’ self control attempts. The consumption of food is not only a fundamental and vital human activity but one that is predominantly social in nature (Maykovich 1978; Saltzer 1980). While the literature on self control focuses on consumers’ ability to regulate impulses or unwanted consumption (e.g., Lawson 2001), most of their food choices occur in various social settings. Hence, consumers’ continuous focus on what they eat is intertwined with social interactions, personal relationships, norms, and obligations that make up their respective environments (Shepherd 1999). Without accounting for the role of these complex social determinants, the understanding of self control successes and failures in consumers’ weight loss strivings remains incomplete. Further investigation of the factors that facilitate or inhibit these attempts is warranted in order to help consumers advance their own well being.

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THE PROCESSUAL NATURE OF THE OBESITY STIGMA: FROM BLINDNESS TO HOPELESSNESS
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Although the rise of obesity has been targeted as a critical issue by many public policy makers and national governments in the Asia Pacific region, very little empirical research has been undertaken to understand how obese and overweight consumers behave due to their obese status. This paper focuses on the negative associations that obesity has in society and what impact that stigmatised state has on consumers’ behaviors and ability to internalise and act upon relevant social marketing interventions encouraging weight loss.

The extant literature from sociology, psychology and marketing focuses heavily on the perceptions of onlookers of a stigmatised consumer; however, there appears to be no research investigating how consumers themselves change their behavior or perceptions of themselves due to the stigmatised status. Drawing on theories such as Tajfel’s (1979) Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Allport’s (1954) work in prejudicial behavior a basis was provided for understanding how Asia Pacific consumers act and react towards being obese.

Qualitative research methods were employed to provide rich data to aid in the elucidation of this under investigated area. Four focus groups and eight depth interviews were conducted within three distinct community groups; Indo-Fijian, Fijian and New Zealanders. The data forms the foundation for the emerging theory explaining how obesity stigma can be internalised and what impact this has on future consumer behavior.

Three themes emerged from the data: hopelessness, blindness, and variable salience. Hopelessness is characterised as being a deep sense of loss and personal self worthiness to the extent that the respondents had lost all feelings of personal self efficacy regarding their obese weight. Distinct from existing theories, such as self regulation theory, the respondents did not try to disassociate themselves from the stigma, rather they accepted this fate, but worked to protect others close to them so that they did not continue down a similar path as them.

Blindness represents a lack of understanding, especially amongst the younger informants, about the risks of obesity and the reality of being stigmatised until they were confronted with a situation where they felt prejudiced or singled out because of their stigma. There existed a turning point where the respondents realised that they were in fact stigmatised and that they were marginalised by others. This turning point represents a form of negative intervention, or a negative situation that has a significant impact on the individual’s life, which instigates a period of self reflection and loss of personal satisfaction.

Finally, respondents discussed that the feeling of being stigmatised was not a constant mood. Rather, depending on the situation there were times of high stigma salience and negative self satisfaction, which were as quickly replaced by times of low stigma salience and positive self satisfaction. The notion that once stigmatised the individual loses hope is not shown in this dataset, providing an avenue for social marketers and public policy makers to encourage and motivate obese individuals without resorting to negative connotations of the obesity stigma.

The findings provide a basis for understanding how an obese individual can progress from a state of blindness about his or her size to a state of total hopelessness. The process of moving from a state of blindness to that of hopelessness does appear to be an iterative one, developed over time over a number of intervening situations. The more negative interventions, the greater the likelihood of decreased self efficacy and decreased motivation regarding a consumer’s ability to lose weight.

The role of the intervention as a method for social change has been discussed in length by many leading social marketing academicians (Andreasen 1995, Donovan and Henley 2003, Kotler and Roberto 1989). However, understanding how the everyday interventions, such as family meetings and social interactions may lead to a feeling of negative self worth has not been investigated. From this study there exists a gap in the extant literature regarding the importance of stigma salience as a driving force for understanding how consumers can go from total unawareness about the need to lose weight to a state of hopelessness regarding their ability to lose weight.

The premise therefore exists that one off ad hoc campaigns are unlikely to provide any significant impact on the consumer’s sense of personal efficacy. That is, when ongoing negative interventions surround the consumer there needs to be adequate positive interventions to ensure that the consumer does not continue to spiral into a deeper feeling of hopelessness. This is not to say that obese consumers are praised for their size, rather that they are encouraged and motivated by their in-group to maximise their feelings of personal self efficacy. Ideally any intervention would be targeted early on when the consumer has been fraught with only a few negative interventions and he or she still feels the ability to make significant changes to his or her weight.

Further research is needed in the role that negative stigmas have on marginalised consumers’ perceptions of themselves and their sense of self efficacy. By empirically identifying specific motivating antecedents that may increase self efficacy, motivation to lose weight and locus of control a more effective social marketing campaign can be developed and implemented.

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ABSTRACT

Consumers confined to the home due to disability or long term illness are the subjects of this study. Home confined consumers are not subject to the public gaze but are nevertheless just as conscious of idealised conceptions of what constitutes a normalised body and strive to attain this by means of highly disciplined body self-care practices. This paper examines their consumption experiences and finds that they strive to create a disciplined approach to inner and outer body maintenance. They do so in order to maintain and develop self-identity, and even the survival of the self in their self-created marketplaces.

INTRODUCTION

For postmodernists consumption is the key to the construction of self and postmodern consumers can create and recreate identity at will through their consumption (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). The body, according to Belk (1988), is the ultimate possession and a major contributor to and reflection of our identity. Similarly, Thompson and Hirschman (1995, 150) talk about the ‘profound experiential significance that results from the body’s being a visible object with culturally salient meanings’ and that consumers are socialised to discipline and normalise their bodies in line with cultural ideals. Consumers confined to the home due to disability or long term illness are the subjects of this study. These consumers are not subject to the public gaze yet they are just as conscious of idealised conceptions of what constitutes a normalised body and strive to attain this by means of highly disciplined body self-care practices. These practices are directed at managing the health and appearance of the inner body and body surfaces (Glassner 1990). The highly disciplined regimes of body care adopted by the home confined consumers in this study serve to reinforce the importance of the body in the construction and maintenance of self-identity but also highlight the relationship between the body and control of self and others.

The paper begins by reviewing the literature on the ‘disabled’ body in consumer research before drawing from relevant literature in other social sciences relating to disabled bodies and body discipline. A brief explanation of the research approach and strategy employed in the study follows. The study findings are then presented using data from two longitudinal case studies to illustrate key points. Finally, the implications of the study for research on the role of the body in consumer identity are presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Little is known about consumers who for reasons of ageing, long term illness or disability are confined to their homes. Even less is known about them in their roles as consumers. Estimates of the numbers of disabled people in society vary considerably reflecting the wide variation in the ways that disability/ability is defined (Rummel, Batista and Schwartz 1996). It is estimated that there are 36 million people with chronic disabilities in the USA (Mueller 1990) and 8.5 million in the UK (Kleinman 2002). Almost certainly the numbers will grow as the general population ages (Burnett and Pallab 1996).

Society is designed for able-bodied persons, following a perspective called ableism. Physicality is a highly valued commodity in Western society, and those who fail to meet the socially imposed standard are viewed as a class apart (Chouinard 1997). Power and social control are reflected in environmental design, keeping disruptive elements in their place (Moss and Dyck 1996). Restrictive environments control access to social spaces, determining in a very real sense who does and who does not belong. Similarly, equating disability with illness has had a significant impact on modern thinking. Western society views illness as a private problem to be resolved outside of the public domain (Rioux 1985).

Peripheral access in society is granted to the disabled according to able-bodied parameters, thereby satisfying the concept of universality without comprising or disrupting the day to day activities of non-disabled citizens (Chouinard 1997). Disabled persons have not been allowed to be actively involved in the process; rather they have been acted upon. As a result, disabled people must labour under the assumptions imposed upon them by their able bodied counterparts. Socialisation with one’s non-disabled peers is severely restricted and regulated. Myths, fear and apprehension remain intact due to lack of exposure to, or knowledge of, disability and the absence of everyday encounters between the able-bodied mainstream and its disabled outsiders merely perpetuate the ignorance of the former and their fears (Barnes 1991). In particular, it is assumed that people with disabilities are damaged, feeble, passive and dependent (Murphy 1990).

Conroy (1988) argues that a critical component to insuring independence for this particular population is their ability to perform autonomous consumer related activities. However, the challenges they face as consumers restrict many aspects of ‘typical’ consumer behaviour (Kaufman 1995). Consumer researchers have been slow to focus on the difficulties faced by consumers with disabilities. To date there has been only limited research that examines the adoption of consumer roles by disabled persons. Research by Vezina, Astous and Deschamps (1995), Burnett (1996), Kaufman-Scarborough (2001), Barker and Redmond (2001) and Baker, Stephens and Hill, (2001) has focused on disabled consumers who consume in the ‘normal’ interactive environment of the able-bodied individual. Most individuals learn the meanings of consumption through the socialisation process – via families, friends and especially through direct interactions in the commercial marketplace. This brings into question consumers who have very limited or no direct access and exposure to the commercial marketplace and, hence, limited personal experience that might be expected to impact on their ability to utilise...
product cues and consume symbolically. Furthermore, given the importance that consumer researchers now attribute to the role of the body in consumer identity (Belk 1988; Thompson and Hirschman 1995), a detailed understanding of the nature and range of consumption situations, including consumers in 'extreme' situations (Warlop and Beckmann 2001), allows consumer researchers to re-evaluate assumptions we make about 'normal' consumers and 'normal' bodies.

As Marks (1999, 129) notes, “the body adopts a particular habitual way of relating to the environment”. Bourdieu (1990) argues that it is easier for the dominant classes, because of their greater access to, and possession of, cultural and social capital to define their bodies and lifestyles as superior. The attainment of such corporeal “value” by disabled people is hampered by societal views which tend to define, and categorise, disabled people’s bodies as “abject” and abnormal and, thus, bodies without value (Grosz 1994; Hawkesworth 2001). As Branson and Miller (1991, 41) note, “the contours of social inequality are structured through patterns of unequal access to symbolic capital, through unequal cultural competence”. In this sense, disabled people are confined in their habitus through cultural impoverishment and cultural difference.

Consumer culture latches on to the prevalent self-preservationist conception of the body, which “encourages the individual to adopt instrumental strategies to combat deterioration and decay…… and combines it with the notion that the body is a vehicle of pleasure and self-expression” (Featherstone, Hepworth and Turner 1991, 170). Indeed the suppression of the body through body maintenance routines is presented within consumer culture as a precondition of acceptability and the release of the body’s expressive capacity. Featherstone et al. (1991, 171) suggest that “diet and body maintenance are increasingly regarded as vehicles to release the temptation of the flesh”. This emphasis upon body maintenance and appearance within consumer culture suggests two basic categories: the inner and the outer body.

The inner body refers to a concern with the health and optimum functioning of the body, which demands maintenance and repair in the face of disease and aging. In contrast, the outer body refers to appearance as well as the movement and control of the body within special space. It can also encompass the organisation and surveillance of docile disciplined bodies within social space (Foucault 1977; Giddens 1981). Within consumer culture, the inner and outer body become co-joined and, as a consequence, the prime purpose of the maintenance of the inner body becomes the enhancement of the appearance of the outer body. Consumer culture permits the unashamed display of the human body and this is strongly supported by images in the marketplace that make individuals more conscious of external appearance, bodily presentation and the “look”.

Within consumer culture the body is proclaimed as “a vehicle of pleasure; it is desirable and desiring and the closer the actual body approximates to the idealised images of youth, health, fitness and beauty the higher its exchange-value” (Featherstone et al. 1991, 177). The penalties of bodily neglect are a lowering of one’s acceptability as a person, as well as an indicator of low self-esteem and even moral failure.

Throughout the history of Western culture, the state of one’s body has been interpreted as a material sign of the moral character “within” (Foucault 1978). In contemporary consumer culture, consumers’ perceived responsibilities include careful monitoring and controlling not only of the physical appearance of their bodies, but also of the various foods, substances, and environmental conditions to which their bodies are exposed. Ehrenreich’s (1989) proposal that the fear of failing, the failure to live up to the cultural ideal of controlling one’s life, is expressed in a variety of bodily focused anxieties. Knowledge and technology are viewed as empowering and liberating forces (Foucault 1980) and as such provide guidelines that rational individuals should adhere to. The dynamic between knowledge and the socio-cultural operation of power is no more evident than in consumption contexts.

Many consumer actions are motivated by culturally sanctioned knowledge claims regarding how consumption can be used to control the health and the appearance of the body (Glassner 1990). As noted by Glassner (1990), this self-evident “rational” linkage between one’s current consumption pattern and the future state of one’s health (and appearance) echoes the legacy of Christian asceticism and its promise of eventual reward for resisting the temptations of the flesh. Indeed negative changes attached to those who substantially deviate from cultural norms of body image often include the attribution that these individuals have not exerted sufficient effort and self-care to avoid such a condition (Fallon 1990). As Glassner (1990) suggests bodily neglect reflects lack of self-discipline and work ethic.

Body image is commonly defined as a “mental construction” embedded in a larger mental construction (self-schema) that can “deviate substantially from a person’s objective physical characteristics” (Myers 1992, 116). The theoretical premise underlying this contemporary definition is that a person’s corporeal body is meaningfully perceived in relation to a relevant cognitive structure and, conversely, that this subjectively constructed image mediates understanding of the objective body. Through the processes of normalization and problematization, and the pervasive operation of the disciplinary gaze, the embodied subject is readily objectified. The body that is objectifiable can also be seen as objectionable in many of its specific attributes. The social world in which each consumer is embedded operates to enforce and reinforce this system of bodily meanings and practices. The result is a form of socialization that inspires a deeply internalised duty to discipline and to the normalization of one’s body. As Featherstone (1991) notes, contemporary consumer culture has been marked by a dialectic between asceticism (self-discipline as a moral responsibility) and the pursuit of pleasure. The socialised body implies that a complex cultural ideology of the body underlies consumers’ satisfaction with their appearance, their sense of an ideal and the consumption activities that these self-perceptions motivate.

In relation to the postmodern consumer, the act of consumption serves to produce a desired self through the images and styles that are conveyed through one’s possessions (Belk 1988). The postmodern self-identity is an ongoing consumption project which is continuously in the process of creation. Thompson and Hirschman (1995) found that self-understandings did not forsake aspects of
modernity, rather a profound significance was placed on personal history and understanding of the social world. As such the postmodern consumer is an optimistic theoretical construction as it implies that each us can select identities at will from a spectrum of cultural images which can then be discarded.

**METHODOLOGY**

Given the challenges in understanding self identity amongst consumers confined to their homes, there was a need for a methodology that was sensitive to the research agenda of discovery and the research context. As one of the purposes of this research is to understand the consumption experiences of home confined consumers within their own limited social and private worlds, these experiences need to be described as they are lived and originate from the perspective of “person-in-the-world”. The research approach adopted, radical constructivism, stems from the understanding that human beings have the ability to create meanings that help them navigate life, regardless of whether or not these match an external reality (von Glasersfeld 1995). Von Glasersfeld (1995) argues that human perception is adaptive; it evolved to help people survive. Humans’ sense of continuity is preserved because we construct, and manage to believe in a relatively smooth narrative of events. To the radical constructivist, discontinuities in action are to be expected at every level of social living, from the individual to the communal. Furthermore, the self as a locus of experience is an active agent rather than a passive entity.

Purposeful sampling was used for this project, which involves sampling units being selected purposefully to permit understanding of a phenomenon in depth (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling involved the selection of information-rich cases that are used to provide in-depth information that is relevant to the purpose of the research. All sampling in qualitative research is purposeful to the extent that the sample is always intentionally selected according to the needs of the study (Coyne, 1997). The research strategy selected focuses on building knowledge of the experiential reality of the home confined consumer by means of a small number of case study research subjects who were purposively selected for in depth study over a long period of time. To date, two years into the research, this has involved weekly intensive “interview” sessions with each research subject, coupled with participant observation to gain the rich detail necessary to understand their experiential reality. Interviews in this study take the form of conversations during the “visit” time spent with each subject; over time this has permitted the researcher to become a member of the personal community of each subject.

A short historical perspective on two of the case subjects is offered at this juncture to provide a context to the findings that follows. Jay is home confined as a result of an automobile accident. Quadriplegic for a period of 24 years, Jay lives as independently as possible. A room in his own home is fitted with many aids to independent living including a computer with which he can control many day to day living tasks such as answering the telephone, closing curtains, and so on. Jay has mastered various technologies that afford a degree of abelism in his daily life.

Barbara and Gloria are unmarried sisters, who have been home confined for just over two years. They cared for ailing parents over a period of twenty five years. After the demise of their parents, Barbara and Gloria became the carers of each other in their own home. To some extent the home confinement of Barbara and Gloria was self-enforced. The sisters came to believe that the world outside of their home was a dangerous place for them and that the recurring illnesses and allergic reactions they experienced were aggravated when they left their home environment.

**FINDINGS**

Barbara and Gloria admit few people into their home. Over their period of home confinement they have become very conscious of how adversely they are affected by smells from the outside world brought into their home by callers. All callers, even the regulars who bring them necessities of life, including food and medication, are subjected to a letter box ritual now described. After making sure of caller’s identity there follows a typical pattern, “Is that you,” followed by “Are you sure you have no perfume or deodorant on?” This will be asked over and over again before the door will be opened. On gaining entrance, the full implication of breaking the “access” rules will be run through, “If Barbara and I come into close contact with any of those smells you know we wouldn’t be well for days. The pain Barbara would be in with her nose, you know how sensitive it is”. Barbara will then point out Gloria’s negative side effects, “Gloria had an awful time last week with her stomach, somebody must have been in the house covered in the smell of cigarette smoke, and you know how it sets her off. We have to be very careful who we let in”. This self-care practice is a form of “disciplined body” work, which describes a style of body use and body-to-object relatedness in relation to control. The disciplined body makes itself predictable through its regimentation. This is an example of such predictability that affords the control and, by extension, the power needed to maintain a visibility and an identity.

It is interesting to note that the substances that appear to irritate Barbara’s nose are essentially smells associated with personal hygiene and self-care practices and for most consumers constitute “normal” product use. Yet the sisters do not seem to be affected by other pungent substances such as household bleach, which they use extensively around their home to create a safe and sterile environment. To understand this somewhat conflicting consumption behaviour the lifestyle of the sisters must be taken into account. Raised in a very austere religious background, Barbara and Gloria believe that “cleanliness is next to Godliness”. This colours much of their consumption behaviour including self-care practices and inner and outer body maintenance.

The same disciplined approach is adopted with respect to outer body maintenance practices in order to maintain an environment of cleanliness and sterility. Skin and hair washing and grooming products and practices maintain a special space for Barbara and Gloria, free from contamination. Clothing, for example, is hand washed in pure soap flakes. This is echoed in respect of inner body maintenance where the “purest” of ingredients are sourced for food; no processed food products are purchased and the sisters make their own bread. Thus, very strict guidelines are given to those who shop on their behalf; every item is
checked in terms of its ability to contaminate their bodies so that no product gets through the net to become “the enemy within”. For example, household cleaning products are limited to vinegar, baking soda and bleach, widely used in the days before the advent of “synthetic” cleaning products. Here again the control and power to accept and reject products and discipline the self and others lies firmly in the sisters’ domain.

The focus of Jay’s self-care practices concerns the issue of extension of self, where effort, time and organisation of lifestyle are interrelated to create an experiential reality that affords such identity maintenance. In relation to the maintenance of the inner body, the health of the bowel is a particular concern. The daily routine revolves around the intake of fluids and solids in exact quantities so that control over outputs can be scrutinised. The strict adherence to disciplined body practices affords Jay the control vital for self-preservation and ultimately self-identity. In relation to solid food intake, itemised organic fresh sources are consumed for their advantages in terms of nutritional value, vitamin content and overall consumer well-being. Tried and tested foods that ensure the optimal working of the bowel are integral to inner body maintenance and addressed in a strict, almost religious manner. The active selection of products and the high level of interest shown in their nutritional value highlight the importance of seemingly mundane consumption practices (Elliott et al. 1995). The self-regulation and serious manner in which these practices are upheld show the importance of this consumption behaviour for the realisation of a healthy body. Indeed as Domzal and Kernan (1993, 498), suggest, “The body-as-object is the most visible expression of a person’s self.”

Monday’s and Thursday’s are the days when Jay undergoes private and extremely sensitive procedures in relation to bowel function. Sunday and Wednesday’s are filled with anxiety and an almost blinkered focus on the consumption of the “right” foods that will achieve the desired positive outcome. There will be no variation of Jay’s menu on Sunday or Wednesday, and certainly no deviation from this menu will be tolerated, lest a negative consumption experience is realised. Everyone’s sense of self must include some form of bodily consideration, because corporeality or body cathexis (Rook 1985) influences processes such as self-identity, self-presentation, and self-evaluation.

Jay also has deep concerns in relation to the more aesthetic outer body maintenance issues that for him represent signs of decay. The current deterioration in the health of Jay’s teeth has further constrained and disciplined his eating habits. The search for nutritional products that will optimise inner body health and not further deteriorate his eating habits. The search for nutritional products that will optimise inner body health and not further deteriorate his eating habits. The search for nutritional products that will optimise inner body health and not further deteriorate his eating habits. The search for nutritional products that will optimise inner body health and not further deteriorate his eating habits. The search for nutritional products that will optimise inner body health and not further deteriorate his eating habits. The search for nutritional products that will optimise inner body health and not further deteriorate his eating habits. The search for nutritional products that will optimise inner body health and not further deteriorate his eating habits. The search for nutritional products that will optimise inner body health and not further deteriorate his eating habits. The search for nutritional products that will optimise inner body health and not further deteriorate his eating habits. The search for nutritional products that will optimise inner body health and not further deteriorate his eating habits.

Adherence to disciplined body practices is the process by which Jay tries to ensure that the special space he has created does not become an “institutionalised” space within a hospital regime. The fear of being removed from an independent environment to that of an “institutionalised” one represents for Jay a regression or loss in terms of the self and of one’s identity. Jay’s actions are directed at retaining control over his independent lifestyle. It should be noted that this disciplinary bodily maintenance can only be realised with the help of significant others. These others comprise his personal community and his carers over which he has control in relation to their actions in his space.

Disciplined behaviour not only makes bodies productive in terms defined by some other (Foucault, 1980), but they can also be used by bodies themselves to achieve productive ends of their own. Bodies discipline themselves but they do so within institutions and discourses which are not their own. Those, for whom the need for self-discipline must be projected out, assume the style of domination over others. This is the case for the home confined consumers discussed here. They have developed rules and rituals of body care in their quest for the disciplined body and survival. The control over self through extreme measures of care is extended and played out by their personal communities who are selected for the competencies they bring and that are required by the home confined consumer.

**DISCUSSION**

The body is at the intersection of nature and culture, of the individual and society, of space and time, of corporeality and spirituality (mind), and as such is subject to social control but is also “the seat of individuality, the material substrate of our physical existence, thought and social relations” (Varga 2005 210). The problems concerning the body are manifold and do not only concern the case of the home confined consumer, it applies to all consumers, albeit the problems of what we eat, how we care for our health, and how we present the body in “public” becomes heightened in the context of this study for the individuals explored here. Indeed the importance of the body is captured in the words of Mauss (1968, p 372) “The body is the first and most natural instrument of man. Or, more precisely, (the body is) the first and most natural technical object, and at the same time the technical means, of man.”

The disciplining of the body, optimizing its capabilities, increasing its usefulness is accomplished by exercising power over individuals. The question arises as to whether this discipline and control can be obtained in a society ever more dominated by consumerism. The home confined consumer shows evidence of maintaining or realizing such capabilities through the self-care practices in conjunction with their personal communities. The premise for regulation and control and hence power lies firmly in the domain of the home confined consumer through the utilization of the body as object and the diffusion of such disciplinary measures throughout the personal community to achieve the optimal level of “abelism” inherent in such consumption activities.

Postmodern consumer culture highlights the significance of the body as a personal resource and as a social symbol, which gives off messages about a person’s self-identity. We make many assumptions about a person on appearance alone; the body communicates the identity-value of its owner. The stigmatizing of non-abelist consumers and disabled bodies as diseased, inferior and lacking mental capacities and capabilities (Barnes et al. 1999) leads to an underdeveloped understanding of the interrelationships between non-abelist bodily functions and broader socio-cultural values and practices. Shilling (1993, p.9) suggests that any theory of human agency or action requires an account of the body, that “acting people are
acting bodies”. The highly disciplined approach and regime afforded to bodily concerns by the home confined consumers in this study show control and power over not only the self but equally over the others who comprise their personal communities.

The attainment of optimal inner and outer body conditions serves to highlight the driving desire to accomplish and maintain survival, survival not only of the self and of the identity but survival in the special spaces they have created in their homes. These highly disciplined measures of self-care and body practices heighten the ability for the home-confined consumer for self-empowerment but more fundamentally serve to provide a self-survival in a subjective personal reality as opposed to that of an “institutionalised” reality. The overriding fear of being removed from their special space and to lose control and power over their life course explains the unrelenting attention to detail in their self-care practices. The body itself is the seat of power and the ability of the home-confined consumer to delay the process of disease and decay and by extension, invisibility, firmly lies in their domain. These practices prolong visibility of self and of self-identity and help to dispel the passiveness of the “hidden” body associated with such a non-abelist perspective.

Home confined consumers are not confined in their ability to access the marketplace, albeit indirectly through their personal communities. Indeed, it could be argued that they have created new marketplaces that suit their home confined status. It could be argued that the body creates its own marketplace for interaction and socialization and, hence, a place where for ongoing identity construction. Finally, this study challenges the stereotypes of the disabled body as powerless and passive. On the contrary, the home confined consumers maintain and develop self-identity, and the on-going survival of the self in their self-created marketplaces.

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This paper describes issues encountered by researchers when applying an approach to video-ethnography that anecdotal reports suggest is widely used yet seldom explicitly recognised; namely “systematic combining” using abductive logic (Dubois and Gadde 2002). In applying this approach, researchers sampled, collected, and analysed data in an iterative non-linear process in which they moved from the literature, to the data and back to the field (not necessarily in that order) to validate, expand upon or refute their emergent understanding. He video-ethnography explored the following question: “Which factors contribute to sustained celebrity worship/fandom within a micro-community?” The research setting was the Sydney division of the Australian Sir Cliff Richard Fan Club, members of which have been fans since teenage-hood and who are typically over 50 years of age. The research culminated in the identification of several explanatory themes including: 1) pre and early adult socialisation, 2) celebrity narcissism, 3) sexualised para-social relationship, 4) moderate psychopathology, 5) congruence between ideal self and celebrity-image, 6) religiosity, 7) brand community, and 8) music preference.

To address the research question researchers collected a large volume of print and filmic, written, visual and/or audio data. Auto-driving during long interviews and focus groups conducted in informants’ homes resulted in presentation and discussion by informants of this material from different origins reflecting multiple aspects of the celebrity and their fandom over time. Cliff Richard’s management was a source of feature length films, music video clips, posters, photographs, picture books, and commemorative items such as decorative plates and T-shirts. From the popular media came newspaper and magazine stories, books about the celebrity, television reports, interviews and documentaries about Cliff Richard. Fans shot personal photos and amateur videotapes documenting their experiences as fans and in some cases generated home-made Cliff memorabilia such as bookmarks, Christmas cards and clocks. Another rich source of data originated was extensive video footage of in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted in informants’ homes by the researchers. They therefore captured informants’ self-reports (transcribed in full) as well as their non-verbal behaviour such as gestures, facial expression, grooming, clothing, social interaction and physical surroundings.

Over nine months researchers analysed the data to generate explanatory themes. They generated explanatory themes by moving freely in tandem between the literature, written, verbal, visual and/or audio data and in some cases expert informant advice. For example researchers concluded that celebrity narcissism might be an important concept worthy of future exploration after engaging in process described below. They read the following in a focus group transcript: “Cliff loves himself. We know that. Whenever we meet, he congratulates us on our great taste.” Referring to the relevant video-tape footage the researchers observed extended laughter by focus group members after this comment. These observations prompted the researchers to examine theories of narcissism (American Psychiatric Association 1994), which detailed markers of the personality type, such as vanity, self-absorption, excessive pride, and lack of empathy, that became a guide for subsequent data analysis. Vanity was suggested by images suggesting Cliff’s obsession with maintaining a youthful appearance via cosmetic surgery, dying his hair dark brown despite being 64 years of age and wearing brightly coloured figure hugging clothes to draw attention to his slim physique. The researchers returned to the transcripts and found several comments by informants suggesting Cliff was constantly on a weight reduction diet: “He only ever eats once a day.” In Cliff’s television interviews, self absorption, intense pride in his achievements and arrogance are clearly evident in his demeanour. Cliff’s reported lack of success in his romantic life and his dislike of physical contact with others, exemplified the narcissistic traits of avoiding intimacy, love, and attachment (American Psychiatric Association 1994). Finally Cliff’s career of over approximately 50 years attests to his quest for “narcissistic supply,” that is, a seemingly endless need for adoration by others (Horowitz 1975). A documentary about Cliff’s early life reinforces this point; as he appears before thousands of squealing fans a voice-over states that “for Cliff his fan’s are everything.” To further validate these findings researchers consulted an expert in narcissism who suggested the likelihood of Cliff’s having Acquired Situational Narcissism, a proposed form of narcissism which develops in adolescence or adulthood, brought on by wealth, fame and the other trappings.

In applying systematic combining, the researchers attempted to reduce the probability that their preconceived ideas would inhibit collection of useful data and detection of unanticipated patterns or obscuring reality by forcing data into in-appropriate categories. Hence they implicitly acknowledged that their beliefs would not always remain constant during the research project; being revised through encountering concrete examples likely to drive conceptual shifts in proving, refuting and enhancing emergent theory. However, the researchers noted that approaching research in this way when a wide range of different data types are in play requires substantially more time and effort than other.
approaches (e.g., pencil and paper surveys). Furthermore researchers perceived that prolonged exposure to visual and/or audio material which featured quasi realistic representations of informants altered their biases. Initially the researchers believed that informant’s behaviour to be aberrant and even evidence of mental illness. By the end of the research, they concluded that most informants were well-adjusted people and that their participation in the fan club had positive affects on wellbeing. The researchers thereby concluded special care must be taken when analysing this type of material if an appropriate level of objectivity is to be achieved.

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SINGING, SEEING, BELIEVING: AN ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION
Jeaney Yip, The University of Sydney

The use of visuals in ethnographic consumer research is well-documented (e.g. Arnould and Thompson 2005; Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003), in which they are commonly used to complement ethnographic interviews. However, integrating the visual and the textual is not without challenges. The issues are described in a study of Christian music performed at a charismatic church in Sydney (Hillsong).

This study analyses the meanings of these praise and worship songs and how this discourse intersects the sacred and cultural constructions of the self. The project started with an analysis of the lyrics, but it was realised that inclusion of the physical performance environment was also vital to the analysis. The importance of the spaces between text and audience, consumption and production were found to result in a multi-layered interpretation of this form of religious expression. Music as an expression of worship has a visual representation in the context and way it is played and performed by producers and audience. This differs by religious institution and ranges from traditional hymns to Gospel music, to contemporary praise and worship, to Christian rock. Music style is not neutral, but is organically wed to the socio-cultural setting in which the music is created. This produces an assortment of representations and discourses which requires a marriage of visual, audio, and textual research.

A cross section of Hillsong music dating from 1990 – 2005 was selected. I initially used discourse analysis to study the lyrics and explore the meaning expressed through the language of the songs. The objective was to gain insight into the institutional values behind the message. The visual materials included pictures of the music performance, the congregation, the architectural space, images of the people (audience, song performers, and church leaders), pictures of artefacts produced by the church, and video recordings of services and related events proved vital to developing richer understandings.

The theology, values and rituals of the church is grounded in beliefs of success, blessings, and prosperity in the present. They blend traditional biblical doctrines with secular values of individualism, materialism, and commercial success. The visual display of the music performance mimics that of a rock concert. The congregation’s expressions are euphoric. Actions include clapping, jumping, dancing to the beat, often with eyes closed or hands up in the air. The performance style of the music contrasts with the solemn image of traditional church hymns. The architectural space of the church has a corporate appearance with convention-style seating. The church building is modern and traditional Christian icons are absent (e.g. cross, wooden pews, pipe organ, and statues). The church is equipped with the latest technology in terms of sound systems and flat plasma screens onto which the music lyrics are projected. All of this gives the appearance of an commercial entertainment centre. This setting provides the context in which the music is both “seen” and “heard” by the audience. Artefacts produced by the church include brochures for it’s various events and conferences, and a multiplicity of items that are on sale such as mugs, T-shirts, books, and videos. The website also provides visual material with images of people always happy, young, energetic, enthusiastic, and hip.

This visual material amplifies the self-empowering messages in the lyrics. The emphasis is very much on “I” rather than “we.” This is opposite to traditional church music where the “I” is deemphasised in deference to god. The self-empowering, self-liberating, and self-satisfying values embedded in the music is congruent with Inglehart’s (1997) post-materialist values (emphasising self-expression and quality of life) which characterises post-industrialised societies such as Australia. This study illustrates how discourses are articulated through an assortment of visual and textual representations. Consequently, meanings must be decoded from holistic combinations of sensory stimuli.

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Opinion leaders in consumer research are attributing greater importance to documentary filmmaking (e.g., Belk and Kozinets 2005; Holbrook 1998). This development suggests that an imperative exists to clarify the different roles that the Documentary can assume in communicating research findings. We commence our exploration of this issue through Currie’s (1999) conceptualisation of the Documentary as a “testimony,” that is, a representation of “what someone thought were the facts of the matter” (p. 287) through the presentation of the phenomenological facts as documented in film form. Currie (1999) asserts that photographs and films are ultimately traces of reality. A documentary film that is constructed predominantly, or entirely, on traces is called an indexical record (Plantinga 2005; pp.105-106). The DIR (documentary as indexical record) account reflects the view that the photograph (and by inference films) has “an evidentiary status that we would not grant to a painting” (Plantinga 2005, p.106). Well known examples of DIR appear (a) in cinema verite genre, in which filmmaking equates with mechanical observation and (b) anthropological and sociological films reflecting “old school” notions of ethnography. These observational filmmaking schools in particular have in the past claimed to be the torchbearers of truth, in which audiences are allowed to form their own interpretations by experiencing the raw facts without the impingement of abstraction by the use of interpretive filmic devices on the part of the filmmaker. However, Curry (1999) infers the selectivity of the filming process and hence its inherently biased representation of reality. That is, all trace elements originate from a subjectively biased framing of reality. Hence, whilst a documentary as an indexical record will be based on traces of reality, it is more accurate to describe as a realistic representation of the facts, than a presentation of reality.

Walterstorf’s conceptualisation (1980) more aptly characterises all documentaries as assertions (DA). According to Walterstorf, the expression or projection of the world depicted in a documentary inherently contains the filmmaker’s assertion about the actual world, whether it is highly abstracted or not. Other theoreticians elaborate declaring that any non-fiction film fundamentally involves an “assertive stance” or “assertorial intentions” (e.g., Ponech 1999). The assertive stance is most evident in Expository-type documentaries; for example in which a voice-over narrator not only enhances the representation of events depicted in the film by providing descriptions, but instructs the viewer how to interpret a phenomenon. A good example is a science documentary about the formation of the universe. Another example is the historical documentary in which a focus exists on subjects and events that existed before the invention of the photograph. Here the visuals are only ever a substitute for traces. From a DIR perspective, this type of representation lacks the credibility and authenticity of a documentary based on trace elements.

Plantinga (2005) argues for distinctions between saying and showing to further delineate how documentaries are constructed or produced. Saying involves the assertion of specific propositional content, as in the Expository documentary. Showing may involve the assertion of specific observational content, as in the DIR account (2005). Plantinga argues that documentaries as representations should combine both saying and showing. In what Plantinga describes as an asserted veridical representation (AVR) the filmmaker intends the spectator to form certain beliefs and draws upon the necessary filmmaking conventions in order to achieve this, whilst still providing visual and sonic supporting evidence, including in the form of traces. Unlike the proponent of cinema verite, the AVR filmmaker is free to exploit any filmmaking device in order to persuade the audience. Simultaneously, an audience still expects an AVR to offer a reliable record or account of something in the actual world. A good example of a recent AVR account is “Super Sise-Me” (2004), directed by Morgan Spurlock, a documentary film that entertainingly represents the experimental research conducted by the documentary filmmaker into the effects of eating McDonalds junk food. What makes “Super Sise-Me” an AVR account and not a DA or DIR account is that the filmmaker seeks to persuade the audience into a point of view in relation to McDonalds junk food and its health implications to consumers. A DA account would not seek to persuade, it would instruct the viewer in a didactic fashion. A DIR account, on the other hand, would not seek to explicitly influence the interpretation of the audience.

The DIR, DA and AVR conceptualisations of the Documentary provide a useful framework for consumer research scholarship as represented in the Documentary. The AVR account offers a robust formula for representing both theory and data, in which the filmmaker not only puts forward an argument, but is also expected to provide supporting evidence. The DIR and DA accounts also have a valuable role to play. The Documentary as an indexical record can be useful to elicit multiple interpretations in relation to a relatively non-theorised phenomenon, especially in relation to aspects of emergent consumer behaviour. On the other hand, where theory predominates where there is insubstantial or inaccessible trace data, the Documentary as an assertion is a logical mode of representation.

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THE EFFECTS OF BRAND AND PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE ON CONSUMER EVALUATIONS OF BRAND EXTENSIONS
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INTRODUCTION

Although the role of consumer knowledge in consumer brand extension evaluations has been studied in previous research, little research has investigated whether there is any difference between the effect of product knowledge and brand knowledge. Consumer knowledge has been treated as one single variable in previous research (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Muthukrishnan and Weitz 1991; Roux and Boush 1996). However, consumer knowledge is multidimensional (Brucks 1986; Peter and Olson 2005). Two different elements of consumer knowledge, product knowledge and brand knowledge were found to have different effects on some consumer behaviours (Fiske, Luebbehusen, Miyazaki and Urbany 1994). This suggests that the influences of these two types of consumer knowledge on consumer fit perceptions may also be different. Thus the objective of this study is to investigate more deeply the role of consumer knowledge in brand extension evaluations, by treating product knowledge and brand knowledge as two different variables. Brand extension has become a popular strategy since the 1980s (Aaker 1990). Due to the many advantages and strategic importance of brand extensions, this strategy has received much attention from both academics and practitioners (e.g. Aaker and Keller 1990; Barone, Mniard and Romeo, 2000; Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Czellar 2003). The most widely accepted finding from the brand extension literature is that the consumer perception of fit between a new extension and its parent brand is the most important factor in determining brand extension evaluations (Aaker and Keller 1990; Muroma and Saari 1996; Zhang and Sood 2002). However, the strength of this relationship may be affected by other factors for example, the consumer mood and brand advertising (Barone et al. 2000; Bridges, Keller and Sood 2000; Lane 2000). Consumer knowledge has also been suggested as one of the variables which have an impact on consumer fit perceptions in a brand extension evaluation (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994).

In the brand extension area, empirical evidence has also been found that high and low knowledge consumers may react differently when evaluating a brand extension (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Muthukrishnan and Weitz 1991; Roux and Boush 1996). However, some recent conceptual commentaries show that some confusion still remains about consumer knowledge in the brand extension evaluation literature, and more empirical studies are needed to focus on this factor (Czellar 2003; Grime, Diamantopoulos and Smith 2002). Thus the purpose of this study is to further examine the role of different types of consumer knowledge in brand extension evaluations.

This study answers the following question: How does product knowledge and brand knowledge together influence fit perceptions of brand extensions? If both the product knowledge and the brand knowledge affect consumer fit perceptions, do they have equal influences, or are they different?

This study contributes to the brand extension literature by investigating the effects of the product and brand knowledge in the consumer brand extension evaluation process separately. It is expected to provide a deeper understanding of whether and how different kinds of consumer knowledge affect the consumer fit perception between a new extension and its parent brand.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: First the conceptual and empirical literature pertaining to brand extension, consumer perception of fit, and consumer knowledge in brand extension evaluation are presented. Two research hypotheses are then proposed which is followed by the methodology, research design, measurements of each variable, and subjects and procedure. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section the literature on consumer fit perceptions and consumer knowledge are reviewed. Previous studies on brand extension are typically grounded in categorisation theory (Aaker and Keller 1990; Park, McCarthy and Milberg 1993; Park, Milberg and Lawson 1991). According to this theory, consumers are likely to develop a set of expectations about products and brands abstracted from previous experience and knowledge and stored in memory. When a new extension product is introduced, it is considered as a member of the original brand ‘family’ (category). Thus the affect, feelings, beliefs and attitudes associated with the original brand are expected to transfer to the new extension product.

There are two conclusions from categorisation theory. First, the consumer attitude transference from a brand to a new extension is restricted by the fit perceptions between the extension and the parent brand. In categorisation theory, the affect of a new stimulus can be retrieved, only when the stimulus fits into the category/schema with which the affect is stored (Cohen 1982; Fiske 1982; Sujan 1985). Consequently, in the case of a brand extension, consumers’ beliefs and feelings about the original brand are likely to be transferred, only when the extension product is perceived as a member of the original brand family (e.g. Aaker and Keller 1990; Consumer Behaviour Seminar 1987; Muroma and Saari 1996; Park et al. 1991). Thus the fit perception is the determinant factor in brand extension evaluations. Second, this determinant factor may be affected by consumer knowledge. A category/schema is formed based on consumers’ previous experience and knowledge (Fiske 1982), thus consumer knowledge may have an effect on the use of categorisation processing (Sujan 1985). Expert consumers with more knowledge and prior experience seem to develop better-constructed knowledge than novice consumers. Consequently this may influence the match between the target instance and the category. In other words, consumer knowledge may have an impact on
consumer perceptions of fit between the extension product and the original brand in a brand extension evaluation process.

**Consumer fit perceptions in brand extension evaluations**

As “a central component in the categorisation theory” (Zhang and Fitzgerald 1997), the consumer perception of fit between an extension product and its parent brand is the most important construct in the consumer evaluation of a brand extension. It is widely accepted that the fit perceptions determines consumer evaluations of brand extensions (e.g. Aaker and Keller 1990; Muromz and Saari 1996). Consumers will evaluate extensions that have a higher level of fit more favourably than those with lower level of fit. However, there are still some considerable viewpoints about the dimensions of consumer fit perception in the literature.

The most popular constructs in the literature that have been used to define the dimensions of fit are ‘similarity’, ‘relatedness’, ‘typicality’, and ‘brand concept consistency’ (Aaker and Keller 1990; “Consumer Behaviour Seminar 1987; Boush and Loken 1991; Herr, Farquhar and Fazio 1996; Park et al. 1991). These concepts define the ‘perception of fit’ from different aspects, but they also have some overlaps. They all measure either the product-related or the non-product-related facet of fit. The product-related dimension of ‘fit’ refers to the consistency or similarity between an extension and its original brand at product level. The product level includes the products’ shared physical features, attributes, usage-situations, and so on, which are all related to the products. The non-product-related dimension of ‘fit’ refers to the consistency or similarity at the image level. This includes shared brand image, brand personality, and so on, which are related to a brand’s image or symbolic meaning.

These two dimensions of fit do not have equal influence in all brand extension evaluations. According to Park et al. (1991), brands can be classified into two types in terms of consumers’ understanding of these brands, functional and prestige brand. A functional brand is understood in primarily in terms of product-related aspects, whereas a prestige brand is understood in primarily in terms of non-product-related aspects, like consumers’ expression of self-concepts or images. Since consumers understand and form their ‘cognitive category’ about brands based on product-related and non-product-related facets, they may also assess the fit between a new extension and its parent brand from these two aspects. For a functional brand, consumers may evaluate its extension primarily from the product-related aspect, evaluating whether the new extension’s features, attributes or performance fit or is similar to the original brand. Conversely, for a prestige brand’s extension, consumers may evaluate whether it is consistent with the symbolic meaning of the original brand prior to evaluating their product-related similarities. In other words, the product-related dimension of fit is more important for a functional-oriented brand extension, whereas non-product-related dimension of fit has a greater impact on the prestige-oriented brand extension (Park et al. 1991).

Consumer perceived fit is the key factor in a consumer brand extension evaluation process, but it may also be affected by other variables such as brand breadth, advertising content, and advertising repetition, which have all been found to moderate the effects of fit in previous research (Boush and Loken 1991; Klink and Smith 2001; Lane and Jacobson 1995). These variables can strengthen or weaken the influence of fit perceptions on consumer brand extension evaluations. Consumer knowledge was suggested to be another variable that has an impact on the fit perception in a consumer brand extension evaluation process (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Grime et al. 2002; Muthukrishnan and Weitz 1991).

**Consumer knowledge in brand extension evaluations**

Consumers with high and low knowledge react differently in a variety of consumer behaviours, for example information processing, and evaluation strategies, decision-making (Rao and Monroe 1988; Selnes and Howell 1999). The differences between high and low knowledge consumers are addressed in several related areas. These are differences in cognitive structures (Marks and Olson 1981), capabilities of analysis (Johnson and Russo 1984), inference, and memory (Selnes and Howell 1999); differences in the internal knowledge transfer (Gregan-Paxton and John, 1997); and differences in similarity judgments between brands (Bijmolt, Wedel, Pieters and De Sarro 1998). The differences between high and low knowledge consumers in these areas suggest that these different knowledge levels influences ‘fit’ perceptions in brand extension evaluations. First, consumers organise information about products hierarchically, and the degree of expertise determines how well the information will be organised (Cowley and Mitchell 2003). That is, novice consumers will have more difficulties to forming a well-developed complex and hierarchical structure than expert consumers. Second, with more developed category knowledge in memory, expert consumers may perceive the ‘fit’ or ‘inconsistency’ between an extension and the original brand more correctly than novice consumers.

Some studies have already investigated the effects of consumer knowledge on fit perceptions and extension evaluation (e.g. Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Muthukrishnan and Weitz 1991; Roux and Boush 1996). The findings in these studies show that consumer knowledge seems to have a positive relationship with extension evaluations by moderating the fit perceptions between an extension and its parent brand. However, there is still some confusion in the literature (Grime et al., 2002). These studies revised previously measured different aspects of consumer knowledge. Muthukrishnan and Weitz’s (1991) research measured consumer knowledge about product category, and did not take the knowledge about particular brands into consideration. Roux and Boush (1996) measured the consumer knowledge about the brand specifically, and did not take product knowledge into account. In Broniarczyk and Alba’s (1994) research they did not measure any kind of consumer knowledge, but they did say that “brand knowledge serves as a potent boundary condition”. Many of these studies focused on brand positioning, e.g. Sheinin (1998) also considered the affect on positioning in the case of a poor fitting brand extension. Grime et al. (2002) pointed out that previous research did not clarify whether the consumer knowledge influencing on extension evaluations relates to the product, the brand, or both. Product knowledge and brand knowledge are different.
sides of consumer knowledge but have previously treated as a single construct not separately in terms of the influences on consumer fit perceptions in brand extension evaluations.

Consumer knowledge is multidimensional, and can be classified and measured by the content (Brucks 1986). Different types or levels of consumer knowledge may have different effects on decision-making and purchasing behaviour (Brucks 1986; Fiske et al. 1994). In this study, two types of consumer knowledge will be employed based on the literature review: product knowledge and brand knowledge. ‘Product knowledge’ refers to information about product categories, either the most general category, or subcategories stored in a consumer’s memory, where as ‘brand knowledge’ refers to consumer knowledge about a brand, including brand name, attributes, benefits, concepts, images, and everything that is associated with the brand (Peter and Olson 2005).

These two types of consumer knowledge were found to have different effects on information search behaviour and brand evaluations (Bei and Heslin 1997; Fiske et al. 1994). Especially in brand evaluation, it was found that consumers who choose brands that give more value for the price are knowledgeable about the product category, whereas those who choose famous and more expensive brands consider the consistency between the brand images and their personalities, egos, or interests more than the functional aspects of products (Bei and Heslin 1997). These findings indicate that product knowledge can help consumers to evaluate brands from a product-related aspect, while brand knowledge helps consumers to evaluate brands from a non-product-related perspective.

Consequently, product and brand knowledge may play different roles in brand extension evaluations. Consumers with high product knowledge may more easily notice the product-related fit, or similarities between the new extension product and the parent brand product. On the other hand, brand knowledge may help consumers to detect the symbolic meaning consistency between the new extension product and the parent brand. As discussed earlier, the importance of two dimensions of fit varies between the functional brand and the prestige brand (Bhat and Reddy 2001). However Bhat and Reddy examined attribute associations but did not consider the overall category (product) and brand knowledge affect together on fit perceptions. The product-related fit is more important for a functional brand, whereas a non-product-related fit is more important for a prestige brand. Therefore, the relative importance of two kinds of consumer knowledge may also vary between the functional brand and prestige brand.

HYPOTHESES

Prior research on the influence of consumer knowledge concludes that consumer knowledge has a positive relationship with consumer fit perceptions between the extension and the original brand (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Muthukrishnan and Weitz 1991). Although the authors of these studies treat consumer knowledge as a single construct, they seem to have preference in terms of product knowledge and brand knowledge. Muthukrishnan and Weitz (1991) measured only product knowledge, whereas Broniarczyk and Alba (1994) and Roux and Boush (1996) considered only brand knowledge. The different measurements of consumer knowledge and similar conclusions in previous research indicate that both consumer product knowledge and brand knowledge may affect consumer fit perceptions positively, regardless the type of brand extension (functional vs. prestige). Therefore, the first hypothesis is proposed as:

H1: Product knowledge and Brand knowledge will both have a significant positive influence on fit perceptions between a parent brand and its extension product.

However, the effects of product and brand knowledge on consumer fit perceptions in brand extension evaluations may not be equal when the parent brands are different. That is, product and brand knowledge play different roles in functional vs. prestige brand extension evaluations. The reasons are, firstly, that two dimensions of fit play different roles in these two kinds of brand extension evolutions (Park et al. 1991). In a functional brand extension evaluation, consumers will pay more attention to the product-related fit. However, they will assess the non-product-related fit more in a prestige brand extension. Secondly, product and brand knowledge helps consumers to assess brands from different facets. As mentioned previously, consumers with higher product knowledge would have more ability to detect the product-related fit between an extension and its original brand. Those with higher brand knowledge would be more likely to identify the non-product-related fit between an extension and its original brand.

Combining these two reasons together, it is proposed that product knowledge would be more important in a functional brand extension evaluation, where non-product-related fit is dominant. Consumer brand knowledge would play a more important role in a prestige brand extension evaluation, because non-product-related fit is more important for prestige brands. Stated more formally:

H2a: For a functional-oriented brand, PRODUCT knowledge plays a more important role in consumer fit perceptions between the original brand and extension product than BRAND knowledge in the brand extension evaluation process.

H2b: For a prestige-oriented brand, BRAND knowledge plays a more important role in consumer fit perceptions between the parent brand and extension product than PRODUCT knowledge in the brand extension evaluation process.

Research design

Multiple Regression analysis was employed to test the proposed hypotheses. Two models were developed in order to examine the effects of product and brand knowledge on consumer fit perceptions in a functional brand extension evaluation, and in a prestige brand extension evaluation.

The functional vs. prestige brand type and their extensions were identified through two pre-tests. In pre-test 1, two brands were selected from a list of brands based on six criteria, in order to make sure they are presenting the functional and prestige brand and are the most appropriate ones. Then one extension was generated for each of these two brands in the pre-test 2. Participants in pre-test were asked to generate some possible extension products for these two brands. Then the most frequent ideas were selected as the extension that was used in the hypotheses
testing. Compaq was selected to serve as the functional brand, and the mobile phone was generated as its extension product. Apple was selected to serve as the prestige brand, and the game console was generated as its extension product.

Measurement of variables

Three items were used on seven-point scales to measure the fit perceptions. These three items measured the product-related fit perceptions, non-product-related fit perceptions, and also the overall feeling of fit between the extension and its original brand. There was also a question asking subjects to give reasons for their fit perceptions, which served as an indicator of the possible bases of fit.

The measuring items for consumer product knowledge developed in this study were intended to capture familiarity and subjective knowledge. Eight items were used and recorded on seven-point disagree-agree scales (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). These items were developed based on Alba and Hutchinson’s (1987) conceptual definition of familiarity, which were trying to capture the consumer accumulated product-related experience includes advertising exposures, product usage, decision making, information search, and purchasing. Some subjective knowledge items were borrowed from subjective knowledge measurements developed by Flynn and Goldsmith (1999). For example, “I consider myself highly knowledgeable/an expert on XX”, and “I know how to judge the quality of XX”.

The items for brand knowledge were borrowed from a previous research (Chen and He 2003), which were developed based on the brand knowledge framework developed by Keller (1993). Eight items were used and the first two items were the measurements of brand awareness. The other six were the measurements of brand image. They measure the type, favourability, strength, uniqueness, congruence, and leverage respectively. All the items were measured on a seven-point agree-disagree scales (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Subjects and procedure

A sample of one hundred and thirty one business students at a New Zealand university participated in the study. The questionnaire measured the product knowledge about computers, game consoles, and mobile phones, the brand knowledge of Apple and Compaq and also the fit perceptions between the two brands (functional vs. prestige brand) and their extensions.

Results and findings

Preliminary analyses were conducted before the hypotheses testing, in order to test the validation and reliability of the measurements, and to the manipulations. Factor analyses were carried out as validation tests. The validity of both original 8-item measurements developed for product knowledge and brand knowledge were examined in the factor analyses. Two items from this scale did not load on the first factor and were removed to ensure unidimensionality. The items removed were a product usage question, which asked how frequently the product had been used in the past 12 month, and a product ownership question, which asked whether the consumer had the product currently or not. In the brand knowledge measurement, ‘brand awareness’ and ‘congruence’ items were also removed. The validity of the 3-item fit perception was acceptable in the factor analyses. Thus both product and brand knowledge variables used a 6-item measurement, and the fit perceptions used the 3-item measurement. Cronbach’s alpha for all measurements were statistically acceptable, and over the minimum acceptable level of 0.7. The manipulation checks of function vs. prestige brands were successful with Compaq confirmed as the functional brand and Apple as prestige brand. However, the extensions for both these two brands were not as good as expected. Game console was found as an appropriate extension for Apple computer with as expected, but the mobile phone was not a good extension of Compaq computer as expected.

Two regression models were developed to test the proposed hypotheses. The first regression model tested the impact of product and brand knowledge on consumer fit perceptions in a functional brand extension evaluation (see below table 1). The other regression model tested the impact of product and brand knowledge on consumer fit perceptions in a prestige brand extension evaluation (see below table 2).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>TABLE 1</th>
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<td>Regression model -Functional Brand extension</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Independent variables</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fit perceptions of Compaq mobile phone</td>
<td>Product Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardised beta coefficients</td>
<td>0.134</td>
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<tr>
<td>t–value</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0.024</td>
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<tr>
<td>P value</td>
<td>0.204</td>
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The first hypothesis proposed that regardless of functional or prestige brand extension, both product knowledge and brand knowledge would have a positive relationship with consumer fit perceptions. To support Hypothesis 1, positive significant t-values should be found in both regression models. However, product knowledge was not found significant neither in functional nor prestige brand extension models, as shown in table 1 and 2. Thus Hypothesis 1 was not fully supported. In the functional extension the beta coefficient for product knowledge was not significant at p<0.05. For the prestige brand extension model, brand knowledge was however significant. Thus the direction of the hypothesis is supported for both types of extension but the hypothesis overall has mixed support in terms of statistical significance.

The second hypothesis examined if product and brand knowledge have different effects on consumer fit perceptions in functional or prestige brand extension evaluations. Even though the first set of hypotheses proposed that both types of consumer knowledge would have positive relationships with consumer fit perceptions, the effects of these two types of knowledge may be different in terms of the different types of brand.

Hypothesis 2a predicted that for a functional brand, product knowledge would play a more important role in consumer fit perceptions between the original brand and the extension product, than brand knowledge. The direction for this hypothesis was confirmed as product knowledge had a greater beta coefficient than brand knowledge. However, the overall analysis of variance for model 1 had an insignificant p-value of 0.204 indicating that both product and brand knowledge did not explain the variation of consumer fit perceptions well in the functional brand extension evaluation. Thus H2a was not supported.

Hypothesis 2b proposed that in a prestige brand extension, brand knowledge would have more effect on fit perceptions than product knowledge. The overall ANOVA for model 2 had a significant p-value of 0.000, indicating that product and brand knowledge explained the variation of fit perceptions in the prestige brand extension evaluation. As shown in table 2, a significant and positive relationship was found between brand knowledge and consumer fit perceptions, whereas such a relationship was found between product knowledge and consumer fit perceptions, indicating that brand knowledge has more effect on consumer fit perceptions than product knowledge in the prestige brand extension evaluation. H2b was therefore supported.

The expected influence of product knowledge in brand extension evaluations was not found in the study. Examination of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire revealed that both game consoles and mobile phones could fit with the Compaq brand because they were both technology products. But a game console could fit better with the Apple brand, not only because it was computer related or a high technology product, but also because a game console was a product for fun, which is more consistent with Apple’s image, including fun software and graphics. Thus the insignificant fit perceptions between Compaq and mobile phones showed that brand and product knowledge of Compaq was of limited value when considering this brand extension.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the effects of consumer knowledge on consumer fit perceptions between an extension and its parent brand. One of the suggestions from the results of this study is that consumer knowledge does have an impact on consumer fit perceptions between an extension and its parent brand. However, the effects of the consumer knowledge have to be discussed as separate dimensions of product knowledge and brand knowledge. Findings of this study indicated that these two types of brand knowledge is more useful than product knowledge in terms of their effect on consumer fit perceptions for both functional and prestige brand extension evaluations. Evidence also indicates brand knowledge has an impact on consumer fit perceptions, but its effect is dominant only in a prestige brand extension evaluation. In a functional brand extension evaluation, brand knowledge did not have significant effects on fit perceptions as in the prestige brand extension evaluation. The proposed relationships between product knowledge and consumer fit perceptions were not confirmed in the statistical analysis. Although the direction of the beta coefficients suggests that product knowledge

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Independent variables</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fit perceptions of Apple game console</td>
<td>Product Knowledge</td>
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<td>Standardised beta coefficients</td>
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<td>t-value</td>
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<td>P value</td>
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may be more relevant for functional extensions and brand knowledge more relevant for prestige extensions. This study highlights the importance of brand knowledge rather than product knowledge in predicting the ability of a brand to be successfully extended and the prestige nature of the brand. A functional brand appears less able to use either the consumer’s product knowledge or brand knowledge to influence extension perceptions.

The findings suggest that product knowledge and brand knowledge have different effects on consumer fit perceptions in brand extension evaluations. Therefore in future research about consumer brand extension evaluations, researchers need to be cognisant of whether the parent brand is a functional or prestige brand. Furthermore, findings of this study may also have implications for marketing practice in the areas of branding, promotion, and positioning of brand extensions. A firm could use different marketing strategies to promote and position their extensions. An extension of a prestige brand should be promoted and positioned with more brand-related information whereas the promotion of a functional brand extension may include more product information. In terms of brand concept image management, (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986) functional brands seem to be at a disadvantage in terms of being able to utilise both the parent brand knowledge and product knowledge to pursue an extension strategy compared to prestige brands.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Perceptual fit is defined as the perceived similarity between the parent and extension brand. Many studies have considered this as a critical success factor for brand extensions (Aaker and Keller 1990 1992; Boush and Loken 1991; Tauber 1988). Particularly for symbolic brands, studies have demonstrated that brand image fit is vital for invoking positive affect from extension brands (Bhat and Reddy 2001; Martinez and Pina 2003). However, some inherent gaps still persist. First, although the evaluation of brand image fit has proven to invoke a positive affect towards extension brands, the relative role of brand personality towards this relationship has not been addressed (Czellar 2003). With literature supporting the notion that brand personality as a key driver for determining brand image (Aaker 1999; Kapferer 1997; Keller 1993), a causal relationship between brand image fit and brand personality fit may surface. Hence, this becomes an issue to be examined in this study. Second, Czellar (2003) have also postulated that self-monitoring would moderate perceptual fit when the evaluation of fit is dependent on non-product related attributes such as the brand’s image and personality. This is based on the premise that the preference for symbolic brands is very much influenced by the self-monitoring disposition of consumers (Hogg, Cox and Keeling 2000; O’Cass 2001).

Therefore, by using a moderated mediation mediated moderation approach, the focus of this study is to examine the relationship between brand personality fit and brand image fit; while examining how both of these evaluations would invoke a positive affect towards the extension brand. Parallel to this, we will also examine the implication of self-monitoring as a moderator to this mediation process. As such, the following hypotheses are put forward:

H1: There is a positive causal relationship between brand personality dimension fit and brand image fit between parent and extension brands.

H2: The positive relationship between brand personality fit and the affect towards the extension brand is mediated by brand image fit.

H3a: The magnitude of the overall effect of brand personality fit towards affect on the extension brand is dependent on one’s self-monitoring disposition (mediated moderation).

H3b: The mediating process of brand image fit that intervenes between brand personality fit and affect on the extension brand will vary as a function of one’s self-monitoring disposition (mediated mediation).

An experiment was performed with 144 undergraduate students from a Western Australian university to verify the above mentioned hypotheses. In this experiment, two symbolic brands (i.e. BWM and Omega) were selected via a focus group exercise. The symbolic nature of these brands was subsequently verified through a pretest using Bhat and Reddy’s (1998) scale for measuring symbolism. The questionnaire for the main experiment consists of established scales for measuring brand personality (Aaker 1997); brand image fit (Bhat and Reddy 2001); self monitoring (Lenox and Wolfe 1984) and brand affect (Bhat and Reddy 2001). During the experiment, the subjects were assigned to different groupings. The ad stimulus used for each group differs in their brand personality characteristics. After being exposed to these ads, the subjects were instructed to respond to the questionnaire accordingly. A debrief session was conducted at the end of each experiment session.

Upon completion of the experiment, the data was analysed using a set of 3 regression analyses for measuring moderated mediation and mediated moderation (Baron and Kenny 1986; Muller, Judd and Zerbyt 2005). H1 was supported with brand personality fit found as a predictor for image fit. Similarly, H2 was supported as the results reflect that brand image fit provides both partial (Omega) and full (BMW) mediation towards the relationship between brand personality fit and the affect towards the extension brand. This implies that the positive affect that is associated to the parent brand is made accessible when brand personality fit is established (Johar, Sengupta and Aaker 2005; Meyvis and Janiszewski 2002). Hence, through the causal relationship between brand personality fit and brand image fit, the affect linked to the parent brand is then transferred to the extension brand. Thus, this extends the findings of Bhat and Reddy (2001) by revealing that the brand image fit which was found to causally influence brand affect is actually a mediator for brand personality fit. However, as for hypotheses 3, only H3b was supported but not for H3a. This demonstrates that self-monitoring would moderate the mediation process but not the direct effect of brand personality fit towards affect of the extension brand. More specifically, this implies that for high (versus low) self-monitors, the mediating process for invoking affect on the extension brand is dependent on the evaluation of brand personality fit for generating a more positive brand image fit. In turn, the positive brand image fit would transfer the affect generated by brand personality fit evaluation to the extension brand. Nonetheless, brand personality fit maintains as a predictor for brand affect regardless of one’s self-monitoring disposition.

Finally, there are some key theoretical and managerial contributions derived from this study. First, it has addressed Czellar’s (2003) proposition by demonstrating that brand personality fit evaluation is a crucial process underlying brand image fit evaluation. More precisely, it shows that consumers evaluate brand image fit by firstly making an assessment on the personality dimensions that are conveyed by both the parent and extension brands. Second, this study has provided unprecedented empirical evidence that high self-monitoring consumers would favour evaluating the entire image of the brand for perceptual fit before establishing the transfer of affect from the parent brand to the extension brand. As such, high self-monitors being more sensitive towards the social symbolic meaning of a brand would find brand image fit a more comprehensive evaluation as compared to an evaluation based solely on
brand personality fit (Czellar 2003). Finally, from a managerial perspective, this study has demonstrated that marketing professionals would need to employ different strategies for eliciting positive affect towards new extension brands. They should consider different options in communicating to consumers with differing level of self-monitoring dispositions to bring out the optimum effect from their ads and promotions.

REFERENCES

EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF BRAND LICENSING
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Dirk Ludewig, Dept. of Marketing and Management, University of Hanover

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In marketing literature the brand extension concept has received considerable attention. However, brand licensing, the external form of brand extensions, remains under-researched even though brand licensing arrangements are used more and more extensively. For example, in the United States, the revenues earned with licensed products increased from $4.9 billion in 1977 to more than $70 billion in 1996. In 1996 world-wide licensing revenues amounted to $110 billion, $23 billion of which was collected in Europe.

In this contribution we focus on positive and negative effects of brand licensing. After reviewing the literature on brand licensing and defining it as an external form of brand extension we propose to differentiate between effects that can become effective in all forms of brand extensions (brand extension specific effects) and effects that are specific to brand licensing situations (brand licensing specific effects). As we will show, brand extension specific effects have already been addressed in a number of studies. Brand licensing specific effects, however, have yet not been examined in empirical studies.

In this context we will first define brand licensing specific effects and then support our hypothesis about the existence of these effects by referring to examples. Thereafter we will present the first empirical study on brand licensing specific effects. The goal of this study was to examine whether consumer evaluation of a brand and a product is affected by prior brand-licensing knowledge (i.e., information revealing that a brand is used in licensing arrangements, respectively that a product is produced and sold under license).

Brand licensing is especially popular in the fashion and apparel industry as well as in the foods and electronics industries. Accordingly, for our exploratory study we focused four brands and four products that operate in these markets because for them the topic of brand licensing specific effects is most relevant. The first brand, Esprit, is an international lifestyle fashion brand. The examined product was an Esprit watch. Granini is a brand in the food processing industry. The product chosen was filled fruit sweets. Polaroid is a famous brand in the field of imaging technology. The typical brand licensing product to be examined was a Polaroid branded digital camera. The fourth brand was Puma, which is positioned as a sports lifestyle brand. The respective brand licensing product was a pair of Puma running shoes.

A four-group-experiment and an analysis of variance (ANOVA) were applied to analyse the (significant) effect of brand licensing information on brand equity of the licensed brands and on the product evaluation of the brand licensing products. Four groups of respondents were considered. The first group, the control group (CG), was asked to evaluate four brands and four products. This group was not provided with information on the brand licensing situation. The other three groups (EG1, EG2 and EG3) were exposed to a treatment. Firstly, the respondents were given information on brand licensing in which the concept of brand licensing was shortly explained to them. Secondly, they were provided with different artificial stimuli (competitive information and information of a consumer advice center) explaining that the four brands and four products are used in licensing agreements. After the treatment the respondents were also asked to evaluate the four brands and the four products using the same scales as the control group.

The evaluation of brand equity for the four brands was based on the brand potential index (BPI), a consumer-based brand equity approach that measures brand equity with nine dimensions. For the evaluation of the products, specific dimensions were derived for each product. On the basis of criteria that were applied in product tests and studies a first list of dimensions was created for each product. Thereafter these lists were evaluated and revised by respondents (typical product users) in a two-stage process leading to the final lists of product evaluation dimensions.

Both the brand and the product evaluation items were measured on five-point Likert-type scales. A preliminary test of the questionnaire was carried out with 29 respondents. In this context the aspects of understandability, face validity and logic of the questionnaire and the stimuli were addressed and a comprehensive test of the scales was conducted.

Thereafter a qualified and controlled convenience sample of 418 male and female consumers was drawn in December 2003 and January 2004 to represent the shopping public for the used brands and products. A total of 406 completed questionnaires could be used. The analysis of the significance of the brand licensing information on brand and product evaluation was based on individual samples for each brand and each product due to an individual stepwise elimination process of respondents for meeting the experiment prerequisites.

The ANOVA led to the following results. From 36 potential brand equity dimensions concerning the four examined brands no brand licensing specific effects (significant differences in the group means) could be proved in 35 dimensions. From 40 potential product evaluation dimensions no brand licensing specific effects (significant differences in the group means) could be proved in 39 dimensions.

In summary, no major brand licensing specific effects could be confirmed. However, we are of the opinion that the study has some potential limitations. They can be the cause that brand licensing specific effects on the licensed brand and the brand licensing product could not be confirmed. In this context we propose to address this topic in future studies more extensively. Providing the respondents with more information on the brand licensing situation, examining further brands and products, that are not typical for brand licensing and covering different moderating effects may lead to alternative results.
REFERENCES


ABSTRACT
With the growing globalisation of luxury brands, marketers are increasingly interested in the response of different cultures to marketing stimuli. Consequently, the lack of a clear definition of what makes a luxury brand and the absence of reliable and valid operational measures of luxury have hindered theoretical development in luxury brand management research and consequently its practical application in marketing. However, a brand luxury scale was recently developed using samples of Australian university students. We conducted several studies to replicate the scale development and examined cross-national consumer samples from New Zealand to further test the validity of the scale.

INTRODUCTION
Despite the importance of luxury brands in consumers’ lives and the fact that the luxury market constitutes a large economic activity in the world (Danziger 2005), a considerable amount of research in marketing has been directed to the study of non-luxury brands. Thus, in comparison there has been a lack of reliable and valid operational measures of luxury brands. As emphasised over ten years ago by Dubois and Duquesne (1993, p. 115), “we believe that an analysis of the direct relationship between consumers and brands is the key to an improved understanding of such a market”. Consequently, the development of a scale measuring the luxury of brands is important.

In consumer behavior research, a growing amount of attention has been given to the construct of luxury. Researchers have focused on how the luxury of a brand enables a consumer to express his or her own self, an ideal-self, or specific dimensions of the self through the use of a brand (Lichtenstein, Ridgway, and Netemeyer 1993). Practitioners view it as a main factor to differentiate a brand in a product category, as a central driver of consumer preference and usage, and as a common denominator that can be used to define consumption across cultures (Dubois and Laurent 1994). This study examines the antecedents of luxury-seeking consumer behavior and conduct a cross-national comparison. What distinguishes among brands that are high versus low in luxury? How could an established brand enhance its luxury appeal? Would different countries have the same luxury perceptions of the same brands?

In 1999, Vigneron and Johnson developed an operational measure of brand luxury, and then, in 2004 they developed a Brand Luxury Index scale (BLI) using Australian university students. Thus, we replicated the theoretical framework of the BLI scale from Vigneron and Johnson (2004) using the five constructs of conspicuousness, uniqueness, perfectionism, extended self, and hedonism. We begin with a brief review of the construct of luxury and its potential relevance to issues pertaining to the analysis of luxury-seeking consumer behavior. Next, we attempt to replicate the dimensionality of the scale using multiple steps to test the reliability and validity of the scale with non-student samples. Then, we compare two cross-national samples to measure the validity, namely its generalizability between Australia and New Zealand (NZ). Finally, theoretical and practical implications regarding the symbolic use of luxury brands are discussed.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
The limited psychometric work undertaken in the measurement of personal attitude towards the concept of luxury offers evidence of multi-dimensionality (Dubois and Laurent 1994). Rather than treating dimensions of luxury separately, as it has been characteristic of much of the writing in the field, Vigneron and Johnson (2004) interpreted, combined and expanded a set of luxury factors into a single framework examining a wide range of research either directly or indirectly related to the concept of luxury (e.g., Dubois and Laurent 1994; Leibenstein 1950).

It contributed to the further development of the social psychology of material possessions, linking together existing theories such as models of conspicuous consumption (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Mason 1992) and models of involvement (Horiuchi 1984). But more significantly, the luxury framework included the hedonic and perfectionist effect as additional basic motives, thus supplementing the traditional three-factor structure (i.e., snob, Veblenian, and bandwagon motives) inherited from Leibenstein (1950). In doing so, the model established a balance between personal and interpersonal oriented motives, which tended to dominate past research on brand luxury.

According from Vigneron and Johnson (2004) five key luxury dimensions must be established to create a lasting luxury brand. It is expected that different sets of consumers would have different perceptions of the level of luxury for the same brands, and that the overall luxury level of a brand would integrate these perceptions from different perspectives.

Perceived Conspicuousness
The consumption of luxury brands may be important to individuals in search of social status (Bearden and Etzel 1982) and consumers who associate price and quality often perceive high price as an indicator of luxury (Lichtenstein, Ridgway, and Netemeyer 1993). Hence, the scale includes items such as “extremely expensive”.

Perceived Uniqueness
This dimension is based on the assumptions that perceptions of exclusivity and rarity (Phau and Prendergast 2000) enhance the desire for a brand, and that this desirability is increased when the brand is also perceived as expensive (Groth and McDaniel 1993). Hence, a luxury brand difficult to find because of its uniqueness (e.g., limited edition) and which would be expensive compared to
normal standard (e.g., Jaguar car) would be even more valuable.

**Perceived Extended-Self**

Social referencing and the construction of one self appears to be determinant in consumer usage. People’s desire to conform to affluent lifestyles and/or to be distinguished from non-affluent lifestyles affects their luxury-seeking behavior. Thus, “luxury imitators” may enhance their self-concept and replicate stereotypes of affluence by consuming similar luxury items (Dittmar 1994).

**Perceived Hedonism**

Luxury-seekers may purchase and consume luxury brands for their subjective emotional benefits and intrinsically pleasing properties, rather than functional properties. The hedonic dimension refers to the sensory gratification and pleasure expected from the personal and even private consumption of luxury brands (Bearden and Etzel 1982).

**Perceived Quality/Perfection**

The literature on luxury consumption emphasises the importance of leadership in quality to ensure the perception of luxury (Dubois and Laurent 1994). Accordingly, people may perceive that luxury brands have superior quality than non-luxury brands. The five dimensions of luxury are likely correlated, they all contribute to an index of luxury. The Brand Luxury Index (BLI) is a multidimensional scale that aggregates five sub-scales to form an overall compensatory index of luxury (Appendix 1).

**APPENDIX 1**

20 Items BLI Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Wealthy/For Well Off</th>
<th>Rewarding/Pleasing</th>
<th>Popular/Elitist*</th>
<th>Exquisite/Tasteful</th>
<th>Superior/Better</th>
<th>Best Quality/Good Quality</th>
<th>Sophisticated/Original</th>
<th>Attractive/Glamorous*</th>
<th>Crafted/Manufactured</th>
<th>Precious/Valuable</th>
<th>Rare/Uncommon</th>
<th>Successful/Well Regarded</th>
<th>Conspicuous/Noticeable</th>
<th>Affordable/Extremely Expensive*</th>
<th>Very Powerful/Fairly Powerful</th>
<th>Fairly Exclusive/Very Exclusive*</th>
<th>Unique/Unusual</th>
<th>Leading/Influential</th>
<th>Upmarket/Luxurious *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note: (*) Indicates item is reverse scored.

While consumers may choose to maximise all five dimensions, in practice, consumers may trade off less salient dimensions for more salient ones. Consistent with the literature on luxury, the semantic space between high and low luxury is only comprised between narrow shades of meanings where items are almost synonyms.

**SCALE REPLIATION**

The Brand Luxury Index scale is using a semantic differential scale as recommended when measuring abstract concepts over different brands (Mindak 1961). The replication study process employed in this study (Table 1) followed the paradigm developed by Nunnally (1978) and Churchill (1979), and included examinations recommended by Gerbing and Anderson (1988) and DeVellis (1991). Data for replicating the scale were collected using Internet and email self-administered surveys based on a list of classic car club members from Australia and New Zealand in early Spring 2005. Most of the members owned one or several British Classic cars such as AC, Aston-Martin, Austin-Healey, Bentley, Jaguar, MG, or Rolls-Royce.

Cross-national replication and reliability assessment of an existing scale is an important step in testing its generalizability and constitutes a subsequent contribution in the consumer literature (i.e., SERVQUAL, involvement, etc.). In order to replicate the original study, we examined the reliability and then the validity of the BLI scale using a non-student Australian data samples.

**FIRST STUDY: RELIABILITY**

**Internal Scale Reliability Analysis**

The results from the initial analysis indicated that for Rolex watches (N=116) and Porsche cars (N=156) the scale reported Cronbach Alpha coefficients greater than .88, suggesting significant internal reliability for the scale. To extend the reliability analysis, we examined the item-to-total correlations for each item within all samples, with significant values ranging from .30 to .80.

**Factor Analysis**

Factor analysis was then performed on the 20-item scale to summarise the data in terms of a set of underlying dimensions. Principle component analysis with varimax rotation was used to evaluate and identify the component factors. Varimax rotation was preferred to Oblimin, even though factor correlation was anticipated. Oblimin rotation was performed and resulted in a slightly less satisfactory solution. These results were also confirmed across the study. In interpreting the factors, a decision was made to discard the factor loadings of less than .60 (à priori). The factor analysis specification was set to converge at the desired number of 5 factors extracted. A five-factor theoretical model was the original proposed factor structure for the research.

In both samples, the first factor accounted for most of the variation in the data, explaining an average of 50% of the percentage of common variance. Exploratory factor analysis is useful for data reduction purposes, but it does not provide evidence of the uni-dimensionality of measures essential in scale analysis (Gerbing and Anderson 1988). Thus, we used confirmatory factor analysis to further test the reliability of the scale.

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

The objective of the next study was to model the proposed structural solution and measure its overall fit.
Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the 20 items was performed using a structural equation modeling computer software. The proposed framework hypothesized, first, that the factors identified by the exploratory factor analysis would be substantially related to the dimensions indicated by the structural model. Second, the conceptual model hypothesized that scores on the five latent variables would measure related, but distinguishable, constructs. The covariance matrix for the 20 items was used, and parameter estimates were computed using the maximum-likelihood method. The fit of the five-factor solution was assessed by examining factor loadings, goodness-of-fit indicators, factor intercorrelations, and by comparing it to several available alternatives (i.e., null model, one-factor model, and five-factor model). Several alternative indices were used to assess goodness-of-fit such as the Chi-square statistic and the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) (see, Hair et al. 2006).

The five-factor model for both samples, with all 20 items, each loading on its appropriate construct, yielded significant chi-square statistics, suggesting a acceptable fit for the five-factor model. The other indices for measuring the goodness-of-fit also indicated an acceptable fit to the data, as evidenced by the findings. For instance, relatively good GFI values, .94 (Rolex), .96 (Porsche).

### Item Reliability Over-Time
The consistency of measurement was determined using the same subject population over two periods of time and. A new set of respondents (N = 111) initially rated two new brands, TAG-Heuer watches and Mercedes-Benz cars. We used only the respondents who completed both surveys for each brand, resulting in a loss of 7 respondents.

The average Pearson correlation between time one and time two on total scores was .84. Test-retest Pearson correlations for each brand were as follows: TAG-Heuer r = .83; Mercedes-Benz r = .86. These brands were also tested for internal scale reliability over the two periods. The Cronbach alpha coefficient ranged from .87 to .91, and the item-to-total correlations ranged from .42 to .63. Altogether, these results demonstrated a significant reliability (Table 2). In addition, we computed two structural models, one for each brand. Mercedes-Benz, indicated a better fit, $\chi^2 = 174.13$, p<.027 than TAG-Heuer items, $\chi^2 = 208.61$, p<.032.

---

### TABLE 1
Summary of the Scale Replication Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Scale Development</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Analysis Procedure</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Rolex watches, Porsche cars, Tag-Heuer watches, &amp; M-Benz cars (N=394)</td>
<td>• Internal Reliability (N=172) • Reliability over Time (N=111)</td>
<td>Good factor and time reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>BMW cars Jaguar cars (N=217)</td>
<td>• Content validity (N=104) • Predictive validity (N=113)</td>
<td>Significant level of validity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-National Study</td>
<td>Australia (N=283) &amp; New Zealand (N=228)</td>
<td>Cross sample factor structure: Cattell’s Salient Similarity Index</td>
<td>Down to 15 items</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### TABLE 2
CFA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Porsche Cars</th>
<th>Rolex Watches</th>
<th>Mercedes-Benz Cars</th>
<th>TAG-Heuer Watches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>226.32</td>
<td>255.30</td>
<td>174.13</td>
<td>208.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2/dl$</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION OF THE RELIABILITY STUDY
Analysis of the results indicates a satisfactory stability of the scale factorization and of the level of reliability over time. The second study assessed the validity of the scale, using content and predictive validity.

SECOND STUDY: VALIDITY RESEARCH
Content Validity
This study was an attempt to substantiate and extend the findings of the reliability analysis by showing a direct relation between the results from the BLI scale and the content analysis of respondents’ open-ended answers. We used BMW cars (N=104) to test the 20 item-scale. After the respondents had completed the questionnaire, we asked them to answer the following open-ended question: “Please, we would be grateful if you could write in your own words and as simply as possible, the reason why you rated this brand that way”. Subjects were classified into three groups, according to their “brand luxury index” mean score. Three judges assessed the total set of open-ended responses depending on whether the open-ended responses were representing an attitude describing a low, medium, or high level of luxury toward the brand. The classification of respondents into three groups was supported by the mean score results. These results revealed a significant association (88% agreement) between the open-ended answers and their scores, providing further evidence to support the validity of the scale.

4.2 Predictive Validity
The purpose of this validity test was to measure the accuracy of the scale. A single-item attitude scale (measuring only luxury) was used as a criterion to obtain a score classified into three distinct categories (high, medium and low luxury). This method was strictly borrowed from Zaichkowsky (1985). A new set of respondents rated one brand (i.e., Jaguar cars, N = 113) using the BLI scale, and then, they used the criterion scale to classify Jaguar into the 3 specified categories. Based on DeVellis (1991), we defined accuracy as the proportion of correct classifications, i.e., the higher the correlation between the BLI scale and the criterion, the greater the validity of the BLI scale as a predictor of luxury for brands.

The predictive validity study suggested that the BLI scale was sensitive for measuring luxury, and provided further evidence for accuracy. The anticipated scores predicted with the criterion-related scale were subsequently obtained to a very satisfactory degree with the BLI scale (i.e., correlations ranging from .44 to .49).

CONCLUSION OF THE VALIDITY RESEARCH
The present study yielded encouraging evidence concerning the construct validity of the BLI scale and its multi-dimensionality (i.e., conspicuousness, uniqueness, quality, self-perception, and hedonism).

STUDY 3: CROSS NATIONAL EVALUATION
In addition, this study examined the cross-national psychometric properties of the Brand Luxury Index scale using samples from two countries thought to be cross-nationally homogenous. The scale was originally developed in Australia and to evaluate its external validity it is necessary to replicate its development in a number of different contexts and cultures.

From a cross-national perspective, two issues need to be addressed. First, reliable and valid measurement is necessary to obtain accurate information pertaining to consumer attitudes and evaluations of brands. Similarities and differences may be obtained when evaluating cross-national properties of a scale but the most important are the results but the background of evidence supporting these results. Although we expect a scale to be largely stable across contexts, one cannot underestimate, for instance, the influence of different cultures on people perceptions of similar brands. A second issue is linked to the selection of countries chosen for cross-national evaluations. There is no valid reference that state or rank countries according to their level of cross-national difference or similarity. Thus, one can only assume that there will be significant level of difference or similarity when choosing two different countries. The next logical sampling population chosen for replication was New Zealand due to its geographic proximity and most importantly its cultural diversity from Australia. Both are Anglo-Saxon in origin but have developed distinctive economies and cultural heritage.

A two-part data analysis was employed. First, the dimensionality and internal consistency reliability of the scale was examined. If the scale is applicable across countries, its multidimensional factor structure, pattern of factor loadings, and previously found high level of reliability should be replicated across samples from different countries. Part two involved identifying similarities and differences between the two sets of data to form a concurrent factor model that was satisfactory across both countries.

Data analysis
A sample of 126 classic car club members from several lists of clubs in New Zealand was used for the replication process (three discarded incomplete scales). Respondents were asked to evaluate Rolex watches (N=105) and Porsche cars (N=123) with the 20-item BLI scale. Data examination revealed no unusual response patterns and scale items were all normally distributed and fit the [+2 to -2] range of kurtosis and skewness acceptable levels.

The Cronbach alpha procedure ran on the 20-item scale yielded a score of 0.74, a little below the recorded alpha from the Australian sample. To improve the reliability of the scale, five items from the original twenty were deleted: popular/elitist, attractive/glamorous, conspicuous/noticeable, leading/influential and upmarket/luxurious. These items were found across four of the original five-factor structure and were not concentrated in one dimension. The resulting 15 items accounted for an alpha level = .80. The first step in confirming the factor structure for the New Zealand sample involved a five-factor forced solution using principal component analysis with VARIMAX rotation. These were the same parameters used in the Australian samples. Results of the analysis did not support the original factor structure found for the BLI. The leading indicators could not be found in any consistent manner throughout the factor structure. Given this, we examined the NZ data according to its natural optimal
factor solution. Using a combination of the eigenvalue criterion and the scree test, the optimal factor structure for the NZ sample was 3 as shown in Table 3.

### TABLE 3
Three-Factor Solution for the New Zealand Sample

**Rotated Component Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1 &quot;Quality&quot;</th>
<th>2 &quot;Social&quot;</th>
<th>3 &quot;Unique&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sophisticated</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wealthy</td>
<td>.655</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclusive</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>superior</td>
<td>.598</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>best quality</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crafted</td>
<td>.449</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stunning</td>
<td>.430</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exquisite</td>
<td>.428</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very powerful</td>
<td></td>
<td>.702</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unique</td>
<td></td>
<td>.670</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extr. expensive</td>
<td></td>
<td>.598</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>precious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>successful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rewarding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.480</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Extraction & Rotation Method:** Principal Component Analysis with Varimax.

Three components accounting for 18%, 14% and 13% respectively (45% total) represented the best fit to the NZ sample. Attempting to name these factors was not as clear as in the Australian sample. But judging from the leading indicators, it appeared that Quality, Social and Unique were roughly equivalent labels for the factors.

**Total Variance Explained**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Variance</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.729</td>
<td>18.191</td>
<td>18.191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.162</td>
<td>14.412</td>
<td>32.603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.994</td>
<td>13.292</td>
<td>45.895</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Extraction Method:** Principal Component Analysis.

Data suggested that the conspicuous and hedonic dimensions were not clear in the NZ sample. Although correlated the Social and Unique factors are conceptually different. Unique is a function of the brand image versus Social is a function of the user imagery.

**Comparing factor structures across samples**

Visual inspection after our first factor analysis suggests that the five-factor solution was not replicated in the NZ sample. However, perhaps the more parsimonious three-factor solution found here could also fit the Australian sample. In order to compare the three-factor structure across both samples, the principal component analysis was run on the Australian sample, forcing a three-factor solution. Results are displayed in Table 4. The resulting structure explained 54% of the variance with the first factor accounting for 20%, the second for 19% and the third for 15%. The first factor combined the more "experiential" components of Conspicuous, Hedonic and Social while the second replicated the "Unique" factor found in previous analyses. The third factor was also a replication of the Quality component. Again, visual inspection suggested that the first factor in the NZ sample "Quality" could match the third factor in the Australian sample also labeled "Quality". The third factor in the NZ sample labeled "Unique" also could match the second factor in the Australian sample also called "Unique". The remaining factors 2 and 1 did not
appear to have any significant correlation. As recommended in Catell and Baggaley (1960) when factor comparisons are less obvious, Cattell’s Salient Similarity Index, $g$ and the Pearson correlation $r$ were computed from the full set of factor loadings to empirically determine the significance of the comparison. Firstly, factor 1 "Quality" in NZ was compared to factor 3 "Quality" in Australia. The $g$ value was 0.62 which exceeded the value expected by chance ($v=0.51$) at $p=0.02$. The correlation between the loadings was $r = 0.49$ which suggests some similarity in the factors for "Quality". Secondly, factor 3 in NZ was compared to factor 2 in Australia which generated a $g$ value of 0.40 but not enough to be significant ($v=0.26$, $p=0.138$) and with a correlation $r = 0.41$. Finally, factor 2 in NZ was compared to factor 1 in Australia and the results here show a $g$ value of 0.46 but not significant ($v=0.26$, $p=0.138$) and a low correlation of $r = 0.17$.

TABLE 4
Three-Factor Solution for the Australian Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rotated Component Matrix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1 &quot;Conspicuous&quot;</th>
<th>2 &quot;Unique&quot;</th>
<th>3 &quot;Quality&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wealthy</td>
<td>.690</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extr. expensive</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exquisite</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stunning</td>
<td>.650</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glamorous</td>
<td>.604</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rewarding</td>
<td>.579</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conspicuous</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>elitist</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>very powerful</td>
<td>.563</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leading</td>
<td>.517</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luxurious</td>
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<td>.757</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rare</td>
<td></td>
<td>.754</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unique</td>
<td></td>
<td>.746</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclusive</td>
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<td>.720</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>precious</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>successful</td>
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<td>.515</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>best quality</td>
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<td>.728</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crafted</td>
<td></td>
<td>.722</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sophisticated</td>
<td></td>
<td>.715</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>superior</td>
<td></td>
<td>.695</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction & Rotation Method: Principal Component Analysis with Varimax.

Total Variance Explained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Variance</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.974</td>
<td>19.869</td>
<td>19.869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.757</td>
<td>18.785</td>
<td>38.654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.992</td>
<td>14.962</td>
<td>53.617</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Finding similarities and differences

The data analysis suggested that only one clear common factor emerged from the cross-sample replication. In NZ, "Quality" dimensions explained most of the variance and could perhaps be interpreted as a skew towards the more functional attributes of luxury brand. Further, the
conspicuous/hedonic dimensions explained most of the variance in the Australian sample, suggesting a more experiential skew towards luxury brands. Although the magnitude of these differences was small to moderate, they highlighted the potential effect of culture on the perceptions of luxury brands. For instance, a mean comparison of the composite score derived from the 15-item version of the BLI scale showed a significant difference in the level of luxury perceived for similar brands across countries (NZ sample, N=228: bpi=3.19, std=0.86; Australia sample, N=272: bpi=2.76, std=0.66; t value =5.52, df=387, p<0.000). Australians perceived significantly higher luxury levels for the same brands as New Zealanders did. In NZ, males perceived significantly more luxury than females but in both countries, Porsche cars scored consistently higher than Rolex watches. Cross-cultural replications might highlight differing degrees of enthusiasm and cultural values toward luxury.

**DISCUSSION**

**Implications**

The present research revealed that the concept of luxury is multidimensional and it replicated a five-factor model in Australia, but failed to replicate the framework in New Zealand. In developing a scale measuring the concept of luxury, we established evidence for both aspects of reliability and validity. However, our study addressed the need to establish the psychometric properties of cross-national measures and it exposed the need to evaluate the applicability of concepts developed in one country to other countries (Parameswaran and Yaprak 1987). The results pertaining to the BLI scale’s dimensionality using the replication sample from non-students samples in Australia is as strong as the original study. However, the results from the New Zealand samples are not as strong as the Australian samples internal consistency and face validity results. Although the factor structure had to be re-modeled to achieve a more comparable structure, the mean scores obtained from the two scales are directionally similar which provides evidence of nomological validity since one would expect the luxury image closely related between the two countries.

It is interesting to conclude that one should not assume that two countries often associated, such as Australia and New Zealand, are homogenous. As it appears, strong differences of perception have been identified in this study. This context may be the result of the hypersensitivity related to the particular surveyed brands. After all, people are increasingly exposed to luxury consumption and brand images throughout the world. Thus, global marketers can use marketing to homogenise worldwide demand by focusing on common basic luxury perceptions across many cultures. Nonetheless, globalisation should not ignore such profound cultural differences. People’s consumption of luxury brands is often complex and subtle and slight differences may be understated.

As noted, the results of this research could serve various purposes, most importantly it could build brand luxury, or address issues such as how to maintain brand luxury once it is established. The BLI scale is particularly useful for comparing several luxury brands and thus for recognizing competitive advantage. Relative strengths and weaknesses can be identified in the target market across each of the 20 items comprising the scale or each of the five underlying constructs determined by the research. It would definitely be an asset for global firms wishing to promote luxury brands across cultures. Based on our analysis, one cannot assume duplication of key drivers of luxury even across cultures sharing a common heritage.

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

Further replication and extension would be required to improve the scale potential. (a) For example, it would be interesting to identify the perceived number of levels of brand luxury, for instance, [high and low] or [high, medium, and low]. (b) The replication of these findings should be tested with more contrasting cross-cultural samples such as cultures with known individualistic behavior such as USA or Europe, and more collectivist cultures such as China. Collectivist cultures may perceive more interpersonal dimensions, and in contrast, individualistic cultures may emphasise more personal and emotional dimensions acquired from consuming luxury brands. (c) Further research will include questions on social desirability, socio-economic conditions, and other relevant constructs to understand the nomological network of brand luxury.

**Limitations**

A major critique of survey-based research in general is that people’s responses may be constructed without much prior thought involved. That is, there may be “a demand effect” from “leading” terms such as elitist (positive connotations) and popular (negative connotations). An individual’s motivation is not always obvious and conscious. Indeed, abstract constructs are more difficult to measure, and people may try to give biased answers when dealing with luxury brands. Also, the brands or variables that we have selected may have been more salient of luxury in Australia than in New Zealand.

In conclusion, the 20-item scale is sensitive to the level of luxury associated with different brands, demonstrating reliable measures, and valid results. This scale has potential value for researchers interested in measuring the decision-making process involving the consumer perceptions of luxury. From a practical standpoint, the more complete measurement of luxury perceptions provides useful information for effective positioning and promotional strategies. This is particularly effective when comparing the luxury image between different brands and hence for identifying competitive advantage.

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SESSION OVERVIEW

Versatility and a sound theoretical basis have made choice experiments a popular method for measuring consumer preferences and predicting choices in many applications (see Louviere, Hensher and Swait). However, for really new products, choice experiments may lead to less accurate forecasts of actual choices because consumers are unfamiliar with such products and their attributes, so they cannot express accurate or stable preferences for future options. One way to potentially overcome this limitation is to combine choice experiments with Information Acceleration (IA) methods (Devinney, Louviere and Colman 2003; Urban, Weinberg and Hauser 1996; Urban et al. 1997).

The idea behind IA is to place consumers in virtual environments that simulate the information that will be available to them when they make future purchase decisions. Information in IA tasks typically is presented in multimedia formats that allow respondents to freely access several sources of information like (simulated) ads, store or dealer visits, consumer reports or similar reviews, and even word-of-mouth. This contrasts with most forecasting methods that only account for the availability of information sources (Urban et al. 1996).

The objective of this session was to discuss and contrast experiences with, and perspectives on the use, and usefulness, of Information Acceleration (IA) for exploring the evolvement of consumer preferences in changing decision environments. Contributors to the session have all been working on several projects that made use of IA. The focus of the session was in particular on the effectiveness of IA as a device for enhancing choice experiments for different decision contexts. Issues to be addressed included: What is information acceleration and when could it be useful? How close can virtual decision environments match real decision environments? How to select and operationalise key attributes in decision environments; How to distinguish experimental artifacts from real decision effects? What is the role or importance of a multi-media or even holistic approach to decision making compared to single media (e.g. verbal only) approaches. What are effects of information availability and exposure on preferences? How does source credibility affect information acceleration? How should IA researchers deal with the constructive nature of preferences? (Bettman, Luce and Payne 1998).

In the session three studies were presented that demonstrate the levels of realism and complexity present in IA studies as currently conducted, thereby also demonstrating the challenges encountered in maintaining experimental control of key drivers of consumer preferences. Collectively the papers illustrate the potential of IA to become an effective tool for the study of consumer preferences and decision making, for both academic and industry research.

The first paper, “Modeling Demand for Radical New Technologies and Services” by Tim Colman, Tim Devinney and Jordan Louviere outlines an approach to information acceleration modeling that was funded through two projects by the “Smart Internet Cooperative Research Centre” in Australia. Using rich multimedia and nested discrete choice modeling experiments demand was tracked for a new PDA and online Web service. Information acceleration was used to assess the direct and mediating effects of information (e.g., advertising, word of mouth, product presentation, etc.) and context (e.g., number of products, technology development, dominant design, etc.); both of which are critical to assessing not only the decision state in which a consumer may reside but also what triggers transition between decisions states.

The second paper, “Consumer Modeling in Space Tourism: An Illustration of Information Acceleration” by Geoffrey Crouch, Tim Devinney, Jordan Louviere and Tim Colman, investigates consumer demand for a totally new and high involvement product, space travel. The paper describes a space tourism research project that was conducted with an emphasis on the presentation and manipulation of space tourism information and product attributes in the context of an online consumer choice experiment. Potential space tourism consumers currently know very little about space tourism and the characteristics of space tourism products and experiences that may emerge in the years ahead. This makes information acceleration a suitable technology for gauging consumer preferences for space tourism. A pilot test examined how the public might react when faced with four potential space tourism alternatives spanning high-altitude jet fighter flights, zero-gravity flights, sub-orbital space tourism, and orbital space tourism. The pilot provides an assessment of the role that the attributes play in influencing choice between each of the four types.

The third paper, “Decision states and information acceleration: Effects of acceleration on information search and product preferences” by Mark Morrison, Harmen Oppewal, David Waller, Paul Wang is based on an ongoing project funded by the Australian Research Council regarding how information acceleration may enhance choice model estimates (or measurements of consumer preference) in conditions where markets are changing due to, for example, the arrival of a new product. The study tracks the uptake of the DVD recorder category using the concept of decision states. Decision state measures are used to categorise respondents into broad categories such as ‘in the market’ versus ‘not in the market’. Information acceleration is used to establish if and to what extent decision state transitions will occur as the market for the study category develops.
Profitability and subsequent viability depends upon an organisational ability to meet predicted demand for new product and process innovation. However, it is a big ask to expect accurate demand estimates from traditional market research techniques that suffer from a number of obvious limitations. These limitations are typically a combination of a lack of realism with respect to purchase situations and market context, and the expense associated with dealing with such limitations. The holy grail of market research techniques is to find an approach that is sufficiently robust to allow for consumers to reveal realistic behaviour in a simulated and cost effective (to the researcher) environment. To date we have traded off realism and cost, and hoped that it did not introduce too great a degree of bias in the results.

The artificiality of market research techniques has been addressed by doing in store manipulations and setting up simulated and virtual on-line stores. These approaches work for environments where product and context are well understood. However, for many products—particularly those of the more radical variety and representing future technologies—these techniques are inappropriate as context is unlikely to be understood and consumers lack sufficient knowledge to make representative decisions. This situation is particularly problematic given the accepted importance of product innovation in strategic management and marketing (Chandy and Tellis 1998).

In this paper we rejuvenate an approach to modelling consumer demand that has struggled to make an impact on the marketing community. We argue that the main reasons for this are that information acceleration (Urban et al 1997) has been stuck in proprietary technology that is costly to implement and inflexible when asked to respond to rapidly changing new product markets. Thanks largely to recent technological advances the authors have successfully applied this technique to predict demand for radically new products and online services.

The results reported are derived from two recent projects sponsored by the Smart Internet Collaborative Research Consortium. The first, was concerned with predicting demand for a new type of personal digital assistant with full voice recognition and computer simulated response functionality. The role of IA was to provide sufficient information to ensure that potential customers became aware of the future environment in which the new product was to be used. The second, was concerned with forecasting demand for a suite of new online banking services. The role of IA was to provide alternative scenarios from which the customer becomes aware of different services. Choice modeling was then used identify the specific attributes of the service they value.

As an emerging field, IA offers much promise in predicting the likely impact of radical new technologies. The benefits are numerous and include: (1) enhanced stimuli that are visual, animated, interactive that enable different contexts to be tested (2) the engaging ease and speed with which respondents can express preferences, (3) changes in competition, product design and functionality over time can be easily incorporated.
CONSUMER MODELLING IN SPACE TOURISM:
AN ILLUSTRATION OF INFORMATION ACCELERATION
Geoffrey Crouch, LaTrobe University
Tim Devinney, Australian Graduate School of Management, UNSW
Jordan Louviere, University of Technology, Sydney
Tim Coltman, University of Wollongong

In the past year, private commercial space tourism has been demonstrated to be technologically feasible. However, what has yet to be demonstrated is the commercial feasibility in terms of consumer response. Although, there is good reason to believe that there is a strong desire on the part of many people to travel into space, this desire is generally expressed as an abstract latent desire independent of the cost and reality of what a touristic space experience might entail. Unlike many other adventure activities we know little about the characteristics of what will make a “value for money” experience for those wishing to partake of a flight into near earth, or earth, orbit. Although numbers have been bandied about, few people know what the actual cost of a ticket will be—other than it will be an expensive ticket—what the level of the training involved might entail—and how it might exclude many individuals—and how individuals react to placing one's life in someone else's yet-to-be-proven hands.

In terms of the consumer response to this new industry, the most important need is to be able to obtain a reasonable prediction of the actual demand for space tourism rather than merely interest or desire (as market research studies to date have done). However, this is quite difficult to achieve when an entirely new industry with no market demand, track record, or history is available upon which demand estimates can be based or extrapolated. Furthermore, market demand is not some hidden quantity waiting to be discovered or revealed. That is, there are many possible market demands. That is, there is a probability distribution of demand and this distribution is a function of a wide range of factors, some of which include: the price of various space tourism options, the risk inherent in these options, the competitive dynamics as the industry unfolds between different space tourism ventures and between different forms of space tourism (i.e., zero g flights, sub-orbital ST, orbital ST, etc.), and the wide array of attributes which define each space tourism alternative (e.g., duration and level of training required, type of launch and return spacecraft used, national identity of the operator, launch location, duration of the flight, etc.).

The challenge of estimating and forecasting the size of the market for space tourism is considerable and faces a number of challenges. With the exception of the two individuals who have travelled into space as tourists to date, there is no history of commercial space tourism that might reliably point to future consumer attitudes and behaviour in this market. Future market research must address the many important variables involved. Situational factors such as economic trends and events, global political developments and conflicts and changing public attitudes will also shape the context of consumer choice towards space tourism. Most importantly, however, public attitudes and interest toward space travel and tourism are not measures of actual future demand or choice behaviour. Indeed, past marketing research experience suggests the likelihood that such surveys substantially overestimate market demand, particularly in the short term. Potential space tourism consumers currently know very little about space tourism and the characteristics of space tourism products and experiences that may emerge in the years ahead. This lack of knowledge and information on the part of consumers raises a further caution concerning the conduct and interpretation of market research studies.

A pilot test examined how the public might react when faced with four potential space tourism alternatives spanning high-altitude jet fighter flights, zero-gravity flights, sub-orbital space tourism, and orbital space tourism. That is, for the purpose of this particular application, the pilot focussed on how the attributes of these four alternatives influenced how individuals might choose between the alternatives, with a focus on zero-gravity flights and sub-orbital space tourism. The pilot provides an assessment of the role that the attributes play in influencing choice between, but not within, each of the four types. It would, however, be straightforward to design a similar but different choice experiment that examined choice among alternatives within one of these types of space tourism alternatives, such as sub-orbital space tourism. This would enable an assessment to be made of the relative role that each attribute plays in influencing choice between one sub-orbital space tourism venture and another.

The proposed presentation will describe how the research was conducted with an emphasis on the presentation and manipulation of space tourism information and product attributes in the context of an online consumer choice experiment.

DECISION STATES AND INFORMATION ACCELERATION: EFFECTS OF ACCELERATION ON INFORMATION SEARCH AND PRODUCT PREFERENCES.
Mark Morrison, Charles Sturt University
Harmen Oppewal, Monash University
David Waller, University of Technology, Sydney
Paul Wang, University of Technology, Sydney

This paper presents results from a study into the effectiveness of Information Acceleration methods for enhancing the predictive ability of choice experiments. Choice experiments allow one to assess and model consumer preferences by presenting systematically varied choice sets of existing or hypothetical options (Louviere, Hensher and Swait 2000). Versatility and a sound theoretical basis have led to choice experiments being a
The idea behind IA is to place consumers in virtual environments that simulate the information that will be available to them when they make future purchase decisions (Urban et al., 1996). Information in IA tasks typically is presented in multimedia formats that allow respondents to freely access several sources of information like (simulated) ads, store or dealer visits, consumer reports or similar reviews, and even word-of-mouth. This contrasts with most forecasting methods that only account for the availability of information sources (Urban et al., 1996), IA typically tracks consumers’ active search behaviour.

Our objective is to determine the extent to which the “acceleration” provided by IA methods influence consumer decision states. Consumers flow from one state to another as a result of their search for information and in response to marketing actions (Urban, Hulland and Weinberg 1993). For example, they move from being unaware to being aware of a new product or product feature. We hypothesise that the use of IA will hasten the movement of respondents to decision states where their preferences are more completely formed, and where predictions about future product usage can more accurately be made.

The paper will firstly present some results from a study into how preferences and choice model results differ between consumers who are in the market, that is, they actively consider purchasing in a category, and those who are aware but not yet in the market to purchase from the category. The study was conducted for the DVD recorder category using a discrete choice experimental approach. It was found that, as expected, choice models have a better fit for consumers who are in the market than for those who are not in the market.

The paper will secondly present results from a follow up study in which respondents from a large consumer panel completed a similar decision task but had varying levels of access to information about DVD recorders. The data collected will allow assessing the effects of the information availability on the extent to which consumers access the information, under various conditions of information source credibility and consistency/inconsistency of product information received.

REFERENCES


THE IMPACT OF SELF-CONSTRUAL ON THE ROLES OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL REFERENCE PRICES IN PRICE EVALUATIONS

Cathy Yi Chen, Singapore Management University

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A successful pricing strategy is greatly influenced by the reference prices that consumers use in evaluating products (Kopalle, Rao and Assunao 1996). If the price of a brand is lower than the reference price, consumers are more likely to consider the brand’s price as fair and thus are more likely to purchase the brand (Garbarino and Slonim 2003). Two types of reference prices have been identified in previous literature: internal and external (Kalyanaram and Winer 1995). Internal reference price refers to the prices of the target brand that consumers consider as fair and normal based on inherent characteristics of the brand. External reference price refers to the prices of other competing brands observed at the point of purchase (Rajendran and Tellis 1994). Although early research in this area tend to believe that one type of reference price is used exclusively in price evaluations, recent studies start to adopt the view that both internal and external reference prices may jointly influence price evaluations. For example, Mazumdar and Papatla (2000) show that consumers use both internal and external reference prices, but the dominant one differs depending on consumers’ characteristics (e.g., consumers’ attitudes towards gains and losses).

In view of the large number of studies that use modeling methods on secondary data, behavioral research that use lab experiments to examine how consumers’ characteristics lead to differential focus on internal or external reference prices has been relatively quiet. In fact, previous cross-cultural studies suggest that culture may have significant influences on the use of different types of reference prices. For instance, Morris and Peng (1994) find that Americans favor using internal information whereas Chinese prefer external or contextual explanations for social events. Such differences in cognition styles may be a
The result of different value systems that can trace back to the social economic structure differences between Ancient Chinese agricultural economy and Ancient Greek herding and fishing economy (Nisbett et al. 2001).

In addition, previous research has suggested that the two dominating dimensions of self-construal (i.e., independent vs. interdependent) often work as an interpretative framework for the effect of culture. Various priming techniques can be used to make either independent or interdependent self-construal temporarily more activated, which result in an individual’s perception, cognition style and behavior change in ways that mirror those traditionally found between cultures (Brewer and Gardner 1996; Gardner, Gabriel and Lee 1999; Trafimow, Triandis and Goto 1991). For example, Gardner et al (1999) find that when an independent self-construal is primed, participants are more likely to endorse values of individualistic cultures (e.g., freedom, independence, choosing one’s own goals), whereas when interdependent self is primed, participants are more likely to endorse values of collectivistic culture (e.g., belongingness, family safety, connection). Ybarra and Trafimow (1998) find that priming an independent self-construal causes participants to place more weight on inherent attributes, but priming an interdependent self-construal causes participants to place more weight on subjective norms and contextual factors.

Based on previous review, it is reasonable to believe that consumers with an activated independent self-construal are more likely to endorse and adopt the cognition styles of Western culture. As a result, they may tend to believe a brand’s price should be more influenced by its inherent characteristics and thus give high decision weights to internal reference prices when evaluating a current price. In contrast, consumers with an activated interdependent self-construal may think and behave more like East Asians. As a result, they may tend to believe situational information like prices of competing brands (i.e., external reference prices) should be more responsible for the current price of the target brand. The impact of self-construal on the use of internal versus external reference prices is investigated in two experiments.

Experiment One examined how self-construal influenced the relative impact of internal reference prices, which are estimated based on the descriptions of a target brand, and external reference prices (i.e., the current prices of competing brands) on consumers’ evaluation of the current price of the target brand. 97 participants were randomly assigned to one of a 2 self-construal priming (Independent vs. Interdependent) x 2 external reference price levels (low vs. high) between-subject conditions. Participants were first shown a 20” flat panel TV illustrated with a photo and described with five technical attributes. They were then asked to estimate a fair price based on the description. Participants were divided into two groups later using a median-split of the estimates of internal reference prices. Afterwards, the current price of the target brand as well as the information and the prices of two competing brands were provided to the participants. Last, participants were asked to rate the attractiveness of the current price for the target brand. Data revealed that the evaluation of the target price was significantly influenced by their internal reference prices only when the participants were primed with independent (vs. interdependent self-construal). In contrast, the external reference prices only had significant effect on price evaluations when participants were primed with interdependent (vs. independent) self-construal. The cultural orientation self-construal was also measured before the study and found to reveal similar effects on the differential uses of internal versus external reference prices in product evaluations.

Experiment Two examined the impact of self-construal on the use of internal versus external reference prices when the external price information was made highly relevant. One objective of Experiment two is to rule out an alternative explanation of experiment one, which may argue that the finding was due to the particular method of self-construal priming on the use of external price information. Thus, a different priming method was used. 105 participants were randomly assigned to one of a 2 priming (independent self-construal vs. interdependent self-construal) x 2 external reference prices levels (low vs. high) between-subject conditions. When the external information was made highly relevant, participants in both priming conditions were influenced by the external reference prices to a similar extent. However, the differences in the use of internal reference prices still remained. In other words, the results replicated the finding of Experiment One and showed that participants primed with interdependent self-construal were less influenced by their internal reference price than participants primed with independent self-construal.

This research extends previous research on the cross-cultural differences of cognition style, and enriches knowledge on the consumers’ difference in using types of reference price.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers often turn down a good purchase opportunity just because they have previously foregone a much better opportunity in the past. For example, they frequently choose not to buy a product at a discounted price, if they have failed to take advantage of an earlier, much deeper discount on the same product. Research on decision-avoidance shows that consumers exhibit this tendency, termed inaction inertia because they code the unfavorable price discrepancy between the current and the foregone opportunities as a loss and decline the current opportunity in order to shield themselves from the anticipated regret that they would they would experience if they made the purchase.

In this paper, we argue that the addition of even a trivial attribute to the current product may be sufficient to mitigate the regret arising from an adverse price discrepancy between the current and foregone products and restore the likelihood of purchase. We posit that, much like a trivial attribute creates meaningful differentiation among products that are concurrently available, it can also create differentiation between those that are temporally separated. Therefore, the addition of a trivial attribute to the currently available product may be sufficient to help manage the psychological deficit that results from an adverse price discrepancy between the current and the foregone product. Such an attribute can serve to reduce the anticipated regret from having missed the previous lower-price opportunity and restore the likelihood of purchase.

We examine this issue using a series of four studies in which we manipulate the prices and the feature set of the current and the foregone product and measure the likelihood of purchase. The results from the first study show that the addition of merely a distinguishable trivial attribute does suppress inaction inertia and restores purchase likelihood that has been otherwise suppressed because of having missed a previous, lower-price opportunity. The second study shows that it is the addition of an identifiable and distinguishable trivial attribute, not merely the difference in the feature sets of the two products, that suppresses inaction inertia. The third study shows that the effect of trivial attributes on purchase likelihood is asymmetric. Specifically, while adding a trivial attribute to the current product suppresses inaction inertia, adding one to the foregone product does not exacerbate it. And finally, the fourth study shows that if alternative psychological mechanisms are available to reduce the anticipated regret from having missed a previous, lower-price, opportunity, then the addition of a trivial attribute to the current product does not have an incremental additive effect on purchase likelihood. A mediation analysis of the data from the studies implicates regret as the mediating variable between the presence or absence of a trivial attribute in the current product and the level of purchase likelihood.

Taken together, the results from these studies extend the literature on inaction inertia by demonstrating that a trivial differentiation on one dimension, say feature set, may be sufficient to suppress inaction inertia cause by a large, adverse discrepancy on another dimension, say price. Our results also extend the literature on trivial attributes from the domain of brand choice to the context of purchase incidence. They provide a complementary perspective to the finding that meaningless differentiation facilitates decision resolution by providing a reason to prefer one option over concurrently available others. We show that when a consumer is motivated to reduce regret caused by a failure to previously take advantage of a better opportunity, a trivial attribute can also provide a reason to accept rather than forego the current option that “is” when the consumer is cognizant of a fictitious, lower-priced, option that “could have been.”

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interest and final price, when compared with a high starting bid.

H2: Auctions with a high number of bids will show higher auction interest and final price than auctions with a low number of bids.

H3: A seller with a high reputation will attract more auction interest and a higher final price than auctions held by sellers with low reputations.

H4: A low reserve price will increase auction interest and final price when compared to a high reserve price (relative to the price of the product), when it is disclosed.

H5: A longer auction of seven days duration will increase auction interest and final price, compared to a shorter one day auction.

METHODOLOGY
Utilising a quasi-experimental design means auction participants were unaware of their participation in the experiment, as data collected is publicly available to bidders and observers. The online auction website for this experiment was selected based on AC Nielsen Net Ratings (2004), which stated the chosen site was ranked first place in the top 10 shopping websites for the country in which it is based. Selection of four product categories suitable for this experimental study was based on existing online auction literature. Consequently, the product categories chosen for this study were cars, computers, books and DVDs. Cars and computers represent high involvement products; whilst books and DVDs are considered low involvement goods. This categorisation was based on the criteria from Zaichkowsky’s (1994) Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) theory.

A total of 431 auctions were monitored and categorised into the four product groups: cars, computers, books and DVDs. The data was collected and processed over a three week period, with a non-specific time for data collection to ensure a significant sample size was achieved. The study variables include seller reputation, auction length, bidding history, starting bidding price, reserve price, security feature - support safe trader, picture, auction information, and auction attraction features. The dependent variables are auction interest and final price: Auction interest is represented by the number of hits, and final price is the final bid value of the auction. Examination of the auction results focuses on two important outcomes: auction interest and final price. It was found that auction variables that impact overall auction interest and final price appear to vary depending on the nature of the product advertised. Bidding history, measured by the number of bids, factored across all four product categories examined as associated with increased interest.

RESULTS
H1 which states a low starting bid will generate higher auction interest and final price, when compared with a high starting bid is supported for low involvement products such as DVD’s and books, positively influencing final price. Hence, the findings of Lucking-Reiley (1999) and Gilkeson and Reynolds (2003) that starting the bidding at a falsely low minimum bid might generate interest, create bidding momentum and consequently send bidding past the reserve, appears to apply only to low involvement products. H2 states that auctions with a high number of bids will attract more auction interest (measured by the number of hits) and obtain a higher final price than auctions with a low number of bids. The findings support this hypothesis with strong effects observed across all four product categories for the dependent measures of auction interest. This finding supports Smith’s (1989) social inertia theory that increased bidding competition will often increase the final sale price and overall interest in the auction.

H3 stated that auctions conducted by a seller with a high reputation will attract more interest and hence a higher final price than auctions held by sellers with low reputations. This was partially supported as it demonstrated an impact on the dependent measure of final price, for high involvement products only. As the level of risk is much lower for items such as books or DVD’s versus cars or computers, a variance between product categories regarding the influence of seller reputation can be normally expected.

H4 states a low reserve price will result in a higher final price and increased auction interest when compared to a high reserve price (relative to the price of the product). The experiment results show, H4 is supported for the dependent measure final price for the high involvement products of computers and cars, which typically involve higher bid levels than DVD’s and books. For the auction interest dependent measure, this hypothesis is not supported.

Finally, H5 states an auction of seven days duration will attract higher prices than a one day auction. This hypothesis was supported for the dependent measure auction interest for the three product categories of books, computers and cars. However, there was no auction duration effect on final price.

CONCLUSION
Practically, this research indicates to online auction hosts and sellers, methods to increase auction interest and maximise final price dependent on the type of product they are attempting to sell. The model provided may act as guide for which variables are important when orchestrating an online auction. Theoretically, this research provides a link between traditional in-person auction theory and the rapidly growing online auction market and also contributes in blending expansive developed theories underlying traditional in-person auctions, with the emerging and rapidly growing medium of online auctions.

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THE GAMES SHOPPER’S PLAY: DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTIVENESS OF GAMES-BASED PROMOTION ACROSS CONSUMERS
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Marketers use a variety of promotional vehicles to entice point of sale purchases and increase satisfaction with the shopping experience. One such vehicle is the lottery-like scratch-and-win card that consumers must actively scratch to reveal possible deals. This type of promotion is being used extensively by marketers, including fast food chains such as McDonald’s. Presumably, the gaming experience increases the chances that shoppers will take advantage of the offered deal. In this research we test this assertion and offer that the attractiveness of game-based promotional deals is moderated by individual differences in the need for control over ones life. The results of three studies indicate that the gaming vehicle increases deal acceptance for consumers with a low need for control and decreases its acceptance for consumers with a high need for control.

Effects of Promotional Games on Deal Purchase
Shoppers who win a deal opportunity via an in-store game may find that the experience enhances the attractiveness of the offered deal. Why might this be the case? First, consumers may feel that they contributed to the successful gaming experience. That is, they attribute this success to their own “luck”—a positive personal attribute in which one can take pride, similar to intelligence or athleticism. This sort of personalization of an objectively skill-irrelevant outcome serves individuals’ fundamental need to feel some level of control over their day-to-day lives (Adler 1956). Because people frequently do not have direct, tacit control over events they encounter, they sometimes adopt beliefs that offer a secondary means of maintaining feelings of control (Rothbaum, Weisz and Snyder 1982). The secondary control mode can be contrasted with the primary control mode, which involves exerting direct influence on one’s environment to control it. Individual makes use of the secondary mode by adopting beliefs that allow them to feel some level of control over uncontrollable events and situations. Through beliefs in luck—i.e., thinking that chance forces can conspire to support and protect oneself—people are able to more comfortably face the difficult, uncontrollable world in which they live. The secondary mode of control is, then, a coping mechanism of sorts. Note that members of society often subscribe to a host of other philosophical or religious beliefs that offer similar comfort.

In addition to believing that individuals can be supported by chance, people have a desire to confirm that they are indeed one of those supported individuals. A winning gaming experience can contribute to this confirmation, and thus can provide feelings of competence and positive self-regard (Gilovich and Douglas 1983). And the purchase of a deal that has been delivered via this experience can reinforce these feelings, because consumers seek to advance their own self-concepts via their purchasing behaviors (Belk 1988). That is, a shopper who seeks to confirm that she is lucky is likely to not only feel good about the gaming win, but also to embrace the offered deal—assigning it greater utility—because it is associated with the lucky outcome. That is, the fact that the deal is associated with the game win could be a reason that consumers use to justify the choice to purchase (Shafir, Simonson and Tversky 1993).

However, promotional incentives sometimes arouse psychological reactance in consumers (Kivetz 2005). Promotional efforts represent external influences that attempt to limit one’s consumption behaviors and, thus, threaten perceived freedom. Kivetz (2005) finds that this reactance causes consumers to make choices that allow them to preserve their sense of freedom. Game-based promotions limit consumers’ freedoms by directing them toward the offered deal. Thus, shoppers who win a deal in one of these promotional games might feel some reactance, which could limit any increase in purchase likelihood, or even reduce it. Importantly, the extent to which shoppers feel such reactance could vary because external incentives are likely to have differential effects across individuals. In particular, the motivation to buy the deal may vary across shoppers as a function of their receptiveness to life’s uncontrollable, external influences. Some people are less open to the impact of chance forces, sticking to the belief that they control their own destinies. These individuals can be described as having a strong internal control orientation (Rotter, 1966; for a review see Rothbaum, Wolfer and Visintainer 1979).

Iyengar and Lepper (1999) show that the sense of freedom offered by free choice is not as important to Asians (low internal control) as Americans (high internal control). They examined the length of time spent by American and Asian children on an anagram task when the puzzle was chosen either by the participant or ostensibly by his or her mother. Americans who were able to choose among anagrams were more motivated than those who had a choice made for them, though Asians displayed the opposite pattern. These results confirm that Asians are more motivated than Americans by certain external influences. Other research confirms that Asians and Americans are value free choice much differently (Kitayama et al. 2004).

We predict that individuals who have a strong internal control orientation should be less likely to purchase game-based deals than those with a weak internal control orientation. It is expected, further, that for those with a strong internal control orientation the gaming tactic can reduce deal purchase likelihood relative to when the same deal is offered as a regular store deal.

OVERVIEW OF STUDIES
In each of our studies we included both East Asians (Chinese), who tend to be receptive to external influences and likely to use secondary control tendencies, and Americans, who tend to be the opposite (Weitz, Rothbaum and Blackburn 1984). We expected that differences in control needs across these two cultures would lead to differences in choice behaviours. The results of a pilot and
two other studies confirmed this to be the case. In a pilot study, Chinese participants who won a two-for-one tissue deal on a scratch-and-win card were more likely to make a purchase than those offered the deal as a regular store promotion. In contrast, the game based deal eroded purchase among American participants. This pattern is replicated in study 1 for a Kodak golf umbrella deal. Once again, the scratch-and-win promotion improved the deal’s attractiveness among Chinese participants, but hurt attractiveness among American participants. Additionally, we show that participants’ self-reported tendencies to apply secondary control modes are predictive of their choices. Not only does a measure of control orientation mediate the influence of culture on choices, but it also explains choices in within culture analyses.

We suggest that consumers need for control drives their appreciation for the game based deal. An alternative account is that game-based promotions stimulate quality inferences regarding the offered deal. We address this alternative explanation in study 2 by observing actual choices of popular candy bar brands, for which quality should be known to participants. Here, choices were made between a candy offered via a coupon that has been drawn and one that has not. The pattern from the previous studies is replicated, and a behavioural measure of control orientation is found to mediate choice.

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FEEL-GOOD MEDICINE: HOW THE CUSTOMER METAPHOR IS UNDERMINING THE AMERICAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
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ABSTRACT
Greater commercialization and customerization of the American healthcare industry have not brought the benefits that were promised, despite claims supporting that idea. As a philosophical matter, it is highly questionable whether treating healthcare as a scarce resource to be allocated by market forces will bring the kind of quality and equity that one would expect of a civilised nation’s healthcare system. As a practical matter, consumer-driven healthcare, with its emphasis on keeping patient-customers happy, has had numerous unintended consequences, including the growing abdication of their professional responsibilities by physicians.

INTRODUCTION
Over the past twenty-five years, the American healthcare industry has undergone dramatic transformation. The introduction of “health maintenance organisations” (HMO’s), “managed care” and other business-related concepts has led to increasing commercialization and customerization of the industry. At the same time, however, increasing concerns have been expressed about whether those innovations have fulfilled their promise, or simply made matters worse. A complicating factor has been the steady flow of questionable information being provided about the costs and benefits of market-driven healthcare. For many reasons, it is critical to understand the true nature of what is happening in American healthcare. For one thing, it is a massive industry, accounting for roughly one-seventh of the Gross National Product—the country’s largest single industry, by some measures. In addition, healthcare is becoming ever more important in a country whose citizens’ average age is increasing steadily. Perhaps even more important, the U.S. is an important test case. Misunderstandings about the world’s largest healthcare system can lead to misguided policy, not just in the U.S., but in the many nations that are seeking to determine the proper balance of public versus private healthcare.

GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY AND EFFICIENCY? NOT REALLY
Proponents of market- or consumer-driven healthcare say that it will bring greater efficiencies, more accountability and better patient service. Herzlinger (1997), for example, has written extensively about how market forces, if given the opportunity, will create customised, more cost-effective healthcare. Unfortunately, both her premise and examples are flawed. Three examples:

1. Thing can’t get any worse—or can they? Herzlinger wrote: ‘Employers that currently provide insurance benefits advocate consumer-driven healthcare because it cannot be worse than the present managed care system, whose costs escalate at double-digit [rates], while quality concerns and employee unhappiness escalate” (“Five Questions” 2002). One need only revisit the late 1970s to understand how potentially wrong that statement might turn out to be, in terms of its basic assumptions. The idea that healthcare couldn’t get any worse, in terms of escalating costs and declining quality, was precisely the environment that allowed “health maintenance organisations” (HMOs) and “managed care” to make huge inroads into the American healthcare system. HMOs were sold to the American public as a panacea—a way to reduce costs and increase efficiency by focusing on wellness and preventive care (hence the term “health maintenance”) and by serving as a watchdog on greedy doctors and hospitals by using their volume purchasing clout to force lower prices for medical products and services. Under managed care, however, it became even harder to get treatment for legitimate chronic and acute health problems, much less care that would maintain health, prevent future health problems, and save money in the long run, as promised. In addition, whatever cost savings were achieved by the buying clout of HMO’s were largely or entirely forfeited by the bureaucracies they created—not to mention the barriers they often erected between doctors and patients as key medical decisions were often taken out of the hands of doctors and placed in the hands of accountants and bureaucrats.

By the end of the 1990s, multiple bills were put forth in Congress in an attempt to clean up the mess (Hess and Eversley 1999), and the number of medical schools offering classes in alternative medicine quickly doubled as the American public became more and more dissatisfied with the state of American medical care (“More Med Schools Teach Nontraditional Therapies,” 1998). The lesson to be learned from all of this was that—contrary to Herzlinger’s assertion—healthcare costs and services can always get worse, and they often do.

2. Healthcare ROI? In arguing for consumers to have greater control of their own healthcare services and costs, Herzlinger used the analogy of employees finding better returns on investments after they were allowed to take greater control over their pension assets. Bad analogy. First, the catastrophic nature of healthcare (that is, unpredictable accidents or diseases that may cost tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars) almost always requires insurance; managing one’s pension fund, by contrast, is something that is relatively predictable and often self-funded (unlike healthcare). Second, the average employee has a much better grasp of money than they do of medicine, and therefore far better ability to evaluate investment options than medical-treatment options.

Herzlinger used eyeglasses as a case study in how consumers’ control of their own medical needs can lead to greater efficiencies. (Because eyeglasses are not generally paid for by health insurers, goes the argument, costs for eyeglasses have been held in check by a market that is much more efficient than for other medical products.) Again, bad example. In one sense, she is right—a classic economic study suggested many years ago that the cost of eyeglasses went down, as a result of increased competition,
The problem is that eyeglasses are an extraordinarily simple and pervasive medical product. With the vast majority of medical products and services, however, consumers are unable to make efficient or informed decisions. As O’Brien (2003) put it:

Knowledge of what is sold is inequivalent. [Even] if patients knew the difference between a colonoscopy and colposcopy, they would not know the fair market value of either procedure. Unlike buying a car, where the dealer knows you can walk off, patients cannot negotiate, and can’t determine the quantity of medical services needed. Eyeglasses constitute a misleading example.

3. Does the market really serve everyone? Herzlinger condemned “homogenised prices” for healthcare that “make sick enrollees unprofitable.” She claimed that “other consumer-driven markets demonstrate that suppliers innovate to reach all income classes.” She used automobiles as an example of an industry that has provided quality products at a wide variety of prices. While it goes without saying that wealthier patients often have better access to information and the resources to afford better surgeons, one still has to question whether a civilised nation wants to walk a path in which a poorer person routinely receives a “Corolla” heart operation, while a wealthy person with the same medical problem gets a “Lexus” heart operation. Of course, Herzlinger’s analogy falls apart completely when one considers that the poorest citizens have no car at all. As Williams (2001) said, “Marketing teaches us to focus on (i.e., satisfy the needs and wants of) the profitable segments of the market and ignore the rest.” Herzlinger concluded that the potential benefits of market-driven healthcare are substantial, while the risks are low. That is simply not true. The benefits are questionable, while the risks have already proven to be quite high.

MAGIC PILL OR SNAKE OIL?

In fact, the fundamental premise of market- or consumer-driven healthcare is fatally flawed. As O’Brien (2003) explained, “Market forces cannot solve the medical crisis. No market exists.” Kuttner (1997, and as quoted in Black 1997) elaborated:

Healthcare is a case that is on the one hand very commercialised, but on the other hand doesn’t conform to market principles. We mess with the demand side, because we say we’re not going to let people die on the streets because they can’t afford surgery. And we mess with the supply side because we decide that doctors have to go to medical school … and get licensed before they can hang out their shingles as M.D.’s. Once you tamper with the supply side and the demand side, you have something other than market discipline at work.

Davidson (1996) has made many of the same points. Specifically, he said the marketing of healthcare lacks at least two conditions essential for the fair, efficient functioning of a market: (a) more-or-less equal standing of buyer and seller; who come together in an open exchange process, and (b) open access to knowledge on the part of both buyer and seller.

In the first case, Davidson pointed out that the exchange process in healthcare is far removed from the straightforward buyer-seller or manufacturer-retailer-customer models of marketing. To illustrate, he used the example of a patient’s purchase of a prescription drug:

First, the product must be prescribed by a physician. Second, the payer may well be an insurance company. Third, the drugstore’s pharmacist may influence the choice between branded or generic products. And fourth, the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) exercises tight control over the entire industry. This complex model distorts the exchange process almost beyond recognition.

Also regarding the requirement for more-or-less equal standing of buyer and seller, it is worth noting that consumers have limited ability to sue HMO’s, contributing to a lack of accountability and an imbalance in power. More important, the practice of medicine is one of the most “closed shops” of all industries in the United States. Unlike typical markets, which have few, if any, legal barriers to entry, a medical license is required to set up shop.

In the second case, access to knowledge, the imbalance between buyer and seller is even greater—and not by accident. While economists perpetually reiterate that perfect or near-perfect knowledge is a fundamental requirement for the proper functioning of markets, the healthcare system in the United States works continually to prevent consumers from obtaining that knowledge. To cite just one example, the American Medical Association (AMA) has sought to abolish the National Practitioner Data Bank, a federally run agency that keeps records of doctors’ malpractice-lawsuit histories, which was begun in 1990 to prevent unscrupulous doctors from skipping state-to-state without being found out. Despite efforts to open the database to the public, information is accessible only to hospitals and other groups that employ physicians.

A CURE WORSE THAN THE DISEASE

From the consumer’s perspective, the early promises of innovations such as HMO’s quickly turned out to be empty. The problems had become so acute by the 1980’s that during his tenure as President, Bill Clinton proposed a patient bill-of-rights to help protect citizens from the abuses of managed care. (The idea was abandoned after enormous pressure was applied by the healthcare industry.) By the late 1990’s, major investigations of one of the country’s largest healthcare organisations, Columbia/HCA Healthcare, called attention to some of the growing dangers of the patient-as-customer approach to healthcare. Among the accusations: above-average costs (despite claims of cheaper, more efficient healthcare); financial incentives to do unnecessary surgeries; commissions or finders’ fees for doctors who directed patients to company-owned hospitals; billing the government for unnecessary lab tests; and rejection of patients unable to pay. The hospital chain agreed to pay the federal government hundreds of millions of dollars, and eventually paid $1.7 billion in fines to settle charges of fraud and other malfeasance. Still, after all the controversies, the company (now called HCA) maintains oligopoly-type status, controlling 25-40% of the market for hospital services and earning well over $1 billion in one recent year (Galewitz 2000; Stires 2004; see also Malhotra and Miller 1996).

DRUG ABUSE

Another example of the dangers of consumer-driven healthcare is the dispensing of prescription drugs in the

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United States. Take antibiotics, as a case study. Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that as many as a third of the approximately 150 million courses of antibiotic treatment each year may be unnecessary. Doctors write roughly a million antibiotic prescriptions a year for viral infections, knowing full well that not only are antibiotics ineffective against viral infections, but also that such indiscriminate use of antibiotics can lower both the individual's and the broader community's resistance to bacteria-based infections (“Study Backs Less Use of Antibiotics” 2000).

It is difficult to say what was in the minds of all of those doctors, but it appears likely that a large percentage of those prescriptions were written to keep patients happy. “Doctors, like everybody else, like to please their patients,” according to the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “If a patient comes in with strong expectations, it is tempting, and takes less time, to write the prescription for antibiotics” (Haney 2003). In fact, two-thirds of doctor visits result in a prescription (“Another Drug Problem” 1998). A Food & Drug Administration (FDA) survey found that 69% of physicians prescribed the specific drug that patients asked for (FDA Survey 2002). The patient-as-customer mentality has become so ubiquitous, according to Rotfeld (2003a, 2003b) that “It would be unrealistic to think that many doctors would not give the requested drug, even when the advertised brand might not be the physicians’ first choice for treatment, or even when the patient might be better off not taking any drug at all.”

While prescribing an unnecessary drug, or the wrong drug, may be good for customer relations, it appears to be a violation of the Hippocratic Oath that most doctors in the U.S. take as they enter the profession, which includes a pledge “to abstain from whatever is harmful or mischievous” (“First Do No Harm” 2004). A further serious complication of unnecessary prescriptions is the potential for the creation of significant phantom illnesses and for systematic, widespread misdiagnoses and overdiaognoses. Research repeatedly finds that after a company introduces a drug for a certain condition, the number of people diagnosed with the problem increases significantly (Rotfeld 2003a). The advertising explosion for prescription drugs is one of critics’ biggest recent concerns about marketing in the healthcare arena. The amount spent on advertising for prescription drugs increased dramatically in the late 1990s, following changes in regulatory law administered by the FDA (Miller 2001), reaching $2.7 billion by 2001. The motives behind those ads are also of concern to many people. Rowland (2003) reported that “Critics, including many doctors, say drug companies are pushing remedies for ailments that already have adequate treatments.” Their concerns may be well founded, considering that there is significant evidence that doctors may be under-using proven, lifesaving drugs while over-using newer, less effective and generally much more expensive medicines. In 2004, the withdrawal of Vioxx from the market, along with serious accusations by FDA insiders, raised further questions about the pharmaceutical companies’ and the FDA’s commitment to public safety.

Interestingly, the United States is one of the very few countries in the world that doesn’t ban direct-to-consumer advertising for pharmaceuticals. In recent years, the industry’s advertising costs have exceeded its research-and-development costs, with promotional budgets of $50-100 million for the most promising drugs. In 2000, for example, Pfizer spent almost $90 million advertising Viagra to consumers. The bottom line is that, while the U.S. accounts for 46% of the industry’s $400 billion world market—a rather startling statistic in itself—it accounts for 60% of the industry’s profit (Siegel 2003).

It is worth noting, too, that the academic world has become embroiled in controversies surrounding prescription drugs. In complaining about the commercialization of American academic research, former Harvard University president Derek Bok referred specifically to drug companies insisting that research information be kept as trade secrets for the companies, a practice that directly violates academic values of collegiality and openness. In some cases, he said, the companies have pressured researchers to suppress unfavorable findings (Rimer 2003). The conflicts of interest created by industry-academic partnerships are many and varied, and generally hidden from the general public. A notable exception was an agreement between the University of California at Berkeley and a company formerly known as Novartis, which called for nearly an entire department of biology at Berkeley to participate in a five-year, $25 million corporate-sponsored program. An outside review team was called in to investigate the controversy and found, among other things, that the arrangement influenced the tenure process of a faculty member who was a critic of the partnership (Blumenstyk 2004).

**NOT THE HEALTHIEST—AND NOT FOR EVERYONE**

Underlying the entire debate about market-driven healthcare is a fact that most Americans don’t fully grasp: While American medical centers such as Johns Hopkins and the Mayo Clinic remain the best in the world (according to global surveys), the American people on average do not enjoy good health, compared with their counterparts in other industrialised nations, despite the fact that they pay more for healthcare than the citizens of any other country (Choo 2000). That conclusion is based on a plethora of data and studies, including a landmark article that appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Starfield 2000). In that study, a Johns Hopkins researcher found, among other things, that:

* The U.S. ranked 12th among 13 industrialised nations in overall health, based on such factors as life expectancy, low birth weight and infant mortality. (In another comparison reported by the World Health Organisation, the U.S. ranked 15th among 25 industrialised nations (World Health Organisation 2000).)

* While many people blame Americans’ poor health on their bad habits, Americans do not lead a particularly unhealthy lifestyle compared with other developed nations. For example, rates of smoking, alcohol consumption and cholesterol concentrations are comparatively rather low.

* The medical system itself has played a significant role in undermining Americans’ health, contributing 12,000 deaths a year due to unnecessary surgery, 7,000 deaths from
medical errors in hospitals, 20,000 deaths from other errors in hospitals, 80,000 deaths due to infections in hospitals, and 106,000 deaths due to negative effects of drugs.

Besides serious questions about the overall quality of American healthcare is the issue of equality and equal access. Various studies have suggested that about 40 million Americans—approximately 15% of the population—have no health insurance. The disparity within those numbers, however, is even more alarming, with almost a third of Hispanic-Americans uninsured, 20% of African-Americans and 20% of Asian-Americans, compared with 10% of white Americans. Worse, children are uninsured as often as the overall population, and the least insured are those in the 18-34 age group (the largest child-bearing group), 25-30% of whom are without health coverage. People who are poor, poorly educated, unemployed and/or foreign-born are much more likely than their opposites to be uninsured.

In confirming the relationship between social class and quality of healthcare, Henry (2001) discovered that the disparity becomes evident at birth and continues throughout the life cycle. Interestingly, the effect does not apply just to poor people, but is gradational in nature and applies to the higher end of the scale as well as to the lower end, so wealthy people are even healthier than the upper-middle-class groups just below them. Henry also found that the correlation between health and social class is the result of a wide spectrum of factors, including psychological (e.g., lower stress), behavioral (e.g., lower rates of smoking) and physical (e.g., living in ecologically safer neighborhoods).

**A SILVER LINING?**

In fairness to the proponents of consumer-driven healthcare, it should be noted that one of the benefits that medical consumerism may have brought is a greater responsiveness to consumers’ desire for alternatives to the drug-and-surgery dominated American healthcare system. A survey suggested that Americans were spending $14 billion a year on alternative medicine by 1993 (“More Med Schools Teach Non-Traditional Therapies” 1998), a large percentage of that out of their own pockets. It was a sum too large to ignore. As a result, the politics of medicine have changed somewhat, with the medical establishment having been forced to accept chiropractors and certain other non-MD providers as sanctioned members of the healthcare system (in the sense that now they are sometimes reimbursed by health insurers, who discovered that alternative care was often just as effective and cheaper).

Some critics, however, argue that American medicine’s openness to alternative therapies is just another, perhaps even more dangerous, manifestation of consumer-driven healthcare. A clinical professor at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, writing to the Wall Street Journal in response to an article on alternative medicine, complained that alternative or holistic medicine had found its way into medical schools for all the wrong reasons—specifically, because medical schools, hospitals, clinics and practitioners are hurting financially, causing them to adopt a give-them-what-they-want philosophy toward consumers’ weakness for the “pseudoscientific, illusory, even mystical appeal” of alternative medicine (Bartecchi 2003). In other cases, Americans are simply giving up on their own healthcare system, in favor of medical tourism to places such as Mexico, India and Thailand, where they perceive that they can get similar or even better quality healthcare at a fraction of the price.

**CONCLUSION**

It remains to be seen whether the patient-as-customer paradigm will be the cure or the disease for healthcare in the U.S. Left to its own devices, however, the possibilities for healthcare marketing are sobering to ponder:

* Bait-and-switch, in which a patient’s surgery is scheduled to be performed by a brand-name doctor, but is actually performed by an underling or an associate.

* Airline-style discounting of hospital and other medical services, based on things such as making advanced reservations and utilising services during periods of slack demand, during certain times of the day, week or year.

* Up-selling, in which doctors and hospitals try to sell patients more expensive models of the product, such as unnecessary additional diagnostic tests or a private room when a shared hospital room would do just as well.

* Rebates or discounts for patients who refer other patients.

* Frequent-patient discount cards (a hypochondriac’s dream, no doubt).

Treating patients as customers, within the existing profit-driven environment of American healthcare, does not appear to be the right prescription for an improved healthcare system. Most likely, the system needs less market—not more. Two or three decades into a grand national experiment of treating patients as customers, the promised efficiencies do not seem to have materialised, America’s standard of health (relative to other industrialised nations, at least) has declined, and the inequities in the healthcare system (based on socioeconomic status) remain wide.

Indeed, maybe the most important question in the trend toward patients-as-customers is to what extent adequate medical care should be a right, rather than an option available only to those Americans who can afford it. The purpose of a market, after all, is to allocate scarce resources. That begs the question of whether healthcare should be regarded as a scarce resource to be allocated to customers who can afford it, by profit-motivated organisations. Or should the objective be essentially the opposite—to ensure that everyone who needs it receives at least adequate medical care, as the birthright of all citizens of a civilised nation?

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EFFECTS OF CIGARETTE ON-PACK WARNING LABELS ON SMOKERS’ PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR

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Ninya Maubach, Massey University
Phil Gendall, Massey University

ABSTRACT
This research explored smokers’ reactions to pictorial warnings on cigarette packaging, and compared these to new and existing text-only warning labels. Purposive sampling yielded a sample of 310; each respondent saw one of five warning labels and their affective, cognitive and behavioural responses were measured during structured interviews. Respondents perceived the pictorial warning labels to be more credible and effective than the text-only versions, but not more fear inducing. The pictorial warnings elicited higher levels of cessation related behaviours and were perceived as better deterrents to non-smokers than any of the text-only warnings.

INTRODUCTION
Many health and public policy researchers have described smoking as the leading cause of preventable death (Taylor and Bettcher 2000). Recent WHO statistics indicate that smoking rates have risen in low and middle-income countries and researchers estimate that, by 2025, some 1.6 billion people worldwide will be smokers (Gavin 2004).

For several decades, social marketers and health researchers have developed programmes intended to reduce the likelihood that young people will become smokers and to assist smokers wishing to give up their habit. These initiatives have ranged from social marketing campaigns, to lobbying government for stricter regulation of the tobacco industry’s marketing and promotion activities. Governments have responded to health researchers’ calls for action by increasing the excise tax on tobacco and making it more difficult to afford, while bans on advertising and sponsorship and restrictions on point-of-sale displays have made it less visible. Recent legislative developments have
included bans on smoking in bars and restaurants, which have reduced smokers’ opportunities to consume tobacco products. However, while tobacco consumption levels in developed countries have generally declined, young people continue to experiment with smoking. Indeed, recent surveys estimate that a quarter of New Zealand 14-15 year olds smoke at least once a month (ASH, 2004), despite high awareness of the risks associated with smoking. The ongoing appeal of cigarette smoking is testament to the tobacco industry’s successful exploitation of legislative loopholes and their ability to utilise effectively those marketing activities that remain available to them (Hoek, 2004). To counter the increasing restrictions on traditional advertising and promotion vehicles, tobacco manufacturers have used non-traditional media, such as product placement and cigarette packages, to create and display imagery that supports smoking. Cigarette packages are a medium that reaches all smokers at the point at which they are arguably most susceptible to influence. Hammond (2004) has noted that tobacco companies carefully exploit the creative opportunities this medium offers, arguing that the meticulous design of brand imagery on packages reassures smokers who feel anxious about the medical consequences of continuing to smoke. Furthermore, Mahood (1999) warned that sophisticated use of pack design elements reduced the visibility and impact of health warnings (see also Pollay 2000; Pollay 2004; Wakefield, Morley, Horan and Cummings 2002).

Pollay has frequently described cigarette brands as “badge” products that deliver psychological benefits, as well as temporarily satiating smokers’ nicotine addiction (Pollay 2004). He argued that packaging design undergoes extraordinary levels of testing and refinement in order to shape and support smokers’ perceptions of smoking. Wakefield et al. (2002) summarised this reasoning when they described cigarette packages as “a living testimonial endorsement of the user on behalf of that brand and product” (p. 73). Health researchers quickly recognised that a medium able to reach all smokers at the very point at which they consume a cigarette had great potential to carry anti-smoking messages (Borland and Hill 1997). This fact, together with knowledge of the role that cigarette-packaging plays in maintaining brand salience, led health researchers to call for stronger warnings on cigarette packages. Since the 1960s, when text warnings first appeared on cigarette packages in the United States and United Kingdom, warnings have become more specific and increasingly sophisticated. Many countries now follow the lead set by Canada and have introduced (or are evaluating) visual on-pack warnings, which research suggests are more noticeable and more likely to stimulate cessation-related behaviours (Hammond, Fong, McDonald, Cameron and Brown 2003). The WHO has also called on signatories to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to introduce visual warning labels on all tobacco products (WHO 2004).

However, the tobacco industry remains implacably opposed to moves that would increase the size or prominence of on-pack warning messages as they claim this type of regulation interferes with their intellectual property. Given the legal challenges mounted by the tobacco industry to strike out legislative measures that would curtail their marketing activities, regulators proposing more stringent governance of the tobacco industry need a sound evidence base to support their proposals. This paper begins by reviewing the evolution of cigarette-pack warnings, before discussing findings from research that compared on-pack warning images and texts, and outlining the public policy implications of these.

Evolution of Cigarette Pack Warnings

Chapman and Carter (2003) argued strongly that consumers have a fundamental right to make informed decisions about the products they use consume (see also Mahood 1999). In the case of tobacco, this implies that consumers should receive information about the harmful consequences of smoking when that information has the greatest potential to influence their behaviour. Unlike other product packaging, which consumers often remove and discard before they can use the product, cigarette packages retain utility until smokers have consumed the entire pack. As a result, packages represent a vehicle that could convey warning information that reaches all users just when they plan to smoke.

However, the tobacco industry has, with some success, opposed the introduction of warning labels on cigarette packets (BAT 2004; Chapman and Carter 2003). The first on-pack warnings appeared during the 1970s, but were weakly worded and did little to create a level of concern that might encourage smokers to give up their habit. In addition, these warnings typically appeared at the bottom of packs and were presented in colours that merged easily with the rest of the pack, thus reducing the likelihood that smokers would attend to them.

During the 1980s, many governments mandated stronger and more specific on-pack warnings that posited causal links between smoking and a range of fatal diseases. In the 1990s, warnings increased in size and visibility and moved from the bottom of packs to the flip-top lid, where smokers were more likely to notice them. In 2000, Canada took warning labels a step further by introducing 16 visual images that complemented specific warnings about the effects of smoking. Since then, Australia, Singapore and Brazil have followed Canada’s lead, and several other countries, including New Zealand, are considering such changes.

As Chapman and Carter (2003) noted, the tobacco industry has consistently questioned the likelihood effectiveness of initiatives designed to strengthen the impact of on-pack warning messages. Among other things, the industry has argued that on pack warnings set a dangerous precedent for state intervention and warned that other products are unlikely to avoid similar restrictions being imposed on them in the future. The tobacco companies have also claimed that there is insufficient scientific evidence to substantiate the warnings now required on packs; that smokers already have a sound knowledge of the risks associated with smoking, and that increasing the size and nature of on-pack warnings interferes with their intellectual property by “disfiguring” the brand imagery (Chapman and Carter 2003).

By contrast, health researchers have noted that, unlike other products, cigarettes cause harm when used as directed, and even moderate consumption of cigarettes increases smokers’ risk of experiencing life-threatening health problems. As a result, they argue that on-pack...
warnings should be strengthened to recognise the inherent danger of smoking and the fact that smokers have no safe means of consuming cigarettes. Despite industry assertions that the risks of smoking are well-known, Mahood (1999) questioned whether smokers do actually understand the dangers of smoking and argued that their knowledge of key risks was often inadequate and over-estimated. He suggested new warnings could reinforce awareness and provide a stronger stimulus to action, even among smokers who claim to be aware of the risks of smoking (Mahood 1999).

The tobacco industry has also argued that graphic warning images would cause unnecessary distress among smokers; however, these assertions sit uneasily alongside evidence that many smokers actually want stronger on-pack warnings (Mahood 1999). Overcoming a nicotine dependency requires considerable effort and smokers who wish to quit often recognise their need for powerful stimuli that will assist them in this process (Shanahan 2000). Thus, although warnings that use images of diseased body parts may create fear and unease among smokers, this disquiet can strengthen smokers’ resolve to quit (Shanahan 2000).

However, support for the tobacco industry’s arguments has come from a surprising quarter; leading social marketers have questioned the appropriateness and effectiveness of fear-evoking imagery. Hastings and MacFadyen (2002) suggested that tactics involving threat appeals have become less effective and advocated greater use of relationship marketing to persuade smokers to align themselves with health promoters rather than the tobacco industry (see also Strahan et al. 2002). Despite these suggestions, other researchers have noted that smokers themselves believe their main motivation for quitting is fear of the health problems that will result if they continue smoking (Hill and Donovan 1998; Siegel 2002). Similarly, Biener and Taylor (2002) suggested anti-smoking campaigns that generate high levels of fear were consistently more persuasive than those that evoked less emotional reactions. More generally, researchers have found advertisements that elicited strong negative emotions were more effective than those using positive emotions (such as humour) or featuring normative messages (Biener, Ji, Gilpin and Albers 2004; Hammond 2004).

In summary, although debate continues over the specific emotions that anti-smoking campaigns should elicit, the current evidence suggests negative emotions are more effective at gaining attention and fostering behaviour than positive emotions. These findings support policy makers’ use of fear-evoking images to develop stronger and more effective on-pack warnings, such as the graphic images depicting the health consequences of smoking now featured on cigarette packages in several countries, including Canada and Australia. Research to date suggests that a high proportion of Canadian smokers had read at least one on-pack warning and those who had discussed the warning labels were more likely to intend to quit, or to quit, and to reduce the number of cigarettes they smoked (Hammond et al. 2003). Moreover, contrary to the tobacco industry’s claims, Hammond et al. (2004) found little or no evidence of any adverse effects, and, where low levels of reactance were detected, these were overwhelmingly outweighed by the positive effects of the warnings.

Similarly, New Zealand research that compared five warnings images, each representing a different type of fear, found that graphic medical images were more effective among young people than images that evoked social fear or embarrassment (Hoek et al. 2005).

However, although Hammond et al.’s (2003; 2004) research suggests the new Canadian warning labels are more effective than the text only messages they replaced, tobacco companies have questioned whether these findings indicate the novelty of the warnings or the use of visual imagery. Since the introduction of visual images will increase production costs, the tobacco industry has sought evidence that these will be more effective than refreshed text warnings to justify increased the production costs they would incur if pictorial warnings were introduced.

For several decades, advertising researchers have investigated the relationship between the text and pictorial components of print advertisements. Research studies have consistently concluded that images provide multiple cues that heighten the salience of a message and enhance recipients’ ability to recall it (Children and Houston 1984; Pieters and Wedel 2004). These findings provided the theoretical rationale for the introduction of pictorial warnings and early empirical tests examining the effectiveness of visual warning labels have concluded that these are more effective than the text only messages they replaced.

However, this work has not explored in detail whether visual warning labels are more effective than refreshed text-only warnings, thus a key question raised by the tobacco industry remains unanswered and may hamper further regulatory efforts. The research outlined in this paper was designed to address the questions raised by tobacco companies. It tested two graphic medical images used in the Australian and Canadian warning labels that had consistently evoked strong reactions in pre-testing and concept development (Elliott & Shanahan 2006; Environics 2001). These graphic images were compared to two refreshed text-only warning messages, and a control message that was the strongest of the existing text-based warnings. The research tested the following hypotheses:

H1a: Visual on-pack warning images will elicit stronger affective and cognitive reactions than text-only warnings.

H1b: Refreshed text-only warnings will elicit stronger affective and cognitive reactions than current text-only warnings.

H2a: Visual on-pack warnings will elicit higher levels of likely behaviour than text-only warnings.

H2b: Refreshed text-only warnings will elicit higher levels of likely behaviour than current text-only warnings.

METHODOLOGY
Development of Stimulus Material

Based on Strahan et al.’s (2003) framework, we developed warning labels that were eye catching, vivid and designed to evoke fear of the health-related consequences of smoking, specifically heart disease and stroke. Two images were sourced from existing warning labels used in
Canada and employed in anti-smoking campaigns; these were refined by a graphic artist to ensure they were clearly recognisable. The researchers sourced and developed text to accompany each image and pre-tested draft concepts before these were developed into pack prototypes. The prototypes followed the Canadian approach, which features warning material on 50% of the front and back of cigarette packages. Aside from the warning images, the remainder of the material on each prototype was identical to the information currently featured on cigarette packages. Table 1 describes the images used in these packages and Figure 1 contains two of the images used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brain 1</td>
<td>Brain with large blood clot</td>
<td>Smoking is brain dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain 2</td>
<td>No image</td>
<td>Smoking is brain dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart 1</td>
<td>Diseased heart with large blood clot</td>
<td>Smoking is a heart breaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart 2</td>
<td>No image</td>
<td>Smoking is a heart breaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Text only no image</td>
<td>Smoking kills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 1**
Brain Image Warning, Brain Text Warning and Control Warning

**Sample and Survey Instrument**
A convenience sample of 310 smokers was selected for the study. Because only 25% of the adult New Zealand population smoke, random sampling of smokers from the general population would have been very time-consuming. Consequently, the sample was selected by approaching smokers in a variety of locations in a large New Zealand provincial city during a two-week period in November 2005. Once identified, respondents were allocated to one of four treatment groups or to a control group. Table 2 contains the demographic profile of the sample; there were no significant differences in the composition of the subsamples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Mean Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brain 1 (Image and Text)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain 2 (Text only)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart 1 (Image and Text)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart 2 (Text only)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (Smoking Kills)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MEAN**
66   34   30

The questionnaire examined respondents’ current rate of smoking and their brand repertoire. Because the pack prototypes were generic, we primed respondents to consider their preferred cigarette brand by presenting them with a showcard that featured logos of the nine main brands sold in New Zealand (Stribling 2004). Respondents were then asked to view the prototype packs presented to them in the next question as though these were their preferred brand.
Each respondent evaluated one of the five prototypes using a 7-point semantic differential scale that explored a range of affective and cognitive variables. These included paired antonyms examined in earlier studies as well as new pairs developed to assess the specific images tested. To obtain measures of respondents’ likely behaviour, we used the Juster Scale, an eleven point probability scale that contains adjectival descriptions and numerical probabilities (Juster 1966). Research comparing the Juster Scale to intention scales has demonstrated that the Juster Scale provides more accurate predictions of likely behaviour (Day, Gan, Gendall and Esslemont 1991). Respondents estimated the likelihood that the image they had been shown would discourage non-smokers from experimenting with smoking and encourage smokers to quit their habit. In addition, they were asked to indicate the chances that they would phone the Quitline number provided on the pack, reduce the number of they cigarettes smoked, or quit smoking if the image they were viewing appeared on the cigarette or tobacco brand they normally purchased.

RESULTS

We first conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to examine common themes in the paired antonyms; Table 3 contains the results of this analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 1 (Fear)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made me feel anxious</td>
<td>.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made me feel afraid</td>
<td>.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made me feel nervous</td>
<td>.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image was threatening</td>
<td>.678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image was unsettling</td>
<td>.675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image was frightening</td>
<td>.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image was told the truth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image was believable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image was relevant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image illustrated harm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image was encouraged label reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image gained attention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image encouraged quitting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image was effective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Scores below .5 were suppressed.

Three principal components with Eigen values greater than one explained two thirds of the overall variance in attitude scores. These components were varimax rotated to give the factor loading matrix shown in Table 3. Variables loading strongly on the first factor related to the level of fear evoked, while the second factor was dominated by variables relating to the overall credibility of the image and accompanying message. The final factor reflected the images’ effectiveness, particularly their ability to gain respondents’ attention, prompt them to read further, and encourage them to quit smoking.

These factors were used as the basis of an index created by summing the mean scores of the variables loading on each factor; this resulted in three overall mean scores for each image. To address the first two hypotheses, we examined respondents’ affective and cognitive responses to the images and used MANOVA to test whether the images had elicited different reactions. Individual image scores were analysed using Duncan’s post hoc test (Pillai’s trace = .193; Wilks’ Lambda = .816; p=.000). Table 4 contains these results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Brain Image and Text</th>
<th>Heart Image and Text</th>
<th>Brain Text Only</th>
<th>Heart Text Only</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>3.3*</td>
<td>3.3*</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.6*</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>5.8*</td>
<td>5.7*</td>
<td>5.0*</td>
<td>4.5*</td>
<td>5.9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>4.3*</td>
<td>4.4*</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.6*</td>
<td>3.6*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Scores marked 1 (shaded blue) were significantly higher than scores marked 2 (shaded yellow). The closer the score to 7, the more strongly it evoked each factor.
Overall, the warning labels tested did not evoke high levels of fear; they were seen as credible and impactful rather than frightening. Nevertheless, the pictorial warnings elicited stronger reactions than the text warnings on the fear and effectiveness factors although they did not differ significantly from the current ‘Smoking Kills’ warning on the credibility dimension. The first hypothesis was that visual on-pack warning images would elicit stronger affective and cognitive reactions than text-only warnings, irrespective of whether these were refreshed warnings or the strongest of the existing warnings. Table 4 shows weak support for hypothesis 1a.

The second research hypothesis was designed to examine whether refreshed text-only warnings were more effective than existing text-only warnings. The effectiveness of refreshed warnings clearly depends on their content, thus the refreshed warnings used included one currently in use in Canada as part of a new pictorial warning ('Smoking is a heartbreaker'), and a similar one created by the researchers ('Smoking is brain dead'). As Table 4 shows, the refreshed text-only warnings elicited very similar responses to the existing ‘Smoking Kills’ warning, except for the credibility factor, where the ‘Smoking Kills’ score was significantly higher than those of the new text-only warnings. This finding suggests that the novelty of new text warnings alone is not sufficient to generate the same fear, impact and credibility as the same warnings when these are combined with a striking visual image.

The remaining hypotheses related to respondents’ likely behaviour, which was measured using the Jaster Scale. The data were analysed using MANOVA and the percentages reported in Table 5 indicate the likely effects respondents thought the warning labels would have on their own behaviour and others’ behaviour.

As Table 5 shows, a significantly higher proportion of respondents thought the pictorial warnings would discourage non-smokers from experimenting with smoking when compared to the text only warnings. When asked specifically about teenagers, respondents were less optimistic about the effect the warning labels would have. However, a significantly higher proportion considered that the pictorial warnings and the text-only ‘brain dead’ warning would discourage non-smokers from experimenting with smoking when compared to the control and ‘heart breaker’ message. This latter pattern continued when respondents were asked to estimate the chances that the warning label they had been shown would encourage current smokers to give up their habit. When asked specifically about their own behaviour, the pictorial warning labels elicited higher levels of predicted uptake of a range of cessation related behaviours. Respondents shown the ‘heart breaker’ image were significantly more likely to indicate that they would phone the Quitline for information on giving up smoking than respondents shown other warning labels. Both the ‘brain dead’ and ‘heart breaker’ pictorial warnings elicited significantly higher predictions of likely behaviour when respondents were asked the chances the warnings would prompt them to reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke each day, or quit altogether.

These findings support hypothesis 2a and suggest pictorial warnings may prompt higher levels of behaviour change than either refreshed text warnings or the strongest of the warnings currently in use. However, the results did not support hypothesis 2b as the responses to the refreshed text warnings did not differ consistently from the control warning label; around 25% of those exposed to any of the text only warnings indicated that this would prompt them to call the Quitline or reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke each day, or quit altogether. Although a higher proportion of respondents exposed to the ‘brain dead’ or ‘heartbreaker’ images than the control image indicated the former would prompt them to quit smoking altogether, these differences were not significant.

**TABLE 5**

Predicted Responses to Warning Images

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour Examined</th>
<th>Brain Image and Text</th>
<th>Heart Image and Text</th>
<th>Brain Text Only</th>
<th>Heart Text Only</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discourage non-smokers</td>
<td>65(^1)</td>
<td>64(^1)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourage non-smoking</td>
<td>38(^2)</td>
<td>35(^2)</td>
<td>36(^2)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teenagers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage teen smokers to quit</td>
<td>41(^1)</td>
<td>39(^1)</td>
<td>35(^1)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage adult smokers to quit</td>
<td>43(^1)</td>
<td>41(^1)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Quitline</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce consumption</td>
<td>36(^3)</td>
<td>35(^3)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quit altogether</td>
<td>26(^4)</td>
<td>31(^4)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Response differs significantly from the control text-only warning.
DISCUSSION

The pictorial warning labels tested were significantly more impactful than the text-only warning, and generally elicited stronger affective and cognitive responses than the refreshed text warnings or the current warning message used as a control. Perhaps more importantly, the pictorial labels elicited stronger predicted behavioural responses than the control message in four of the seven behaviours tested, and were in the predicted direction for the other three behaviours examined.

By contrast, the refreshed text warnings evoked similar affective and cognitive reactions to the control and there was no evidence that updating the written warning labels would render these more effective. Although further research could explore a wider range of replacement warnings, the control, ‘smoking kills’, is a clearly stated and stark warning and it is difficult to imagine a text-only warning that could evoke higher levels of credibility. Overall, the alternative text warnings had weaker effects on predicted behaviour than the pictorial warnings, although the ‘brain dead’ text warning was as effective as the visual warnings for three of the behaviours.

These findings confirm earlier work by Hammond et al (2003; 2004), who concluded that the Canadian pictorial warnings were more effective than text only messages. More importantly, the results are consistent with the wider theoretical framework that suggests visual elements increase the salience and effectiveness of textual messages. The effectiveness of pictorial warnings is thus attributable to the introduction of a visual element to the warning label, and is not merely due to any novelty effect that new text only messages seem unlikely to increase either the

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the inclusion of visual images in on-pack warnings elicited stronger affective responses and stronger predicted behavioural reactions from smokers. However, not all warnings functioned as hypothesised and, in particular, replacing existing text-only warnings with new text-only messages seems unlikely to increase either the salience or the effectiveness of on-pack warnings. Further research could now explore smokers’ perception of different images and whether the effect of these varies across different demographics. In addition, future research should examine the effects of multiple exposure on respondents’ evaluations, and the likely wearout of the images. Further studies using branded packages are also required to explore the effectiveness of visual warnings in the context of brand imagery. However, despite the need for additional work, our findings suggest on-pack image warnings create dissonance that may prompt smokers to reduce their consumption or quit altogether. In particular, images depicting the physical consequences of smoking were consistently more effective than the text-only warnings and would both complement and strengthen cessation and initiation reduction programmes targeted at smokers.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The AIDS problem in Asia is growing. Much of the past research on AIDS in the social marketing context tended to focus on Western or African countries, making it difficult for Asian social marketers and policy makers to apply available theories. Research on AIDS also focused either on health behavior models or personality theories separately to explain protection intentions and actions. This paper proposes a conceptual framework based on the Protection Motivation Theory (Rogers 1983), which also incorporates personality variables, knowledge about AIDS and religious orientation. This framework is tested in the Singapore context to develop a more holistic model to explain protection intentions among Singaporean youth. The two most advocated protection methods in Asia are “Keeping to One Partner” and “Using Condoms”.

The hypotheses advanced in this paper pertain to risk taking, impulsivity, perceived severity, perceived vulnerability, response efficacy, self-efficacy and religious orientation. With regard to the personality variable of risk-taking, as one is increasingly willing to take on the risks of sexual activity, s/he would be less motivated to adopt protection actions and vice versa. People who are more impulsive are also less likely to take protection actions. When an individual perceives AIDS to be a serious disease, s/he will be more motivated to protect oneself from contracting the disease. Similarly, an individual who believes s/he is vulnerable to AIDS will protect him/herself from contracting the disease. Response efficacy refers to one’s belief that a particular protection action will be effective in helping him/her avoid the negative consequences associated with AIDS. For self-efficacy, when one expects that s/he is able to perform the recommended actions, s/he will intend to protect him/herself from contracting AIDS. Lastly, when a person is more religiously oriented, s/he would tend to be more conservative. Out of guilt, s/he would be more inclined to use condoms or to keep to one partner. All of the constructs were measured using multi-item scales that were adapted from PMT and where possible, most of the responses were assessed on a seven-point scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Existing scales for risk-taking, impulsivity and religious orientation were also selected and adapted.

The proposed framework was empirically validated and tested using data from respondents in Singapore. For the purpose of this study, 339 questionnaires were deemed suitable for data analysis. Compared with the 2001 Singapore Census (Singapore Census of Population 2001), the gender breakdown of 168 males to 171 females mirrored closely the younger cohort of the general population of Singapore. Most of the respondents were Chinese (94.1%). About half of the respondents were 21-25 years old (54%); the other prominent age groups were for those aged 18-20 years old (15.9%) and 26-30 years old (10.6%). Item reliability analyses and exploratory factor analysis, variable inter-correlations, and validity checks were conducted to determine psychometric adequacy. Items low in item-to-total correlations were removed to enhance internal consistency. T-tests were used to confirm the differential hypotheses which compared between youth who intended to use condoms as a protection method and those who intended to keep to one partner (KOP). Additionally, linear regression was utilised to examine protection intentions for the two different protection actions of keeping to one partner and condom usage.

The t-test results revealed that those who intended to use condoms were greater risk-takers, while those who intended to KOP tended to be more religious, feel more vulnerable, believe more strongly in the severity of AIDS and that KOP is an effective protection from HIV, hence supporting five out of the seven hypotheses. The regression results showed that for KOP respondents, the factors affecting protection intentions include Risk-Taking, Perceived Vulnerability, Self Efficacy, Response Efficacy, and Religious Orientation. The drivers for the intention to use condoms included the additional factors of Impulsivity and Perceived Severity but excluded Perceived Vulnerability and Religious Orientation.

Implications for public policy markers are proposed. Policy makers should adopt a more open attitude towards promoting the use of condoms, even in situations where youths are involved in monogamous romantic relationships. Policy makers can also increase the free distribution of condoms to youths who are likely to be at risk and expanded to more distribution locations. Educators should also impart the proper usage of condoms in the high school and university curriculum. Policy makers can enforce mandatory instructions for condom usage on all condom packages. This may improve the response efficacy towards using condoms and concomitant increase in protection intentions and behaviors. Future research could compare various models (e.g., Health Belief Model, Theory of Planned Behavior, etc.) for understanding protective intentions on safe sex among youths. Further research on the impact of religion (e.g., studying protection intentions within a particular religious faith among Asian youth) would allow for a better understanding of how religious organisations, together with social marketers can collaborate in the control of the AIDS epidemic. Research can also be targeted specifically at vulnerable groups such as the younger homosexuals.

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KEEPING UP APPEARANCES: LOW-INCOME CONSUMERS’ STRATEGIES AIMED AT DISGUISSING POVERTY
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ABSTRACT
This paper explores the experiences of low-income families in dealing with the stigma associated with poverty in a consumer society. In-depth interviews were held with thirty low-income families. Findings suggest that attempts to disguise or mask poverty are common. These masking strategies were found both outside and within the family. The former involves the family’s united attempts to reduce the visibility of poverty to outsiders while the latter involves parents’ attempts to shield children from the effects of poverty. Findings support consumer research studies on stigma management, and suggest that strategies that mask stigmas may be important for vulnerable consumers.

INTRODUCTION
This paper explores the experiences of low-income families in terms of the strategies they employ to disguise the visible signs of poverty. Low-income consumers are individuals whose financial resources or income results in them being unable to obtain the goods and services needed for an “adequate” and “socially acceptable” standard of living (Darley and Johnson 1985: 206). As a result of their limited ability to conform to the consumer society through responding to the temptations of the marketplace, low-income consumers have been described as “unwanted” (p.91), “abnormal” (p.36), “blemished, defective, faulty and deficient” (p.38), “flawed consumers” (p.38) and “non-consumers”(p.90) (Bauman 1998). Previous research has acknowledged the vulnerability of low-income consumers. Andreasen and Manning (1990: 13) defined vulnerable consumers as “those who are at a disadvantage in exchange relationships where that disadvantage is attributable to characteristics that are largely not controllable by them at the time of the transaction.” Low-income consumers experience consumer disadvantage in the form of exchange restrictions in the marketplace such as limited product availability (Hill and Stephens 1997) and lower quality goods and services (Williams and Windebank 2001).

As well as having to deal with the harsh realities of life on a low-income, these consumers also have to cope with the projection of negativity from other members of society. Although low-income consumers have been described as “flawed” (Bauman 1998: 38), their experiences of and responses to stigma have been largely neglected in the literature. This paper examines the ways in which poor consumers attempt to avoid stigmatisation. It begins with a review of literature that discusses the stigmatization of consumers attempt to avoid stig...

Stigmatising Low-income Consumers
Goffman’s (1963: 14) pioneering work on stigma identified three different types of stigma, namely, physical deformities, “blemishes of individual character” and tribal stigma of race, nation and religion. Bauman (1997: 1) suggested that academic interest in the living standards and consumption activities of the poor has resulted in an “individualisation” of poverty that has constructed the poor as “different” and defines poverty in personal rather than social terms. Given this trend towards the individualisation of poverty, the stigma of poverty can be associated with the “blemishes of individual character” type of stigma.

From a social psychologist perspective, stigma is seen as a social construction that involves two components, first, the recognition of difference based on some distinguishing characteristic and secondly, the consequent devaluation of the person (Dovidio, Major and Crocker 2000). The stereotypical view of poverty often results in the devaluation of low-income consumers. Traditionally, it was suggested that poor consumers have no morality, are lazy, do not want to get an education and are a bunch of “sickies” (Waxman 1977, p. 3). This view has not disappeared and Becker (1997:1) suggested that many consider the poor to be “lazy, criminal and responsible for their circumstances.”

Poverty is related to the wider issue of social exclusion, whereby individuals who are residents in a society do not participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society (Burchardt, Le Grand and Piachaud 1999). One explanation for social exclusion centres on a moral underclass discourse that focuses on the moral and behavioural delinquency of the excluded themselves. This discourse dictates that the poor are to blame for their own poverty as they have deviated from cultural and social “norms.” It is also a gendered discourse that focuses on the delinquency of young men in terms of criminal behaviours and the delinquency of young women in terms of the irresponsibility of lone parenthood (Levitas 1997).

The projection of negativity from other members of society impacts on low-income consumers’ self-image and consequently self-definition is influenced by perceived social definition. This echoes Goffman’s (1963: 18) suggestion that shame can be a central possibility arising from the individual’s perception of failing short of “what he really ought to be.” To illustrate, Hill and Stephens’ (1997) investigation of AFDC mothers revealed that the women experienced feelings of humiliation when their financial circumstances became visible, for example, using food stamps stigmatised them as inferior and unworthy. This is consistent with Andreasen’s (1975) suggestion that the poor can see themselves as relatively deprived, powerless and alienated.

The stereotypical approach of constructing the poor as “different” and marginalising them from other members of society implies that they are a minority group. Statistics demonstrate that this is not the case. In the United States, 32.3 million people are classified as poor, representing 12% of the total population (Hill 2002b) while in the UK it is estimated that between 13 and 14 million people now live in poverty (General Consumer Council 2001). Furthermore,
stereotypes do not acknowledge the heterogeneity of poor consumers. As Henderson (1998) stated, diversity exists not only across groups but within generalised groups. There are various different reasons why people fall into poverty including both familial and personal factors (O’Boyle 1998). The population in poverty is made up of people with a variety of demographic and socio-cultural characteristics such as large families, older consumers, the unemployed, minority groups and so on (Darley and Johnson 1985; Alwitt and Donley 1996; O’Boyle 1998).

Recent studies by Ronald Paul Hill represent an awareness of the heterogeneity of poor consumers that was often missing from early research through the categorisation of poor consumers into subpopulations. These include the hidden homeless, that is, a poverty subgroup that lives outside the social welfare system (Hill and Stamey 1990), the sheltered homeless and homeless families (Hill, 1991), welfare mothers and their families (Hill and Stephens 1997), the rural poor (Lee, O’zanne and Hill 1999) and poor children and juvenile delinquency (Hill 2002a). However, these studies remain in the minority and in general low-income consumers remain a neglected group in consumer research.

As Henderson (1998, p. 157) noted, people in the non-dominant social system are traditionally “underresearched and underserved.” The paucity of research on poverty within marketing and consumer research means that there are many gaps in knowledge in this area of consumer behaviour. Within new consumer behaviour research the emphasis on how consumption relates to the rest of human existence has created more legitimacy for macro and non-managerial marketing topics (Belk 1995). However, a consideration of the publication outlets for poverty research implies that this legitimacy has not been extended to research on low-income consumers. Only two pieces of work have been published within the Journal of Consumer Research (JCR), both over a decade ago (Hill and Stamey 1990; Hill 1991). Given that JCR is the main academic journal in consumer research, this is further evidence of the neglect in this area. Additionally both of the articles published in JCR focus on extreme poverty associated with homelessness. As such, there is scope for studies relating to less extreme forms of poverty.

The lack of research interest in gaining a deeper understanding of the low-income consumer experience contributes to the continuation of negative stereotypes. As Reinharz (1992) suggested, lack of research on vulnerable populations only heightens and perpetuates their powerlessness.

**METHODOLOGY**

In-depth interviews were held with thirty low-income families. As poverty can affect the whole family unit, a family approach was adopted in that all households included at least one child under the age of 18. Both individual (16) and family (14) interviews were held. In the first instance the primary respondent in each household, defined as the person responsible for consumer decision making including sourcing and paying for goods and services, was interviewed. In other households it was possible to arrange an interview with multiple family members simultaneously. These family interviews included a partner and/or secondary school age children (aged 11 to 18). Family methodologies have not been widely used in consumer research and the plurality of family structures has not been greatly recognised (Ekström 2004). It was hoped that including multiple family members in the interviews would lead to the discovery of more insightful findings.

Poverty is often experienced within the social context of the family and as such, responses to poverty may be collaborative in nature. The interviewing of multiple family members permits a deeper understanding of the family dynamics in terms of each person’s role in coping with poverty.

The study involved five two-parent families and twenty-five lone parent families (twenty-four headed by females). This is consistent with the feminisation of poverty and the increasing attention placed on the plight of poor lone mothers (Hill and Stephens 1997). Lone parents account for a significant percentage of the poverty population and lone parenthood is the main cause of family poverty (Field 1996). The sample in this study is drawn from families in less extreme forms of poverty than the homeless consumers previously discussed in consumer research journals. Respondents came from urban areas and included both the unemployed and those working in low-paid jobs.

Given the private and personal nature of the research, interviews were carried out in respondents’ homes to ensure a familiar and comfortable environment. Additionally, as researchers are “outsiders” to family life, this approach offers the added benefit of obtaining glimpses of the “inside” (Franklin 1996: 253). The researcher also attempted to create an informal atmosphere by wearing appropriate clothing (i.e. casual). Topics of discussion included family background information, financial circumstances, everyday life, budgetary strategies and hopes for the future. In line with a social constructionist viewpoint, the respondents were encouraged to provide details about their daily lives and the emphasis was on obtaining the subjective perspectives of the respondents at the level of lived experience. A guide of interview topics was prepared but rather than being locked into one set of questions, a flexible approach allowed questions to be adapted to suit the direction of each interview. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and with respondents’ permission were audio-recorded and later transcribed. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of informants and ethical approval was obtained for the study.

Hermeneutics was used to interpret the data. This is an iterative process, “in which a “part” of the qualitative data (or text) is interpreted and reinterpreted in relation to the developing sense of the “whole”” (Thompson, Pollio and Locander, 1994: 433). These iterations allow a holistic understanding to develop over time, as initial understandings are modified as new information emerges. Thompson, Locander and Pollio (1989) discuss how the part-to-whole process can occur. First, each individual interview is interpreted. Secondly, separate interviews are related to each other and common patterns identified.

**FINDINGS: COPING WITH THE STIGMA OF POVERTY**

The findings reveal that some low-income consumers put a great deal of effort into fighting against the negative stereotypical image of poverty. Attempts to disguise or
mask poverty are common through the portrayal of an image that minimises visible signs of social difference. This masking strategy was found on two levels, first, outside the family and secondly, within the family. The first category involves the family’s united attempts to reduce the visibility of poverty to outsiders while the second category involves the attempts of parents to shield their children from the effects of poverty. These strategies are now discussed.

Masking Poverty from Outsiders

Masking poverty from outsiders was especially important for the children in the study who did not want to appear different from their peers. Peer pressure and fear of social difference affected almost all the families in the study highlighting the strong social pressure to conform. Within the consumer society there is a large emphasis on designer brand names that have high brand awareness among children, even those younger than school age. Children are presented with the ideologies of the consumer society through a variety of socialisation agents such as the media, peer groups and even other family members. Consequently, they are very aware of their projected image and place a large emphasis on brand named products in terms of the clothes they wear and even the food they eat. In some family interviews, teenagers admitted that their peers would tease them if they did not wear the “right” clothes. For example, 14 year-old Lisa explained that she often picked clothes “just because of their name” and because her friends would “ slag” her if she did not wear brand named clothing. This is indicative of the strong influence of the consumer culture. Previous research has suggested that it is not uncommon for children in poor families to own branded clothing and they consider that if someone is wearing expensive-looking brand names they could not be poor (Elliott and Leonard 2004).

This strategy could be viewed as a disconfirmation of the stereotype. This occurs when the stigmatised person displays attitudes, behaviours, symbols and signs to distance themselves from the stigma (Miller and Major 2000). By displaying brand name products that are regarded as socially acceptable among peer groups, low-income consumers avoid the stigma of poverty.

The desire to avoid showing visible signs of poverty may be so strong that some parents expressed fear that children may turn to deviant behaviour if particular clothing demands are not satisfied. Denise and Barry’s children (aged 16 and 17) provide a good illustration of this as they are heavily influenced by brand names. Denise fears that her sons will turn to crime if their desires for brand name clothing are not satisfied, “you have to let them have it; you don’t want them out stealing.” Stretching financial resources to pay for such clothing as well as the worry of the alternative means that their sons may obtain this clothing places a strain on Denise and Barry. The children in this family place high demands on their parents in terms of the clothing they desire and if these demands are not met “they won’t go out.” Self-confinement to the home is used as a strategy by the children to encourage parents to meet their demands.

Daily and Leonard (2002) suggested that children may turn to deviant behaviour as a persuasion tactic to get what they want. In this family, although the children have not threatened deviant behaviour, Denise feels that peer pressure to wear the “right” clothing may be so strong as to encourage criminal activity. Denise would prefer to allocate resources to areas that would benefit the household as a whole, “you’re paying £49 for a T-shirt, you could get a table and chairs for that, you know what I mean.” However, the pressure of the consumer society can prove too tempting for some low-income consumers resulting in the family’s coping efforts being placed under threat. The stigma attached to being poor not only leads to emotional effects such as low self-esteem, it also has behavioural implications in that it encourages some people to overspend, and in some cases, get into debt, in order to avoid negative reactions from others. Some adults in the study were also concerned with portraying the “right” image. For example, they commented that they would not wear second hand clothing items because they did not know who had previously worn them, “it’s just the thought of somebody else wearing them.” Many fear being seen in second hand shops because this would convey to others that they are unable to afford new products.

Similarly, respondents did not want other people to be aware of their financial circumstances. This is illustrated in the following comment by Jodie from a two-parent family with two children:

“When we’re looking help we wouldn’t go and ask for money but there would be people that would come and ask us. People are under the impression that we have money but we don’t have money. But I let people think that, I don’t change their minds. If they think I’ve money let them think that. They don’t know that I’m sitting here many a night without a pint of milk but that’s my business.”

Ensuring that visible signs of poverty remain hidden appears to be an important strategy for low-income consumers. This supports research on other groups of stigmatised and vulnerable consumers. For example, Tepper (1994) found that elderly consumers employed various information management strategies to avoid disclosing their senior citizen identity such as the rejection of senior citizen discounts. Likewise, Adkins and Ozanne (2005) found that low literate consumers are often skilled at avoiding social disclosure and have the ability to act like a literate person.

In some cases, it appears that stigma is less of an issue for respondents when they are interacting in a network of social or family contacts. This is supported by Goffman (1963) who suggested that the area of stigma management pertains mainly to public life and contact with strangers or mere acquaintances. In the case of low-income consumers, many families live in low-income neighbourhoods and hence interact with others who are in similar situations. Consequently, efforts to hide the visible signs of poverty become less important in family and social networks. To illustrate, a family interview with Catherine (aged 40), a lone mother, and her 15 year-old daughter, Samantha, was particularly useful in demonstrating the importance placed on the extended family. Catherine lives in close proximity to three subgroups of extended family members; her two sisters, a niece and their respective families. As a result she felt that there was a supportive atmosphere in her neighbourhood.

“The people on this road are really good, if you need
anything or if anything happens they would come out and support you at anytime. We’re all basically the same, if anyone gets a job you feel happy for them, glad that they’re getting on their feet.”

Close inter-familial relationships were important for many families in the study who benefited from this source of social support. However, as is discussed in the following section, this openness surrounding financial circumstances is not extended to all family members.

**Masking Poverty within the Family**

Masking poverty within the family is largely aimed at protecting children from the stigma of poverty. Many of the parents felt pressurised into ensuring that their children had access to socially acceptable clothing.

Jackie: “Actually nearly all his friends wear brand name shoes so I wouldn’t make my child stand out (23, lone parent, one child).

Sarah: “If I buy them cheap stuff they won’t wear them, they’re only going to be laughed at in the street, you buy stuff for the kids so as they’re not going to be bullied.”

Interviewer: “So do you feel under pressure to buy them brand names?”

Sarah: “Oh I do, I do indeed, I would buy a pair of sports shoes and write Nike on the front, cause you’re only paying for the name when you think about it, for the tick or something” (46, lone parent, six children).

Lorraine: “It seems to be that it’s the done thing to dress your kids in brand name clothing, I have to do it now; she has reached that age. For years I avoided brand names, but I was never going to make her stand out from the rest of them” (43, lone parent, three children).

The purchase of brand name clothing represents parents’ attempts to protect children from the effects of potential stigmatisation such as bullying. Many parents in the study aimed to minimise the negative consequences of poverty for their children and as such, children have a strong influence on the consumption activities of their parents. The majority of the parents interviewed said that obtaining what their children need and want is their main priority and consequently family consumption is structured in the ways that parents suppress their own needs and prioritise their children’s needs and wants. As Kochuyt (2004: 45) suggested “By imposing an ‘artificial lack’ of resources upon themselves, the parents create an ‘artificial affluence’ for their kids.” As a result, the ways in which resources are distributed within the family can create affluence amidst poverty. This reiterates Goffman’s (1963: 146) suggestion that a family can have a high capacity to “constitute itself a protective capsule for its young.” As well as protecting children from potential stigmatisation, masking is also evident in terms of hiding efforts to economise that children may not support. With the emphasis on brand names, children are unhappy with purchasing their clothes in discount stores and eating supermarket value or generic brand products, strategies that many adults in the study admitted to. The following examples illustrate how adults follow these strategies but make a conscious effort to mask them.

In an interview with 17 year-old Ryan and his mother, Maria (lone parent family), Ryan revealed that he did not like to shop in discount stores because he feared being ridiculed by his friends. However, Maria and Ryan cannot stretch their financial resources to purchasing expensive clothing. One strategy that Maria uses to overcome her son’s refusal to wear cheaper clothing is by hiding the location where they were purchased.

“We were in town today and I said to him, come on and look around Primark [a discount store] and he said I’m not, what if someone sees me? Primark has got this thing about it. I mean he has had stuff out of Primark and I just cut the labels out of it and he never knows the difference.”

This strategy of masking purchase location of clothes is also extended from discount stores to the second hand market. Several parents noted that they obtain brand name clothing in second hand shops yet conceal the purchase location to avoid the stigma that is often attached to obtaining goods from the second hand market. Other parents used this masking strategy in relation to food purchases, concealing the fact that they use generic branded products. The following extracts illustrate this point.

Catherine: “I’ve actually taken cereal out of one box and put it in another [empty branded] box and they couldn’t tell the difference…it’s just the box.”

Eva: “I would buy their brands [supermarket’s own brand] and just don’t say to the kids because if they see it they don’t like it, if they don’t see it they like it, it’s just mind over matter.”
Many parents believe that they can reduce expenditure on food purchases without sacrificing quality. As children do not always understand this concept, parents often find it easier to hide value brand packaging. Again, this is connected to reducing the visibility of products or activities that could have the potential to create stigma.

**DISCUSSION: ARE LOW-INCOME CONSUMERS REALLY THAT “DIFFERENT”?**

The findings suggest that low-income consumers make great efforts to reduce the visibility of their poverty. However, recent trends in consumer behaviour suggest that low-income consumers are not really that different from so-called normal consumers. Traditionally, wealthier consumers have experienced peer pressure in relation to doing and owning the “right” things, referred to as conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1970). Findings suggest that this phenomenon is increasingly moving downward to encompass all consumers, not just the traditional trendsetters and followers of the middle and upper income groups. Additionally there has been a shift towards thrift shopping (Fernand 2005). In the UK, the success of the discount clothing retailer, Primark, has reduced the stigma associated with purchasing low-cost products. This has lead to the trend of cheapskating, that is, blending luxury with low-cost items or sometimes just low-end with yet more low-end (Fernand 2005). Likewise, in the US, thrift stores have increasingly gained acceptance by middle-class shoppers where the demographics of thrift store consumers are shifting from poor consumers and incorporating the average consumer (Darley and Lim 2005). There has been a change in what is viewed as acceptable consumption behaviour for different groups of consumers. Traditionally, structural constraints imposed uniformity in consumption behaviour within particular social groups. However, Warde (1994) pointed out that such constraints are reduced due to increased individualisation.

This implies that the consumption patterns of low-income consumers may not be that different to those of more affluent consumers. While low-income consumers may be forced to engage in thrift shopping in order to maximise financial resources, recent research has demonstrated that thrift shopping can also be driven by hedonic desires, and as such, thrift can coexist with treat (Bardhi and Arnould 2005). Like the low-income consumers in this study, Bardhi and Arnould (2005) found that thrift shoppers in second hand outlets were attracted by the purchase of well-known luxury brand items that contributed to the realisation of consumer fantasies.

Some of the respondents in the study also had aims and goals that may be reflective of those held by the general population. For example, two lone mothers who were also full time university students were involved in the study. In these cases short-term monetary rewards are sacrificed with the aim of enhancing future opportunities. In this regard, Townsend (1979) suggested that the conceptualisation of poverty should not be limited to income but also includes education, social activities, family activities, recreation, and so on. Although these families do not have high levels of financial resources, they would not be considered as poor on other dimensions such as education. This demonstrates that the lived experience of low-income consumers may contrast with the negative and lazy stereotypical image associated with those living in poverty. Some families are future oriented and act in ways that will lead to the transition out of poverty and ensure that poverty is not passed from generation to generation.

**CONCLUSION**

Previous consumer research studies have focused on extreme poverty associated with homelessness (Hill and Stamey 1990; Hill 1991). The current research considers what it means to be poor in a consumer society, that is, consumers who are unable to participate in a socially acceptable level of consumption. It demonstrates that those affected by less extreme forms of poverty may be skilled at reducing the visibility of poverty in attempts to overcome society’s ability to alienate through the masking of visible signs of social difference. As such, this challenges the assumption that low-income consumers are “lazy” (Waxman 1977; Becker 1997).

This study also provides an insight into the family dynamics of poverty. Previous studies have largely focused on individual behaviour thus neglecting the fact that poverty may be experienced as a family. The current research recognises that the social context of poverty may impact on the choice of coping strategies employed. To illustrate, findings suggest that the coping strategies of families are largely directed at minimising disadvantage faced by children to ensure that they are not excluded from the consumption practices enjoyed by their peers. This study therefore demonstrates how a family methodology can offer an insightful approach to consumer research.

At a more general level, this study supports previous consumer research studies on stigma management. For example, findings support Adkins and Ozanne’s (2005) research on low literate consumers when it was suggested that stigma should be studied from the perspectives of the people that hold them. Adkins and Ozanne (2005) suggest that illiterate consumers may have the ability to act literate.

In the current research, findings suggest that masking poverty from outsiders is important to many low-income consumers who attempt to engage in socially acceptable consumption behaviour such as displaying appropriate brand named clothing. This suggests that strategies aimed at reducing the visibility of stigma from outsiders may be employed by different vulnerable consumer groups.

This study extends this idea by suggesting that there may be two levels of stigma management. First, reducing the visibility of the stigma to outsiders and secondly, reducing the visibility of the stigma within the family. This challenges Goffman’s (1963) suggestion that stigma management pertains mainly to public life as low-income parents may make efforts to mask certain coping strategies from children within the family.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In this paper, the role of advertising in China’s social transition from a communist country to a consumer society in the past two decades was examined through an interpretive semiotic approach. Most research on Chinese advertising relies on content analysis and compares cultural values reflected in advertising with other countries. Such studies failed to consider how social, cultural, and economic factors have influenced Chinese advertising and the role of advertising in China’s ideological transition from communism to consumerism. This theoretical gap was the focus of our paper. We drew upon Turner’s (1968, 1982) theory of the ritual process and Van Gennep’s (1960) conception of rites of passage to address this issue.

Advertising is a system of signs synthesised from a wide range of shared cultural symbols and formulates a particular view of the world (Sherry 1987). Individual advertisement was considered to be particular rituals that reveal the larger system of culture. However, Sherry’s formulation of advertising as ritual emphasises advertising’s function as a means of socialization, similar to the way that cultural rituals have worked to socialise members of a particular society to its sign systems and to its established social order and hierarchy. The ritual process of advertising in society was ignored and called for further examination. Rites of passage (Van Gennep 1960) and liminality (Turner 1969) provide a theoretical lens with which to consider the rituals of advertising in Chinese society. Rites of passage are rituals accompanying an individual’s change of social status or rituals associated with seasonal changes for an entire society (Van Gennep 1960). The transitional stage of rites of passage is characterised by a space and period of ambiguity or liminality that few attribute of the previous or the subsequent states. Established symbols of the proceeding stage are destroyed and reconfigured. Signs of the new social status are created. The liminal or liminality is the setting in which new symbols, paradigms, and cultures arise (Turner 1982). Advertising in China constituted such a liminal space in which the signs and discourses of the dominant ideology of socialism were destroyed, reconfigured and represented (Hall 1997) to promote the rising ideology of consumerism.

Advertising in China was eliminated as an evil symbol of decadent capitalism for nearly two decades soon after the founding of the PRC in 1949. It was reinstated in the late 1970s as a means of glorifying communism and facilitating socialist economic reformation, in a way similar to China’s political propagandas and its official art of socialist realism did (Stross 1990; Schudson 1984). Chinese advertisers took on this task by using political discourses and symbols of socialism in the promotion of consumer goods, during a time when consumption of luxury brands were still severely and publicly stigmatised in Party organs such as the People’s Daily as evidence of decadent bourgeois lifestyle to be eliminated. Such seemingly simple practice of combining acceptable symbols in commercial promotion has far-reaching implications on Chinese society. In our paper, we examined such important issues from the perspectives of cultural ritual and rites of passage. Our conception of advertising as semiotic liminal space helped to enrich our understanding of advertising’s role in China’s social transition to consumerism in the past twenty years.

REFERENCES


IMMIGRANT ACCULTURATION AS A DIALOGICAL PROCESS
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Today, individuals find themselves living in between cultures due to the increasing forces of globalisation, immigration and tourism. Cross cultural psychologists have done work that documents the immigrant mental adaptation process (Berry 1980, Gordon 1964). Berry (1980) suggested that immigrants would follow one of four acculturation strategies and these strategies are: assimilation, integration, separation or marginalization.

These works made contributions to our understanding of these processes, yet these studies only examine the relationship between the immigrant and the dominant culture. If one examines, the changing demographics of the majority of developed countries, it is clear that the time has come for research that goes beyond examination of immigrants and the dominant group since most countries have significant subcultural segments, for example consider the Indians in the UK, Hispanics in the U.S. or the Africans in France. Due to these demographic changes it can be expected that new immigrants will not only adapt to the dominant culture but also to minority cultures with which they might be identified. Therefore, the study of immigrant acculturation must include the adaptation of immigrants to the minority groups.

Prior research has shown that immigrants tend to keep not only their culture of origin but also move towards the dominant culture (Penaloza 1994). Black immigrants in the United States deal with acculturation forces from the dominant White culture and from the African American culture (see Oswald 1999). Berry and others have suggested that the best acculturation strategy for the immigrant is one of integration, where the immigrant makes a conscious decision to keep aspects of his/her original culture as well as integrate the culture of immigration. Researchers have already begun to question the universality of these psychological processes. Bhatia and Ram (2001) suggest a process-oriented approach to acculturation research – where the focus is on understanding how immigrants living in hybrid cultures and diasporic locations are constantly negotiating their multiple and often conflicting histories and subject positions. Hermans (2001) has suggested that this new research highlights the unique experiences of Kenyan immigrants. Contrary to other conceptualizations of the acculturation process, we have presented the acculturation of the immigrant as a dialogical process.

An important finding is that they learn that their accent communicates ‘Otherness’, the immigrants are compelled to engage in conversations that move them between the ‘here’ and ‘there’ as well as ‘hostland’ and ‘homeland.’ Upon immigration the Kenyan immigrants immediately become members of a minority and marginalised group. The immigrants learn that they are ‘Black’ and that being “Black” in the United States has a different meaning than being “Black” in Kenya. Bhatia and Ram (2001) have suggested that the acculturation of diasporic immigrants cannot be understood without incorporating race, gender and prior histories. The immigrants learn the implications of being black and a minority. One of the things that they figure out is the dual delivery of services such as hair care, church services and many others.

Through the dialogical lens, this research highlights the unique experiences of Kenyan immigrants. Contrary to other conceptualizations of the acculturation process, we have presented the acculturation of the immigrant as a dialogical process. This dialogue involves three separate groups and our findings highlight the constant weaving in and out from one culture to another. Undoubtedly, our research shows that the experiences of diasporic immigrants are impacted by their race, colonial histories and power. Future research studies should examine the movement of immigrants towards the minority groups.

REFERENCES
EXPLORING INTERGENERATIONAL CHANGE IN THE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS OF KOREAN MIGRANT FAMILIES
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This study explores the consumption patterns of Korean migrant families in Australia, looking specifically at two groups within the community – the first-generation and second-generation migrants. Given the lack of studies specifically examining acculturative and generational influences on changes occurring in a culturally adaptive context, this study’s objectives were to explore not only the experience of consumption for the families, but also the differences between first and second generation migrants and within the family between parent and child.

The study, utilising a multi-method design across questionnaires, consumption diaries and phenomenological interview, explores the food and media consumption patterns and experiences of the families. Questionnaires gauged the background of the families, as well as their general consumption habits, consumption diaries were recorded for a period of 2 weeks to capture actual food and media consumption. Interviews were undertaken at the end of this period to gain a deeper understanding of the food and media consumption experience for the families.

The findings of the study demonstrated the conflicted and negotiated construction of consumption around the subjects’ dual cultural identities. The complexity and creolised effect of consumption appear clearly when traditional food meets with the multi-cuisine foodscape of Australia. The notions of ‘proper food’ and ‘healthy food’ are perceived to be different across the two generations of migrants studied. The nostalgic consumption of certain kinds of ‘ethnic media’ meets up with the second generations’ consumption of the same kinds of media for easy and quick fix ‘cultural socialization’. Elements of ‘reverse socialization’ (where typical consumer socialization roles are reversed and the children act as the agents of socialization bringing consumption knowledge to their parents) were also observed in the data.

Overall it is observed that while intergenerational differences do exist, the differences in both categories of consumption appeared to be the greatest when the younger versus the older migrants were compared (irrespective of whether they were first or second generation migrants). This focuses on the greater ability of younger migrants to negotiate ‘perceived cultural spaces’ moving back and forth between the host and the ‘recreated’ home cultures.

Amongst the younger migrants we find less of the sense of ‘deculturation’ that the older migrants articulate. This greater sense of deculturation appears among older migrants of both generations, and appeared to be linked to ‘perceived’ authenticity in food consumption. Among the younger migrants the ease with which they slip in and out of their ‘koreaness’ appears to be a function of the current generation rather than related to how much time they have lived in Australia or whether they were first or second generation migrants.

This distinctive finding causes us to revisit the notion of acculturation as being a function of length of time spent in the host culture. The notion of ‘perceived cultural spaces’ is offered as an alternative explanation of the constant and seemingly effortless movement back and forth by younger Korean migrants between their ‘constructed/perceived’ cultural spaces. Food and media as consumption categories are important props in this enactment of their dual cultural identities.

It is hoped that the study will contribute to a better understanding of the cumulative and often intertwined effects of acculturation and/or generation in consumption changes, as well as throwing light on the migrant consumption experience in Australia.
AUTOPOIETIC TURNS OF VALUE CO-CREATION IN MARKETING SYSTEMS: MEANING(S) OF FUEL-EFFICIENCY FOR HYBRID CAR USERS
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ABSTRACT
The authors investigate hybrid-car-user experiences to understand and conceptualise dynamics of autopoietically co-constructed marketing systems. The method is a fusion of grounded theory analysis, systems analysis, and the interpretive-constructionist tradition. The study finds that communications within the marketing system are directed toward creating only those conditions which would enable similar communications. The empathic understanding of the nature of autopoietic turns may shed some light on the process, which we call the value drift. The core value, that is sustainable mobility, which has rhetorically been offered by car manufacturers to be passively adopted in the marketing system, appears to be significantly altered (co-constructed) in a self-referential way.

BACKGROUND
Marketing has long been viewed as an integral part of the social systems of interactions (Alderson 1965; Bartels 1970; Dixon and Wilkinson 1982; Dowling 1983; Fisk 1967; Lazer 1971; Reidenbach and Oliva 1981; Sheth, Gardner, and Garrett 1988; Varey 2002). A large number of early contributors to marketing thought, such as Clark, Stewart, Dewhurst, Duddy, Revzan, Vaile, and Alderson, saw marketing as social patterns of market actors’ behavior (Sheth et al. 1988). Kuhn (1963, vii) described the marketing process “as one of several techniques of achieving consensus valuations in a society.” The system perspective centres on the essential idea that marketing is (or should be seen as) a generator of social well-being and positive social consequences in the knowledge-based society (Fisk 1981). Though systems research themes and foci varied substantially from author to author, the main premise was that marketing is the co-constructed and emergent patterns of actions and interactions, and it cannot be attributed exclusively to any of the process participants. This view de-emphasises the importance of clear-cut delineation of roles between producers and consumers, connecting the systems view to the field of consumer research, particularly, the consumer emancipation research (Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Holt 2002; Kozinets 2002a). Especially, socially reflexive, recursive consumer actions are the cause of much interest in the field (Holstein and Gubrium, 2005).

The purpose of this work is to build an empirically-grounded theory of marketing system dynamism. The place and role of citizens as marketplace participants in the system of marketing communications will specifically be investigated. Central to our investigation is the concept of autopoietic turns and its implication on meaning/value co-creation in the specific context of the hybrid-car-marketing-system. Our key guiding research questions are: a) what is the essence of the marketing system when it is seen as a system of meaning/value communication?; b) how do citizens as consumers (and marketers) co-create and negotiate consumption meanings/value?; c) are original, and somewhat idealistic meanings (in our case the notion of sustainable mobility), suggested by marketers, in themselves sustainable?

SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE
The primary source of systems thinking is the seminal work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy on the theory of general systems, which posits that scientific investigation should be directed toward a phenomenon in its wholeness, unity and organisation (i.e. it should be studied as a system). Von Bertalanffy (1950) argued that problems will lose relevance if concepts and relationships were studied in isolation, or through the process of synthesis of the “laws of disorder”, whereas the real life problems appear to be those of “organisation”. He considered the perspective to be radically different to the analysis of isolated fractions of phenomena. Luhmann (1995) described this change of emphasis as a paradigm shift in a Kuhnian sense. He suggests that the main transformation is about shifting attention from the dialectic of “parts versus whole” to that of “systems versus environment”. This change becomes a useful approach to analyse the problem of the enlightenment of a human being, as it is problematic to conceptualise how a part, a human being, would accommodate the concerns of a whole, human society. In this, one is indispensably reminded of the rhetoric of the tragedy of commons (Shultz II and Holbrook 1999). Thus the social systems view cuts through the problem from a totally different perspective, focusing not on individuals, but on the unity of difference and the potentiality of communicative actions within the relevant environment. The emphasis is on perturbations of the systemic unity, which cannot be reduced to cause-effect relationships, but represents the wholeness of complex and chaotic interactions. The unity of difference and potentiality is a phenomenological term, which assumes that a system employs meanings, which acquire difference vis-à-vis its background, and dynamically interact with the world of its potential interpretations. For Luhmann (1995) the social system is the system of communication. Communication is considered as a unity of information, utterance and understanding. Note that communication here is understood in a broader sense than the way it is narrowly depicted in the conventional management literature (Varey 2000). It is rather seen as comprising all social action, interaction and
change (Varey 2002). Marketing systems can be viewed as a special type of social systems. They are the systems of communications that constitute a marketplace. Autopoiesis refers to the “networks of productions of components that recursively, through their interactions, generate and realise the network that produces them and constitute, in the space in which they exist, the boundaries of the network as components that participate in the realization of the network.” (Maturana 1981, 21). The autopoietic system reproduces and maintains itself independently. On this basis, Luhmann (1995, 9) developed the theory of self-referential systems, which states that systems employ and build upon system-environment differences to create self-descriptions. The existence of the environment with all its complexity is a necessary prerequisite for the creation of difference through reduction of complexity. The borders of the social systems are differences in communication and are created through the development of meanings. Meanings are self-referential adaptation to the complexity of the environment (Luhmann 1995). The process of discursive dissemination and circulation of system-unique meanings is termed a self-referential closure or an autopoietic turn.

RESEARCH METHOD

Interaction Artefacts

Our method of investigation of the issue of autopoietic turns in marketing systems is based on the principle of “observing the observer”. The “observer” is a self-referential marketing system that develops self-differentiation within its environment. The idea is to look for ”genuine interaction artefacts”. This requires looking for any traces of market interaction left in information-carrying media, and they seem to be mostly accessible in published media and internet resources. This is like the looking for fossils by evolution anthropologists. The systemic interaction “fossils”, which we use to reconstruct the social, may have become crystallised in debates and discussions stored in media through the use of language, which is considered as the main medium for conveying meanings (Luhmann 1995). Our intention is to avoid creating obtrusive, self-serving artificial autopoietic turns through the use of traditional interviewing techniques (Catterall, Maclaran, and Stevens 1996). In contrast, online forums, chatrooms, and weblogs seem to be more natural, unobtrusive and free-flowing. They perhaps are real (interactive, responsive, unbiased, free of time and peer pressure) indicators of what is happening in the marketing system (Yadav and Varadarajan 2005). “Netnography” is being increasingly recognised as a powerful tool to perform research (Kozinets 2002b; Langer and Beckman 2005). The striking feature of the process is that weblog/forum participants seem not to become passive recipients, but in contrast, their intention is participation and commitment.

Context

A hybrid car market seems to be the result of continuous push for technological innovation exercised by Toyota Motor Corporation, Honda, Ford, General Motors, and DaimlerChrysler start introducing their own versions of hybrid car brands. The hybrid technology is based on combining different sources of power to drive a car engine: electricity and petrol. A computer controls and calculates how much power from which source is needed in every single driving situation. Toyota emphasises the idea of sustainable mobility to promote its hybrids. They planned the launch of a US$ 60m advertising campaign to convince car market members that Prius is the only robust automobile solution for the so-called sustainable mobility dilemma (The Economist 2005a). The sustainable mobility dilemma stands for a situation where there exists a conflict of interests between the increasing needs for mobility and the long-term environmental/social health of society. There are seven goals identified by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development to tackle the problem (Table 1). The sustainable mobility has been defined as “the ability to meet the needs of society to move freely, gain access, communicate, trade, and establish relationships without sacrificing other essential human/ecological values, today or in the future” (WBCSD 2004, 2).

| Goal one: Reduce conventional emissions from transport so that they do not constitute a significant public health concern anywhere in the world. |
| Goal two: Reduce GHG emissions from transport to sustainable levels. |
| Goal three: Reduce significantly the number of transport-related deaths and injuries worldwide. |
| Goal Four: Reduce transport-related noise. |
| Goal Five: Mitigate traffic congestion. |
| Goal Six: Narrow mobility divides that exist within all countries and between the richest and poorest countries. |
| Goal Seven: Improve mobility opportunities for the general populations in developed and developing societies. |

Research Procedure and Sources

The qualitative data analysis software QSR NVivo 2.0 was used to organise and analyse the data. Open and axial coding has been performed to identify the categories and dimensions. This method itself may seem to be “reductionist”, however, the reduction here is to wholeness, not to fractions. As the purpose was to describe the dynamic nature of systemic communications, only certain categories, in our view, could actually contend for centrality. The progressive centralisation (von Bertalanfly 1950) in systems happens in a dynamic and chaotic way. This process never develops stable structures, so our interpretation also follows this dynamism, thus matching
the complexity of the system and avoiding artificial reductionism. The sources of the retrieved qualitative data for this study are the discussion, forum, and weblog sections of several websites. They are www.HybridCars.com, www.Priuschat.com, and www.GreenHybrid.com. The data set retrieved from these websites consists of highly unstructured and chaotic contributions of a large number of participants. As online nicknames are used for identification, it is highly improbable that contributors can be fully identified unless they tell about themselves. A concern might arise that these domains are likely to be “contaminated” by agents other than consumers. However, this was to be expected. Communication is not one-way message sending by a certain homogenised group, but a chaotic appreciative interaction of many involved. Our study should not be confused with factor-controlling experimentation based on pure samples. Understanding the problem of organisation calls for representation of the complex reality as it is. We see the marketing system as comprising all citizens regardless of their temporalised role-taking practices.

FINDINGS

Framework

The framework given in Figure 1 describes the process of autopoiesis in the self-referential system of citizens’ experiences concerning one of the aspects of car driving such as fuel-efficiency. The order and structure of the framework should be taken as merely indicative and relative. The framework should be understood as a single snapshot of a dynamic system, a kind of a transient solution, which may go through nonlinear transformation, or even bifurcate (change abruptly) suddenly at any time to present itself using a different point of autopoietic observation.

FIGURE 1.
The Framework

The framework illustrates the dynamic nature of the hybrid-car-marketing-system. The terms are provisionally divided into two broad groups of categories: process factors and boundary conditions. The process factors (stars), which exist in symbiotic relationship with the other group, are considered to be in the heart of the process. The boundary conditions (ovals) are not only the borders of the system, but also its inseparable components. The meanings of these categories are expected to unveil in the process of the discussion of the findings, so the omission of their definitions at this point is deliberate. They all in totality are thought to underlie the process of emergence of autopoietic turns in the marketing system. The process is dynamically settled and reproduced in the condition of continuous cycles of autopoiesis. The conditions (seemingly external effects and consequences) of systemic communications are recursively used as inherent parts of the system to reproduce similar communications. As the environment is characterised with a higher degree of complexity, uncertainty, and chaos, the overall autopoietic turn
selectively focuses on relevant issues (boundary conditions) and transforms them into the systemic mechanisms at the boundaries. The structure is generated by the unity of all elements within the system.

Process of Autopoiesis: Major Concepts

Value Proposition versus Value Co-creation. The category value proposition is reflected in the notions of the synergy drive, being in control, hope, potentiality, and “pie-in-the-sky”. The common assumption is that all credit should go to the Toyota organisation for the development and fast expansion of the hybrid-car markets. However, under the theory of autopoiesis the company’s actions are merely seen as an insignificant part of the total system of communications. A company is only able to make a value proposition (Vargo and Lusch 2004), which may get transformed in the cycles of autopoietic re-adaptation. In this case, the wholeness of value proposition (complexity related to sustainable mobility) has been narrowed down into promising users that they can take personal charge in saving fuel in a quite controllable manner, while minimally sacrificing driving comfort. This meaning is reflected in Toyota’s concept of the synergy drive. The complexity related to the state-of-art technology, the future of the planet, the new alternative sources of energy, prominent environmental issues, sustainability, safe driving conditions, to name but a few, all have been reduced to a simple gauge, a computer calculator (being-in-control) that shows how many kilometres (miles) are driven per litre (gallon) of petrol burned:

“One of the biggest advantages of… a gas/electric hybrid is that they come standard with instantaneous mileage calculator. If all cars had this… more people would "learn" to drive to get better MPG. (Communication 1 (c1) - a representative fragment of a contribution by a participant in a weblog/forum discussion - the fragments hereafter will be marked as c2, c3, c4...and so forth).

The autopoietic process rendered this simplifying proposition a border for the system, a base for creation of internal complexity and a potential from which to tap an endless metamorphosis of communications. This proposition is invariably linked to hope (Belk 1996) that being-in-control of petrol waste to some extent would deliver the much wanted public welfare and environmental balance (sustainable mobility):

The reason hybrid cars are flying off dealers’ lots is not because they make such a galvanizing financial brief. It’s because people of goodwill, conservative and liberal, are growing weary of the moral calculus of gasoline. What people are learning is that private choices have public consequences. (c2).

The reduced, narrowed-down value proposition is anything but an indicator of the promised potentiality for consumers which must be taken advantage of:

“…see what kind of mileage is possible with hybrids. The average (mean) is not indicative of what gas saving techniques can produce in a hybrid [car], it simply blows away a conventional car…” (c3).

The hope for endless potentiality serves as a starting point for the recursive turns of communications. It serves as a common platform, upon which co-creative experiences are built (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). However, citizens are wary and sure that the value proposition from a company is not a “magic bullet” for all the concerns, rather it is a “pie in the sky” (a concept, naturally found in the data, an in-vivo term), which must be actively sought by relevant actions. Owning a hybrid car is not seen as a guarantee of sustainability, but the way this value proposition is purposefully acted upon may have promised some hope.

The concept value co-creation is based on the following categories: unique fuel-efficiency experience, variability, inconsistent measuring, and power laws. The unique fuel-efficiency experience should not be taken as the extent of fuel spending expressed numerically as quantity, rather it represents the unity of all consumer experience related to the actions, which led to the level of fuel spending. Drastic variability in reporting fuel-efficiency indicates that its comprehension depends upon a myriad of factors ranging from conditions, actions, and expectations to the ways of defining, calculating, and measuring. The actual reported level of fuel-efficiency varied from as little as 19 mpg (miles per gallon) to more than 100 mpg. Many accounts reported difficulties in measurement (inconsistent measuring):

“I would like to say one thing more about the bragging. I have watched the mpg calculator in my 2003 HCH and I know if I work that calculator just right I can make it say I get 70 mpg and I really don't. I know exactly the points on the mileage of a trip where that calculator takes a reading of your mpg on the scale and averages that into what it already has. If I were really being careful and watching that I could get off the gas or coast at those points and make the calculator give me excellent readings. However, all of the mpg I have I calculate the oldest way known. Start with a full tank of gas drive the distance, record the distance, fill the tank back up with gas, record the gallons of gas you buy and then calculate. That is the only real way to know what your mileage is. If you are only looking at that calculator in your car you could be getting a lot different mileage that you think” (c4).

Moreover, the highly interactive, complex systems feature the characteristics of power laws (Marion 1999; The Economist 2005b). Similarly, power law probability distributions could be fitted to the reported fuel efficiency data, which could be explained in terms of highly dynamic interaction among the terms. In this case, the Pareto probability density functions would signify higher probability that a large number of situations be clustered around the manufacturer’s advised level of the variable, whereas the probability (or fraction) of getting the higher levels of fuel efficiency would steadily decrease.

Autopoietic Transformation. Uncertainty with measurement appears to contribute to the alternative mode of value to that advocated by the marketer. In the system, the marketeer’s efficiency has turned into play, the quality has been taken as beauty (Holbrook 1994). The shift in the value transforms the “extrinsic” nature of the proposition (a means to self-oriented ends) to the “intrinsic” quality (an end in itself) (Holbrook 1994), its character changed from
instrumental to ludic (playfulness), from practical to autotelic (action is a reward in itself rather than being associated with some outcomes), from utilitarian to personal appreciation (Holbrook 1999). This process we call the autopoietic transformation of value. The categories retrieved from the data that support the idea are obsession, playful behavior, and artful driving:

What extremes? For example this summer has been very hot. Mid 90’s, 99% humid. Sticky. While almost everyone just runs their AC I have not. Many times I’ve brought along a 6-pack size cooler with icewater and a dabbing cloth… (c5). / I’m a mileage freak… (c6). / My favorite gear is neutral. Every chance I get, I run with the engine off and the ignition switch on. My kids call it driving “Soap Box Derby” style. They are all Soap Box Derby racers. We own three All-American soap box derby cars, and I am a race official. We have been doing this for five years. So you can see, coasting downhill has become a family hobby (c7). / Finding the best balance between using the battery for auxiliary power (when getting up to speed) and using the gas engine only when cruising may turn out to be an art (c8).

It became increasingly clear that hybrid car consumption is not about saving costs. A big part of discussions were about why hybrids should not be considered as a means of a return on investment. Small savings in operating costs are not able to off-set a huge premium paid for acquisition of this type of technology vis-à-vis comparable models. A company would urge users to note the proposition of a clear advantage in fuel economy, thus emphasising a “hedonic” character of value (Podolny and Hill-Popper 2004), that is reducing value to a set of measurable criteria. However, experiences communicated within the system indicate that it rather fits a “transcendent conception of value” (Podolny and Hill-Popper 2004), which stands for a holistic blend of mutual appreciation through reduction of a social distance between the object and the subject.

Autopoietic Turns. The autopoiesis is based on self-referential differentiation (Luhmann 1995). The categories in the data that indicate to this phenomenon are self-differentiation ((in)efficient driving, identity, and legitimacy), the autopoietic closure and (the initiation of) change. A segmentation (value) strategy is directed towards creating a difference along industrial product-categorical delineation, such as between hybrid car(brand)s and non-hybrids. However, the observation shows that the self-differentiation in the system does not match this assumption; rather differentiation occurs in the level of communications. The difference is not constructed along the industrial categorisation of models; instead, it is built up on the difference between efficient and inefficient driving styles. As a means to differentiation and status expression, forum interactors usually start up with presenting their identity, which contains information on an average level of attained mpg (km/l), a number of hybrid-experience years, and a distance driven in a hybrid-car. This kind of informational density itself conveys a feeling of the high complexity of driving experiences. Most interactors whose intention is to give advice to others try to attach high legitimacy to their expertise by expressing their identity in this way. Also, self-differentiation may happen in stages of self-contentment. The self-contentment occurs when one is satisfied with the level of one’s own achievement, and acts toward to the very self-chosen result. Many refer to guys in 40s, 50s, and so forth, which indicate to the level of contentment with the unity of actions to achieve the certain level of mileage. This way of “driving to the result” points to the existence of the autopoietic closure:

Your commute is what you make it. I don’t expect you to understand that (c9).

Autopoietic Closure and Environment. The extent the actors differentiate and distance themselves from the non-hybrid word is the defining characteristic of the closure. This would determine how open or closed the system becomes in its evolving self-referentiality. The closure actually plays the role of a strategy in dealing with increasing environmental turbulence, characterised by the external and internal complexity. Although not all the turbulence is related to the dynamics of the system, its understanding (meaning) is co-created within the system. The closure filters the complexity and creates a temporal internal order which may develop into the internal complexity. The internal complexity increases by creation of changes in driving attitudes and driving habits. As soon as the driving attitude changes, actions pass the systemic borders and emerge in a qualitatively different context:

The fact that hybrid ownership bridges traditional political, cultural, and philosophical barriers is a major plus. It shouldn’t require knowing the secret “with it” club handshake to be welcomed to the hybrid community (c10).

Active Engagement. The self-legitimising recursivity emerges when consumers interactively introduce (co-create) certain driving strategies and principles, and then actively implement them and use them as justification. This kind of activity normalisation is actually done through differentiation, as certain relevant strategies are usually chosen among many available in the perceived “horizon of driving strategies”. The examples for the system-unique driving strategies to emphasise here are pulse-and-glide, and drafting. The pulse-and-glide technique is the most complicated strategy in which one tries to maintain speed and when necessary to accelerate by only using electric power while the petrol engine is in hold. Drafting means getting in close behind big trucks on the highway to get advantage from the aerodynamic corridor created by them. Additionally, within the system, everyone gets affected with certain self-differentiating driving principles such as minimum braking, smooth start and acceleration, keeping momentum of speed, slow driving, and so forth. Such “in-system-principles” have predominantly been understood as having positive connotations vis-à-vis rival principles. The hybrid driver is the proud implementer (enjoins “good” and prohibits “wrong”) of the systemic strategies and principles. The factor that gives this experience the recursive dynamic is the active interaction with the external and car-related conditions. The external conditions can be divided into weather factors (air temperature, humidity, whether it is raining or not, seasons) and geographic factors (local topography, road conditions, traffic, route, and driving time). The car-related conditions are ventilation, vehicle weight, speed, aerodynamics, tire condition, and petrol quality. This list is not exhaustive. The permutation of the
factors would emerge in a driver’s experience in quite a chaotic way, yet a user is not a passive acceptor, rather he/she is an active interactor, even a constructor of his/her experience. The type and character of active engagement and experience construction largely depends on the intentional foci of actions. Even such uncontrollable factors as outside temperature can pro-actively be interacted through the intentional action:

“...it sounds well deep, like walking on the rice paper and not leaving a mark like David Carradine in Kung Fu. Aside from accel work, this guy covers almost all of the front grill and half the engine room in winter, has extended the air intake pipe, and uses the equivalent of a block heater on the engine. It sounds like he is using a halogen room heater, a somewhat improvised solution” (c13).

The re-production of the conditions-consequences cycle would not be possible without continuous learning, educating and experimenting within the system. Interestingly what emerged is that any one of these three may appear as a necessary precondition for the others, or/and take turns in preceding each other. They emerge in a concerted unity.

**Meanings/Value Drift**

The marketers are diligently uttering the sustainable mobility values. Here we deliberately avoided using the term “communicating”. The communication is complete (becomes a unified system of meanings/value) if there is understanding (appreciation) in the ‘reader’. The drift in the originally proposed value may have developed due to the unified interaction between the process factors and the boundary conditions, which may have bifurcated through the autopoiesis. We would like to discuss three points related to the sustainable mobility issue in the context of this particular system: harmful emissions, safety, and widespread mass access. A benefit the hybrid technology offers is drastic reduction in carbon dioxide emissions levels per a car. However, how this benefit might relate to the total emissions produced within the system is, as yet, uncertain. Extensive proliferation (and ludic experimentation) of the technology may have resulted in the higher rates of demand and usage. For example, Toyota acknowledges failure in reducing total emissions in absolute terms (Toyota Motor Corporation 2005). However, could such a complex term as sustainability be reduced to a certain measurable foundation (here, it is fuel-efficiency and emission reduction)? As far as systems thinking is concerned, probably not. As soon as we (citizens) are proposed a certain measure, we autopoietically render it to the transcendent value. We play with it, marvel at it, get obsessed, and experiment with it. Thus the system thrives. Moreover, much debate online was on the relative fast wearout of the hybrid system components, which would mean faster accumulation of waste in global terms. Yet the biggest issue that must be noted is the safety of the users. Could we imagine how dangerous the traffic might get if some of drivers would unexpectedly start drafting or pulse-and-gliding? This turn could become a self-defeating strategy for companies who would like to argue that hybrids are about sustainability. The final concern is about enabling access for the global population to the beneficial technology. In terms of costs, the hybrid models are still inaccessible to most drivers in the developed world, not to mention the developing regions. One might wonder if it is not becoming an entertainment of a prosperous few that is covered in the “sustainability cloak of innocence”.

**CONCLUSION**

It seems that hybrid-car acquisition does not become an automatic guarantee of sustainability as claimed by producers. To be sustainable what might really matter is the way and attitude by which the value proposition is acted or communicated upon. Manufacturers’ communications are but a small part of the whole marketing system. The interactivity appears to be out of the control of any agent. Luhmann (1995) speaks of a “double contingency” in this regard (i.e. two agents depend on each other to create their respective self-identities), however, we see it as a multiple contingency. System boundaries are far from being material or tangible, they are communicative, and they tend to become actualised through considerable changes in actions (communications). For instance, “border-crossing” happens when a user starts driving in a “hybrid way”, which is “constructed” to be totally different to the conventional way of car driving. The difference among consumers is traditionally understood in terms of demographic, psychological, or geographic factors. In contrast, our theory emphasises the case of the dynamic communicative differentiation that is based on a totality of actions (interactions). So borders may not be there to set apart intra-system and inter-system relationships, but serve as a “filter” that helps to reduce the environmental complexity into a manageable intra-system auto-poi-sis. The wholeness co-created must be meaningful in terms of the current practicality (Luhmann 1995). However, sustainability is complex and uncertain, so no particular system can “digest” it within its reductionist circularity of meaning. Nevertheless, it may have a chance to be actualised in the intersection of several systems. For citizens to reach “sustainability emancipation”, the transcendence over the narrow autopoietic turn is required.

**Meanings/Value Drift**

It has been suggested that consumers create autopoietic turns in using value propositions and meanings, and the process is not always as it is intended by producers. The value assumes a totally different meaning through co-creative experiences triggered by self-referential communications. In the context of the autopoiesis, communications selectively create certain relevant conditions, and these conditions are in turn used to create similar communications. The communications are directed toward creating only those conditions which would enable the regeneration of the same kind of communications. By creating a full dynamic cycle the marketing system closes itself apart from the environment, especially its uncertain complexity, and then starts adapting to its own complexity. The excess self-adaptation might lead to an ever-increasing chasm between the original value and the transformed value. The system, particularly its active part, which is reflected in the participant’s communications, is driven by its own autopoietic (regeneration) motives, rather than the sustainability of the environment. As communications are temporal, the sustainable self-emergence prevails regardless
that the value of environmental sustainability is being continuously infused into the systemic operation. It seems natural, because the environment is cyclically constructed in each autopoietic turn by the same system for its own purposes. The ideal of sustainability, as the dominant rhetoric, is made to serve sustainability, but in this case it is that of the systemic autopoiesis. The question remains open: Is this process itself sustainable?

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ABSTRACT
This paper brings current thinking about the communicative constitution of organisations to bear on marketplace phenomena. Examining marketplace communication we find compelling evidence of something we call hyperorganisation. As a verb and a noun, hyperorganisation describes both a process and an outcome. A hyperorganisation appears to grow organically or strategically from roots in common human interest, i.e., a set of shared or overlapping purposes. A hyperorganisation exists irrespective of traditional boundaries of organisations or institutions. Its own boundaries are socially constructed, dynamic and permeable. It may share membership with one or more formal organisations. Most notably, it exists in and through processes of communication. A theory of hyperorganisation has the potential to unify such similar but narrowly construed constructs as consumption subcultures and brand communities with such disparate constructs as boycotts, consumer movements, and supply chains. We discuss the discovery of hyperorganisation and some of its implications for consumer behavior and marketing.

INTRODUCTION
The construct of the hyperorganisation exemplifies how organisational communication theory may broaden our understanding of the organising grammars through which consumption subcultures, brand communities and other marketplace phenomena emerge. In our discovery of the hyperorganisation we began with two assumptions. First, organisations are communicatively constituted as both a means and process of sensemaking (Taylor 1993; Weick 1979). Second, grammars of sensemaking or organising may be mediated and may include behaviors other than speech. We put these assumptions to work by analyzing specific communication behaviors with the purpose of better understanding the organising process and its results. Through the investigation we have uncovered a phenomenon, the hyperorganisation, for which extant theory fails to account adequately. We invoke recent scholarship in consumer behavior to explore the concept of hyperorganisation as it relates to alternative grammars of sensemaking in the marketplace. Finally, we discuss the discovery of the hyperorganisation as it relates to individuals, to formal organisations, and to the further study of consumer behavior.

Communicative Organising
Scholars have rethought and to a large extent rejected structural and functional theories of organisational communication. Rather than relying on the assumption that organisations are static, bounded structures, or on scientific models of phenomenal explanations, researchers have developed theories from more open perspectives (e.g., Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo, 1982, Taylor, 1993, Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Taylor (1993) suggests that “the goal of organisational communication theory ought to be to bridge the micro/macro gap by showing how to discover the structure in the process and delineating the processes that realise the structure” (p. 261). Determining an organisation by its formal agendas or it bricks and mortar is less enlightening than investigating the communicative processes first and then observing the organisation mutually constructed by participants.

This approach has its foundation in Weick’s (1979) theory of sensemaking. Sensemaking involves attention to talk, discourse, and conversation as a way of investigating how social contact is mediated (Weick, 1995). Organisational communication scholars (e.g., Taylor, 1993) and organisational behavior scholars (e.g., Hatch, 1997) argue that organisations are socially constructed by the communication and behavior of organisational members. Weick (1979) notes that organisations are structures superimposed by people on flows of experience. When group members reach agreement as to what is consequential and what is trivial, and agree on the nature and directions of connections, their experience becomes sensible. Thus, organising is a “consensually validated grammar of reducing equivocality by means of sensible interlocked behaviors” (Weick, 1979, p. 3).

Extending the concept of an organising grammar allows theorists to include new communication technologies (e.g., e-mail, text messaging, and instant messaging) and suggests new grammars for distance organising. Traditional mass media also carry organising grammars beyond traditional organisational boundaries. Commonplace, mundane, and low-tech behaviors of symbolic consumption may also provide grammars to facilitate the consensual reduction of equivocality among people engaged in common social projects. Considering new organising grammars also allows us to think more broadly about how people constitute organisations through communication. Similarly, we may discover that our concept of the organisation requires commensurate broadening.

Discovering the Hyperorganisation
We recently conducted a case study (Martin and Schouten 2002) in an effort to better understand the communicative constitution of organisations. Traditional studies in this vein begin with an organisation and then examine the communicative acts and processes within it. Naturally they find that organising occurs and organisations are constituted. Bothered by the tautology inherent in such an approach, we elected to turn the research process inside-out. We began by examining a communicative act in a market space in order to assess the kind of organising that might flow from it. Specifically, through the analysis of telephone conversations broadcasted on the call-in radio
program Car Talk, we observed and documented organising. We also examined Car Talk’s web site (www.cartalk.com), including its selling function, the “Shameless Commerce” division, and its interactive “Email and Chat” function. For the purpose of illustration we now confine ourselves to the examination of a single radio call-in (See Appendix for a transcription).

In analyzing the Car Talk communication processes for evidence of organisational constitution we utilised the criteria specified by McPhee and Zaug (2000) in their definition of an organisation, namely:

...a social interaction system, influenced by prevailing economic and legal institutional practices, and including coordinated action and interaction within and across a socially constructed system boundary, manifestly directed toward a privileged set of outcomes (p. 5).

Examining a single Car Talk call-in episode while holding present the above definition allows us to follow the logic of the communicative constitution of an organisation. In the course of the conversation, a number of interesting social phenomena manifest themselves. Here we will concern ourselves only with a few that impinge directly on our research question: Does the communication event called Car Talk organise people in a meaningful way?

According to the definition, an organisation is a social interaction system. So is Car Talk, without a doubt. Its very purpose is to generate and moderate social interaction between the hosts and callers for the primary purpose of entertaining National Public Radio listeners, and for the secondary purpose of providing advice about all things automotive. Those purposes begin to unfold as soon as the phone is answered. The cast includes radio hosts Tom and Ray Magliozzi, AKA the Tappet Brothers, and a caller named James.

The call begins with Tom answering the phone, “Hello, you’re on Car Talk.” James announces the purpose of his call as “a moral dilemma,” which he hopes “two good Italian guys” (“I’m Roman Catholic too,” he also says) can help him to resolve. James then tells his story, complicated by frequent, joking interruptions from the hosts, about finding a large envelope full of money ($3200) hidden in the trunk of a recently purchased 1985 Cadillac. James’s moral dilemma: What to do with the money?

As a second condition for the existence of an organisation, the social interaction system must be “influenced by prevailing economic and legal institutional practices.” Once again the Car Talk episode fits the description. Calls are fielded through an established “800” number and broadcast in accordance with a corporate timetable and in accordance with FCC regulations. Within the call itself we also see evidence of prevailing economic and legal practices. The advice dispensed by the Magliozzi brothers covers both money and ethics. It also enters the realm of law. Says Ray, “Well, I uh, legally you bought the car and everything in it...So the money’s yours.”

An organisation also demonstrates coordinated action and interaction within and across a socially constructed system boundary. In this single, short episode there are several calls to action, including the following directive from Tom, reached after lively banter among the three call participants over how to detect any other money that may have been hidden in the car: “I think you have to, at the very least, take out the back seat.” More directly, there occurs a well-orchestrated production process in the conversation. The product is entertainment. It is produced and re-produced jointly, intentionally, and collaboratively. James, formerly only a consumer of Car Talk, is invited onto the airwaves to become a co-producer, exemplifying member identification in the process of the interaction (Weick, 1995). The system boundary is delineated by a radio frequency, which Tom articulates with the question: “What are you going to say when he (the seller of the car) hears this call on his local NPR station?”

An organisation has socially constructed boundaries. So Does Car Talk. One boundary is suggested when James evokes his and the Magliozzi brothers’ common Catholicism. More importantly, listeners and callers share insider humor with Tom and Ray who find ways to relate to each other, to callers, and to the audience. And they routinely refer to third parties, such as the seller of the car in this episode, or to other auto mechanics, as outsiders. They are not “in on” the joke.

Finally, an organisation is manifestly directed toward a privileged set of outcomes. It is clear from a single phone call that Car Talk is managed purposefully and collaboratively to produce humor and, by extension, entertainment for listeners to National Public Radio.

From one short communication event we can see that, at least according to one definition, the communication phenomenon called Car Talk constitutes an organisation. That we found evidence of organisation in the course of a Car Talk program was unsurprising. We expected it. Current organisational communication theory predicted we would. What was interesting, however, was that the organisation we uncovered was very different from what we would have found had we simply gone looking for the Car Talk organisation. The Car Talk radio program, which airs weekly on National Public Radio (NPR) in the United States, is produced by a formal organisation consisting of Tom and Ray Magliozzi and nine core staff members located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. However, the structure we identified while examining the results of public Car Talk communication was something larger, more fluid, and more dynamic. Articulating with members of the formal organisation through the media of telephone and radio are callers and a national radio audience. The callers emerge from the audience to participate actively in the co-production of Car Talk’s principal product.

The formal Car Talk organisation relies on the participation of people outside the organisation to generate the social interaction that is the essence of the organisation’s mission. Hosts and callers collaborate for the purpose of achieving a privileged set of outcomes, namely, entertaining NPR listeners while sharing automotive advice. Both the humor and the advice are effective because they are relevant to listeners’ lives and issues; that is, they are influenced by prevailing economic and legal institutional practices. Discussions of in-groups and out-groups, and evidence of insider humor, demonstrate a clear, socially constructed system boundary. Car Talk’s listeners and callers identify personally with the show. They consume it, and more importantly for our purposes, they also play integral roles in its ongoing production.

Are the callers, then, and by extension, the national
organising. (p. 43) Once again we see an emphasis on relation in modern life are the activities and associated interpersonal relationships that people undertake to give their lives meaning.” (Weick 1979) theory of sensemaking, McAlexander assert: “The most powerful organising forces with Weick’s theory of sensemaking, Schouten and McAlexander assert: “The most powerful organising forces with Weick’s (1979) theory of sensemaking, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) hinted at the power of marketing organisations (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002) as “a specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among users of a brand” (p. 412) which exhibits consciousness of kind or belonging, shared consumption rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility to the brand. The relationships, the consciousness of kind, the rituals, and the sense of connection and responsibility all are products of communication. A brand community is a hyperorganisation that exists in symbiosis with a formal organisation, namely a marketing enterprise. It is important to note that hyperorganisations are not simple artifacts of business. Brand communities are in many instances accidental organisations that emerge through socializing processes of communication that include customer responses to mass-mediated commercial messages, internet-mediated and interpersonal interactions among consumers, and interactions between consumers and agents of formal marketing organisations (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002). The force behind the emergence of these hyperorganisations is a process of sensemaking among consumers working out issues of individual and group identity, taking meaning from and creating meaning with grammars provided by the marketplace.

In the case of Car Talk, the Harley Owners Group (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), or Camp Jeep

Harley-Davidson provides necessary goods and services for the functioning of the [subculture], and in return it receives such enviable benefits as fierce customer loyalty, voluminous publicity, and highly useful consumer feedback. Another remarkable benefit that accrues to marketers from subcultures of consumption is the phenomenon of “grass-roots r & d” that occurs as highly involved consumers develop stylistic and technological advancements for existing consumer goods. (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995, p. 57)

More recent explorations in the sociology of consumption discuss a kindred social collective, the brand community (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001), which also fits our definition of a hyperorganisation. A brand community is defined by Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001) as “a specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among users of a brand” (p. 412) which exhibits consciousness of kind or belonging, shared consumption rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility to the brand. The relationships, the consciousness of kind, the rituals, and the sense of connection and responsibility all are products of communication. A brand community is a hyperorganisation that exists in symbiosis with a formal organisation, namely a marketing enterprise. It is important to note that hyperorganisations are not simple artifacts of business. Brand communities are in many instances accidental organisations that emerge through socializing processes of communication that include customer responses to mass-mediated commercial messages, internet-mediated and interpersonal interactions among consumers, and interactions between consumers and agents of formal marketing organisations (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002). The force behind the emergence of these hyperorganisations is a process of sensemaking among consumers working out issues of individual and group identity, taking meaning from and creating meaning with grammars provided by the marketplace.

In the case of Car Talk, the Harley Owners Group (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), or Camp Jeep

Hyperorganisation and the Organising Grammars of Consumer Behavior

It has been nearly half a century since Levy (1959) alerted marketing scholars that consumption is symbolic and that consumer behavior is necessarily communicative. It is through grammars of symbolic consumption that certain kinds of organising take place. From a historical perspective, Boorstin (1974) hinted at the power of symbolic consumption to organise social structures. He characterised consumption communities as “invisible new communities…created and preserved by how and what men consumed.” (Boorstin 1974, p. 89). While not specifically addressing the processes of communication that create consumption communities, he observed that following the industrial revolution the sense of community in America began to shift in the direction of commonalities based on brand use and affiliation. Without even knowing it, American consumers had begun to organise themselves socially through the messages carried by their consumption.

If Boorstin’s consumption communities were invisible, then other consumer collectives are quite the opposite. Schouten and McAlexander (1995), in an ethnographic study of Harley-Davidson owners, introduced the concept of a subculture of consumption as “a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects based on a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity.” (p. 43) In a passage that resonates with Weick’s (1979) theory of sensemaking, Schouten and McAlexander assert: “The most powerful organising forces in modern life are the activities and associated interpersonal relationships that people undertake to give their lives meaning.” (p. 43) Once again we see an emphasis on organising.

A subculture of consumption is communicated into being and perpetuated by a grammar that includes not merely speech acts but also acts of symbolic consumption and display. It constructs clear boundaries of membership, such as the ownership of a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. With its codes and rituals it privileges certain outcomes. They happen to be consumption related outcomes, such as motorcycle customization or a pilgrimage to Sturgis, South Dakota for the annual Black Hills motorcycle rally. As in any organisation, members of a subculture of consumption are socialised to certain ways of speaking, thinking and acting by lesson, by example, and by assumptive speech. For example, bikers learn group-riding etiquette from more experienced riders. They learn correct manners of dress through observation of other bikers and through retail activities aimed at them. The impetus for a pilgrimage may come from another biker’s assumptive question: “So, have you been to Sturgis yet?”

Similar to the relationship between the formal Car Talk organisation and its hyperorganisation, Bikers have a symbiotic relationship with Harley-Davidson, Inc.:
Consumer emancipation and resistance do not necessarily organise around a specific firm or brand. Consumer activists also organise in opposition to cultural institutions and practices such as advertising and genetic engineering of foods. In so doing they negotiate meaning in terms of their own identity, and they attempt to revise or marginalise the meanings proclaimed by the institutions or industries they oppose (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). Consumer movements emerge as hyperorganisations.

A hyperorganisation may even at times both support and oppose a marketing institution. Kozinets (2001) describes Star Trek fan culture as both organising around and actively resisting a complex commercial enterprise. Fans avidly consume and co-create Star Trek products and cultural artifacts while simultaneously seeking to liberate those artifacts from the control of the marketing organisation that owns and (in some fans’ views) profits from them. In every respect the fan base fulfills our definition of a hyperorganisation. In the case of Apple Newton users (Mutz and Schau 2005) a hyperorganisation has completely assumed roles once played by the now absent marketer, engaging in such functions as service, repair and new product development.

The above examples of hyperorganisation beg the question of agency and control over production between consumers and producers (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). In their study of ESPN Zone Chicago Kozinets, Sherry, Storm, Duhachek, Nuttavithisit and Deberry-Spence (2004) recognise two views of agency:

- Instead of a dichotomous view of agency in which two parties—consumers and producers—vie for control, our findings at ESPN Zone Chicago vividly illustrate another model: one of embedded consumer-producers, where consumers produce producers’ products at the same time and as much as producers consume consumers’ consumption (p. 671).

- Our Car Talk example fits the pattern of ESPN Zone. Whether a consumer collective organises around consumption or anti-consumption, and whether their co-production of products and meanings is harmonious or combative, they are alike in the phenomena that qualify them as hyperorganisations. They are communicatively constituted; they construct boundaries, identity, and meaning; and their behaviors of co-production and co-consumption have economic consequences for the institutions around or against which they organise.

**Hyperorganisation and the Value Chain: Grammars of Co-Production**

Consumer research tends to privilege the customer point of view, a natural tendency given the emphasis on consumer-centrism that pervades marketing literature. Current trends in marketing thought are, if anything, more consumer-centric than ever before. Supply chain or value chain management relies on communication, collaboration and synergy among networked firms in order to create value for all participants. Vargo and Lusch (2004), in discussing a “new dominant logic for marketing,” place customers as active participants and co-producers in a value chain characterised by exchanges of service or competencies. Customers co-produce value for the entire network through the consumption of goods and services and through communication with marketers (Normann and Ramirez 1993; Vargo and Lusch 2004). We would maintain that a well-functioning value chain (or value web) is a hyperorganisation. It is communicated into existence. Its boundaries are socially constructed and transcend the traditional boundaries of organisation charts and bricks and mortar. It integrates production, consumption and meaning construction throughout the marketing channels, and its effectiveness has economic impact for each participant in the network.

Not all members of a hyperorganisation are necessarily equal partners in the co-creation of value and meaning. In the context of the value chain certain companies participate from a position of dominant channel power. Normann and Ramirez (1993) in their discussion of “value constellations” focus on IKEA. By viewing their customers as a “co-producer[s of] improvements in family living” (p.4) IKEA co-opts consumers’ labor in the purchase and use of customer-assembled furniture and frames it as a value. The customer is cast in the role of co-creator, but the process and decisions of creation remain in the control of IKEA. This works as long as consumers derive sufficient value from the co-production process. IKEA also turns to its suppliers in a similar fashion, making stringent requirements while also providing management advice. The danger to IKEA or any marketer in a similar position is that if they fail to keep the lines of communication in the value chain open then other members (including customers and suppliers) are quite capable of creating new hyperorganisations (such as internet-mediated market spaces) that circumvent the marketing organisation.

**CONCLUSION**

The construct of the hyperorganisation extends consumer behavior theory in two important ways. First, it makes explicit that the various relationships that create communities and markets are products of communication. Second, it provides the macro construct that unites and makes sense of more narrowly defined constructs such as subcultures of consumption, consumer movements, brand communities, boycotts, and possibly even value chains. Moving beyond modernist notions of the organisation as a container, a communicative-constitution perspective uncovers rich and interesting dimensions in consumer behavior and market dynamics. We have written of the hyperorganisation primarily as if it were a thing as opposed to a process. It is a thing in the same way that the surface of the ocean is a thing. Its contours and constitution are
constantly in flux, shaped by the organising powers of winds, currents, shores and tides. The contours and constitution of the hyperorganisation are shaped by the communication of its many participants and the social contexts in which they find themselves. And just as the surface of the ocean looks different depending on an individuals subject position relative to it, so does the constitution of a hyperorganisation. Schouten and McAlexander (1995) observed that their understanding of a Harley-owners subculture changed as they became progressively embedded within it. One might reasonably suspect that the view of the subculture is even more different from the perspective of marketing managers within Harley-Davidson whose sense-making grammars include inputs from such parties as suppliers and stockholders in a dynamically competitive marketplace environment. Martin, Schouten and McAlexander (2006) also demonstrate the value of taking multiple subject positions in their feminist re-inquiry into the Harley-Davidson owner subculture.

This theoretical essay merely hints at the power of the hyperorganisation. This construct, which encompasses many of the collectives regularly studied in consumer behavior, merits additional investigation. To better understand a hyperorganisation we should examine more closely the processes of communication that structure its component relationships. Understanding hyperorganisation as a process may offer the best handle yet on phenomena such as entrepreneurship, which often depends on personal networks and relationships to be successful (Martin 2006). The potential for understanding and effecting social change and major shifts in the marketplace also intrigues us. To the extent that hyperorganisations gain critical mass and energy through communicative behaviors such as expressive consumption and internet-mediated communication, they may pressure institutions such as governments and corporations to respond. Institutional resources such as mass media and product design could potentially close a feedback loop that accelerates change in a manner similar to that described by Malcolm Gladwell in The Tipping Point (Gladwell 2000).

REPRESENTS
APPENDIX

“Found Money”
Transcription of a Car Talk Episode

Tom: “Hello, you’re on car talk.”
James: “My name is James and I’m from Charleston South Carolina.”
Tom, Ray: “Hi James” “Yes James, what’s up?”
James: “This is a moral issue, and I figure that you’re two good Italian guys and you’ll figure this out. I’m Roman Catholic too, and this has just got me…”
T/R: “Yeah”
James: “We recently purchased a 1985 Cadillac Fleetwood Brougham…”
Tom, Ray: “Oh man!” “Does it get any better than that!”?
James: “Well… It does.”
T/R: laughter “yeah…”
James: “It does, it does. About two or three weeks ago—we’ve had the car for about seven months—two weeks ago I’m in the trunk of the car, and…”
Ray: “Just hangin’ around?” laughs
James: “No no no I was…"
Tom: “He was measuring for bodies, you know…” laughter
James: “… no, the story gets good here, because I, I noticed the rug was kinda loose—now on a fifteen year old car that’s not anything exceptional—but I, you know, there was a little tab that was holding the rug on…”
Ray: “Ohhh, so you pulled that and you found Jimmy Hoffa!”
James: “No, I found thirty-two hundred dollars in small bills.”
Tom: raucous laughter “That’s even better!” laughter
James: “Honest to God”
Tom: “Did you really!”
James: “Honest to God, and it was in a yellowed kind of envelope. Now, here’s the moral dilemma…”
T/R: “Do you tell your wife!?” raucous laughter
James: laughing along “You know, guys, that’s the first thing I did. I took the envelope and I brought it right to her”
T/R: “You. No you fool!” laughter
James: laughing “I mean it was just kind of a reflex reaction, I said ‘look at what I found!’ Now, but, here’s the deal. Now, um, then my conscience started to bother me, and I said ‘you know, I should go back to the guy who sold me the car and tell him and maybe share in the trophy, right?’”
Tom: serious "He didn’t know about it either.”
James: “Uh, clearly not!”
Ray: “Clearly not. So you know the guy that you got the car from?”
James: “I…I’m hardly familiar with him. He lives in the same general neighborhood and he’s not talking with me very much. Every time he sees me he kind of hides.”
Tom: “Why’s that?”
James: “Because it was his parents’ car, and I think he thinks I’m gonna come back to him and say, you know, ‘what a piece of junk, I paid two thousand dollars for this car…”
Tom: “What are you going to say when he hears this call on his local NPR station?”
James: “Hopefully he won’t!” laughter
Tom: laughter “You’re not really from Charleston, South Carolina…”
James: “Yea I am…”
Ray: “And your name is not James…”
James: “No, everything so far is the absolute God’s honest truth.”
Tom: “So what do you propose? I know what I would suggest.”
James: “What’s that?”
Tom: “Well I, I, I would suggest that you, uh, you gotta tell ‘im about it.”
James: “Okay.”
Tom: “Don’t you? It probably was his parents’ money.”
James: “Right.”
Tom: “Do you and this person from whom you bought it have a favorite charity?”
James: “Yeah, maybe that’s the, uh, you know that’s, uh, that appeals to me…”
Tom: “I think you two should get together and send that charity a hundred bucks…” raucous laughter
Ray: “Exactly! What is charity?! Why doesn’t charity begin at home?”
James: "Like my wife says!"
Tom: “But unfortunately the money belongs to him.”
R: “How much…?”
Tom: “His parents, it was his parents’…”
Ray: “Does not!? He sold the car and everything in it!”
James: “The parents are dead.”
Tom: “Was there anything else in the car?”
James: “…except there were some dog hairs, and a bad air conditioner compressor, but that went…”
Tom: “Wait a minute! James, have you, have you torn apart the entire car?”
Ray: laughter
Tom: “If what you saw was in a place so easy to find, imagine what’s inside the doors!”
Ray: “Imagine what’s inside the seats!”
Tom: “You’re gonna hafta…”
Ray: “Or the roof lining! Cut that thing open, man!” laughter
James: “You know, you’ve got a point…”
Tom: “You need to tear up every… I would…”
Ray: “Do you have an oxyacetylene torch?”
James: “Right.”
Ray: “Would you like one?” laughter “(garbled)…out there in the morning…”
Tom: “Cut the thing open”
James: “Right!”
Tom: “I don’t think you can take a chance. There might be a hundred and thirty two thousand dollars in this car.”
Ray: “Might be the tip of the iceberg.”
James: “You’re pr… you may be right. And then I can be really generous.”
Tom: “Exactly. You can give ’em five grand.”
Ray: laughter
Tom: “I think you have to, at the very least take out the back seat.”
James: “Okay, we’ll do that.”
Ray: “Well, I uh, legally you bought the car and everything in it.”
James: “Right.”
Ray: “So the money’s yours.”
James: “You think so?”
Tom: “But morally the money belongs… if it’s only thirty-two hundred…”
James: “Right”
Tom: “…there’s no reason”
Ray: “to go to hell. Don’t tell a lie…”
Tom: “There’s no reason…”
Ray: “unnecessarily…” laughter
Tom: “If it’s thirty-two hundred, give him the money. Your conscience will be clear. It’s not going to change your life. If it’s a hundred and thirty-two thousand, call us back!” laughter “Good luck!”
Ray: “And if you get a phone call from HIM…”
James: “right”
Ray: “…like tomorrow…”
James: “Right. Then we’re in trouble.”
Tom: “Yeah”
Ray: “Then, we don’t know nothin’!” laughter
Tom: “Good Luck, James!”
James: “Thank you.”
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In a larger definition, narratives are articulations carried, contained and transmitted through language, (verbal as well as textual), images, (constructed, captured or represented in both fixed and moving forms) and gestures (extended or represented). They help us construct our social and cultural worlds through our stories about past, present and future; account, action and imagination; myth, legend and fable; arts, crafts and literature; marketplaces, products and behaviours (Barthes 1966). Like other facets of social and cultural life, narratives permeate marketplace, but because marketplaces are ruled and governed by marketers, marketplace narratives are generally marketing communication inspired rather than consumer generated. Thompson’s (2004) work demonstrates that commercial narratives are created and tailored to provide meanings and metaphors to serve ideological agendas, and that the dynamically evolving nature of marketplace mythologies indicate an ever-present discourse of power among marketplace stakeholders. Perhaps because ordinary market structures do not empower consumers within exchange (Holt 2002) or allow them to freely create commercial as well as consumption narratives, some consumers may turn to alternate platforms like flea markets (Sherry 1990) or burning man festival (Kozinets 2002).

In order to find ‘consumer generated’ commercial narratives, devoid of self-referential commercial agenda, perhaps it is pertinent to look at alternate marketplaces such as online auctions where a consumer becomes the marketer himself. Selling in online auction is primarily aimed at disposal, but consumer experimentation has resulted in popular sites like eBay becoming as much a platform for social and communal action as much a platform for acquisition and disposition. This paper looks at the narratives on eBay, to study how consumers use socially and culturally embedded narratives, archetypes and mythologies in order to promote their own ideological agendas. Consumer empowerment through alternate marketplaces—Within the literary corpus, perhaps there is no universal definition of an ‘alternate marketplace’, but ordinarily a marketplace is presence of buyer, seller and offering; a place where buyers and sellers exist in non-overlapping spheres. Online auctions where consumers act on both sides of a transaction represent a significant change in the centuries old marketplace structures by allowing a role malleability which effectively dissolves the buyer-seller boundaries and makes the consumer a potent force in contemporary marketplace discourses of power (Siddiqui and Turley 2005).

METHODS AND FINDINGS

Making use of an eighteen month long immersive ethnography of eBay, this article casts a wide eye at consumer generated narratives on two of the largest eBay regional websites, US and UK eBay. The extensive database (over 10,000 listings, more than 2,000 pages of printout) included many forms and formats of narratives; textual and visual product descriptions; audio-visual enhancements as well as statistical records; narratives which were inspired by and followed-onto the commercial narratives, as well as the originals which exhibited resistance to the pervasive brand semiotics.

Consumer empowerment on eBay; through making her the marketer, the communicator, the audience and the buyer; grants her the ultimate authority. This authority draws in proponents of multifarious agendas to utilise eBay’s marketspace in creative ways, both constructively as well as deconstructively. Figure 1 summarises our findings about the nature, content and functions of eBay narratives. We find that eBay narratives comprise of four main components; identity, interaction, exchange and social and cultural. These components are woven into the bargain hunter sense of commonality of the larger eBay community to shape an alternate market ethos. We also find that at another level commonality of interest may also results in creation of multiple communities of collectors and consumers around material objects or brands.

DISCUSSION

If the Foucauldian view, that social and communal movements always invoke resistance to prevailing power structures, is applied to alternate marketplaces, we might explain why and how new modes of trade become active subjects in the larger marketplace discourses of power. When these discourses of resistance originate as consumer actions, they have the propensity to emerge as social movements (Kozinets 2004) based on the attribution of an emancipatory universal to a particular social group (Poster 1984). In case of eBay, the very notion that something is advertised on eBay invokes ‘get it cheap’, ‘rock-bottom bargain’ and ‘value for money’ themes built upon knowledge, beliefs and assumptions of the larger eBay community of bargain hunters. These themes essentially are, at one level, indication of a resistance to contemporary market structures based on the assumption that removal of the profiteering middleman from the equation is in best interest of the consumer and is enacted through a consumer-consumer exchange mechanism. However, this ‘removal of middleman’ assumption is counterpointed by the other popular ‘from rug to riches through selling trash’ assumption held by the larger eBay community. Although many consumers do not find the juxtapositions of these two respective metaphors contradictory, we may see them as representing historically countervailing views of alternate marketplaces. On eBay the postmodern notion of consumer freedom (Venkatesh 1998) by escaping the marketplace (Kozinets 2002) is manifested through opting for an alternate marketplace, which, ironically, attracts many consumer-entrepreneurs in quest of Marxian prospect of becoming an active subject in the very economy they are trying to escape.
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WHEN CARS ARE MORE THAN CARS
Olga Kravets, University of Sydney
Catherine Sutton-Brady, University of Sydney

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The ‘motor car’ is among the most significant material objects ever created by people. In their omnipresence and inalienability, cars by and large are taken-for-granted in modern day living. So much so that cars have been barely noticed by sociologists and cultural theorists (Miller 2001), and even less by consumer researchers (Solomon 1992). The present research seeks to highlight the paucity of research on cars as important cultural objects and to identify some issues related to car consumption that in addition may offer additional insights into phenomena of traditional interest to consumer researchers, for instance, consumer-object relations (Belk 1988; Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003; Fournier 1998; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). In particular this research explores consumer interactions and experiences with cars as realised in everyday practices, because it is in mundane daily practices that the true cultural meanings of a product are constructed and its significance for consumers is enacted (de Certeau 1984).

Barthes (1972) noted that a car “is a habitat before being a means of transport”, suggesting that car use developed into distinct way of dwelling, socializing and interacting with the world around. In order to provide the theoretical background for this research we first offer a brief overview of car as a cultural product. Following the logic of Kopytoff’s (1986) ‘cultural biography’ approach, we consider economic, social and cultural significance of a car and review the development of public discourse and private perceptions of a motorcar. Then, we recap some of the key works concerned with cars and cultural aspects of car consumption in consumer research.

Next, we present the method proposed for this study and discuss the preliminary findings from this exploratory research. Four in-depth interviews are conducted with BMW Mini Cooper car owners regarding their experiences with their cars. Additional data is gathered from an online forum devoted to BMW Mini Coopers. Reflecting previous research, this study focuses on owners of ‘aesthetic’ cars, particularly BMW Mini Cooper, one of the successful retro brands, which are associated with resurgence of car enthusiasm, revival of the significance of cultural meanings associated with car ownership and promotion of emotion-based perception of a personal car (Brown et al 2003).

Therefore, it has to be acknowledged that any findings of this study are time and context-bound and their generalizability can only be determined through subsequent research.

This project is conceived and undertaken in the spirit of exploration and discovery rather than justification (Hudson and Ozanne 1988). The research was conceived and constructed as exploratory (with four in-depth interviews). Therefore, we did not attempt to construct a model or theory. Rather we saw our principal goal in uncovering some constellations of terms of reference (McCracken 1988) in consumer-car practices based upon which it would be then possible to identify a direction and develop a strategy for further, more focused research. The core themes noted during the analysis of the four exploratory interviews, supplemented by the observations from the online forum are: Heart, It’s a She!, A Machine and Car as Consumer.

Three avenues for further research into the dynamics and the complexities of consumer-car relations emerged: car as a human being, car as a seducer, and car as a consumer. All three are deeply intertwined and relate to understanding the car as an active partner in the relationship. All three appear to be realised in the mundane practices and daily experiences with a car. All three are context-constituted, that is, they become evident and acquire their meanings and significance in specific contexts. These considerations shall guide the future research agenda.

In summary, in this research we seek to highlight the importance of research on cars in consumer behavior research, by presenting the cultural biography of car, based on the prior studies in sociology. Further, through the examination of the empirical material, we identify some issues related to car consumption, which are worth researchers’ consideration, particularly in the light of the recent call for the research benefitting consumers and contributing to public policy making.

The study’s contribution lies in developing a better understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of car consumption and the relations and/or interactions people have with their cars. Theoretically, this research may contribute to the consumer-object relations research, specifically to the research on interaction and experience of interaction with an ‘active’ object in everyday life and consumer (self) seduction through that experience. Practically, the implications of this research could be twofold. Firstly for the society as a whole and the individual consumer – since “sustainability is not just a matter of technical fixes, but of social and cultural practices” (Graves-Brown 1997). The understanding of these practices could help governments to develop effective strategies for de-marketing a car and help individual consumers to ‘divorce from their car’ and to overcome car-dependency (see the ACR 2005 Conference Presidential Address). Secondly for the industry – a better understanding of consumers’ car reproduction or curating practices could provide opportunities for development of the efficient aftermarket products and their marketing.

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ABSTRACT

Sex in advertising is a known research area which is still of interest given the extended and recent use of provocative sexual appeals in ads. We test the usage of this type of appeal on attitude towards the ad and attitude towards the brand and propose that the concept of embarrassment explains Aad and Ab. We show that embarrassment is composed of two dimensions (private and public) and that both dimensions play very different roles in attitude formation.

INTRODUCTION

The use of provocative sexual appeal in advertising is a common practice, which has increased over the recent years (Lambiase et al. 1999). The “porno chic” trend is an example of this tendency and is very popular especially in the luxury and fragrances business. Advertising campaigns for Dior, Calvin Klein, or Yves Saint Laurent often choose visuals considered as offensive by consumers. The concept of “embarrassment” may help understanding the mechanisms at work while one is exposed to a provocative sexual advertisement. Embarrassment is defined as an emotional reaction to unintended and unwanted social predicaments or transgressions (Edelman 1981, Higuchi and Fukada 2002). It is a short emotional response that appears in social interactions when an undesired event intervenes, disturbing someone’s self image (Goffman 1956) and it results in poor consciousness and low level of attention (Miller 1996). As sexual appeal in advertising may disturb someone’s values or habits, it may cause embarrassment and therefore result in lower consciousness and attention level, leading to lower advertising effectiveness. The purpose of this study is to examine the structure of the concept of embarrassment and its potential effects on attitude toward the ad (Aad) and attitude toward the brand (Ab) for provocative sexually appealing advertisements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has been directed at understanding the causes of embarrassment and many different models have been proposed and tested. Five main models have been developed: (1) the “social evaluation model” whereby undesired evaluations from others cause embarrassment (Miller 1996, Semin and Manstead 1981), (2) the “loss of self-esteem model” that shows that not only negative evaluations from others cause embarrassment, but also loss of self-esteem (Modigliani 1971), (3) the “personal standards model” for which embarrassment occurs when one realises that his or her behavior is in some way inconsistent with his or her idiosyncratic ideals (Babcock 1988, Babcock and Sabini 1990), (4) the “dramaturgic model” where embarrassment occurs because of disrupted social interactions (Parrott et al. 1988, Parrott and Smith 1991, Silver et al. 1987) and (5) the “transgression of others’ expectations model” for which embarrassment occurs when people present a self that transgresses others’ expectations. People then perceive negative evaluations from others and feel embarrassed (Sugawara 1992, 1998). All these somewhat contradictory findings could be due to methodological issues. There are indeed many difficulties linked to the measurement of the concept of embarrassment and there might have been different types of embarrassments according to the context of application. Some authors focused on embarrassing settings in a school context (Higushi and Fukada, 2002), others in sales settings (Verbeke and Bagozzi, 2002), or in buying situations (Dahl, Manchanda and Argo, 2001). Actually, little research focused on the concept itself, a key question being that of dimensionality (is it a one-dimensional or multidimensional concept?). Higuchi and Fukada’s (2002) recent study offers a more complete understanding of the concept and reveals that embarrassment is due to four causal factors: disruption of social interaction, apprehension of social evaluation, inconsistency with self-image, and loss of self-esteem. It is showed that the sequence and the weight of the four factors depend on the type of situation encountered, namely whether it is private or public. In public situations, main factors appear in the following order of importance: disruption of social interaction → apprehension of social evaluation → inconsistency with self-image → loss of self-esteem. In private situations, main factors appear in a different order: loss of self-esteem → inconsistency with self-image → apprehension of social evaluation → disruption of social interaction.

Thus, there appears to be a “public” embarrassment in which the judgment of others is very important and a “private” embarrassment linked to the perception that one has of him or herself. In an advertising context, it is interesting to study if the two types of embarrassments have the same influence on attitude toward the message (Aad) and attitude toward the brand (Ab). Since advertising is by definition a public event influencing fashions, trends and judgments, we expect public embarrassment to be quite consensual among viewers. Also, disruption of social interaction should not lead to a loss of self-esteem since the disruption is not linked to nor provoked by the individual but is only due to an outside stimulus (the advertisement). Public embarrassment should thus be neutral and have no influence on attitude towards the message (Aad) and attitude toward the brand (Ab). Private embarrassment involving self-image and self-esteem is expected to have a negative influence: an embarrassing visual on a “private” level will lead to a bad evaluation of the ad and of the brand. Hence, based on previous research, we assert that embarrassment influences attitude toward the message (Aad) and attitude toward the brand (Ab). We hypothesise the direction and intensity of these effects to be linked to the dimension of embarrassment studied (private or public). Therefore, we suggest the following four research hypotheses:

PROVOCATIVE SEXUALLY APPEALING ADVERTISEMENTS: THE INFLUENCE OF EMBARRASSMENT ON ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AD

Virginie De Barnier, France
Pierre Valette-Florence, University Pierre Mendes
H1: “Private” embarrassment has a negative influence on Aad

H2: “Public” embarrassment has no influence on Aad

H3: “Private” embarrassment has a negative influence on attitude toward the brand (Ab)

H4: “Public” embarrassment has no influence on attitude toward the brand (Ab)

Finally, for consistency with previous research, we added:

H5: Attitude toward the ad (Aad) has a positive influence on attitude toward the brand (Ab), H6: Aad has a positive influence on Ib and H7: Ab has a positive influence on Ib.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to test the persuasiveness of explicit sexually appealing advertisements, we selected ads for identical brands and products, but with very different appeals. We studied real ads: two traditional ads, one for perfume “Paris” from Yves Saint Laurent and one for perfume “CK One” from Calvin Klein, and two sexually provocative ads for the same two brands (see appendix 1). Two sets of dependent variables were selected to measure the effectiveness of both types of messages: attitude toward the ad (Aad), and attitude toward the brand (Ab). Machleit and Wilson’s scale (1988) was used to measure Aad, the scale proposed by Goodstein, Edell and Moore (1990) was used for the measurement of Ab and Ib was measured by asking two questions on a five-point scale where (1) is labeled ‘extremely unlikely’ and (5) ‘extremely likely’. Embarrassment was measured with the scale developed by Verbeke and Bagozzi (2002), which was initially created to measure embarrassment felt by sales people during embarrassing selling situations. We adapted this scale (dropping sales-related items) and kept the 12 items related to embarrassment, measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

RESULTS

4.1 Validation of the scales measuring embarrassment, attitude towards the ad (Aad), and attitude toward the brand (Ab)

All scales were 5-point Likert scales and we followed the same procedure for each of them: confirmatory factor analysis on all items, and reliability coefficient calculation. Convergent validity was tested by calculating t-test. The confirmatory factor analysis showed a bi-dimensional structure for the embarrassment scale, composed of a “private” dimension and a “public” dimension. However, due to poor factor loadings we had to drop four items leaving out eight items as for the final number of items related to the measurement of the two dimensions of the embarrassment scale. The reliability coefficients for the two dimensions of the scale showed high level of reliability (.894 for the “private” dimension and .879 for the “public” dimension). The t-tests for each item were greater than 2, indicating a good level of convergent validity. Moreover, the fit indices reported in table 1 (see below) showed that the proposed factorial structure did provide a good fit to the data. Similarly, the convergent validity of the attitude toward the advertising message (Aad) was supported (t-test greater than 2), as well as the reliability of the scale (Jöreskog’s coefficient = .90). Finally, the scales for attitude toward the brand (Ab) and buying intention (Ib) were validated through factor analysis and Jöreskog’s rho coefficients (equal to .913 for and to .842 for Ib). Table 1 describes the structure of the embarrassment scale.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>TABLE 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Structure of the embarrassment scale</td>
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<td>Loading</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| EMBARRASSMENT |
| --- | --- |
| PRIVATE EMBARRASSMENT |
| Embarrassed | .853 | 68.169 |
| Not at ease | .915 | 96.931 |
| Uncomfortable | .887 | 82.627 |
| Turn away | .615 | 24.362 |
| PUBLIC EMBARRASSMENT |
| Ridiculous | .889 | 75.990 |
| Stupid | .908 | 83.448 |
| Ashamed | .726 | 36.317 |
| Laughable | .673 | 29.622 |
| RMSEA | 0.074 |
| GFI | 0.919 |
| AGFI | 0.898 |
4.2. Results

The sample was composed of 346 individuals evaluating 2 different advertisements, which represents a total of 792 observations. We first check that the sexually provocative ads implied more embarrassment than the standard ads (private embarrassment=0.40 for the provocative YSL ad vs. -0.43 for the standard ad and 0.34 vs. -0.33 for the CK ads, all differences between pairs of scores being significant at p=0.01. For public embarrassment, it is equal to 0.34 for the provocative YSL ad vs. -0.19 for standard and 0.19 vs. -0.19 for the CK ads, all differences between pairs of scores being significant at p=0.01).

4.2.2. Hypothesis testing

Taking into account the non-multi-normality of the data, and the nature of the scales (Likert scales), we used structural equation modeling with the Maximum Likelihood estimation method together with a bootstrap procedure. In order to test the hypotheses, we first conducted an analysis on pooled data (two ads x two brands) and then a multi-group analysis to compare the two provocative advertisements to the two traditional ones. Results, presented in Figure 2, provide a good representation of the existing relationships between concepts.

Overall, private embarrassment has a strong negative direct impact on Aad (beta=-0.35, p=0.001) but not on Ab (non significant coefficient). Public embarrassment has a positive impact on Aad (beta=0.19, p=0.001) and no impact on Ab. The multi-group analysis reveals that the relationship between embarrassment and Aad is stronger for provocative advertisements. The private dimension has a direct negative effect on Aad (beta = -0.35, p=0.001 for provocative ads vs. -0.18, p=0.01 for classic ads). The public dimension had a positive effect (beta=0.21, p=0.01) for provocative ads vs. no significant relationship at p=0.05 for classical ads). Hence, the global influence of embarrassment on Aad depends on the dimension of embarrassment felt while watching the advertisement. It is negative for private embarrassment and there is no (or a positive) effect for the public dimension. Hypotheses H1 and H2 are largely supported (the positive effect of public embarrassment for the sexually provocative condition might be linked to the product category (it is possible that perfume targeted at young women fits well with nudity and sexual arousal. Since the public embarrassment is not caused by the viewer of the ad, the rupture of the social code might be perceived as positive).

The absence of impact of private embarrassment on Ab is confirmed by the multigroup analysis (no effect from either embarrassment dimension in both groups). The result is contrary to hypothesis H3, but H4 is supported concerning the lack of impact of public embarrassment on Ab.

---

**FIGURE 1A**

Average scores of embarrassment for both ads

When both ads are studied together, the level of embarrassment felt is higher for provocative ads and lower for standard ones. The embarrassment level difference is higher for private embarrassment than for public embarrassment.
As expected, the average scores of embarrassment are higher for the provocative YSL ad. Attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand are higher for the standard YSL ad.

The results are similar to those obtained for the YSL ad. The provocative CK ad induces higher embarrassment and lower Aad and Ab.
TABLE 2
Validity indicators of the model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit Indexes</th>
<th>Simple Model</th>
<th>Multigroup Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationships between Aad, Ab and Ib

For all observations, the sexually provocative ads and the classical ads, coefficients were respectively 0.63, 0.68 and 0.57 (p=0.001 for all) for the impact of Aad on Ab. They were 0.56, 0.57 and 0.55 (p=0.001) for the impact of Aad on Ib and 0.28, 0.23 and 0.33 (p=0.001) for the impact of Ab on Ib. All expecting relationships are highly significant and classical hypotheses H5, H6 and H7 are supported.

FIGURE 2
Results of the research model

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of this exploratory research was to study the effect of embarrassment on the persuasiveness of provocative sexual appeal in advertising. The confirmatory factor analysis showed a bi-dimensional structure of the Verbeke and Bagozzi’s (2002) scale composed of a “private” dimension and of a “public” dimension. The effects of these two dimensions were
different on Aad and on Ab. Hence, embarrassment cannot be studied as a one-dimensional concept since its effects vary according to the type of embarrassment felt toward an advertisement. Private embarrassment, involving self-image and self-esteem, has a negative impact on attitude toward the advertisement (Aad) and has no direct impact on attitude toward the brand (Ab). Public embarrassment has a positive effect on Aad especially for sexually provocative advertisements. Therefore, three concepts are the key to better understand the advertising persuasive processes of sexually provocative campaigns: embarrassment, attitude toward the ad (Aad), and attitude toward the brand (Ab). What is also interesting is that the latter measures do affect persuasion (Ib) rendering embarrassment a key concept.

We studied sexually embarrassing visuals since it is a common practice for luxury brands. This advertisers’ choice probably results from a differentiation strategy in an overcrowded advertising context. Hence, some luxury brands follow in the so-called “shockvertising” trend for their global advertising campaign when it is believed to fit with the targeted consumers (e.g., Dior, Armani, Ungaro and Versace). The positive influence of public embarrassment on attitude can be another justification for such a choice. However, advertisers should watch for advertisements causing private embarrassment since it may have negative effects directly on Aad and indirectly (through Aad) on Ab. Consequently, the answer to the question “is it efficient to provoke the consumer in an advertising context?” is complex and certainly not straightforward.

Although this study leads to a better understanding of how the concept of embarrassment may influence Aad and Ab, it also has few limitations. First of all, the core point of our research deals with the measurement of embarrassment. Although the scale we have adapted showed good psychometrics properties, further research should investigate the appropriateness of this scale when compared to other potential measures drawn for instance from Higuchi and Fukuda’s components of public and private embarrassment. Such comparisons are worth investigating and left for further empirical researches.

Also, several factors may have affected embarrassment, for example the conditions of exposure (which were artificial), the administration of a questionnaire, the selection of brands or the choice of print advertisements. This study demands replications with varying conditions. Different types of provocation used in advertising might be studied (sexual, religious, sexist, social, ethical, related to a taboo, etc) in order to retest the dimensions of embarrassment and capture the type of embarrassment they provoke.

Future research should also focus on several issues as the impact of gender and age on the degree of embarrassment felt which has already been explored in the literature. Since provocative ads include both female and male models with varying degrees of nudity, while traditional ads only have a female model, we tried to investigate the potential mediator effect of respondents’ gender on the results. To this end, a multi group structural equation model analysis (group one male, group two female) was initiated. Carefully investigating the configurational, metric and scalar invariance advocated by Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998) we did not find any differences between respondents as far as gender is concerned. In addition, we believe that an inter-cultural comparison would be interesting since it is expected that embarrassment operates differently according to culture. Future research should also study advertisements from more interactive media, allowing exposition to even more provocative sexual settings. Relationships between concepts might well be non-linear with highly negative impacts of both private and public embarrassment beyond a threshold.

Concerning variables introduced in the model, determining the role of emotions felt by the receiver and their influence on embarrassment could lead to a better understanding of the persuasive process in advertising. Also, the effect of several variables (such as involvement, congruence between the product category or the brand and sexual provocation, humor) on embarrassment constitutes a whole new field of investigation. Indeed, these constructs can be either inhibitors or facilitators of embarrassment. Evaluating their influence would lead to a better understanding of the persuasive process in advertising and of the consumer psychology.

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APPENDIX 1
Advertisements used in this research

Provocative Advertisement #1
Yves Saint Laurent

Traditional advertisement #1
Yves Saint Laurent

Provocative Advertisement #1
Yves Saint Laurent

Traditional advertisement #1
Yves Saint Laurent
Differential Effects of Humor Advertising by Expression Type

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Huiuk Yi, Yeungnam University
Tae-Gil Ha, Keimyung University

ABSTRACT

The current study analysed the relationship between expression type of humor ads and their advertising effects and the differences in advertising effects by expression type according to temperament as categorised by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Expression type of humor was classified into arousal-, incongruity-, and superiority-type humor ads. Advertising effects were measured by consumers’ cognitive, affective, and conative responses. Three ads were created based on expression type of humor: A personality type, as measured by the MBTI, was categorised into four types of temperament, namely SP, SJ, NF, NT and used as moderating variables. As a result, the advertising effects varied according to the expression type of humor advertising. Interaction effects between ad expression type and temperament on ad feeling and ad preference were also found.

BACKGROUND

Expression Types of Humor

Although humor advertising has been widely used and its importance has increased, most of its studies have been limited in two respects. First, assuming that humor advertising is generally more effective than non-humor advertising, previous studies were primarily conducted to find out the degree and cause of the differences in advertising effects between humor and non-humor advertising. In other words, the studies did not distinguish between different types of expression in humor advertising (Alden, Mukherjee, & Hoyer, 2000; Chung & Zhao 2003; Geuens & Pelsmacker, 2002; Lammers, 1991; Scott, Klein, & Bryant, 1990; Smith, 1993; Unger, 1995; Weinberger & Spotts, 1995; Zhang & Zhinkan, 1991; Zhang, 1996) but categorised them all as “funny.” To address this problem, humor advertising must be examined at various levels in relation to the types of humor expression. For this purpose, a theoretical approach to the expression forms of humor advertising is required.

As the types of humor expression are diverse and distinct in their advertising effects, the communication effects of humor ads regarding their possible differences should also be studied. Thus, this study is based on the proposition that the effects of humor advertising vary according to the expression type of humor.

According to Weinberger and Gulas’ (1992) categorisation of humor into the two aspects of content and technique, this study defines the content of humor as the type of humor ad and the technique as the expression type of humor ad. Moreover, humor ads are divided into three types, according to classification by Lefcourt and Martin (1986): the arousal-type, the incongruity-type, and the superiority-type humor. Each type of humor advertising is characterised as follows: The arousal theory refers to the effect of humor as either decreasing an unpleasant state or increasing a pleasant state of mind by means of a naive and relaxed laughter, a dreamy smile, or a sympathetic and loving grin. The incongruity theory relates to a state of cognition that one reaches unexpectedly through a humor of reversal, contradiction, or inconsistency. The superiority theory discusses the expression of comparison or contempt for weaknesses through humor of explicit harassment, attacks on weaknesses and mistakes, or a sarcastic smile.

The techniques of expression type of humor advertising are operationally defined as follows: First, according to the arousal theory, the techniques involve those such as boasts, exaggerations, comedies, imitations, parodies, and jests. Second, according to the incongruity theory, the techniques include those such as reversals, disappointments, incongruities, and jokes. Third, according to the superiority theory, the techniques include those such as ridicules, ignorance, exposures, disparagements, mistakes, and satires.

MBTI: A Self-Report Style of Temperament-Type Index

Moderating variables that have been used thus far to measure the effects of humor advertising are confined to consumer characteristics variables, such as sex (Lammers, 1991; Madden & Weinberger, 1982; Weinberger & Gulas, 1992; Whipple & Courtney, 1981), culture (Alden, Hoyer, & Lee, 1993; Toncar, 2001; Unger, 1995; Weinberger & Spotts, 1989), personal need for cognition (Alden & Hoyer 1993; Geuens & Pelsmacker, 2002; Zhang, 1996) and involvement variables (Chung & Zhao, 2003; Madden & Weinberger, 1984; Scott, Klein, & Bryant, 1990; Spotts, Weinberger, & Parsons, 1997; Weinberger & Spotts, 1995) related to product characteristics, such as the FCM (what’s this stand for?) model and PCM (product color matrix) model. A demographic variable such as sex and a geographic variable such as cultural difference are still popular since they ensure analysis and classification of consumers. A consumer characteristic variable such as personal need for cognition as well as product involvement variable have been recently added. However, these factors are not sufficient in measuring the varying effects of humor advertising. Additional factors that can provide more specific knowledge about consumers are required. A psychological variable such as MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) temperament can provide useful information for the segmentation of consumer markets.

Roeckelein (2002) argues that humor depends on one’s personality traits such as temperament. It is interesting to note that in physiology, humor refers to the four body fluids that determine one’s constitution: blood, mucus, bile and melancholy. Hypocrates once classified human temperament as sanguine, cholerikier, phlegmatic, and melancholy. Having examined whether or not humor is identified with temperament, he argued that if the four body fluids of humor are not in balance and one fluid is either lacking or in excess, the dominant fluid will determine the temperament. As body fluid determining temperament is referred to as humor, humor can be said to determine one’s temperament. In this respect, temperament type can be used as an appropriate moderating variable between the expression type of humor advertising and advertising effects.

The MBTI is a psychometric instrument that measures personality types and preferences. The notion of psychological types began with Carl Jung, who theorised that human behavior is classifiable and predictable. Jung proposed that behavioral differences are caused by personality differences and emphasised personality as a mediating factor for psychological processes such as information processing and individual development (Coe, 1992). The MBTI, which provides a large amount of behavioral information, has been recognised as a non-clinical behavioral instrument with broad use. The self-report index was categorised into four types of temperament SPs (Sensing Perceivers), SJs (Sensing Judgers), NFs (Intuitive Feelers), NTs (Intuitive Thinkers) and used as moderating variables. The general
characteristics of the four types are as follows (Keirsey & Bates, 1984, 27-66): (a) SJs have a high sense of social responsibility. They value tradition and belonging; (b) SPs have a high sense of reality but dislike being tied down or obligated. They live for the moment; (c) NFs energy centers on new possibilities in human relationships. They are in search of the meaning of life; (d) NTs enjoy acquiring intelligence. They have a high need to be competent. They are in search of the why’s of the universe. The measurement tool was the MBTI GS, standardised in Korean by the Korea Psychological Testing Institute with permission from the Consulting Psychologists Press in the US in 1987.

**HYPOTHESIS**

The purpose of this study is to analyse (a) the relationship between the expression-type of humor ads and their advertising effects, which have not yet been investigated, and (b) the differences in advertising effects by expression type according to MBTI temperament. In the analysis of advertising effects according to the type of humor expression, a framework of understanding expression type of humor advertising has been established. Using the MBTI, the temperament of consumers will be analysed, and the differences in advertising effects by type of humor expression according to MBTI temperament will be categorised. The findings of this study will provide advertising agencies with a strategic framework of humor advertising that is suitable for consumers’ psychological profile. To accomplish the purposes of the study, the following hypotheses have been established.

Hypothesis 1: Advertising effects (cognitive, affective, conative responses) will vary according to the expression types of humor advertising.

Hypothesis 2: The degree of the influence of expression type of humor advertising on their advertising effects (cognitive, affective, conative responses) will be moderated by the consumer’s temperament.

**METHOD**

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>EG 1 (Arousal)</th>
<th>EG 2 (Incongruity)</th>
<th>EG 3 (Superiority)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MBTI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJ</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NF</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dependent Variables**

Consumers’ cognitive (ad recall), affective (ad feeling, ad preference, product preference) and conative (buying intention) responses to the three different humor ads were measured. The degree of the recall of advertisement was measured by scoring the brand name, product type, manufacturer, ad title, ad contents or scenes and so forth that were written down immediately after exposure to an advertisement. Ad feeling was measured with 9 items on a 7-point semantic differential scale (unfavorable-favorable, stale-fresh, boring-interesting, unappealing-appealing, negative-positive, not persuasive-persuasive, not impressive-impressive, unentertaining-entertaining, not moving-moving). Ad preference and product preference were measured with 1 item on a 7-point semantic scale (dislike-like). Buying intention was measured with three 7-point semantic differential scales (not likely to purchase—likely to purchase, probably not purchase—probably purchase, will not purchase—will purchase). Cronbach α was .92 for the ad feeling scale and .95 for the buying intention. Since Cronbach α for both scales were reliable, the scores of the two measurement items were averaged and the results were analysed.
Procedure

The procedure was essentially divided into two parts. First, the temperament test of MBTI, composed of 94 questions, was administered to the selected subject group. Second, a week later, the subjects grouped by the results of the MBTI were divided into three subgroups, and each subject was exposed to an advertisement respectively based on the arousal-, incongruity- and superiority-type ads. The advertisement took 30 seconds, and then each group answered the questionnaire.

RESULTS

This study assumes that the effects of humor advertising vary according to the expression types. Although many researchers (Alden, Hoyer, & Lee, 1993; Weinberger & Gulas, 1984) have suggested that a study of the relationship between the effects and the expression type of humor advertising is necessary, such a study has not yet been conducted.

First, because it is hard to clearly distinguish between expression types of humor advertising, efforts to define and differentiate between them have been scarce. Second, measurement tools for expression type have not been agreed upon by scholars, which render the production of advertisement suitable for an expression type practically impossible. For these reasons, until recently, studies on the effects of humor advertising have been limited to comparative studies between humor and non-humor advertising, with all types of humor advertising identified as the same. Therefore, in the present study, the expression type of humor advertising is first defined, and measurement tools for each type are suggested. Both the advertising effects by the expression type and the advertising effects by the expression type according to MBTI temperament are analysed.

Measurement of Validity and Reliability for the Expression Types of Humor Advertising

The type of humor advertising must be clearly defined prior to the measurement of advertising effects by type. Three theoretical frameworks based on the theories of arousal, superiority, and incongruity were categorised to deliberately create definitions of the characteristics of the expression type of humor ads. Items on the expression types of humor ads have been developed based on the operational definitions of humor.

<p>| TABLE 2 |
| Measuring tools for the expression types of humor advertising |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Expression type</th>
<th>Item contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AROUSAL</td>
<td>Boast 1</td>
<td>An over-exaggeration with no sense of reality induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boast 2</td>
<td>An exaggerated behavior induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comedy 1</td>
<td>A humorous and witty conversation between characters induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comedy 2</td>
<td>The contents of a conversation between characters induce pleasant laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parody 1</td>
<td>A parody of a popular tale induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parody 2</td>
<td>An exquisite restructuring of a traditional story induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jest 1</td>
<td>A non-aggressive, natural smile induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jest 2</td>
<td>Innocent, fairytale-like laughter is induced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCONGRUITY</td>
<td>Reversal 1</td>
<td>An unexpected, ridiculous speech or behavior reversing a situation induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reversal 2</td>
<td>The consequences of a clever speech or unusual behavior induce laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disappointment 1</td>
<td>An unexpected, abortive ending induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disappointment 2</td>
<td>The resolution of a conflict caused by an ambiguous behavior in the beginning induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paradox 1</td>
<td>A truth hidden in the contradictory expression induces paradoxical laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paradox 2</td>
<td>As in a non-sense quiz, defenseless laughter is induced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joke 1</td>
<td>A will to overcome, rather than submitting to, a given situation induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joke 2</td>
<td>A comic expression of contradictory reality induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPP</td>
<td>Ridicule 1</td>
<td>A character’s sneer at his/her opponent induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ridicule 2</td>
<td>A ridiculous expression of the opponent’s weaknesses and faults induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ignorance 1</td>
<td>A ridiculous ignorance of the opponent’s stature induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ignorance 2</td>
<td>A disregard for the opponent induces negative laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure 1</td>
<td>An explicit speech or behavior disclosing the opponent’s weaknesses induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure 2</td>
<td>An attack at the opponent’s weaknesses or mistakes induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satire 1</td>
<td>A speech or behavior making fun of the opponent induces laughter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of 88 items were originally constructed to measure three humor expression types, from which overlapping items in meaning were eliminated and ambiguous expressions were rephrased, with final items reduced to 24 (see Table 2).

**TABLE 3**

Results of the Factor Analysis and the Reliability Test of Measures for the Expression Types of Humor Advertising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Eigen Value</th>
<th>Cronbach α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance 1</td>
<td>.900</td>
<td>6.983</td>
<td>.9137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure 2</td>
<td>.900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satire 1</td>
<td>.899</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure 1</td>
<td>.896</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance 2</td>
<td>.877</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridicule 1</td>
<td>.809</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satire 2</td>
<td>.728</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridicule 2</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedy 2</td>
<td>.850</td>
<td>4.903</td>
<td>.8781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedy 1</td>
<td>.821</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jest 1</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parody 2</td>
<td>.739</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parody 1</td>
<td>.737</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jest 2</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boast 2</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boast 1</td>
<td>.475</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradox 1</td>
<td>.857</td>
<td>2.815</td>
<td>.8744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradox 2</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointment 2</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joke 2</td>
<td>.724</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joke 1</td>
<td>.689</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal 2</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal 1</td>
<td>.645</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointment 1</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

166 students were used for the scale development. They were exposed to one of three ads and asked to rate the ad on a 7-point Likert-type scale (very unlikely – very likely) using the 24 items in Table 2. The validity of the measurement variables was verified through factor analysis, and a total of 24 items were loaded as factors for the three types. The results of the factor analysis and the reliability of each factor are as shown in Table 3.

**Manipulation Check for the Degree of Humor and the Expression Types of the Humor Ads**

The degree of humor in the three types of humor ad, respectively based on the theories of arousal, superiority, and incongruity, was measured for possible differences. In the case of differences in the degree of humor among the three types, it will be difficult to identify whether the differences in advertising effects are due to the expression type or to the degree of humor. The degree of humor in the speech, behavior, and appearance of characters and the ad in general was measured by a 7-point scale, ranging from not humorous at all to very humorous. As the result of one-way ANOVA, the differences in mean value by the group tended to be ignored (M of arousal=4.50, M of incongruity=4.21, M of superiority=4.22, p=.07).

A one-way ANOVA was performed to ensure that the three ads created for this study represent each theory of
humor. As shown in the <Table 4>, the three ads were found to represent each theory of humor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4</th>
<th>Manipulation Check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arousal-type Humor Ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arousal</td>
<td>4.60 (0.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incongruity</td>
<td>3.93 (.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superiority</td>
<td>2.84 (1.21)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number represents mean (sd). * p<.05. ** p<.01.

| FINDINGS |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5</th>
<th>Analysis of Variance for Humor advertising by the Expression Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arousal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad Recall</td>
<td>5.05 (1.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad Feeling</td>
<td>4.27 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad Preference</td>
<td>4.58 (1.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Preference</td>
<td>4.14 (1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conative Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying Intention</td>
<td>3.24 (1.35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number represents mean (sd). * p<.05. ** p<.01.

The results of the one-way ANOVA revealed significantly different advertising effects among three different expression types on ad recall, ad feeling, ad preference, product preference and buying intention. The test results of hypothesis 1 are shown in <Table 5>.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6</th>
<th>Post-Hoc Test Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arousal-Incongruity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Response</td>
<td>Ad Recall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Response</td>
<td>Ad Feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ad Preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product Preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conative Response</td>
<td>Buying Intention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number shows mean difference between two types. * p<.05. ** p<.01.

As shown in <Table 5> and <Table 6>, type of humor advertising does not have different effects on the product preference but does affect the ad recall, the ad feeling, and the ad preference, which in turn affects buying intention. Specifically, arousal-type humor ads were observed to be the most effective.
TABLE 7
Mean Differences of the Affection for Humor Advertising Type by Temperament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective Response</th>
<th>Humor Ad Types</th>
<th>Temperaments(MBTI)</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>SJ</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>NF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad Feeling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arousal</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.16 (.91)</td>
<td>4.33 (.05)</td>
<td>4.10 (.90)</td>
<td>4.62 (.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incongruity</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.59 (1.08)</td>
<td>3.47 (1.11)</td>
<td>4.44 (.75)</td>
<td>4.28 (.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Superiority</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.50 (.89)</td>
<td>3.34 (.81)</td>
<td>3.97 (.92)</td>
<td>4.10 (.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.78 (.99)</td>
<td>3.69 (1.08)</td>
<td>4.17 (.86)</td>
<td>4.34 (.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.450*</td>
<td>12.206**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad Preference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arousal</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.38 (1.37)</td>
<td>4.56 (1.43)</td>
<td>4.47 (1.07)</td>
<td>5.20 (.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incongruity</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.24 (1.13)</td>
<td>3.60 (1.15)</td>
<td>4.71 (.92)</td>
<td>4.53 (.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Superiority</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.79 (.99)</td>
<td>3.52 (1.09)</td>
<td>4.44 (1.03)</td>
<td>4.21 (.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.86 (1.27)</td>
<td>3.87 (1.30)</td>
<td>4.54 (1.00)</td>
<td>4.66 (.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.703**</td>
<td>9.429**</td>
<td>.351</td>
<td>5.723**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number represents mean (sd). * p<.05. ** p<.01.

As for hypothesis 2, an interaction effect was found between ad expression type and temperament on ad preference (F=2.09, p<.05). There were no interactions between ad expression type and temperament on ad recall, ad feeling (F=1.91, p=.08), product preference, and buying intention. The test results of hypothesis 2 are summarised in Table 7.

FIGURE 1
Ad-Feeling Scores for Humor Advertising Type by Temperament
The results of the two-way ANOVA analysis support the idea that arousal-type humor advertising may be most effective in Korea. As in the Figure 1 and Figure 2, those who showed a high degree of affective responses to the arousal type ad represent 83% of the total respondents in this study (See Table 1).

**TABLE 8**
Temperament Distribution in Korea and the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperament</th>
<th>SPs</th>
<th>SJs</th>
<th>NTs</th>
<th>NFs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Samples</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(27.6%)</td>
<td>(41.9%)</td>
<td>(16.5%)</td>
<td>(14.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPTI Data*</td>
<td>1,065</td>
<td>2,457</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>4,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(22.8%)</td>
<td>(52.6%)</td>
<td>(15.3%)</td>
<td>(10.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Data**</td>
<td>(38.0%)</td>
<td>(38.0%)</td>
<td>(12.0%)</td>
<td>(12.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The temperament distribution of the respondents is similar to the one of KPTI (Korea Psychological Testing Institute) (Park, 1996). These findings can be applied to the study of humor ads in the US. As 76% of the population belongs to SPs and SJs, a particular type of humor advertising favored by the majority, when identified, should be taken into consideration for the use of humor ads.

**CONCLUSION**

Whereas most of the previous studies on humor advertising were conducted to discover differences in advertising effects between humor and non-humor advertising, the current study is focused on the differences in the effects of humor advertising alone among various expression-types. The findings will provide future researchers of the effects of humor advertising with a theoretical background to understand different advertising effects according to different expression-types of humor advertising.

In addition, most of the previous laboratory research used humor ads in print that were experimentally constructed with scenes without a plot or adopted old TV commercials as they were, which caused validity problems due to the lack of control of variables. In the current study, however, a plot is structured according to the three expression types of humor advertising, that is, the theories of arousal, incongruity, and superiority are used as the framework for analysis; an experimental advertisement was produced through computer animation. As such, the findings of the study provide a high possibility of generalization and present practical guidelines for future research. The findings of the study provide the following practical benefits for marketers. First, humor-advertising producers will be able to develop a strategy for humor ads based on a scientific theory rather than intuition or inspiration. Second, by identifying the differences in the effects of humor advertising by the expression types according to temperament, marketers are provided with the possibility of unique advertising strategies suitable for each temperament.

This study has several limitations. The homogeneous subjects comprised of college students may limit the generalization of the findings. Moreover, the subject groups were forcefully exposed to humor advertising, which decreases the external validity of the findings of the study. However, this study offers important implications within the field of advertising regarding the use of humor.
REFERENCES


Park, J. (1996), Universality of MBTI, Cultural Ideal Types and Falsification Issues in Korea,” *Journal of the Korea Academy of Psychological Type*, 3(1), 68-82.


HEARING DOUBLE: THE EFFECT OF VOICE-OVER TRANSLATIONS IN INFORMATIONAL MESSAGES

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Therese Louie, San José State University
Juliana Renovato, San José State University
Cynthia Alejandro Enriquez, San José State University
Kurt Le, San José State University
Prabha Chandrasekar, San José State University

ABSTRACT

Media technology that has enhanced exposure to people around the world has increased opportunities to use voice-over translations for foreign language speakers. A study examined undergraduates’ responses to an educational videotape wherein the narration was in English only or was in a foreign language voiced-over in English. Measures were taken of the perceived informativeness of the videos, and the recall of the materials. Participants rated the video with the voiced-over language as less informative. However, somewhat counter-intuitively, the same voiced-over tape produced a marginally higher level of correct recall. Discussion suggests ways to further examine the effects of voice-over translations.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine that a classroom of students is watching a videotape about a cultural ceremony. The narrator, who speaks in a foreign language, is voiced-over by an individual speaking English. As is typical, the foreign language is predominant at the very start of each spoken segment, and then is quickly dropped in volume and overridden by a translator. How do the students respond to the information? Is the low sound of the foreign language distracting? Or, does it bring increased attention to the material? Do audience members who are familiar with the cultural ceremony respond differently to the voice-over translation than those lacking prior knowledge? This research investigates these questions.

Advanced media technology around the world, and the continuing emergence of “borderless consumption” that has removed barriers between consumers, has increased opportunities for voice-over translations of individuals speaking foreign languages. We hear voice-over translations in informational programs, for example, when listening to pre-recorded interviews of foreign leaders. In entertainment programming, voice-over translations are heard in some shows that are broadcast internationally, such as when the Japanese television show Iron Chef appears on the English language Food Network.

Yet, despite widespread use of this presentation format, a review of research reveals a surprising lack of work in this area. Most studies on voice-overs have focused on single narratives involving one language, instead of on translations. For example, content analyses have examined the persistence (Bresnahan et al. 2002) or the decline (Bartsch et al. 2000; Furnham and Farragher 2000) of gender stereotyping in advertisements narrated by males and females. One experimental study that examined viewer perceptions (Dimofte, Forehand, and Deshpandé 2004) found that ethnic group members who watched advertisements provided directionally (but not significantly) more favorable evaluations when the voice-over was provided in the language matching their ethnicity than in the mainstream language. Work on the effect of two languages, which is the focus of this research, has centered largely upon technological issues related to obtaining high sound quality voice-overs (Jackel 1995). Franco (2001), who reviewed the use of voice-over translations in television documentaries, noted that audiovisual translation is a relatively new research field that has a long way to develop. Hence, this research provides an exploratory look at the impact of voice-over languages. The described study focuses on an information-oriented videotape presented in an educational setting.

Most inquiries about narrator translations have focused on other means of accommodating language differences. For example, Koolstra, Peeters, and Spinhof (2002) reviewed the pros and cons of dubbing and subtitling. Note that dubbing is different from when a speaker is voiced-over. In the former, the foreign language is not heard in the background but instead is completely replaced by a translator. Nonetheless, Koolstra et al.’s (2002) research provides insights into this inquiry because they—similar to findings of prior work (Kilborn 1993)—found that viewers prefer presentation formats with which they are most familiar. German viewers, who are accustomed to dubbing, prefer that format to subtitling. In contrast, Dutch viewers have more exposure to, and more highly prefer, subtitling. A preference for the norm suggests that viewers would more favorably evaluate material that does not have a voice-over translator to one that does, because the former format is typically more prevalent.

Other insights can be gained from studies on narrators’ accents. Researchers (Bottrell and Johnson 1985; Gill 1994) have noted that information presented by speakers without foreign accents seems to encourage higher comprehension. Perhaps that finding is due to the extra attention and effort required to understand nonstandard speech patterns (Fuertes, Potere, and Ramirez 2002). If voice-over translations, similar to accents, require more work and focus to process, then audio-visual materials without them would be preferred.

Narrators speaking foreign languages are often describing attitudes or traditions customary to their background. In such cases, audience members who are more familiar with the information described might have a different reaction to voice-over materials than those without such prior knowledge. For example, individuals who are familiar with traditions associated with Hanukkah might more readily process information in a videotape depicting that holiday than those who are not. Hence, the effect of participants’ prior knowledge of the presented information is examined in this research.

The following exploratory study examined if voice-over translations, relative to straight narration with no foreign language involvement (a) are perceived differently in terms of informational value, (b) encourage disparate levels of recall, and (c) prompt different reactions from individuals who do and do not have prior knowledge of the events depicted.

METHOD

Participants

Thirty-six students enrolled in an undergraduate marketing course in the United States were asked to volunteer for this study. One participant who did not complete the survey was eliminated from the analysis.

Procedure


An educational videotape was created that depicted various aspects of a traditional Vietnamese New Year’s celebration, which is based on the lunar calendar. In one version there was no voice-over translation. The narrator— who was born in the United States and who was of Asian descent—spoke English with an American accent typical of the participants’ geographical area. In another version, the same English narration was added over the narrator speaking Vietnamese. The visual content, which was identical for each video, was approximately six-minutes long.

The participants were randomly assigned to one of two viewing rooms, in each of which was shown one version of the video. After watching the tape, all participants were asked to complete a related questionnaire. To secure students’ anonymity, the course instructor stayed out of both rooms while research assistants showed the videos and distributed the measurement instruments.

**Dependent Variables**

**Informational Value.** All participants were asked to rate how informative the videotape was on a scale of one (1 = uninformative) to five (5 = very informative).

**Recall of Videotape Content.** Participants were asked to recall the information in the tape. Two undergraduate students were trained to code the open-ended responses into those that correctly and incorrectly reflected the information content. For example, one participant recalled accurately from the video that, “Red [clothing] is a symbol of good luck.” In contrast, it was not correct to claim that, “Traditional festivities start on New Year’s Eve”; in actuality, in the video it is mentioned that activities engaged in days before the New Year are important parts of the celebration. Coder agreement was 76%. Note that many of the initial disagreements were questions of symmetry. For example, the video describes how fireworks are lit to “scare away the evil spirits.” One coder felt that stating, “Fireworks bring good luck” was correct, while the other felt that it was not the same as avoiding bad luck. The discrepancies were resolved through discussion. The resulting level of accurate recall, as noted below, is quite high.

**Prior Knowledge Measure.** To examine if the students’ prior knowledge of the video topic (i.e., with the festivities related to the Lunar New Year) influenced their reactions to the materials, they were asked, “Before watching the video, how much previous knowledge did you have about the traditions depicted about the Vietnamese New Year?” They responded on a scale of one (1 = I knew nothing that was in the video) to five (5 = I knew everything that was in the video). The responses were divided into those with and without high prior knowledge of the festivities based upon a median split of the data. The 43% who provided a rating of four or higher were in the high prior knowledge group.

To add validity to the prior knowledge measure, participants were asked to list what languages they speak other than English. Twenty percent of the participants noted that they speak Vietnamese, and 23% noted Chinese language skills (in Cantonese or Mandarin). Both the Vietnamese and Chinese cultures celebrate the Lunar New Year, yet not all families maintain country-of-origin traditions when immigrating to the United States. Hence, it should come as no surprise that 73% of the participants in the high prior knowledge group, compared to 22% without high knowledge, had Vietnamese or Chinese language skills.

**RESULTS**

**Preliminary Analyses**

To investigate the influence of voice-over translations, the data were initially analysed using ANOVA with the voice-over condition (voice-over translation present or absent) and the level of participants’ prior knowledge (high prior knowledge about the Lunar New Year present or absent) as factors. Preliminary analysis revealed that the prior knowledge factor was not significant for any of the dependent measures (p > .05). Hence, the data were collapsed across this variable.

**INFORMATION VALUE OF THE VIDEOTAPE**

Congruent with research findings of a preference for familiar presentation formats (Koolstra et al. 2002), t-tests (p < .05) reveal that participants rated the video as more informative than the one with the voice-over translation (t(33) = 2.43, p < .04). Table 1 presents the means of the dependent variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Absent (English with no foreign language)</th>
<th>Present (English voiced-over a foreign language)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informative of the video</td>
<td>3.95 (0.61)</td>
<td>3.33&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; (0.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of recalled items</td>
<td>5.00 (2.10)</td>
<td>5.33 (2.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of correctly recalled items</td>
<td>0.90 (0.14)</td>
<td>0.97&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; (0.10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Means in the same row differ at P < .05.

<sup>b</sup> Means in the same row differ at P < .10.
RECALL OF INFORMATION IN THE VIDEO TAPE

T-tests reveal no differences in the mean total number of items recalled across the voice-over conditions ($\bar{M} = 0.47$, NS).

The difference in the mean proportion of correctly recalled items also is not significant, but the results are “directional.” That is, somewhat counter-intuitively given the “informativeness” findings, those who saw the videotape with just the narration in English had a marginally lower mean proportion of correctly recalled items than those who viewed the voice-over tape ($\bar{M} = 1.82, p < .08$).

DISCUSSION

Participants in this study rated the videotape as more informative when there was no English voice-over translation of a foreign language. This finding is congruent with past work that suggests that audience members prefer presentation formats with which they are familiar (Koolstra et al. 2002). Examining the results of the other dependent variables offers insight into what did and did not influence the preference for the norm in this study.

Specifically, dissimilar from research on accents (Fuentes et al. 2002), the preference for the norm does not seem to be based upon the ability to comprehend the narrator. The level of correct recall was not higher for the English-only version of the tape. In fact, it was marginally lower. The juxtaposition of the high “informativeness” rating and the directionally lower correct recall suggests that factors other than the ability to understand the narration influenced the evaluation of the videotapes.

In addition, the preference for the tape without the voice-over translation does not seem to be based upon prior knowledge of the video topic. High prior knowledge of the events depicted did not have an effect on the perceived informativeness or on the recall for the material. To further investigate this issue, the data provided only by those with Vietnamese and Chinese language skills were analysed across videotape conditions. Within this group, the mean “informativeness” rating is marginally higher for the videotape that was in English only ($\bar{M} = 4.00, n = 7$) than it is for the tape with the voice-over translation ($\bar{M} = 3.33, n = 8; \bar{t}(13) = 1.79, p < .10$). Note that the marginal effect, as opposed to the fully significant effect for the entire sample, is likely due to low statistical power. In fact, the difference in the means is a bit larger for the partial than for the full participant group. Hence, even when looking only at participants from cultures that celebrate the Lunar New Year, there was a directional preference for the version of the tape that was closer to what they normally see and hear in educational settings. Within the language-skilled group, no significant differences are found across the absent and present voice-over translation conditions in terms of total recall ($\bar{M} = 5.86$ and $\bar{M} = 6.00$, respectively; $\bar{t}(13) = 0.26$, NS), or in the proportion of correct recall ($\bar{M} = 0.92$ and $\bar{M} = 1.00$, respectively; $\bar{t}(13) = 1.35$, NS).

Before concluding that audience members generally prefer materials that do not contain voice-over translations, it is important to consider factors that might have influenced the results. First, this study had a relatively small sample, with 15 and 20 participants in the present and absent voice-over translation conditions, respectively. It should be replicated with larger cell sizes to test the generalizability of the findings.

Given more participants, it would be helpful to analyse the results grouping separately those who do and do not speak the foreign language heard in a voice-over tape. As stated above, there appear not to be large differences in the way that the Vietnamese and Chinese speaking participants responded to the materials relative to the rest of the sample. However, low cell sizes of those who speak Vietnamese (i.e., seven participants with that language skill split across two study conditions) make it impossible to draw conclusions specifically about the matched-language group. Although same-language effects were not the main focus of this study, further examining them would be worthwhile. For example, a focus on individuals who speak the same foreign language as a narrator would allow a researcher to determine if the preference for the norm seen in this study was based in part upon a lack of familiarity with the language that was voiced over.

Researchers can also use more measures to ascertain why participants have preferences for materials without voice-over translations. For example, this research was conducted in an area where that presentation format is prevalent in educational settings. However, asking participants how often they view programs with voice-over translations would allow a more specific test of relative familiarity. In addition, asking participants if they have first-hand experience with the activities depicted in the tape would better separate those who have prior background information from those who do not.

Similarly, researchers can pinpoint the direction of the discrepancy between materials that do or do not contain voice-over translations. That is, do individuals upgrade the single-language communications, or do they downgrade dual-language presentations? One way to address this issue is to ask more questions about the delivery of the information. Participants can be asked specifically about the authority and credibility of the English narration when it is alone and when it is used as the translation. Targeted questions about the foreign language can similarly provide more specific information about its positive or negative effects. The combination of measures would provide insights into any increases in credibility for the English-language only narration, any downgrading due to the dual-language presentation, or both.

Subsequent studies can focus on the discrepant findings in this research between perceived informativeness and recall. Intuitively, the measures should correlate positively. But in this study, one is significant and one is not, and the latter even leans in the opposite direction. This finding suggests that there are other favorable aspects to voice-over materials that were untapped in this study. It may be, for example, that the foreign language attracts increased attention to the materials, which in turn enhances recall. Or, perhaps the foreign language made understanding the English narration more difficult, and prompted more careful processing that resulted in relatively higher levels of recollection. Asking participants if the foreign language is interest-provoking, enjoyable, or distracting would help provide insights into the perceived informativeness and recall findings.

More generally, the counter-intuitive pattern of results suggests that there are times when individuals (i.e., students) do not accurately perceive formats from which they learn the most. This lack of awareness of voice-over effects is congruous with recent research on endorsers by Forehand and Perkins (2005). When examining celebrity voice-overs, they found that celebrity attitudes predicted brand attitude change, even when participants did not explicitly recognize the famous persons’ voices. Hence, the subtle effects of voice-over translations are a topic for future work.

As media technology exposes audiences to speakers in different parts of the world, and as populations become more diverse, the effect of language voice-overs will likely remain a relevant area of study. It is hoped that this research provides insights into the reaction to messages containing voice-over translations.
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses seven factors that limit the validity and generalizability of advertising laboratory experiments. These factors include exposing ads only once to participants, which limits the validity of the results, and the use of a single ad or brand in the study, which limits generalizability. Examples are offered of studies limited by the factors discussed in the paper. The paper concludes with recommendations of how future advertising laboratory experiments can be improved.

INTRODUCTION

Laboratory experiments are the most common method in academic advertising research and the method is enjoying increasing popularity. In 1984, eight out of 30 articles (27%) in the Journal of Advertising were based on advertising experiments but, by 2004, the share had more than doubled: 15 out of 26 articles (58%) in JA were based on experiments. The main advantage of experiments is high internal validity: they allow for control of important factors influencing the effects of advertising, for example competitive interference or exposure frequency, while other factors, for example, benefit claims or spokespeople, can be varied between experimental groups and causal inferences made. A disadvantage is that controlling for factors extraneous to the problem under study may limit external validity to the extent that the results have no value for understanding and explaining real-world advertising phenomena. Lack of realism has received attention from researchers and several articles discussing limitations with advertising experiments and consumer behavior experiments have been published (e.g., Bogart and Lehman 1983; McQuarrie 1998; Wells 1993). However, lack of realism is not the only potential problem with advertising experiments. Many advertising experiments have other limitations in their design that limit the value of the studies. These limitations can, for example, relate to the generalizability of the results. Generalizability limitations have received little attention among scholars, even if they are at least as important as limitations due to lack of realism.

This paper reviews and discusses limitations in academic advertising experiments and recommends how they can be remedied in future studies.

FACTORS LIMITING THE EXTERNAL VALIDITY OF ADVERTISING EXPERIMENTS

In the following sections five factors that limit the external validity, or realism, of advertising experiments are discussed. In addition one factor that limit the generalizability and one factor that limits the value of experimental results are discussed. These factors have been selected as they are believed to unnecessarily reduce the value of advertising experiments. All of these factors can and should be addressed when advertising experiments are designed. Although there are other factors that limit the realism of advertising experiments (see, e.g., McQuarrie 1998) it is not always possible to address these without harming the internal validity of the experiment. These other factors have not been addressed in this paper.

Single exposure

In most advertising experiments participants are exposed once to the ad or ads in the study. McQuarrie (1998) reports that 84% of advertising experiments published in leading academic journals (JAR, JA, JCR, JM, and JMR) between 1990 and 1997 used a single exposure.

The minimum effective frequency, the number of exposures at which an ad achieves its communication objectives, varies between product categories, situations, and target groups, but it is rarely a frequency of one, even for a direct-response ad (Rossiter and Bellman 2005). This means that advertising experiments with a single exposure may underestimate the effects of advertising. Even if processing of ads in advertising experiments is more focused and deeper than in real life, it is by no means certain that a single exposure will be sufficient for the ad to achieve its communication objectives. This applies in particular to TV ads, which participants cannot process at their own pace. Thus, small or non-existent effects of advertising may be the result of insufficient processing and not of ineffective ads in the experiment. For the same reason, it may well happen that an experiment fails to produce differences between experimental groups that would have occurred with multiple exposures. It may also happen that use of a single exposure leads to differences between experimental groups that would not occur with multiple exposures, since insufficient processing may mean that participants do not have sufficient grounds to form an overall impression of a brand but focus on certain details. An illustration of the importance of frequency can be found in a study by Berger and Mitchell (1989) who found that attitude accessibility and confidence was significantly higher, and the attitude-behavior relationship stronger, for participants exposed to the same ad three or four times compared to participants only exposed only once.

Immediate measurement

Except for direct-response ads, there is generally a delay between exposure to advertising and brand choice. However, most academic advertising experiments are carried out with measurement of dependent variables immediately following exposure. In fact, 95% of experiments published in leading journals between 1990 and 1997 measured the outcome variables immediately following exposure (McQuarrie 1998). Immediate measurement means that the information in the ad is easy accessible in memory, while delayed measurement increases the likelihood that information decays or is naturally interfered with by other ads (Keller 1987). It has, for example, been shown that brand attribute judgments become less positive over time and that consumers rely more on specific product attributes when forming purchase intentions in immediate measurement and more on general product category attributes when forming intentions in delayed measurement (Mazursky 1990). Another illustration of the difference between immediate and delayed measurement can be found in Bergkvist and Rossiter (2005). Their study showed that Attitude toward the Ad (Aad) influenced Brand Attitude (Abrand) when both were measured immediately following exposure to the ad. However, there was no relationship between the Ad measure taken in immediate measurement and the Brand measure taken in delayed measurement, which shows that the relationship between the variables is different depending on when measurement is made.

Measurement of brand awareness not valid
Almost all academic advertising experiments measure brand awareness communication objectives wrongly (Rossiter and Bellman 2005; Rossiter and Percy 1997). Most experiments measure recall or recognition of the brand from the ad, rather than to measure it independently of the ad, which is how brand awareness occurs in the real world. If brands in the product category are typically chosen by brand recall, then a delayed, category-cued measure of brand name recall should be used; if brands are typically chosen by recognition of the pack or logo, as for most fine food brands at the point-of-purchase, then a competitive, speeded recognition test should be used. Brand “awareness” results based on brand name recall (“unaided”) or brand name recognition (“aided”) from the ad-testing context itself bear no systematic or valid relationship to independent-of-context measures. Achievement of valid brand name recall or valid brand recognition, as appropriate, is essential for subsequent brand evaluation measures, such as brand attitude or brand purchase intention, to be meaningfully interpreted.

Unrealistic ads

Some advertising experiments use real-world ads, for example, real ads for real brands taken from another market that are unknown to the participants (e.g., Baker, Honea, and Russell 2004; Bergkvist and Rossiter 2005). However, it is also common to use ads that have been designed by the academics doing the research. These latter ads often are amateurish and disturbingly lacking in realism. For example, Craig and Shimp (1990) ran an experiment in which they used two home-made print ads for the same brand of low-alcohol beer. The ads were designed to be identical except for the experimental variation in the text and the pictures. The headline in both ads read “Introducing the new breakthrough in beer” and the layout of the ads was dominated by text (in fact, there were between 130 and 150 words in each ad, excluding the headline). The text in the ads was written in an academic style, for example, one of the ads contained the lines “Unlike regular beer, Break’s lower alcohol and lower calorie content allow you to have a great tasting beer while keeping physically and mentally fit.” Moreover, part of the experiment was to vary the attractiveness of the couple used as spokespersons in the ad. This meant that the picture in one of the ads was chosen because the couple in it looked unattractive according to pre-tests! In short, the ads were nothing like real-world beer ads, which tend to be dominated by attractive pictures, have short headlines, little or no text, and often are witty or humorous. A second example of unrealistic print ads can be found in the study by Schumann, Petty, and Clemons (1990) which was an experiment with eight different ads for a pen. The two sample ads shown in the article are glaringly amateurish, with static layout, typewriter typeface, academic style of writing, a long key benefit claim placed at the top of the ad immediately below the headline, no brand logo, etc. In short, the ads have virtually no similarity to real-world ads and any findings based on them lack external validity.

The problem with using home-made ads is that mental processing of these ads is likely to differ from the processing of real-world ads. If ads are badly laid out, use home-made pictures, or the text is dry and boring, participants are not likely to process the ads in the same way as they would with real-world ads. In many product categories, for example, soft drinks, beer, or spirits, most advertising comes in the form of image advertising which may do nothing more than show typical or aspirational users of the brand or convey a single abstract benefit such as “cool” (Rossiter and Bellman 2005; Sutherland and Sylvester 2000). Now, if academic advertising experiments employ dull home-made ads with large blocks of text, large number of benefits, and small pictures in these product categories, it is likely that the participants will process them rationally, based on the verbal arguments, instead of emotionally as they would normally do with ads in such product categories. If the focus of the experiment is on testing details of the ads, as is the case with the research within the Elaboration Likelihood Model paradigm (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983), for example, testing “central” versus “peripheral” verbal arguments then effects are likely to be increased if the ad is dominated by text instead of pictures, especially if the ad is for a brand in a product category where image advertising dominates. It is also likely that differences between ads will occur on the “negative” side of the dependent variable, particularly brand attitude, with poor ads – another limitation of external validity because such weak ads would never be approved for real campaigns. Another problem with amateurish ads is very low purchase intention scores.

Artificially induced response sets

It is common in advertising experiments to set up experimental conditions that influence how participants process the information in the ads. For example, in a typical experiment Goodstein (1993) informed participants before they were exposed to the ads either that they would be asked about their impressions of the ad or their impressions of the brand, thus focusing their processing on either of the two. Inevitably, instructions of this type influence how participants process the ads and, as a consequence, the experimental results. Indeed, in most cases it is part of the experiment to test the effect on outcome variables of different instructions. The question is what the value of these results is. It is not likely that advertisers would be able to instruct their target audience how they should process the advertising they are exposed to. (Try to imagine a TV ad starting with an instruction to focus on the brand, not the ad, during the following 30 seconds.)

Just one or two ads

It is common practice to include only one or two ads in advertising experiments. This raises the issue of whether you can generalise to all advertising or to a certain category of advertising on the basis of one or two ads (Wells 2001). There are numerous differences between ads, even within the same category, as illustrated by the following quote:

“Humorous advertisements differ from each other in many ways. Some are attractive and some are unattractive. Some are gentle. Some are clever. Some are funny and some are not so funny. Some poke fun at men, or women, or animals, and some do not. Some are for new brands and some are for established brands. Some are for funny products and some are for serious products. Some are for services. Some are in newspapers. Some are in magazines. Some are on the radio. Some are on television. In short, the category is heterogeneous.” (Wells 2001, 494)

Furthermore, they differ in the mental processing of, and the responses to, advertising between product categories and between brands within categories. Product categories and brands are expected to vary with respect to the mental processing of advertising depending on the level of involvement (low or high) and type of purchase motive (informational or transformational), that is, the two dimensions in the Rossiter-Percy-Bellman Grid (Rossiter and Bellman 2005; Rossiter and Percy 1997).

The differences between ads and between product categories and brands means that, in effect, an advertising experiment with only one ad or brand tries to generalise to a heterogenous population on the basis of a sample of one (Wells 2001). This means that results from an experiment with, for example, a painkiller ad (a typical low-involvement informational product) may very well not hold
for an ad for a vacation trip (a typical high-involvement transformational product). In particular, highly likable ads are a requirement in the low-involvement-transformational cell but not in the other three cells (Rossiter and Bellman 2005; Rossiter and Percy 1997).

**Small differences between experimental groups**

Advertising experiments, like other types of consumer behavior experiments, often result in small differences between experimental groups. One reason for this is that researchers tend to focus on statistical significance rather than effect size (Peterson, Albaum, and Beltramini 1985). An example of this can be found in Muehling and Sprott (2004) who reported statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences between experimental groups for Attitude toward the Ad ($A_{AD}$) and Brand Attitude ($A_{Brand}$). However, the size of the differences was less impressive: For $A_{AD}$ the group mean scores were 5.68 and 5.29, respectively, and for $A_{Brand}$ 5.91 and 5.58. (The authors do not report the length of their answer scales, but presumably they used 1 to 7, 7-point scales.) This means that both experimental groups had clearly favorable ad and brand attitudes, even if there were minor differences between groups.

This tendency to focus on small but statistically significant differences should be contrasted with how advertising practitioners use advertising copy tests. It is not likely that an ad would be rejected on the grounds that the mean brand attitude score was .33 lower, on a 7-point scale, for one ad than for another. Instead, practitioners tend to look at the share of respondents for the different response categories and reject ads if the percentage that dislikes an ad is too high or if the percentage that likes an ad is too low.

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper addressed seven factors that limit the value of advertising experiments. Most of these factors unnecessarily limit the external validity and thereby the applicability to the real world of the experiment, but two of the factors limit the value of the experiment in other ways. The first of these two, the use of just one ad, or perhaps two ads, in the experiment, limits the generalizability of the experiment. A single ad or even two ads does not offer grounds to generalise findings across different types of ads or different types of product categories. The second factor, small differences between experimental groups, does not limit the realism or the generalizability of the experiment, it simply makes the experiment uninteresting from an academic as well as a practitioner point-of-view.

It can be argued that the five factors that limit the realism of advertising experiments (single exposure, immediate measurement, unrealistic ads, irrelevant product categories, and artificially induced response sets) are necessary in order to control for extraneous factors. After all, the whole point of an experiment is to control for as many factors as possible at the same time as the factors under study are varied between the experimental groups. However, to improve the realism of the five factors discussed in this paper would not have a negative effect on the experimental control, or internal validity, provided by advertising experiments. Using multiple exposures or several ads would not lessen experimental control, even if it does mean somewhat increased effort for the researcher. Using real ads for real products means that an extra effort is required to find suitable ads, but it does still allow for experimental control.

Other authors have discussed additional realism factors that have not been addressed in this paper. For example, McQuarrie (1998) mentions that ads should be embedded and not shown separately, that the outcome variables should be brand choice, that experiments should include competitive interference, and that experiments should include ads for familiar brands and not only new brands. These factors have not been addressed in this paper because it is believed that they cannot be addressed without jeopardizing experimental control or because they may entail practical difficulties of a large number of conditions, as well as sampling problems of their own. Also, if experiments are run with ads for familiar brands the effects of previous knowledge, brand attitude, and so forth, has to be accounted for in the experiment, which means that a larger sample of participants will be needed.

Based on the discussion in this paper, the following recommendations are offered for future advertising experiments.

**Advertising experiments should use multiple exposures to the ads in the study.** The effective frequency varies between situations but is generally greater than one. The number of exposures should be set depending on whether it is print, radio or TV advertising, whether the target audience is new category users, and so forth (see Rossiter and Bellman, 2005, for an overview of factors influencing effective frequency). It is also recommended that exposures be spread in time in order to simulate a real-world campaign. Most advertising campaigns run for at least a week and sometimes up to three or four weeks and ideally repeated exposures should be spread in time accordingly.

**Measures of brand awareness should be brand based.** Recognition or recall of the brand, as appropriate, should be measured independent of the advertising experiment context.

**Measurement of outcome variables should be made after a delay.** The effects of advertising should not be measured immediately following exposure, but after a realistic delay. The length of the delay should vary according to the average interval in the product category between advertising exposure and purchase opportunity. An absolute minimum would be a few hours with some interfering tasks between exposure and measurement.

**A minimum of four different types of ads should be included in the study.** It may not always be possible to include several different types of ads in the same experiment, but it is always possible to repeat an experiment using different ads. It is recommended that ads be chosen to represent the four quadrants in the Rossiter-Percy-Bellman Grid (Rossiter and Bellman 2005; Rossiter and Percy 1997).

The ads in the experiment should be realistic. A large majority of academic marketing researchers do not have the same talents that professional copy writers and art directors have. Therefore, it is better to ask advertising professionals to design the ads that are used in advertising experiments or to use ads taken from other markets that are unknown to the participants in order to get ads that are realistic and of a persuasive quality likely to be effective in a real campaign. The response of participants should not be induced in any way. Participants in experiments should not be told how to process the information in the ads, only instructed to look at the ads as they normally do.

Practical significance of results should be considered in addition to statistical significance. Not all statistically significant results are practically significant or interesting and statistical significance should never be the single criterion for presenting a result.

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THE STRUCTURAL EFFECT OF INDIRECT COMPARATIVE ADVERTISEMENTS ON CONSUMER ATTITUDE, WHEN MODERATED BY MESSAGE TYPE AND NUMBER OF CLAIMS
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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of direct comparative advertising is fairly well-known and understood by advertisers. It is the major contribution of this paper to show that indirect comparative advertising (where the competitors name is not specifically mentioned) is also effective in changing attitudes and purchase intentions. The second contribution of this paper is to show that the effects of such comparative advertising upon attitudes and intentions are mediated by both the number of comparison points made and how convincingly the comparisons are substantiated.

PROBLEM FOCUS

In Korea there is mounting evidence of an increase in the number of indirect comparative advertisements. A typical example of such advertising is provided by Coca Cola competing with local brands; ‘To drink cola or to drink non-cola’. The use of direct comparative advertising in Korea is practically non-existent, because both the law and the culture frown upon direct comparisons being made in advertising. In fact, the Fair Trade Commission of Korea suggests that comparative advertising activity evokes confusion in consumers. Even so, in 2005, the Fair Trade Commission permitted limited comparative advertising (allowing objective comparative evidence to be shown. By and large, though, advertisers in Korea have found it hard to find objective evidence that suits their need, and although the Confucian belief that direct comparisons with other brands would be improper is weakening, it still exists. So, indirect comparative advertising is still seen as the best method to transfer a message about competitive advantage of brands in Korea. We will argue that indirect comparative advertising is merely one style of (weak) comparative advertisement (McDougall 1977).

The prevalence of comparative advertising has increased in the USA, probably due to the Federal Trade Commission’s informal, 1972 encouragement of explicit comparisons (Willkie & Farris 1975), as well as to advertisers’ belief in its effectiveness (Grewal et al 1997). The FTC’s implicit encouragement of brand comparisons sparked the research interest of academicians and practitioners. However, the effectiveness of comparative advertising, according much empirical research, is equivocal (Grewal et al 1997). With this in mind, the purposes of this study are to first examine the effects of (indirect) comparative advertising on consumer attitude, and then to explore the structural effects using a “dual mediator model” proposed by Droge (1989). The moderators of the indirect advertising message used here are designed to be of use to advertisers – prior research has indicated that message characteristics and amount of information are two such variables in Korea, if not elsewhere (Na & Son 1998).

RELEVANT PRIOR LITERATURE

Indirect comparisons as a form of comparative advertising

According to Wilkie and Farris’ (1975) definition, comparative advertising occurs when two or more specifically named, or recognizably presented, brands of the same generic product or service class are compared, and the comparison is made in terms of one or more specific product or service attributes. In the present Korean circumstances, even though the competing brand is not actually named, consumers can guess fairly easily which brand is actually being compared to which in the advertisements – i.e. the competing brand is often “recognizably represented” even if not specifically named. Etgar and Goodwin (1978) made similar claims to support their US study.

Comparative and non-comparative advertisements

Earlier work in the area did not seem equivocal. For instance, Golden (1979) agreed with Levin (1976) and Prasad (1976) in contending that there is no significant difference between non-comparative advertising and comparative advertising in terms of consumer buying intention and credibility of the advertised message. Swinyard (1981) even found comparative formats less believable, particularly for users of the comparison brand. Comparison-brand users may attribute desperation and hostility to sponsors making comparative claims, because these claims challenge consumers’ prior beliefs. Rather than change these strongly held beliefs, skeptical consumers may respond to comparative claims by first derogating the source of message, then counter-arguing with the message claims (Swinyard 1981).

Grewal et al (1997), in their meta-analysis, also asserted that the effectiveness of comparative advertising, according to the body of extant research, is equivocal. None the less, their systematic review of the comparative advertising literature – published and unpublished – enabled them to report that comparative advertising is generally found to be more effective than non-comparative advertising in generating attention, message and brand awareness, levels of message processing, favorable sponsored brand attention, and increased purchase behavior. We thus believe that indirect advertisements must also positively affect consumers’ information processing and buying behavior.

Moderating variables

There are many variables that could moderate the relationship between advertising format and consumer response. Two only are selected here, based upon our understanding of their relevance and practical importance to advertisers. We also bear in mind that Etgar and Goodwin (1978) asserted that comparative advertising is primarily applicable to messages which compare specific, measurable product attributes. Previous work in Korea concerning practitioners’ interest in comparative advertising (Na & Son 1998) revealed two key factors; advertising message type and the number of claims in the advertising. Both these aspects do concern the critical issue pointed out by Etgar and Goodwin.

Types of message claim; substantiated versus unsubstantiated

Several critics of comparative advertising (Chevins 1975; Kershaw & Tannenbaum 1976) have suggested that when the comparisons include generalised, non-substantiated statements, the consumer may become misinformed as well as confused. Claims of superiority, for example, which are not supported by independent test (or even convincing tests conducted by the brand’s company) may reduce the credibility of the message. McDougall
(1976) tested for the relative effectiveness of use or non-use of substantiated claims across various message appeals and found that, overall, substantiated claims receive greater acceptance in terms of reliability and helpfulness. Golden (1976) also manipulated claim substantiation. She, however, found no differences in message-appeal effect. Wilson (1976) found, further, that unsubstantiated comparative advertisements were perceived as significantly more confusing and less believable than others. Thus the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Substantiated claims are more effective than unsubstantiated claims, in terms of consumers’ attitudes toward the advertisement, attitude toward the brand and consequent purchase intentions.

**Number of message claims**

Comparative advertisements found in the media reflect a diversity of approaches. While some restrict discussion to one product characteristic, many make comparisons on multiple dimensions, apparently believing that more information lends additional credibility concerning the claim. Alternatively, Etgar and Goodwin (1978) suggest that they may, perhaps, merely be attempting to be consistent with a particular positioning strategy which management wishes to invoke. In a later paper, the same authors found that there was no difference in attitude effect responding to the number of message claims for a new brand situation in a comparative context (Etgar and Goodwin 1982).

However, an opposite view could be inferred from the “information overload” ideas of Jacoby, Speller & Kohn (1974), which suggests that consumer evaluation of advertising and brand conforms to some kind of inverted U-shaped function of the amount of information provided. Golden (1979) also shows that a non-comparative advertising message is more influential in generating purchase intention in the situation where there is one advertising theme prevalent rather than a comparative advertising situation. But, if there are two or more themes then comparative advertising is more effective than non-comparative advertising. That suggests that information overload is not effective in case of a comparative advertising context.

Furthermore, information load may be minimised in that indirect comparative advertising evokes less counter arguments than comparative advertising. Thus Hypothesis 2:

Hypothesis 2: Attitude toward the advertisement, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention will all become more positive when more points of specific comparison are made.

The structural effect of comparative advertisements on attitude

Based on this first step, with the pattern of moderating effects upon (indirect) comparative advertisements established, the structural effect on consumer attitude will be measured based on a dual mediating hypothesis model suggested by Droge (1989). We believe that the advertisement with multiple, substantiated comparative information items will have a stronger effect on consumer attitude. The reader should be reminded, however, that we are using indirect advertising because the research is being performed in Korea and to ignore the law and practice would be externally invalid – we therefore expect somewhat weaker evidence than if we had used a stronger form of direct comparison in the advertisements.

Hypothesis 3: An advertisement with multiple, substantiated comparison claims will have a greater structural effect on consumer attitudes toward the advertisement, brand and purchasing intention than an equivalent advertisement with a lower number of unsubstantiated claims.

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

**Selection of the experimental stimulus and subjects**

**Stimulus**

The methodology was designed to test the theoretical notions described above by controlling as many extraneous factors as possible. The experimental stimuli used in the study were print advertisements made by agency professionals. The product selected to feature in the advertisements is a pocket-sized electronic memorandum. The reasons for selecting this product category are twofold. First, this product category has been around for some time, and the 20yr old target market is familiar with the product and its various functions. Second, we believe that purchase evaluation of the product category generates a fairly rational decision process. The invented brand was named “Only One”, this name is appropriate in Korea yet the effect of predispositions from previous knowledge about known brands is removed.

The experimental stimuli are arranged in a 2 x 2 design. One dimension is message type, with substantiated and non-substantiated form. The other dimension is number of claims in the advertising.

**Sample**

The pretest sample, for testing the manipulations, consisted of 15 males and 15 females aged 20-29, of whom 11 were attending university, 12 were businesspeople and 7 in other occupations. For hypothesis testing 120 males and 120 females, all 20-29 years of age, were included in the sample. Of these, 144 were at university, 82 in business and 14 otherwise occupied. The selection of both groups was made as a quota sample (non-random), but the coverage is quite wide and reasonably representative of the target user group of a pocket-sized electronic memorandum.

**Operationalizing the independent variables**

A 2 x 2 experimental design is used, where number of claims and the type of information are manipulated. The number of claims is limited to two extreme groups, one using two claims, and the other seven. The information manipulated was drawn from prior commercial research (Duehong Marketing Institute, 1997). This research claims that the seven most important evaluative criteria for this product class, in descending order of importance, are the telephone memory, schedule memory, calculator, data, clock and game functions. In the case where only two comparative items of information are offered, then the telephone number memory and the schedule functions were listed.

Message substantiation is achieved through manipulation of source credibility. Thus, in neither case is the brand mentioned, but in one case information is said to come from research by the Electronic Information Institute. In fact no such institute exists, to the authors’ knowledge, but the name does have an authentic ring about it. This 2x2 design yields four advertisement types, then; many points of comparison and a few points of comparison using substantiated and unsubstantiated claims.

**Dependent measures**

Four dependent measures of attitude measures were used; attitude toward the advertising (Aad), brand cognition (Cb), attitude toward the brand (Ab) and purchase intention (Pi). All use a seven-point Likert scale. Each item is formed.
by two types of question. Aad seeks answers to questions about the perceived reliability of the claim in the advertisement and also about the overall liking of the advertisement. Cb asks the respondents to state whether, when seeing the advertisement, they believe that the brands are functionally excellent and whether they believe the information submitted is sufficient. Ab seeks to ascertain the overall favorable attitude toward the brand and interest in it, whilst Pi is concerned with information seeking and purchase intention. These measurements are adopted from Droge, Cornelia (1989).

RESULTS

Manipulation check

To determine whether the manipulations were successful, a cross-tabulation of the types of claim and the number of claims was conducted using the pre-test data. Subjects were asked to indicate their impression of each advertisement by being asked to sort the stimuli according to the criteria.

In the low information situation, a 90% agreement rate was reached for both substantiated and unsubstantiated claims. In the high information situation and 93% agreement rate was reached for substantiated claims and 87% agreement for unsubstantiated. The authors consider this sufficient evidence to show that the manipulations were successful.

Hypothesis testing Substantiated claim versus unsubstantiated claim

To test Hypothesis 1, one-way ANOVA is implemented where Aad, Cb and Pi are the dependent variables and substantiated or unsubstantiated claim is the independent. As hypothesised, the substantiated claims seem to generate a more positive attitude towards the advertisement (F = 21.5, p<.001; MeanSubstantiated = 3.4, MeanUnsubstantiated = 2.77). In a similar manner, a more favorable attitude toward the brand seems to be generated by substantiated claims (F = 19.18, p<.001; MeanSubstantiated = 3.5, MeanUnsubstantiated = 2.89) and more positive intention to purchase (F = 9.08, p = .003; MeanSubstantiated = 3.65, MeanUnsubstantiated = 3.23).

Number of claims

A similar analysis, also by one-way ANOVA, is conducted to examine H2, with the independent variable formed by the “number of claims” condition. The results are again supportive, showing that the more comparative claims made, the more positive the attitudes and intention become. Thus, for Aad F = 7.76, p = .006, MeanMany claims = 3.28, MeanFew claims = 2.89; for Ab F = 8.63, p = .004, MeanMany claims = 3.40, MeanFew claims = 2.98; and for Pi F = 14.69, p <.001; MeanMany claims = 3.71, MeanFew claims = 3.18. Golden’s (1979) belief that more information increases purchase intention is vindicated, over this range, at least.

Measuring the Structural Effect

Prior to calculating the dual mediating hypothesis model, the four advertisements were examined to see how many advertisements need be included for model fitting. ANOVA was used to test for an interaction effect between type of claim and number of comparative claims. Although the main effects of the model are highly significant, the interactive effects are not (F = 0.114, p = .74). Hence the model-fitting tests were implemented with two advertisements only; the extreme instances were selected.

FIGURE 1

Proposed Dual Mediating Model

The proposed ‘dual mediating hypothesis model’ is described as in Figure 1. We adopted Droge’s 1989 model, using the AMOS program. Four types of criteria for the model fitting test, suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), were employed; Chisquare test, GFI, AGFI and RMR. The dual model fits well in the case of the advertisement with many substantiated claims, but the other case (the advertisement with a few, unsubstantiated claims), does not fit so well.

TABLE 1

Goodness of fit statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>X² (P-value)</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantiated * Many</td>
<td>14.703 (0.473)</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td>0.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsubstantiated * Few</td>
<td>48.454 (0.000)</td>
<td>0.860</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td>0.084</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### DISCUSSION

It was Swinyard (1976) who suggested that indirect advertising offers less chance of arousing counter-argument that indirect advertising, and therefore should be more effective. The results here to give general support to the effectiveness of indirect advertising but, as substantiated ad claims are more effective than unsubstantiated, it does appear that at least some counter-argument may occur.

There is also qualified support for the opinions of Jacoby et al. (1974), in that the larger number of comparisons offered generates more positive attitude and intention than a smaller number of information items. The support is qualified because the present experimental design only offers a variation between two and seven comparison points, and thus we are not in a position to comment about the information overload aspects discussed by Jacoby et al. This is an issue, however, which can be easily addressed in future research.

Using T-values, we can further investigate the structural relationship of brand cognitions, attitudes towards the advertisement (Aad), towards the brand (Ab) and towards purchase (Pi). These relationships are illustrated in Figure 2. It can be seen very clearly that the advertisement with a substantiated, larger number of information items has generates stronger effects than the advertisement with fewer, unsubstantiated information items. Droge’s dual mediating hypothesis model (1989) fits well for the former case but not so well in the latter.

### FIGURE 2

Cognitive, Attitudinal and Intention structure for two advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Substantiated Many</th>
<th>Unsubstantiated Few</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parameter</td>
<td>Path parameter (T value)</td>
<td>Standardised parameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab → Aad</td>
<td>3.815 (1.525)</td>
<td>2.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab → Cb</td>
<td>0.490 (3.144)</td>
<td>0.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pi → Ab</td>
<td>0.619 (3.052)</td>
<td>0.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pi → Cb</td>
<td>0.035 (0.187)</td>
<td>0.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Ab → Ab</td>
<td>Fix as 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Ab → Ab</td>
<td>0.893 (7.698)</td>
<td>0.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Pi → Pi</td>
<td>Fix as 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Pi → Pi</td>
<td>0.926 (4.962)</td>
<td>0.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Aad → Aad</td>
<td>Fix as 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Aad → Aad</td>
<td>3.164 (2.143)</td>
<td>1.476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Cb → Cb</td>
<td>Fix as 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Cb → Cb</td>
<td>0.834 (5.643)</td>
<td>0.148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen in Figure 2A that, for the substantiated claims case, the path from brand cognitions to attitude towards the brand is statistically significant (0.536). This is quite different from the observed pattern in Figure 2B, where that path is not significant and the path from brand cognitions to purchase intention is significant (0.672). A possible explanation can be mooted in terms of brand equity. In the situation where the multiple claims are substantiated it seems possible that brand equity has been accumulated, and this is reflected in the strong positive impact upon intention to purchase. In the second (fewer unsubstantiated, comparison points) case, there is still an increasing purchase intention but there seems little, if any, effect upon brand equity – the observed impact upon purchase intentions is smaller than the previous case and it is tempting to speculate that this would be a short-term change rather than a semi-permanent change to the cognitive structures of the target audience.

### FUTURE RESEARCH

As with most research, there are a number of weaknesses, that lend themselves to opportunities for further study. The question of generalisation arises, as we used only one product, the electronic pocket memorandum, and
other products (or services) may dampen or exacerbate the effect identified here. Similarly, different effects may develop in different cultural milieus. It is the design objective in research such as this to give the effect in question every chance of showing; hence, we chose to use an unknown, invented brand. It has been noted before that if respondents already have a strong opinion about a brand, then changes to their attitude and intention structure regarding the brand are significantly harder to achieve (Villarreal-Camacho 1984), for instance. On the other hand, it is interesting that our research hypotheses were supported when we were only using a "watered-down" form of comparative advertising. It will be recalled that we made an assumption that indirect comparative advertising (where no explicit mention is made of a competitive brand name) does operate in a similar manner to directly comparative advertising. Although it appears that this assumption was justified, it also seems reasonable to assume that even stronger results would result if we had used direct comparisons instead.

Lastly, in retrospect we wish we had used (at least) three levels of number of claims, so stronger support for Jacoby's argument about information overload could be offered. Seven comparative items seemed to us to be a fairly large amount of information, but clearly it was not enough. It would be interesting to find out whether additional items of comparison simply show a marginally decreasing impact upon purchase intentions, or whether there is actually a decrease in purchase intention at some optimal point. Having made these caveats we do feel that something worthwhile has been achieved. The implications for practitioners are quite clear with regard to comparative advertising, even when

...Hopefully lead to more sophisticated research.

REFERENCES


RELATEDNESS VS. SIMILARITY: THE ROLE OF RESPONSE SET EFFECTS IN COMPETITIVE ADVERTISING

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Competitive interference, i.e., the notion that brand information recall is lower when a brand’s advertising occurs in the presence of competitive advertising (competing ads having similar ad content) than when the competitive advertising is absent (competing ads having dissimilar ad content), has been the focus of numerous studies for the past two decades (e.g., Burke and Srull 1988; Keller 1987, 1991; Jewell and Unnava 2003; Kumar 2000; Unnava and Sirdeshmukh 1994). Although, most of the research has focused on the damaging effects of competitive interference, Unnava and Sirdeshmukh (1994) suggest that variable encodings of stimulus information should result in multiple retrieval cues which should assist in the retrieval of information. Such variable encoding can occur when consumers see the same ad in different program contexts (Singh et al. 1992) or when the product is portrayed in different situational contexts by varying the ad executions (Unnava and Sirdeshmukh 1994).

In this research, we extend this notion of reducing the damaging effects of competitive interference and seek to uncover some conditions under which marketers can maneuver themselves out of the detrimental effects of inevitable clutter. Our research differs from the previous research in two aspects. First, whereas past research has focused on the recall of brand name and information of the target brand, we focus on the combined/overall recall of brand information for the target and competitive ads.

Overall recall is important when firms manufacturing different products are interested in improving awareness of the overall brand name, rather than the awareness of a single product. Second, past research has typically used externally provided cues (e.g., headline from an ad) at the time of retrieval to reduce the damaging effect of competitive interference, we employ the response set theory as a basis to suggest that when appropriate retrieval cues are present at the time of encoding rather than retrieval, they offer ease of identifying the categorical relations between pieces of information, which in turn enhances recall (Garner and Whitman 1965). Applying this to the competitive advertising context, we propose that such retrieval cues may take the form of related ad content. Hence, we conjecture that response set effects are evoked when competing ads contain related (rather than similar or dissimilar) product claims, as observed from enhanced recall. Importantly, by examining related, in addition to similar and dissimilar stimuli, fills a gap in interference research.

Response set theory (Bower, Thompson-Schill and Tulving 1994) proposes that predictive retrieval cues can be used to call up a small group of response words, thereby making them available for recall. For this to happen, a cue should be specific to the item to be recalled (Bower and Bolton 1969). In addition, an obvious rule relating a cue term to its response terms (e.g., ‘duck’ and ‘luck’ both end with ‘uck’) should be present and easily identified. In their experiments, Bower et al. (1994) used two main lists of items: the all-same list and the congruent list. The former constituted a list of items that belonged to the same type of material (e.g., all were two-digit numbers). These authors observed that higher levels of interference occurred because there was no specific response term for its category (i.e., an abundance of similar responses). In competitive advertising, similar ad content is likewise prone to higher levels of interference since they are possible responses during retrieval. In contrast, vastly different paired-lists should have no retrieval cue since there is no obvious relation between the response terms and the retrieval cue (e.g., pan, 45, sick, ball, W). This in turn corresponds to the notion of dissimilar ad stimuli in competitive advertising, where interference is negligible.

On the other hand, items in Bower et al.’s (1994) congruent list either belonged to the same form class (e.g., numbers with numbers, letters with letters) or had similar semantic structures (e.g. even numbers, rhyming words). Thus, the congruent list observes a systematic same-category rule, which serves as the retrieval cue (Underwood 1963). The form class of sets of response terms (e.g., two-digit numbers, alphabetical letters, and names of famous persons) acts as an important retrieval cue which provides an enormous boost in learning effects. Extending this notion to advertising, similarity in semantic structures may be replicated through ad content relatedness. For example, an ad may promote a car’s product benefits of “spaciousness” while another may advocate the related benefit of “child safety auto-lock.” These two benefit claims are conceivably linked by the cue term “good for family use.” Hence, competing ads related to each other by virtue of having similar semantic structures should facilitate easy identification of the relations between themselves, which in turn evoke response set effects. Related ad content in competing ads should therefore result in better learning compared to ads of similar or dissimilar ad content.

Results from our experiment indicated that there was no difference in the recall of information between ads portraying dissimilar versus similar ad content, in line with response set theory. However, ads portraying related content information led to a significantly higher overall recall compared to ads portraying similar information. Collectively, the results from the current study augment past interference findings by demonstrating that related content can actually enhance recall. These results supported the usage of similar semantics structure (i.e. related ad claims) as a retrieval cue, enabling the identification of an implicit relation associating the competing ads. Given that subjects were not explicitly cued or primed about how competing ads may be related, enhanced recall performance for ads containing related ad claims suggest that they were able to form associations between the two ads.

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ATTITUDES TOWARD COMPARATIVE ADVERTISING IN THAILAND: THE MODERATING ROLE OF PRODUCT CATEGORY TYPES
Kawpang Polyorat, Faculty of Management Science, Khonkaen University

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ABSTRACT
While comparative advertising has been widely used in the US, it is uncommon in several other countries. This study attempts to examine the attitudes toward comparative advertising in Thailand, a country where comparative advertising has been rarely used. In addition, this study also seeks to investigate the moderating role of product category types (utilitarian vs. hedonic). Overall, the results from an experimental study demonstrated that comparative ads elicited more favorable ad attitudes than noncomparative ads for utilitarian products but not for hedonic products. Finally, theoretical and managerial implications are provided and avenues for future research are suggested.

QUESTIONS
Comparative Advertising
Comparative advertising explicitly or implicitly compares at least two brands in the same product class on specific product attributes (Grewal et al., 1997). Direct comparative ads make explicit references by mentioning the name of a competitive brand. Indirect comparative ads, on the other hand, do not mention any specific comparison brand(s) but compare the focal brand with other brands or the category in general; e.g., “our brand is better than any other brand” (Pechman and Ratneshwar 1991). Most comparative ads are indirect since the competitor is often simply implied rather than directly named (Walker and Anderson 1991). Noncomparative ads, in contrast, try to make an impression by conveying the information of the advertised brand without implicating how it fares against competitors (Manning et al. 2001).

A meta-analysis of comparative versus noncomparative advertising studies by Grewal et al. (1997) revealed that while comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads elicit more attention, greater awareness, more favorable brand attitudes and stronger purchase intention, they tend to elicit less favorable ad attitudes. One plausible explanation for the less favorable ad attitudes is that consumers see the comparison as an attack on the comparison brand, which would either derogate the message source or produce counterargument to the message content (Wilkie and Farris 1975). In spite of the less favorable ad attitudes, the fact that comparative advertising is still widely used suggests more studies are needed in this topic.

Since the majority of comparative advertising studies are conducted in the US, where comparative advertising is common, the impact of comparative advertising on ad attitudes may be different for consumers in a country where comparative advertising is not common. Comparative advertising is rarely used in Thailand. Its persuasiveness (e.g., ad attitudes), thus, remains largely unexplored. As a result, from a managerial perspective, it is interesting to examine attitudes toward comparative ads before an implementation in real media. From a theoretical perspective, two competing hypotheses which suggest the two possible but opposite attitudes toward comparative advertising for Thai consumers are largely unexplored. This research will, therefore, fill this gap.

The first hypothesis, based on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance, suggests that comparative (vs. noncomparative) advertising will elicit less favorable ad attitudes in Thailand, where collectivism is highly valued and uncertainty avoidance is relatively high (Hofstede 1990). In collectivist societies, harmonious relationships, modesty and face-saving considerably influence communication. Comparative advertising, which claims the superiority of the sponsoring brand over the competitor(s), however, would seem to be at odds with these values. For example, a number of content-analytic studies indicate that comparative advertising has been very rare in collectivist countries (e.g., Japan; Mueller 1987; 1992). Moreover, literature on conflict management suggests that while individualist Americans have a stronger tendency toward competition, collectivist Chinese are more likely to avoid

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conflicts (Morris et al. 1998). Based on the results from these two streams of individualism-collectivism research, comparative advertising should provoke less favorable ad attitudes than noncomparative advertising.

Furthermore, Thailand is also different from the US in terms of uncertain avoidance (Hofstede 1990), the extent to which ambiguity and uncertainty are tolerated among members of a society. Donthu (1998) investigates comparative ad persuasiveness in four different countries including the US (as a base since most of comparative advertising studies are conducted here), Canada (where comparative advertising is legal and widely used), the UK (where comparative advertising is legal but not widely used), and India (where comparative advertising is illegal and therefore is rarely used). People from countries where comparative ads are not widely used have more negative attitudes toward comparative advertising than those from countries where comparative ads are more common. The researcher attributes this finding to (1) mere exposure effects, (2) differences in national diffusion of innovation, and/or (3) differences in uncertainty avoidance. The final explanation stems from national differences in levels of uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede (1990) classifies the US and Canada as cultures low in uncertainty avoidance and India as a culture high in uncertainty avoidance. Cultures with low uncertainty avoidance tend to be open to new things and behaviors whereas cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to be risk-averse, resistant to change, and low tolerant for ambiguity (Donthu 1998). Comparative ads may be considered novel, ambiguous, and risky. As a result, cultures low in uncertainty avoidance such as US and Canada may be more receptive to comparative advertising than cultures high in uncertainty avoidance such as India. Based on this rationale and empirical evidence, in Thailand where uncertainty avoidance is relatively high, comparative ads should be less persuasive than noncomparative ads.

The other hypothesis, based on novelty effect and the other side of Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance implication, nevertheless, suggests the opposite. That is, comparative (vs. noncomparative) advertising could elicit more favorable ad attitudes. Because comparative advertising has been rarely employed, Thai consumers could find this type of ad novel. Aaker and Williams (1998)’s cross-cultural research reported that more novel ad appeals would bring about more favorable attitudes. In Thailand, comparative ads are more novel than noncomparative ads. In other words, Thai consumers are less familiar with comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads. As novelty has been found to produce more favorable attitudes, it is expected that comparative (vs. noncomparative) advertising will be more persuasive. Moreover, based on the other implication of uncertainty avoidance, a positive impact of comparative advertising on persuasiveness could also be predicted. High uncertainty avoidance culture could be argued to prefer comparative ads to noncomparative ads because the former provides more information regarding the sponsoring brand. As a result, uncertainty could be reduced to a larger extent through the use of comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads. This line of reasoning received preliminary support from Jeon and Beatty’s (2002) study which reports that, in Korea (a high uncertainty avoidance culture), comparative ads are more persuasive than their noncomparative counterparts.

Jeon and Beatty (2002) suggest that Koreans, which are classified as high uncertainty avoidant according to Hofstede (1990), consider comparative ads (vs. noncomparative ads) to be novel and thus found them more persuasive. Their argument for a novelty effect, however, appears to be at odds with the explanation regarding the role of national uncertainty avoidance offered by Donthu (1998). Specifically, comparative ads are novel. Countries with high levels of uncertainty avoidance might regard novelty as risky and ambiguous. As a consequence, from Donthu’s (1998) perspective, those with high levels of uncertainty avoidance (e.g., Indians) have less positive attitudes towards comparative ads versus noncomparative ads.

These two competing hypotheses and empirical evidences, thus, lead to the first research question which seeks to examine whether comparative or noncomparative ads would elicit more favorable ad attitudes for Thai consumers.

RQ 1: What type of advertising (comparative vs. noncomparative) will elicit more favorable ad attitudes for Thai consumers.

Product category type and attitude towards comparative advertising

In addition to examining the main effect of ad types, this study also explores the role of product category types (utilitarian vs. hedonic). Apart from a few studies (e.g., Goodwin and Elgar 1980; Gorn and Weinberg 1983; Putrevu and Lord 1994), previous comparative ad research has paid relatively scant attention to the possible moderating role of product category types.

There are differences between the two types of product categories. On one hand, utilitarian products are primarily concerned with the functional/instrumental usefulness of the products which is derived from the performance of the products. They provide the customer value by being a means to an end (Chandon, Wansink and Laurent 2000). They do not have either inherently positive or negative affects (Youn et al. 2001). Office supplies, batteries (Youn et al. 2001), calculators, cameras, antacids, weighing scales and electric blankets (Hsu and Monroe 1998) fall into this product category type.

On the other hand, hedonic products are largely concerned with the experiential pleasure derived from the affective, esthetic, sensory and/or symbolic aspects of that product (Batra and Ahtola 1991; Spangenberg, Voss and Crowley 1997). They are noninstrumental and experiential. They are appreciated for their own sake, without further regard to their practical purposes (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Hedonic products are sometimes called value-expressive products. They carry symbolic or expressive qualities, which lead to the users’ social and psychological interpretation of the product (Kim and Kang 2001). For example, a consumer of an exotic sport car may be associated with an image of the stereotypical driver who is young, attractive, modern, affluent and single (Johar and Sirgy 1991).

A few studies report the roles of product characteristics in comparative ad persuasiveness. For example, Putrevu and Lord (1994) report that comparative ads elicit more favorable brand attitudes when products are congruent to positive-involving and affective-involving. However, noncomparative ads produce more favorable brand attitudes when affective involvement alone is high rather than low. Gorn and Weinberg (1983) find a relative advantage of comparative ads over noncomparative ads in provoking more favorable brand attitudes for toothpaste but not golf balls. Goodwin and Elgar (1980) report that for cold remedy, comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads were perceived as providing greater extent of product knowledge and elicited more favorable ad personality. However, for beer, the two ad types were not perceived as different in enhancing product knowledge and eliciting favorable ad personality.

Although these three studies indirectly suggest the potential moderating roles of product category types, they do not explicitly study this factor. As a consequence,
Another objective of this study is to fill in this gap. It is expected that the findings from the current study will contribute to the literature on the moderating role of product category types. That is, on the one hand, if attitudes toward comparative versus noncomparative ads were similar across the two product category types, we would have an evidence for the lack of the moderating impact of product category types. On the other hand, if ad attitudes were different across the two product category types, we would have the evidence for their moderating role.

RQ 2: What are the roles of product category types on attitudes toward comparative versus noncomparative ads?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
An experimental study was conducted where the independent variables were ad types (comparative vs. noncomparative) and product category types (utilitarian versus hedonic). The dependent variable is ad attitudes. In addition, the product familiarity was included as a covariate since previous research suggested its impact on comparative advertising effectiveness (Dasgupta and Donthu 1994).

Sample and Procedure
The study sample was comprised of 204 undergraduate students (63% female; mean age = 20.3 years) from a major Thai university. The subjects participated in the study during a regular class meeting as a course requirement. All stimuli and measures were provided in a survey booklet format. The subjects were first given a basic description of the study and viewed either a comparative or noncomparative ad for the first product and responded to measures of ad attitudes. Next, the subjects read the ad of the second product and completed the same measure sheet as that for the first ad. The ad types for the first and second products are always different. The subjects then were asked to complete the product familiarity measure sheets for the two products. Finally, after providing basic demographic data, subjects were debriefed.

Ad stimuli
Toothpaste and candy were selected as the focal utilitarian and hedonic products. A pre-test with 40 undergraduate students from the same subject pool as the main study was conducted to determine whether toothpaste and candy could appropriately represent the two product category types. Specifically, the subjects indicated the extent to which the products were utilitarian versus hedonic on a 2-item, 7-point scale drawn from Kempf (1999) and Strahilevitz and Myers (1998); and for the products were utilitarian versus hedonic (a toothpaste = .88 and a candy = .88).

The familiarity of product category was assessed by a 2-point Likert-type two-item scale drawn from Polyorat, Alden and Kim (2005). Specifically, the subjects identified the extent to which they are familiar with toothpaste/candy and the features of toothpaste/candy (r toothpaste = .71 and r candy = .82).

Results
The two research questions were examined using ANCOVA where ad format (comparative vs. noncomparative) was an independent variable, ad attitudes as a dependent variable and product familiarity as a covariate. An ANCOVA model was used for each product category type (utilitarian and hedonic). Treatment means and standard deviations for each cell are shown in Table 1. The ANCOVA results were displayed in Table 2.

The results indicate that comparative (versus noncomparative) ads do not necessarily always elicit more favorable ad attitudes than their noncomparative counterparts (a comparative = 4.42, a noncomparative = 4.09, F = 5.99, p ≤ .05). In contrast, for hedonic products, noncomparative ads elicit more favorable ad attitudes than their comparative counterparts (a comparative = 3.71, a noncomparative = 3.98, F = 3.55, p ≤ .07). The results are graphically displayed in Figure 1. In addition, the covariate (product familiarity) is significant in both product (Futilitarian = 7.66, p ≤ .01; Fhedonic = 14.00, p ≤ .01)

experiment. Thailand’s trademark law prohibits any public use of another trade name (Chirapravati 1996). As a consequence, the direct mention of a comparison brand is illegal and thus not used. The use of indirect comparative ads, therefore, would accommodate this restriction and thus enhance external validity of the current study.

Following work by Barone and Minaird (1999), the researcher developed print ads featuring a general headline with four attribute descriptions for toothpaste and five for candy and a concluding remark. The two print ads (comparative and noncomparative ads) for each product category type contained the same information, except comparative ads also indicated that the sponsoring brand was better on each attribute than the leading brand. A pilot test was then conducted to examine if the two ad types were perceived as intended. As expected, at least 90% of the subjects correctly identified comparative ads as comparative ads and noncomparative ads as noncomparative ads.

Measures
Ad attitudes were assessed by a 7-point Likert-type six-item scale drawn from Neese and Taylor (1994). Specifically, the subjects were requested to identify the extent to which they think the ad is believable, useful, informative, clear, likable, and convincing. Scores from the six items were averaged to yield ad attitude scores (a toothpaste = .88 and a candy = .88).

The familiarity of product category was assessed by a 2-point Likert-type two-item scale drawn from Polyorat, Alden and Kim (2005). Specifically, the subjects identified the extent to which they are familiar with toothpaste/candy and the features of toothpaste/candy (r toothpaste = .71 and r candy = .82).
TABLE 1
TREATMENT MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Category Type</th>
<th>Ad Type</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noncomparative</td>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ad Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.93)</td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hedonic</td>
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<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.99)</td>
<td>(1.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2
ANCOVA RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian Product</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad type</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product familiarity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonic Product</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad type</td>
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<td>3.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product familiarity</td>
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<td>14.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 1
EFFECTS OF AD TYPES AND PRODUCT CATEGORY TYPES

Ad Attitude

- More favorable
- Less favorable

Utilitarian

Hedonic

Noncomparative
Comparative

Ad Type

DISCUSSION
The primary purpose of this research is to examine the persuasiveness of comparative versus noncomparative advertising in Thailand. In addition, this research also seeks to study the moderating role of a product-related variable, product category types (utilitarian vs. hedonic). Overall, the results from an experimental study demonstrated that comparative ads do not necessarily always engender more favorable ad attitudes than their noncomparative counterparts. Their persuasiveness, however, is moderated by product category types. Specifically, comparative ads elicit more favorable ad attitudes for utilitarian products, whereas noncomparative ads elicit more favorable ad attitudes for hedonic products.

Research and Managerial Implications
This research made a number of contributions to existing consumer and advertising literatures. First, it studied attitudes toward comparative ads in an underexamined country, Thailand. To date, the majority of comparative advertising studies are conducted in the US. As a consequence, the cross-cultural attitudes toward comparative ads need to be more investigated. This study is one toward such direction. Second, the impacts of product category types on the persuasiveness of comparative ads have received scant attention. The results of this study reveal the boundary of comparative versus noncomparative ad persuasiveness set by product category types (utilitarian vs. hedonic), at least for Thai consumers. That is, comparative ads elicit more favorable ad attitudes than noncomparative ads for utilitarian products while the opposite is true for hedonic products. Moreover, this study attempts to rule out alternative explanations of other product-related factors by controlling for product...
involvement (in the pretest) and product familiarity (as a covariate in the main study). As a consequence, it can be ascertained that the difference in attitudes toward comparative advertising are more likely to be driven by product-related characteristics in terms of utilitarian versus hedonic aspects rather than product involvement or familiarity.

In terms of managerial implications, our study results suggest that in a country where comparative advertising is rarely used, comparative advertising is novel and has an advantage over noncomparative advertising for certain products. Marketers, as a consequence, may consider using comparative ad (at least indirect comparative) in a country where it is relatively uncommon, if law permits. Marketers, however, may consider using comparative ads only when their products are utilitarian as opposed to hedonic. Nevertheless, when the product is hedonic in nature, noncomparative ads are more suitable. Furthermore, our study results suggests avenue for the cross-cultural use of standardised international ads (Onkvisit and Shaw 1999). Global companies may now be more comfortable in advertising their global products in a comparative manner for utilitarian products because it appears to be as persuasive in Asia as in the West.

Limitations and Future Research

First, in addition to ad attitudes, future studies should include upstream consumer responses to alternative ad types, such as ad recalls and downstream consumer responses such as purchase intention. Second, the focus of this study was print ads only. Other media including television and radio commercials are worth investigating as well.

Furthermore, certain features of this experimental study may limit generalizability of the findings. Research subjects were exposed to prints ads that were not embedded in a book or a magazine. In addition, the exposure environment was relatively free of normal clutters. Given that fictitious brands and student samples may limit external validity, future research should validate its findings with real ads and non-student samples. Moreover, the replications of this study in other countries with different degrees of individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance will extend our level of understanding further. Finally, only indirect comparative ads were examined in this study due to legal constraints, future research may need to verify its findings with direct comparative ad to examine if the explicit mention of a comparison’s brand might systematically affect the results.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

Applications to register colours as trademarks often use survey evidence to demonstrate a distinctive association between a colour and a brand. However, the results are often heavily criticised. This study used Cadbury’s application to register the colour purple to compare three methods of testing brand-colour distinctiveness, including a traditional approach and two novel approaches involving a colour wheel and a choice modelling experiment. All three methods revealed strong associations between Cadbury and purple, but the new methods are potentially more robust and less susceptible to challenge than traditional approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Because trademarks indicate the source of products and differentiate competing products from each other, they have become increasingly important to marketers. Peterson, Smith and Zerrillo (1999) noted that trademarks initially denoted the mark of individual craftsmen, before expanding to indicate the origin of a product. Identification of a product’s source enables dissatisfied consumers to seek redress and protects monopolies from the entry of unauthorised goods.

Although initially developed as identifying devices, trademarks also simplify consumers’ purchase processes by providing visual cues that aid brand recognition and connote performance attributes (Mialoulis & D’Amato 1978; Simonon 1994). As Jacoby and Morrin (1998) noted: “Trademarks ... enable consumers to identify and distinguish among goods and services sold in the marketplace and, by implication, their quality” (p.97). Brand equity research recognises the goodwill that trademarks may develop and the value that brands may develop independently of the physical product itself (Loken, Ross & Hinkle 1986; Aaker 1991; Peterson et al 1999).

Given the growing evidence that trademarks possess an inherent value, protection of this value has grown in importance as marketers seek to prevent rival traders from using marks that may be deceptively similar to their own. Trademark registration confers particular rights on the owners of trademarks and provides grounds for action, should rival traders attempt to infringe those rights. However, while traditional trademarks, such as logos, brand names and slogans, are comparatively straightforward to register, recent changes to trademark legislation have enabled registration of shapes, colours, and even smells. Establishing that non-traditional marks have acquired secondary meaning presents researchers with several challenges, particularly as the courts had previously viewed many of the attributes now able to be registered as generic, and therefore available to all traders in the category.

To obtain registration and operate successfully, trademarks depend on distinctiveness – their ability to identify one brand in a category containing a number of competing brands. Cohen (1986) noted the different types of mark, which she suggested constitute a continuum, anchored by genericism at one end and highly fanciful marks at the other. Generic marks connote a category or type of product, rather than a specific brand within a given category; because of this, they fail to merit trademark protection. Even widespread advertising will not assist a generic mark to become registered because the courts have held that attributes associated with a product category should be available to all manufacturers operating within that category. Examples of generic words and phrases include “butter”, “ice-cream” and “computer”.

Descriptive marks, as their name indicates, describe the products that bear the trademark; a mark that is merely descriptive cannot be registered as a trademark as it does not identify that product’s source. Descriptive marks do not require consumers to speculate about the attributes of a product; the description provided by the mark makes these unambiguous. For example, terms such as “fresh bread” or “espresso coffee” clearly describe the product but offer no guidance that enables consumers to identify the source of that product.

Suggestive marks go beyond descriptive marks by indicating a particular product attribute or trait, although this attribute is not described fully and consumers need to use their imagination to interpret the trademark and its relationship to the characteristics of the product. Suggestive marks use established words, rather than invented words or terms, and examples might include “Get knotted” when associated with a brand of neck ties. Arbitrary marks typically have no clear relationship to the products that feature them but the relationship develops over time, through advertising and usage. Words used in arbitrary marks have dictionary meanings, but those meanings do not provide an insight into the products that use the mark. For example, “Apple” has evolved to become distinctively associated with a specific computer brand, but the dictionary definition of apple refers to a pip bearing fruit, rather than a manufacturer of technological equipment.

The final category of trademark is fanciful marks; these describe invented words that had no prior meaning before they were developed and used as trademarks on particular products. Because fanciful marks’ sole purpose is to function as a trademark in relation to a specific product, they are typically easier to register because competing traders are less likely to be able to claim an innocent intention to use these marks. Examples of fanciful marks include “Kodak” and “Xerox”, although the latter is also an interesting example of how even fanciful marks may risk losing distinctiveness if consumers use them to describe a product category, rather than a brand within that category (Astrachan 2004).

Colour Trademarks

Until very recently, the courts viewed colour as primarily generic and incapable of identifying specific brands. However, over the last decade, several companies have registered colours as trademarks after demonstrating that a colour has become so consistently linked with a specific brand that it has acquired secondary meaning. Changes to trademark law have also simplified registration of colours, as well as enabling registration of shapes and smells, where a distinctive brand link can be demonstrated.

Colour registration first occurred in 1995, when Qualitex successfully argued that the green-gold colour used on its dry cleaning press pads had a distinctive association with its brand and that use of the same colours by a rival manufacturer amounted to passing off. The US Supreme Court accepted that the colours used had no functional purpose and rejected claims that colour registration would lead to interminable disputes over the shades available to competitors. The court also found that existing trademarks did not protect all colours a brand might use and noted that consumers might use colour to identify products where trademarks were undistinguishable.

To establish a colour’s distinctive association with a
brand, counsel must produce evidence about the applicant’s use of the colour, including the length of time the colour has been used, the extent of advertising undertaken, and the use of that colour by rivals. Consumer survey evidence demonstrating a colour-brand association can also help to establish the distinctiveness of a colour. However, there are two problems in attempting to use survey evidence in support of colour trademark applications. First, there is no specific methodology for establishing brand-colour associations; and second, the survey evidence adduced in such cases is often severely criticised on methodological grounds. As a result, it frequently holds little probative weight.

Consumer surveys designed to support colour trademark registration commonly involve two approaches. First, a representative group of consumers is asked what colour, if any, they associate with a particular brand name. Respondents may be shown an image of a brand logo or interviewers may simply read a brand name and record which, if any, colour associations respondents make. This method is an adaptation of the “Thermos” approach, which asked respondents to describe how they might request a product that had particular attributes. One of the problems with this approach is that respondents report a range of colour descriptions that may or may not be considered evidence of a particular brand-colour association; for example, "blue", "royal blue", "dark blue", or "navy blue". Respondents may all have exactly the same colour in mind, however, the fact they use different terms to express the same or a similar shade creates difficulties for those arguing in favour of a specific brand-colour link. That is, the range of answers elicited in response to this question means it is equally plausible to argue that the varying colour descriptions are evidence of the absence of a specific brand-colour association. While many courts have favoured the use of open-ended rather than closed questions, the problems described above highlight the difficulties in developing a case based on subjective impressions.

The second method involves showing a representative group of customers a coloured card, or a swatch of packaging material, and asking which brand, if any, they associate with this colour. However, it is sometimes difficult to reproduce the exact colour used in the manufacturer’s packaging and, even where specific Pantone colours are tested, the substrate used can affect the overall appearance of the colour. Thus, where researchers test a specific colour on a substrate other than the packaging material, they are open to criticism for having used a colour other than the shade for which registration is sought. However, where they use a swatch of actual packaging material, the estimates obtained have been criticised for reflecting recognition of the packaging material rather than the colour per se. In addition, both methods also suffer from the criticism that they rely on leading questions. That is, asking respondents to associate a brand with a colour implies that such an association must exist. Even the use of terms that allow for no associations (such as questions that ask “which colours, if any, would you associate with this brand”) cannot eliminate the possibility that respondents will make an association, even if this had never occurred to them before. The research reported here addressed these problems by developing and testing two new methods of assessing the extent to which colours signify specific brands. Cadbury’s recent application to register the colour purple in the confectionary product category in both New Zealand and Australia provided a timely focus for the research.

**METHODOLOGY**

The research comprised three separate experiments, each involving a different method of measuring the level of brand-colour association between four brands (Cadbury, Nestle, Whittakers and Nova, a fictitious control brand) and four colours (purple, gold, red and lime green). The three former colours were carefully matched to correspond to the packaging colours used by Cadbury, Nestle and Whittakers, while the lime green, a colour not associated with chocolate brands, was used as a control colour.

The first method tested was the “coloured card” method described above, the second was a modification of this method that we describe as the “colour wheel” method, and the third method involved a choice modelling experiment.

**FIGURE 1**

Coloured Card Stimulus Material

**Figure 1: Coloured Card Stimulus Material**

**Coloured Card Method**

This approach used four cards, each with an unbranded representation of a block of chocolate in a different colour (red, purple, gold and lime green). Respondents were presented with each of these cards individually and asked which brands, if any, they associated
with these colours; the order in which the cards were presented was rotated to randomise order effects. Figure 1 contains a representation of the visual stimuli provided to respondents.

**Colour Wheel Method**

The colour wheel method assumes that there is some (narrow) range of colours that respondents will associate with a particular brand if a distinctive brand-colour association exists. Thus, we designed a colour wheel that featured 18 Pantone colours covering the spectrum represented by the correct brand-colour associations of the brands tested. These correct associations were Cadbury-Purple, Whittakers-Gold, and Nestle-Red (plus the dummy control, Nova-lime green). Thus, the colour wheel included, for example, the correct Cadbury purple shade, as well as sapphire blue and violet, both closely related colours. Figure 2 contains the colour wheel used provided to respondents (the colours used in the colour wheel can also be seen in Table 1).

Respondents were given showcards with the names of each of the four chocolate brands and asked which colour or colours on the colour wheel, if any, they associated with each of these brands.

**FIGURE 2**

Colour Wheel

![Colour Wheel](image)

1. The colours used in Figure 2 are an approximation only.

**Choice Modelling**

Though the coloured card and colour wheel methods both emphasised that respondents did not need to nominate a brand or colour, these approaches could nevertheless be criticised for implying that brand-colour associations exist. To address this potential criticism, a choice modelling experiment was designed to examine the relative importance of brands and colours in respondents’ choice behaviour and the interactions between brands and colours. The effect of colour and brand on respondents’ choice behaviour was calculated by estimating a multinomial logit model, which is one of several probabilistic, discrete choice models. It assumes that consumer choice depends on the relative utility of the alternatives offered and that the utility of each alternative can be calculated by summing its attributes weighted by their multinomial logit regression coefficients. The MNL model takes the following form:

\[
P(i | c) = \frac{e^{\beta x_i}}{\sum_j e^{\beta x_j}}
\]

where \( P(i | c) \) is the probability of choosing alternative \( i \) in choice set \( C \), \( \beta \) is the vector of regression coefficients, \( x_i \) is the vector of attribute descriptions for alternative \( i \) and \( x_j \) is the vector of attribute descriptions for alternative \( j \). For each of the alternatives in choice set \( C \) the utility, \( 8x_i \), is found. The exponential of this utility is then divided by the sum of the exponentials, over all choice sets, to estimate the choice probability for each alternative.

To estimate the model, respondents’ choices were combined to produce aggregate frequencies for each brand in each choice set. These aggregate frequencies were then regressed against the matrix of attribute variables, which included brand and colour; both were entered into the analysis as dummy variables. Respondents were presented with a series of show cards containing mock-ups of four blocks of chocolate in various combinations of the four test brands and four test colours, and asked to choose one block from each of eight choice sets. The assumption underlying the experiment is that the importance of brand and colour, and the interaction between these two factors, will be revealed by respondents’ choices. However, there is no *a priori* assumption that there will necessarily be an interaction between brand and colour. To prevent respondent fatigue, a fractional factorial design was used to reduce the number of choice sets each respondent was required to view. In addition, four versions of the questionnaire were used to randomise order effects that may otherwise have resulted from the manner in which the brand-colour combinations were presented.

Respondents for all three experiments were recruited by mall intercept in a local shopping plaza in New Zealand. (The courts have accepted mall intercepts as a legitimate method for selecting representative samples of the general public (Cohen, 1986; Bottomley 2001)). Interviewers were set loose age and gender quotas and the overall samples contained a good cross-section of all demographic groups. The response rates for each survey were approximately 60% and the achieved sample sizes were 297, 318 and 471 respondents, respectively. In addition to exploring brand-colour-associations, the surveys also examined respondents’ brand repertoires and collected details of their demographic characteristics.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Coloured Card Method

Purple was strongly associated with Cadbury; few respondents associated purple with other brands (see Table 1). However, respondents associated red with Cadbury more than with any other brand, even though red is one of the main colours used by Nestle. Similarly, they linked gold with Cadbury as much as with Whittakers, although all Whittakers’ packaging uses gold.

One explanation of these results could be Cadbury’s market dominance; 84% of respondents indicated that Cadbury was their main brand, while only 12% nominated either Nestle or Whittakers. Many respondents may have associated Cadbury with all three colours commonly used in chocolate packaging because Cadbury is such a dominant brand in the category. If this reasoning is correct, the market dominance explanation should also be reflected in respondents’ association of the lime green colour. Brand associations with the lime green stimulus suggest that most respondents did not assume a brand-colour relationship; however, the fact nearly a third did associate lime green with a specific brand means this possibility cannot be ruled out. Alternatively, these results may simply reflect Cadbury’s use of red in some of its packaging variants, and the use of gold in the Cadbury logo and inner foil packaging.

Colour Wheel Method

Table 2 shows the results of the colour wheel experiment. All three existing brands had strong associations with the colours that dominate their packaging and few respondents associated these colours with other brands. More than 80% of respondents associated Cadbury with the colour purple, or the two colours most similar to this. Whittakers had a very strong association with gold, the dominant colour used in its packaging and, like Cadbury, had little association with other colours. Though nearly half the respondents associated Nestle with a red shade, it was more likely than other brands to be associated with a range of shades. This latter finding may reflect the wide range of colours used in Nestle packaging.

Nova, the control brand, was not associated with any colour by 93% of respondents; respondents who did suggest a colour association nominated nearly every shade on the colour wheel. This suggests that only a small proportion of respondents assumed a colour-brand relationship, and those who did based their answers on guesses that showed no bias in favour of any particular colour.

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coloured Card Brand Associations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Association With Each Colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nestle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Choice Modelling

The choice modelling experiment explicitly examined the utility of each of the brands and colours separately, as well as the brand-colour interactions. The model fitted was highly significant and all the main effects and interactions were significant except the interaction between Nova and gold. For the purposes of providing evidence to support colour registration, the important information is the relative utilities of the alternative brand-colour interactions. Table 3 shows these figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Brand-Colour Utilities</th>
<th>Cadbury</th>
<th>Whittakers</th>
<th>Nestle</th>
<th>Nova</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(N= 471)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand-Purple Interaction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.48</td>
<td>-1.92</td>
<td>-2.67</td>
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<td>Brand-Gold Interaction</td>
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<td>-0.16</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.52</td>
<td>-2.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand-Red Interaction</td>
<td>-1.84</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>-1.29</td>
<td>-3.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand-Lime Interaction</td>
<td>-1.69</td>
<td>-1.83</td>
<td>-2.27</td>
<td>-3.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cadbury and purple were set at zero in the choice modelling analysis, thus the negative utilities associated with the other brand-colour combinations show these were less attractive than the Cadbury-purple combination. As expected, Whittakers’ utility was highest (least negative) when this brand was combined with its traditional pack colour, gold, though Cadbury was equally attractive when combined with gold. The Nestle-red utility was higher (less negative) than any other Nestle-colour combination, though it was still less attractive than either Cadbury or Whittakers when these brands were paired with their correct colours. The control brand and colour combination (Nova and lime) was clearly less preferred than any of the real brand-colour combinations.

CONCLUSION

All three methods tested revealed strong associations between Cadbury and purple. However, the coloured card method also linked Cadbury with other colours, thus diminishing the evidential weight of any claim of a distinctive relationship between Cadbury and purple. This illustrates the weakness of this approach, which is compounded when a funnelling sequence of questions inviting very general associations is employed. The colour-wheel method provided compelling evidence of a distinctive and unambiguous relationship between Cadbury and the general colour purple, though the weight of this evidence could be reduced by some respondents’ inability to identify the precise shade used by Cadbury. The success of the method clearly depends on the colours used in the wheel; ideally, opposing counsel would confer and make this decision jointly before a survey is fielded. Agreement on the limits of shades would clarify the level of precision necessary to demonstrate a distinctive association. The choice modelling approach has several advantages: it quantifies the relative utility of different brand-colour associations, it does not imply brand-colour relationships, and it simulates actual purchase behaviour. However, choice modelling is more complex to use and interpret, which may limit its usefulness in court. Nevertheless, this method merits further attention, since it allows for several colours to be tested, employs effective controls, and is inherently non-leading while still employing closed questions. This research has highlighted the weaknesses that undermine traditional methods of determining distinctive brand-colour associations among consumers; continued use of these methods seems certain to exacerbate the poor record of survey evidence in trademark applications. The two new methods developed and tested in this research address many of the methodological limitations of the traditional method and both offer potential solutions to the problem of providing robust consumer evidence of colour distinctiveness in trademark cases.

REFERENCES


KIDS COMMERCIALS AND COMMERCIAL KIDS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT ANYWAY?

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ABSTRACT
This paper presents case study research from the Asia Pacific region (India and Australia), which tentatively extends American views on the issue of regulating child-oriented marketing and advertising, and identifies directions for future public policy research. Further research is needed to confirm (1) parental preferences for regulation of child-oriented marketing and advertising and (2) the influence of, and concern over, toy based television programming. For example, the first issue could be confirmed either cross-culturally, or in specific countries like India, where no such regulation exists today, while the second issue could be studied in Australia, where it may be a bigger concern.

INTRODUCTION
Research by various people and companies across the US suggests that children not only directly purchase products but also exert substantial purchase influence across a wide variety of purchase categories ranging from toys and cereals to computers and family vacations. America's estimated 34 million children aged 12 and under, may have influenced family spending of a record $500 billion in 2000, and spent more than $40 billion in 2002 (The Center for a New American Dream; Horovitz 1997). Similarly, Indian children today act as purchase influencers across a variety of household product categories ranging from child-oriented products to personal care products to even durables and family vacations (Dixit 2003; Dobhal 2001). Australian market research, conducted and reported by Ingenuity Research, also indicates the growing influence of children on purchase decisions, which is largely on products for personal consumption such as snack foods, toys and electronic games, rather than household products (Anonymous 2002). In summary, children’s purchase influence and consumerism is escalating in countries of the Asia Pacific, such as India and Australia, as in the United States, but the higher proportion of children in the population exacerbates the problem. India has 250 million children between 5-14 years of age. Considering strict classifications of consumer households, using financial ability to consume as a criteria (as defined by NCAER – Euromonitor 2000), there are 35 million child consumers in India. But, every Indian child may be a potential consumer, as even a beggar child on Delhi’s streets can be found buying a bottle of Pepsi at the neighborhood betel shop. Similarly, Australia has approximately 4.8 million children aged 0-17 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). The primary source of information on children’s purchase influence and related concerns, such as child-oriented marketing, however, seems to be the popular press in these countries (Anonymous 2002; Budhiraja 2002; Lahiri 2002). Little evidence of empirical research exists, especially from an academic perspective.

This paper presents case study research conducted in Australia and India, focusing on child-oriented marketing and advertising and parental preferences for regulation. These two countries were chosen for the study, because they represent different levels of development with respect to regulation of child-oriented marketing and advertising. India has no regulatory mechanisms or bodies in place to control child-oriented marketing and advertising while there have been significant efforts by Australian agencies, such as the Australian Broadcasting Authority and Australian Association of National Advertisers, to instigate guidelines and regulations with respect to child-oriented advertising. The specific goals of this paper are to assess whether American concepts and findings, with respect to child-oriented marketing and advertising and parental preferences for regulation, can be extended to countries of the Asia Pacific region (e.g. Australia and India), and to determine if there are any specific public policy issues emerging that could warrant further examination. To do this, the paper will proceed in the following manner. Firstly, American literature on the issue of child-oriented marketing and advertising, and the regulation of the same, supported by Indian and Australian data, as available, will be used to build propositions for the study. Then, these propositions will be examined in light of case study data collected from the two countries. Finally, the results will be discussed with reference to their implications for public policy.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
The Role of Child-Oriented Marketing and Advertising in Children’s Influence on Household Purchases
A review of American literature indicates that marketing and advertising efforts targeted at children, especially child-oriented television programming and advertising, have been primarily held responsible for the growing influence of children on household purchases and the escalating levels of child consumerism. Evidence exists that exposure to TV advertising affects children’s attitudes to advertised products (Goldberg 1990), while programs, such as toy-based programs, are liable to influence children’s social behavior (Carlson, Laczniaik, and Muehling 1994) and creative play (Greenfield et al. 1990). Targeting products and their marketing and advertising campaigns at children, is an increasing trend in both India and Australia, whether in the categories of food products, toys, personal care or even big-ticket household items. Children are a major focus of Indian advertisers (Unnikrishnan 1995), to the extent that even companies with serious products targeted at adults, are attempting to build child appeal, by featuring children in their advertising (e.g. LG, Videocon, Samsung, Maruti Suzuki). Even as long as ten years ago, an estimated 35% of all TV advertisements in India were using children to attract consumer interest, and a larger proportion were targeting the child viewer specifically (Unnikrishnan 1995).

Similarly, Australian children are bombarded with snack food and toy commercials even before they reach school age, to the extent that Australia has a much higher level of child-oriented advertising, especially in food product categories, when compared with countries such as USA, New Zealand, UK and other European nations (Anonymous 2001). In fact, child-oriented marketing efforts have now extended into integrated marketing communications in both countries, with merchandise and toys being created around successful television and film characters (such as Pokemon, Spider Man and Scooby Doo) to target children and maintain the life of the franchise of the movie, TV program or cartoon for an extended period. This suggests that:
P1: Child-oriented marketing and advertising is playing a role in the growing purchase influence of children in the Asia Pacific.
Advertising

There appears to be a debate in the literature concerning who should assume responsibility for regulating the potential ill-effects of child-oriented marketing and advertising (Walsh, Laczniak, and Carlson 1998). One stream of thought holds that it is primarily the government’s responsibility to protect children (see Huston, Watkins, and Kunkel 1989), while others put the onus on the marketing and advertising industry to adopt self-regulation and own up to its societal responsibilities in a better way than it is doing currently (see Gotting 2003). Then, there is a third viewpoint which says that parents are ultimately responsible for protecting their children from the harmful effects of television (Armstrong and Brucks 1988).

Carrying this debate forward from the popular press to the household context, emerging research indicates that mothers’ perceptions of, and preferences for, regulating children’s television and advertising, are likely to be different, based on their overall socialization tendencies, as represented by their parental style (Walsh et al. 1998). Authoritative mothers and indulgent mothers are more likely to support parental intervention and mediation of the effects of child-oriented television, than neglecting and authoritarian mothers, as both the former groups of mothers are higher on warmth (Walsh et al. 1998). Authoritative mothers prefer to be self-reliant when it comes to consumer socialization of their children and will hence be more in favor of parental responsibility rather than third-party mediation of children’s television, compared to the other groups (Walsh et al. 1998). Indulgent mothers are concerned for their children’s environment, but have a tendency to avoid setting restrictions on their children. They may want others to set and enforce the rules and hence may not be as involved in this task. Therefore, they may be willing to have broadcasters assume responsibility (Walsh et al. 1998). Authoritarian mothers on the other hand, favor more governmental or independent regulation, and may be less inclined to give broadcasters more responsibility for children’s television. This has been attributed to the fact that these mothers’ favor a respect for authority. Further, these mothers suggest that “parents have little control over what children view on television and can do little to mediate advertising’s effects once children are exposed to programs and ads (Walsh et al. 1998 p. 23)”.

Emerging research in the Asia Pacific suggests that different styles of parenting prevail in different countries, as evidenced by Australian and Indian mothers (Rose, Dalakas, and Kropp 2002; Rose, Dalakas, and Kropp 2003). Australian mothers have been primarily found to be either Authoritative or Permissive, while Indian mothers have been primarily found to be either Authoritarian or Indulgent. This suggests that:

P2: Mother’s preferences for regulation of child-oriented marketing and advertising will not be homogenous in the Asia Pacific – some mothers would be more likely to discuss governmental and industry regulation of advertising, while other mothers may suggest that regulation is a part of parental responsibility towards children.

Parental Concern with Toy Based Programming

American parents reportedly have concerns about toy-based programming (Muehling, Carlson, and Laczniak 1992) as they perceive that toy-based programs: (1) promote violent and aggressive behavior in children, (2) take advantage of children as consumers, (3) displace more creative and educational programs, and (4) interfere with children’s creative play (Laczniak, Carlson, and Muehling 1992). Such parental concern may be linked to issues such as broad parental socialization tendencies and parental television usage (Laczniak, Carlson, and Muehling 1995). The relationship between parental socialization tendencies and parental concerns about toy-based programming has been hypothesised to be positive. On the other hand, it is suggested that there may be a negative relationship between parental television usage and parental concerns about toy-based programming, such that parents who are heavy viewers of television will be less concerned with the effects of toy-based programs (Laczniak et al. 1995).

As discussed earlier, there are several instances of merchandise and toys being created around successful television and film characters (such as Pokemon, Spiderman and Scooby Doo) in countries of the Asia Pacific such as India and Australia, which are actually suggested to be instances of toy-based programming, created specifically to market certain products (Barbara Biggins, Executive Director Young Media Australia as interviewed in Gotting 2003). However, different styles of parenting and parental socialization tendencies may be prevailing in different Asia Pacific countries, as discussed previously (see Rose et al. 2003). Further, different countries of the Asia Pacific may be characterised by different levels of development, with respect to the television industry (i.e. channels, programming and advertising) as well as household ownership of television. For example, the Indian television industry has been flooded with a variety of channels and programs, both national and regional, ever since it was opened up to private/non-governmental operators. However, India is still far behind many other countries in terms of household ownership of televisions - most households are still single-television households. This suggests that:

P3: Mothers in the Asia Pacific are likely to express different levels of concern about toy-based programming targeted at children – some may be more concerned than the others.

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

The data examined in this study consists of 14 depth interviews, collected from 7 households altogether (with children 10 years of age and younger). Households representing similar socio-economic classes (i.e. the upper middle class) have been selected for the study, from Sydney in Australia and Delhi in India, in order to ensure the comparability of data. The data has been then written into mini-cases. The method used in developing and analyzing the mini-cases is described as follows.

The literature suggests that conducting in-depth interviews of mothers and children in each other’s presence is an effective technique to win the confidence of young children and encourage them to volunteer more about their personal consumer tastes and preferences than they might otherwise disclose (Gunter and Furnham 1998). Mother-child pairs were interviewed individually, but in each other’s presence, and were actively encouraged to prompt each other during the interview process.

Both the mothers’ and children’s interviews were conducted using modified versions of the Ward, Wackman and Wartella (1977) guides. The mothers’ interviews covered topics such as consumer socialization goals, personal consumer behavior, television viewing habits of self and children, attitudes towards advertising, attitudes towards purchase requests, orientation towards children’s financial independence and views on the regulation of marketing and advertising to children. The child interviews explored issues such as the children’s understanding of television commercials, attitudes towards advertising, sources of new product information, product requests, brand orientation, pocket money and peer group influence (more details available from the corresponding author).
This process led to the mother and child being stimulated into informal consumption-oriented interactions/conversations with the interviewer, which other members of the family also joined on occasion, as they thought the formal process of interview was over. This was also observed and recorded by the interviewer. The formal and informal stages of this research were combined and recorded into seven mini-cases for further analysis. Four of these are Indian (M1-C1; M2-C2; M3-C3; M4-C4), and three are Australian (M5-C5; M6-C6; M7-C7).

These mini-cases were analysed in two ways. Intra case analysis was conducted to prepare a ‘history’ or summary of each case. Then inter-case analysis was conducted to seek similarities and differences between the cases with respect to the research issue (i.e., children’s influence on household purchases and parental views about child-oriented marketing and advertising) and also, to examine intra-country case differences, if suggested. The results of both types of case analyses were interpreted in light of the research propositions, using the technique of pattern matching (Campbell 1975). Pattern matching is a useful technique linking data to propositions, and leads to a situation where several pieces of information from the same case may be related to some theoretical proposition.

FINDINGS

The goal in presenting the findings is not to present each and every case in detail, but to take pieces of data from all cases and present them as evidence corroborating specific research propositions.

The Role of Child-Oriented Marketing and Advertising in Children’s Influence on Household Purchases

The first proposition suggests that child-oriented marketing and advertising would be considered responsible by parents, for this surge in Asia Pacific children’s purchase influence and consumerism. The case analyses corroborated this view. All mothers, except M3, agreed that commercials often caused their child to want the advertised product. M1, for example, felt that advertising was very good at enticing children through offers –

“Whenever C1 asks for something, it is always the one with the free tattoo, free toy, etc.”

She claims that the only time C1 asked her for toothpaste was when there was a GI Joe toy being given free with a particular brand advertised on TV. Similarly, C5 and C6 who never make requests for personal care products recently asked their mothers for the new toothpaste launched under the Harry Potter brand.

All mothers in the study agreed that commercials on children’s shows were often deceptive and misled children in important ways, and opined that advertising in general did not present a true picture of advertised products. As M7 commented:

“They are attracting kids but they just don’t live up to their promises.”

Mothers’ Preferences for Regulating Child-oriented Marketing and Advertising

The second proposition suggests that mother’s preferences for regulation of child-oriented marketing and advertising will not be homogenous in the Asia Pacific, due to differences in their styles of parenting. Some mothers would be more likely to discuss governmental and industry regulation of advertising, while other mothers may suggest that regulation is a part of parental responsibility towards children. This proposition is tentatively supported by the case analysis.

Discussing the role of the government, M1 and M3 strongly agree that the government should regulate commercials to children, and in fact advocate government regulation of the advertising, sales and marketing activities of all manufacturers. However, M2, M4 and M7, strongly disagree that the government should regulate child-oriented marketing and advertising.

Some mothers also placed the onus on the marketing and advertising industry to adopt self-regulation as in the case of M7 who said:

“Companies should go in for self-regulation and ethical marketing practices.”

Further, mothers in the study seemed to be making some effort or the other, in socializing their children about television and advertising. Most of the mothers interviewed said that they regularly monitored the time when their children were supposed to watch television and the kind of programs they watched. However, the mothers’ discussions with their children rarely went beyond the humor, story line and interest value of advertising, except in the case of M2, M4 and M7. M2 said:

“We talk if it’s funny, absurd. I discuss unreal products, tell her this ad is not really talking about product, and discuss details.”

Similarly, M4 generally discussed advertised products with her daughter and tried to tell her that it did not mean that everything is good –

“She should not be positively biased towards advertised products.”

M7 on the other hand, primarily discussed those television advertisements that were related to purchase requests made by her son, though she would also discuss something that they both found funny.

As suggested by (Walsh et al. 1998), M1 and M3, who are strong advocates of government regulation, do not seem to be engaging in much verbal interaction with their children on television and advertising, especially with respect to the persuasive intent of advertising. Conversely, mothers may not feel the need for external regulation of advertising and marketing to children, if they are highly involved in the process of socializing their children about television and advertising.

This was observed, as these mothers’ views on external regulations for child oriented marketing and advertising, seemed to be negatively related to their reported interactions with their children about television and advertising. M2 and M4, who were discussing the persuasive and/or deceptive intent of advertising with their children, strongly disagreed that the government should regulate child-oriented advertising.

This view is best exemplified in the case of M7, who, when asked whether the government should step in and regulate advertising to children, replied:

“No. I do not believe in all this talk of regulation that is going around nowadays. I was reading in the papers some time back, about a group of people who were advocating a ban on all McDonald’s advertising. I think all this is very silly. Why ban only certain types of advertising? Why not ban all advertising to children as some countries have done?”

When asked further if she was advocating a complete ban on child oriented advertising, and if she envisaged a role for the advertisers themselves, M7 replied:
“I don’t think even a complete ban will do any good, though it may help if advertisers adopt some self-regulations. I basically feel that parents who ask for such bans and regulations are trying to avoid their duties as parents. Ultimately, it is the basics of good parenting, that I should be able to inculcate such values in my child that he can survive in this increasingly consumerist world without getting unduly affected.”

Parental Concern about Toy Based Programming

The third proposition suggests that mothers in the Asia Pacific are likely to express different levels of concern about toy based programming targeted at children. The case analyses strongly support this proposition. While, toy based television programming and advertising emerged as one of the major topics of discussion in some of the interviews, both in the case of children and their mothers, there was no mention of this issue in the other interviews.

Toy based programming and commercials, as well as child-oriented film and television characters, were having an influence on some of the examined children’s lives, both in terms of creative play (sometimes violent) and consumption decisions. For example, the only advertising which C5 remembered was for toy and TV program merchandise advertising, such as Pokemon, Digimon and Dragon Ball Z. He also showed some recall of McDonald’s advertising but only because of the Batman and Superman merchandise that had been advertised as part of those particular Happy Meals.

C6 proudly showed off Ninja Warrior moves during the interview, and demonstrated a series of creative play episodes/activities that he had designed for himself and his younger brother, around scenarios from the latest James Bond movie. C5 also reported that he loved enacting the roles of popular characters while playing, such as James Bond, Ninja Warriors and Scooby Doo.

Some of the mothers also reported a high number of purchase requests for TV related toys and merchandise. M5 reported that C5 constantly made requests for the toys that he saw on television programs and commercials.

“I normally try to appease his requests for TV merchandise by giving him a cheap knockoff from the markets...the Chinese toys, you know. But on special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas, I go in for the real stuff, such as Fisher Price, etc.”

C6 also reported that he loved buying TV merchandise and toys such as Pokemon cards, Harry Potter toys and Tazzos, but attempted to explain that he could see through toy based television programs and commercials:

“I understand that the characters on TV are not real, and cannot talk and act like they do on screen.”

When asked why he was still buying those toys, he continued:

“Sometimes they do...I normally look for the button when I buy those toys. You know...the button indicates that the toy can talk.”

The above conversation shows that children may not yet have a complete understanding of toy based programming and advertising and the characters depicted through them. This is summed up strongly, when C7 is asked about his opinion on whether advertising is always truthful:

“Food commercials sometimes lie about the fat content, like maybe McDonalds...But toy commercials don’t lie...All the toys that I have bought were just the same as I saw on TV.”

The mothers did not overtly mention being concerned about toy based programming and advertising on television, but this concern clearly came through when their consumer socialization goals were discussed, as some of them primarily concentrated on mediating the influence of toy based TV programs and advertisements. M5 reported that she had very few consumer socialization goals for her son, except that:

“I try to explain that the characters and toys that he sees in programs and commercials are not real and the way they are portrayed is not very truthful.”

Similarly, M7 reported that she tried to teach her son to distinguish between fantasy and reality.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study support the need to further explore the issue of children’s purchase influence and child-oriented marketing and advertising in the Asia Pacific, as well as parental preferences for regulation. From a tentative examination of research propositions, it is felt that there are important similarities between American and Asia Pacific households. Firstly, parents in the Asia Pacific hold child-oriented marketing and advertising responsible for children’s growing purchase influence and consumerism, just as American parents do. Secondly, toy based television programs seem to be an influence on Asia Pacific children as well as a source of concern for their parents, similar to what has been reported in the United States.

Further, the Asia Pacific itself may not be a homogenous region with respect to the issue of child-oriented marketing and advertising and parental reactions to it, as suggested by the literature. Firstly, different mothers seem to be having different preferences for regulation of child-oriented marketing and advertising. Some of the mothers as interviewed in the study, are more vocal about the need for governmental and industry regulation of child-oriented marketing and advertising, while the others seem to consider that mediating the impact of child-oriented marketing and advertising is an integral part of parental responsibility towards children. Second, toy based programming seems to be a bigger concern for some mothers, compared to the others.

It was also noted that the mother’s views may differ depending on the country/culture to which they belong. For example, all the cases which illustrate issues related to toy based programming, are Australian, while only Indian mothers seem to be in favor of external regulation of child-oriented marketing and advertising. However, the presence of such cultural differences in the data can not be examined in detail, as the number of cases in each country is not enough for such an examination.

It is important to point out the limitations of these findings before suggesting their implications for public policy research in the Asia Pacific or in the respective countries (i.e. Australia and India). This study can only be described as exploratory, as it utilised data from seven household cases (based on 14 depth interviews of mothers and children, and observations of the subsequent interactions between them and other members). Further, the respondent households cannot be considered representative of either the Asia Pacific or the respective countries studied, as the study was conducted in only one city each in Australia and India.
IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The above findings provide directions for future public policy research in the Asia Pacific. Firstly, research needs to confirm parental preferences for regulation of child-oriented marketing and advertising in this region. Such research can cross-culturally examine the link between parental regulatory preferences and cultural differences in parental styles and consumer socialization tendencies (as discovered by Rose et al. 2003). However, country-specific research could also be initiated, as in the case of India, to confirm if mothers actually favor external regulation of child-oriented marketing and advertising. Since external regulation is absent today in the Indian scenario, further research could then determine a suitable regulatory framework, seeking parental opinion on the involvement of the key agencies (i.e. the government and the industry/advertisers). Secondly, public policy decision makers need to note that toy-based programming may be an area of concern, especially in certain countries of the Asia Pacific. For example, future policy research in Australia could focus on quantitatively validating whether toy-based programs are indeed an undue influence on Australian children and a cause for parental concern. This can then lead to further research on regulatory mechanisms for moderating the impact of such programming.

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ABSTRACT

Freely-elicited brand associations for McDonalds and KFC are collected from four gender-balanced groups of six, nine, twelve and twenty-one year old respondents. The associations are then classified into attributes, benefits and values by three judges, and analysed by ANOVA. It is noted that as the children mature their brand associations shift from the tangible attributes, thru the less tangible benefits to intangible values. Conclusions are then drawn about the way in which children’s brand heuristics are formed and how marketers should monitor and teach appropriate features of their brand as their target market matures cognitively.

BACKGROUND

The issue

This topic, of the way in which children learn brand information, sits squarely at the confluence of two established streams of literature; those of children’s cognitive development and marketing’s treatment of brand equity. Where these apparently disparate topics overlap is that both are fundamentally about the learning process. Much is known about the way children learn as they pass through stages of cognitive development; much is beginning to be understood about how adults learn and organise brand information to assist them in the product/service selection process.

Children are a vital target market in two senses. First, they are increasingly important in terms of their independent spending power and their influence upon their parents’ spending patterns. More importantly, however, they are also the consumers of the future and companies are eager that they learn positive things about their brand which could turn them into lifelong customers.

Brand as a heuristic

Companies seek to increase brand knowledge through heightening brand awareness and building brand image through the use of an integrated marketing approach usually spearheaded by advertisements. In view of the onslaught of persuasive messages from advertisers, people can easily enter into a state of information overload when their ability to process information is exceeded (Baron and Byrne 2000). Research has shown that consumers, when faced with some evaluative task such as choosing between several brands in a product category, tend to conserve scarce information processing capacity by using mental shortcuts (Marshall et al. 2002). People often form simple, experienced-based rules, or heuristics, to help interpret information quickly, form judgments and make complex decisions or draw inferences in a rapid and seemingly effortless manner. These cognitive heuristics have been described variously as rules people seem to apply to reduce complex inferential tasks to simple cognitive operations (Cervone and Peake 1986); as inferential rules of thumb (Allison et al. 1999); and as simple schemas or decision rules (Axom et al. 1987).

Two classes of cognitive heuristics are commonly used; “representativeness” and “availability” (Kahneman and Tversky 1973). The former are used for making judgments based on “the extent (an object) represents the essential features of its parent population” (p163). Stereotypes are a good example of this type of heuristic. The latter are used “whenever (a person) estimates frequency or probability by the ease with which instances or associations comes to mind” (p197); maybe, for instance, a style or quality association of a brand name of a frequently-noticed consumer product. This “shortcut” concept suggests that the easier it is to bring something to mind, the more important it is. The amount of information people can bring to mind also seems to matter (Schwarz et al. 1991). In the purchase situation, although associations learned through experience may be cued by a multitude of variables such as the use of particular colors, smells and illustrations, it is probable that the most frequently invoked heuristic is a brand name or logo.

A brand name can be conceptualised as a recall prompt, or an associative cue for information retrieval. A considerable amount of research has shown that brand names can help consumers recall important product information. Brand names can also serve as predictive cues about product performance (Keller 1993). In other words, a brand name can act as a cue to trigger a set of relevant associations that together form the brand heuristic (Keller 1991).

Brand Equity

Marketing practitioners and academics alike view brand equity as a platform upon which to build a competitive advantage, future earnings streams, and shareholder wealth (Keller 1998). Firms that have brands with high equity possess competitive advantage in the form of opportunities for successful extensions, resilience against competitors’ promotional pressures, and creation of barriers to competitive entry (Farquhar 1989). That marketing managers continue to realise the power of brands today is manifest in the recent efforts of companies to build strong Internet brands such as amazon.com and msn.com.

While numerous conceptualisations of brand equity have been proposed, most marketers assumes a customer-based definition which views brand equity as the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand (Keller 1998). A company’s real value lies outside the business itself, in the minds of potential buyers, as the way consumers perceive brands is a key determinant of long-term business-consumer relationships (Fournier 1998). Keller (1993) refers to consumer perceptions of brands as brand knowledge, consisting of brand awareness (in terms of brand recognition and recall) and brand image, thus forming the link between brand equity and the brand cognitive heuristic. Brand image is defined by Keller as the perceptions about a brand as reflected by the associations linked to the brand that consumers hold in memory.

Consistent with an associative network memory model (Alba et al. 1991; Collins and Loftus 1975; Raaijmakers 1981; Ratcliff 1988), brand knowledge is conceptualised as consisting of a brand node in memory to which a variety of associations are linked. The relevant dimensions that distinguish brand knowledge and affect consumer response are the awareness of the brand and the favorability, strength and uniqueness of the brand associations in consumer memory. In this research, the main focus is on the development of brand associations, which change as consumers mature.

According to Keller (1993) brand associations can be classified into three major categories of increasing scope; attributes, benefits, and attitudes. In this discussion, attributes are distinguished according to how directly they relate to product or service performance. Product-related
attributes are defined as the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function sought by consumers; hence, they relate to a product’s physical composition or a service’s requirements such as colour, shape, smell or texture. Non-product-related attributes are defined as external aspects of the product or service that relate to its purchase or consumption. The four main types of non-product-related attributes are price information, packaging or product appearance information, user imagery and usage imagery. Attributes normally relate to the more tangible aspect of the product or service.

Benefits are the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes and can be further distinguished into functional, experiential and symbolic benefits according to the underlying motivations to which they relate (Park et al. 1986). Functional benefits are the more intrinsic advantages of product or service consumption and usually correspond to the product-related attributes. Experiential benefits relate to what it feels like to use the product or service and also usually correspond to the product-related attributes. Symbolic benefits are the more extrinsic advantages of product or service consumption. They usually correspond to non-product-related attributes and relate to underlying needs. Benefits relate to attributes in that benefits are the values that consumers place on the attributes. Examples of benefits consumers might receive from using a fast food store, for instance, are speedy service, rapid satisfaction of hunger or even low depletion of cash reserves.

The final category of brand associations, and also the most complex, is brand attitude. Brand attitudes are defined as consumers’ overall evaluations of a brand (Wilkie 1986). They involve a value judgement on the part of the consumers. Brand attitudes are important because they often form the basis for consumer behaviour (e.g. brand choice and preference). In the research here we will refer to this category of association as “Values,” as we feel this distinguishes them more clearly from attributes and benefits than the more general, “attitude,” term. Again using a food outlet to give an example, it might be perceived as “cool” to be seen by friends at some venue.

The significance of the these facts about the combined brand heuristic of individuals in a target market representing brand image, or equity, is that the associations which form the heuristic are learned by each individual. Thus consumers’ brand heuristics can be developed by brand owners to optimise the value of the brand within its market space. This leads to the link to the way in which children learn about brands.

The learning link

The use of cognitive heuristics indicates some sophistication and experience in the use of language, therefore it seems to follow that the use of heuristics should develop in accordance to the cognitive ability of a developing child. Indeed, prior research suggests that this is, indeed the case (Marshall et al. 2002). Jean Piaget, one of the most influential researchers in the area of developmental psychology during the 20th century, identified four stages in his Theory of Cognitive Development, the sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and the formal operational stages.

The sensorimotor stage occurs in infancy (birth to about two years of age) when intelligence is demonstrated through motor activity without the use of symbols. Knowledge of the world is limited (but developing) because it is based on physical interactions and experiences. In the pre-operational stage, from two year old toddlers to children of about 7 years of age, intelligence is demonstrated through the use of symbols. Language use matures, and memory and imagination are developed, but thinking takes place in a non-logical, non-reversible manner–egocentric thinking predominates. The concrete operational stage occurs in late childhood to early adolescence (seven to eleven years of age) where intelligence is demonstrated through logical and systematic manipulation of symbols related to concrete objects. Concrete operational thinking develops (mental actions that are reversible) and egocentric thoughts diminish. Finally, in the formal operational stage, which starts from early adolescence (roughly eleven years of age), intelligence is demonstrated through the logical use of symbols related to abstract concepts.

As noted above, the use of cognitive heuristics seems to increase as a child consumer matures from infancy to adulthood. If this fact is juxtaposed to Keller’s categories of brand associations, it follows that—because of the different levels of complexity involved from attributes and benefits to attitudes/values—we would expect that young children in the early stages of cognitive development (i.e., those in the sensorimotor and pre-operational stages) would not be able to process and make evaluative judgments for the latter category as well as those in the concrete operational and formal operational stages. Thus we suspect that the brand associations of younger children consist mainly of attributes and benefits but will become dominated by values when they mature. Thus:

H: There will be fundamental changes in the nature of brand associations as a consumer matures (from the pre-operational to formal operational stages).

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used to trace brand associations was to record freely elicited brand associations, for McDonalds and KFC, of four groups of subjects of increasing age. These associations are then categorised and analysed. Associations are measured in industry and consumer research in a number of ways. Aaker (1991) categorises these measurements as direct methods that scale various brand perceptions, and indirect methods which infer meanings from consumer responses. Since this study is focused on understanding brand associations from the consumer’s perspective, the indirect approach was used. In order to identify the typology of brand association derived from this study, and to examine the relationship between association characteristics and age, a free association procedure was used. In the free association, subjects were asked to write down whatever came to mind when they thought of the brand in question (Chen 2001).

Sample

Following Piaget’s lead, the age groups selected were 6yr olds, 9 yr olds, 12yr olds and 21yr olds (Macoby and Jacklin 1974). Permission was sought from several schools in the location of a university, and written permission was also sought from parents before collection. Children from better-performing schools were chosen for the first three age groups while undergraduates were selected for the final age group. Care was also taken to pick schools with a history of academic excellence and children bought up in the locality, so as to approximate the intellectual potential of their undergraduate counterparts, as in the previous heuristic development research (Marshall et al. 2002). Ten respondents fitting the quota from each group were conveniently selected, yielding a total of 562 associations in total.

Procedure

Each subject was separately interviewed by a single interviewer of the same gender, with all interviews being recorded. A training session was first run for each
respondent, using the name of another fast-food restaurant. Then the subject was first asked to give his/her associations for either of the KFC or McDonald’s fast-food restaurants, the order being reversed for half the respondents. In the first part of the interview, we sought to solicit one-word associations from the subjects by using the free association technique. Subsequently, we proceeded to use photographs showing the general setting of the restaurants with the signboard and mascot and then the menu board at the counters, to aid the subjects in recalling associations that might have otherwise been neglected. When respondents look at pictures representing their associations, it becomes easier to find the right words (Supphellen 2000), especially so for younger children.

The associations were later transcribed and categorised into attributes, benefits or values by three independent judges using three 7-point Likert scales asking the extent to which the judge agreed that each association was an attribute, benefit or value.

**RESULTS**

In this section the inter-judge reliability process is first described, then the main issue addressed. This is undertaken by conducting analyses of variances where Attribute, Benefits and Value associations are each, in turn, treated as the dependent variable and their mean values tracked over the responses for males and females over the four age groups.

**Scale reliability, classification of association**

The elicited associations for McDonalds and KFC were recorded and then classified by three independent (graduate student) judges. A seven-point Likert scale was used, where “1” indicates strong disagreement and “7” strong agreement. A test of inter-judge reliability was made by correlating the 562 classification means of the three judges; all correlations are significant to p < .001. For Attributes, Judges1/2 Pearson’s coefficient of correlation = 0.47, Judges 2/3 = 0.604, and Judges 1/3 = 0.61; for Benefits, Judges 1/2 = 0.39, Judges 2/3 = 0.45, Judges 1/3 = 0.55. For Values Judges 1/2 = 0.4, Judges 2/3 = 0.43, Judges 1/3 = 0.63. Consequently, for each association the mean of the three judgment sets were calculated to offer three values only indicating the extent to which each associative item is considered an attribute, benefit and a value.

**Main analysis**

ANOVA were performed for each of the computed data sets for attributes, benefits and values. What this number represents is the extent to which the judges agree that each elicited association is an attributes, a benefits or a value. All three ANOVAs are significant, and analysis continues by grouping the results by age levels according to Tukey’s HDS and by inspecting the interaction of age and gender.

**Attributes**

The ANOVA of the combined data is significant (F = 50.47, p < .001), as are the effects for age (F = 101.08, p < .001) and gender (F = 11.7, p = .001). The interaction effect is also significant, but this is not important in this circumstance, as the trend for both males and females is clearly similar, with a decreasing declaration of attribute associations being made as the individual matures. In fact, a Tukey’s test for homogenous subsets of the combined shows three groups, one consisting of the 6yr olds, one the 9yr olds and one of the 12 and 21 yr olds combined.

**Benefits**

As for Attributes the ANOVA for Benefits is significant (F = 14.01, p < .001), as are age (F = 25.3, p < .001). However, the main effect for gender is not significant but the interaction of age and gender is (F = 9.1, p < .001) yielding the pattern seen in Figure 2. Here, once again, there is a common pattern between males and females, and the Tukey’s HSD test confirms this, with three homogenous subsets, where the 9 and 12yr olds are grouped together and the 6 and 21 yr olds form separate groups by themselves.
FIGURE 2
Mean number of females’ and males’ Benefit associations by age group

Values
The Values ANOVA is also highly significant ($F = 62.32, p < .001$). The situation is similar to that for Benefits in that the main effect of age is highly significant ($F = 130.47, p < .001$), the main effect for gender is insignificant but the interaction of age and gender is. In this case, though, the interaction again has little importance as the same pattern is in evidence (see Figure 3), where both boys/men and girls/women demonstrate an increasing level of use of value associations as they grow older. To further justify this statement it should be noted that a t-test shows that the difference between the mean of 9yr old girls and 21yr old women is significant ($\text{Value}_{9\text{yr old}} = 3.46$, $\text{Value}_{21\text{yr old}} = 4.07$, $t = 2.5$, $p = .012$).

FIGURE 3
Mean number of females’ and males’ value associations by age group

DISCUSSION

Summary
In this research we set out to show that children first learn the tangible, attribute information about brands then, as they cognitively mature, the benefit associations are added to the brand heuristic and, finally, value information becomes of paramount importance. The results offer strong support for this notion. Face validity is added when the male/female response pattern is considered. It is the girls who are the first to turn from the factual attribute information to the more nebulous benefit information, and this is reflective of what we know about the earlier cognitive maturation of girls.

Implications for Practice
The implications for practice strictly only apply to McDonalds or KFC; perhaps to other fast food operations and similar product categories. It is tempting to consider that the implications can be made wider, but the data will not support such hypothesizing. Clearly, however, attribute information is most appropriate when advertising to small children, and this gives way to benefit and value information over time. McDonalds and KFC must ensure that children learn the appropriate attribute information at
an early age, as the more connections made to the brand the stronger the brand heuristic becomes and the more likely purchase behavior becomes. Thus the first implication for practice is that brand managers marketing to children may well find it worthwhile to track the specific associations held by their young customers to ensure that they are learning the “right” material. Second, is that promotional efforts should take into account the importance of the various associations and lay stress on the various elements in advertising aimed at specific children’s age groups.

**Implications for Theory**

There are obvious theoretical implications, involving both the cognitive development of children (which is well known) and the way in which they learn about brands (which are only beginning to be understood. The more interesting questions arising from this research are still be answered, though, and are discussed below.

The data here shows children learning tangible information then moving on to learn values. However, conceptual extrapolation of the findings could lead to several conflicting ideas. The first question is whether or not all learning of brand information involves learning the concrete, attribute information first and then the intangible benefit and value aspects. This would, if true, have profound implications for advertisers about the form of advertising copy through the product life cycle. The second interesting question arises out of an alternative interpretation of the generalization of the findings reported here, that adults are perhaps are largely interested in only benefit/value information. Actually, this does seem to be the case in some of the brand equity literature. However, the data here does not shed light on these questions, which will remain as a challenge for further research.

**REFERENCES**


PUTTING BRANDS IN THE PICTURE: CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS OF THEIR FAVOURITE THINGS

David Marshall, University of Edinburgh
Robert Aitken, University of Otago

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the results from a recent and continuing exploratory research project that is concerned to find out more about children’s consumption behaviour by looking at their favourite things and the extent to which brands feature in this repertoire of precious items. The project analysed drawings made by children during a series of classroom visits by the researchers. The resulting compendium provides an interesting look at the objects and possessions that are important to children and demonstrate the extent of their early consumption experience with brands.

BACKGROUND

Marketing to children is on the increase and children’s spending has been doubling every ten years for the past three decades (McNeal 1999; Schor 2004; Linn 2004). The toy market (70:30 traditional toys: video games) was estimated to be worth $85.4 billion in 2003 split between Asia/Oceania 29%, America 41%, and Europe 30%, and Africa 1% (ITCA 2003). Although demand for traditional toys and clothing still dominates the market, there is growing demand for audiovisual, sports and furniture products usually associated with the adult market (Meegan 1993). Electronics and computer-related games are increasingly popular (Kline, Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2003; Vowles 1996), and in one Australian study levels of ownership of hi tech products were similar among adults and children (Schiffman et al. 2001). The children’s market has expanded to include products and merchandise associated with celebrity, fashion, television and film (Haynes et al. 993; Kapur 2005; Marshall and Ffelan 1999; Russell and Tyler 2005).

Socialised consumption

More liberal attitudes to parenting and consumption, increasing household affluence and more integrative consumer socialisation enable children to take a more active and involved role in family purchase behaviour (Lackman and Lanasa 1993; McNeal 1992; Moschis and Churchill 1978; Ward 1974). Moschis (1985) found that this process of socialisation provided a clear guide to children regarding the consumption of particular products and brands. Further, this consumption socialisation contributed significantly to the formation of brand preferences and consumption habits combining, as it does, parental product preference and usage with marketplace information. Children display differing degrees of interest, and influence, depending on the product category with certain categories more central to their consumption. In an Australian study parents rated their children as having most influence in takeaway food and breakfast cereal (Hill et al. 1998). Their influence varied by product category but the research found no consistent effects according to children’s age or gender, family communication or decision type, socioeconomic or marital status. In addition to family influences, peers and mass media can play an important role in developing brand preferences (Gorn and Goldberg 1977; Moschis, Moore and Stanley. 1983; O’Guinn and Schrum 1997).

Branded possessions

Children begin to establish powerful relationships with objects such as ‘soft’ toys that provide some security and comfort as well as using possessions as instruments of control and power, dictating who is, and is not, allowed to play with these favourite things (Gunter and Furnham 1998). Possessions may be important due to intrinsic qualities, for instrumental reasons, other use related factors, effort in acquiring or maintaining possession, emotional and self expressive reasons, or due to personal links to the past or symbolic interrelatedness (Dittmar 1992). Most marketing efforts towards children involve building brands that appeal to children (Lindstrom and Seybold 2003; McNeal 1999) and for some this onslaught of advertising and promotion is encouraging excessive consumption (Linn 2004; Schor 2004). Branding is believed to play an important role in the children’s market and marketers have been keen to emphasise the role of brands and branding in childhood consumption (Acuff 1997; Lindstrom and Seybold 2003; McNeal 1992). In one study over half of the children, 56%, asked for brand name items in their Christmas gift requests (Omes, Young, and Kyungseung 1994). O’Cass and Clarke (2001), in an Australian study of brand requests at Christmas, reported around 45% of requests for branded items with around one third of the letters containing no mention of brand name in the children’s letters7 to Santa highlighting the extent to which children are brand orientated in their request behaviour.

As brands continue to pervade the enchanted world of childhood there is some concern over the extent to which they have become an integral part of children’s everyday worlds (Langer 2004). There is clearly evidence that even pre-school children can recognise and even request brands (Gitez 2002, Haynes et al. 1993; John 1999). As John notes (1999: p 192) ‘These developments in brand awareness foster a greater understanding of brands and product categories. Children begin to discern similarities and differences among brands, learning the structural aspects of how brands are positioned within a product category. Children also learn about product categories themselves, developing a greater understanding of how product types are grouped together and distinguished from one another. We refer to this type of knowledge about product categories and brands as structural knowledge. Young consumers also begin to understand the symbolic meaning and status accorded to certain types of products and brand names. We refer to this type of knowledge as symbolic knowledge’.

Pre-school children can recall advertised brands especially those names associated with colours, pictures, or cartoon characters (Macklin 1996). Brand awareness and image are two important components of brand knowledge and believed to be key elements in the success of brands (Keller 1993). Other studies show high levels of brand recognition and recall among 4-11 year olds (Ross and Harradine 2002; Brennan 2005). One question is what meanings do these brands carry for the children and are they active in the construction of those meanings or simply succumb to the pressure of the companies promoting their brands (Langer 2004)?

Chaplin and John (2005) look at how children use brands to create identities and construct self concepts as

7 In this study the letters were categorized according to whether there were single, multiple or no brand requests. There was no indication of what proportion of total requested items were for brands.
they move from concrete, (familiarity and ownership), to abstract brand associations (personalities, user stereotypes, reference group influence). They map out this relationship between possessions and self concept highlighting the developmental aspects. Possessions play a greater role in defining self in children over 8 years old (Dixon and Street 1975). By middle childhood research has shown children are able to name multiple brands from cereals, snacks, and toy categories, and recognise that brands can cover multiple categories (Foxman, Tansuhaj and Ekstrom; 1989; Hite and Hite 1995; McNeal 1992; Omes et. al.1994; Rossiter 1976; Rubin 1974; Ward, Wackman and Wartella; 1977). Yet while the importance of brands has been shown among adolescents the role of brands for younger children is less clear. Ji (2002), looking at the connections children form with brands, found children developed different relationships with a variety of brands embedded within their social environment. A key criterion in this research was the child’s knowledge of the brand name and their ability to recall the brand name as a means to determine that they had established a relationship with the brand.

**Possessions and self**

The individual’s identification with ‘things’ and material objects can help to establish self-not self boundaries in adult consumers (Belk 1987). When asked to identify favourite things it is assumed that those items which individuals list are more central to the self and this has been shown to differ across gender and culture (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). Moreover, the attachments also vary over time and the development of the individual, reflecting individuation, i.e., differentiation of self from others and integration, i.e., integration of self with others (Schultz et al. 1989; Myers 1985). How individuals think, feel and behave towards objects reflects their attachment and part of the challenge is in understanding what brands mean to consumers and how their use relates to identity formation (Elliot and Wattanasuwan 1998). But there has been much less work looking at this in relation to children (Elliot and Leonard 2004; Phoenix 2005). Moreover, much of the work on how children understand and interpret brands, particularly in relation to consumption symbolism, has been taken from a developmentalist perspective (Belk, Bahn and Mayer;1982; Belk et al. 1984, Achenreiner and John 2003). But what is the nature of children’s attachment to goods and what role, if any, do brands play in their everyday lives; or in constructing identities in an increasingly material world? An initial step in identifying the presence and significance of brands in the consumption experiences of young children was undertaken with two New Zealand primary schools.

**METHOD**

In this research we asked children to draw their favourite possessions and then analysed the pictures for brand references in what is a more ‘natural’ and, presumably, embedded set of associations. This was a convenience sample selected through personal contacts with parents who had children at two Dunedin schools. Permission to talk to the children was granted by the school principals who approved this with the classroom teachers and parents. Ethical permission was approved by the University of Otago, New Zealand.

The study concentrated on pre-adolescent children aged between 8 and 11. This age group have exposure to multiple brands and often ask for products by brand name (Achenreiner and John 2003; John 1999; Belk et al. 1984). After discussion with the teachers at each school the classes were split into separate groups for the research sessions. These comprised two with Year 4 children (aged 7 and 8 years) and two with Year 6 children (aged 10 and 11 years). In line with other research practice, the majority of the groups comprised separate groups of boys and girls (Gubler and Berry 1993). The sessions were conducted by the two authors in May, 2005 in the regular classrooms of the children to keep the situation as normal and familiar as possible. Each session lasted approximately thirty minutes.

A total of 84 children participated in the sessions, with a mode of eleven children and a maximum of fifteen children in any one group. The Year 4 group consisted of 34 children and the Year 6 group 50 children. The gender split was 62% boys and 48% girls. The classroom teacher attended for part of the session in an informal and observational role. Children were asked to think about their favourite possessions and then to draw them. It was made clear that accuracy of detail and drawing ability were not an issue. What was important was to select from all the things that they ‘treasured’ a maximum of four that they would draw. Drawing was used as the medium of representation in accordance with conventional practice in psychology (DiLeo 1973; Golomb 1992; Thomas and Silk 1990; Zaltman 1997), education (Matthews 1999), media research (Gauntlett 2004; Lealand 2006) and, increasingly, consumer behaviour (McNeal 1992; McNeal and Ji 2003; Macklin 1996; Rossiter 1976). Drawings can provide rich data that is more reflective and recognises the creative process in individuals not always captured by other more conventional research methods (Gauntlett 2004; Pridmore and Landsdown 1997).

Drawing is seen by children as ‘ordinary’, not requiring any specialised skill, or personal artistic achievement and a natural part of their socialisation (Christensen and James 2000; Zaltman 1997). For children of this age it is also a familiar and rule free activity, that allows them to draw what they value (Dennis 1966). Some have expressed caution over using free drawing but the approach is appropriate where children are happy to talk about the drawings they have produced (Veale 2005). In addition, drawings help create a relaxed atmosphere and provide an alternative way to gain insights into children’s perspectives on the research topic, particularly where these are used as focus group stimulus (Yuen 2004). The justification for using drawing as a way of exploring children’s consumption experiences is, perhaps, best summed up by McNeal and Ji (2003):

> The rich information, both verbal and visual elicited from children’s memory by the drawing technique... suggests that the drawing method is a valid means through which consumer researchers can tap into young consumers’ minds.

(McNeal and Ji 2003)

The exercise began with the researchers introducing the idea of favourite possessions. The children were asked to describe any items that they brought to school with them that were not directly related to school or schoolwork. These items were discussed to provide an introduction to and shared context for an understanding of the notion of ‘special’. In addition to providing a self-directed and experiential element to the research context, it also produced an amusing range of items that settled and relaxed the children. Lucky charms, strangely fashioned ‘blu tack’ models and baby-teeth that were missed by the tooth fairy, provided some interesting opportunities for brief Sawyeresque stories. The
discussion then developed to include possessions from home. The children were asked to imagine a scenario where they had a limited amount of time to gather together up to four of their most prized possessions. It was made clear that this should only include ‘things’ and not people (to avoid the difficulties of decisions such as, “What about Granny?”). The children were also told to confine their collection to easily transportable items so that items of furniture, such as bunk beds and desks, would not be included.

It was decided at this stage not to share examples between the children but to end the context-setting exercise with examples of the researcher’s special possessions. This enabled the researcher to select items that, while providing a certain degree of guidance to the children, also avoided the tendency for convergent and emulative behaviour. It was noted in the earlier discussion that a number of children were quick to claim similar contents in their school bags or pockets as each example of a special possession was described. Children were then asked to think about the four items that they treasured most and to draw them. A limit of four drawings was set to minimise fatigue and maintain interest levels, although some of the children drew more than four items. Having less space for each drawing also encouraged less attention to detail. The researcher moved around the room chatting to individuals about their drawings. At the end of the session the children were asked to write down the source of their possessions and then there was a ‘show and tell’ session to conclude the project. These verbal accounts were not recorded but children were encouraged to write on their drawings to help explain what they had drawn. This typically took the form of labels or single names in order to provide some ‘words’ to support the visuals (Veale 2005).

FINDINGS

The drawing exercise proved a valuable research tool and all of the children participated in the exercise drawing their favourite things and recalling items and artefacts that they considered to be ‘special’ to them. The exercise generated over 400 images of favourite items and covered a range of product categories dominated by electronics, sports and hobbies, pets, toys, and clothing. The following is a summary of the main findings emerging from the analysis of the drawings. This involved looking at each of the drawings and determining both the nature of the products presented, particularly where brands were indicated in the pictures, and identifying themes and issues that emerged from the data. Children had also annotated and written notes on the drawings, mainly on the back of their work helping with the analysis and interpretation. As with any such drawing much of the interpretation relies on the individual accounts of the pictures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>(%) n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>(29.5%) 122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS1 or 2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaming machine games</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-Box</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereo/ Radio/ Speakers</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVD Player</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Phone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other gaming machines</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD's/ DVD</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer/ Laptop</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports and Hobbies</td>
<td>(18.8%) 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trophy's</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport &amp; Sports Equipment</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical instruments</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and magazines</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorbike/ Bike</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo Albums</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets</td>
<td>(16.9%) 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys &amp; Decorations</td>
<td>(11.8%) 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Toys</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows that electronic equipment was the largest product category represented in the favourite things drawings. Games consoles alone accounted for around 10% of all the drawings, followed by television at 7%. Sports and hobbies were the second most popular product category with the majority of drawings being sports related products. Pets proved popular with the children and arguably represent the largest single possessions category, with a large proportion of the drawings depicting pet dogs, cats, and goldfish. Toys accounted for 11.8%, with soft toys representing around 7% of the illustrations. Clothing and furniture each accounted for around 6% of the items with a number of children drawing their bed in the exercise. Other categories included drawings relating to money, cars and food and drink items.

In the drawings we identified about forty different brand names across the groups. The electronics category was dominated by PS2 (Sony) and X-Box (Microsoft) although there was no specific reference to the parent company. Several games console games were drawn including Tony Hawkes, Crash Bandicoot, Motocross Mania, Spyro the Dragon, Tekken (all playstation games). Phillips and Sky were cited in relation to television whereas Sony was named in relation to compact discs (CD). Various artists, such as Green Day, and 50 cents, were cited. Although pets are not specifically branded some of the children identified the breed of their dog and a number wrote down the name of their pet. A number of toy brands were specified including Lego, Warhammer, Duelmaster, Empire Earth and licensed items from Star Wars and The Incredibles. Bratz dolls were drawn along with ‘Pooh’ bear and Noddy characters. No specific brand of furniture was identified but Elementz and Billabong were referred to in the drawings of favourite clothes. Both MacDonald’s and KFC were listed as favourite items, in the case of the former the golden arches featured in the drawing. References were made to Mazda and Ford cars. In a separate exercise where the children drew their rooms Ford duvet covers and various books – The Kazillion Wish, Lord of the Rings, Santa Paws, Princess Diary, Famous Five and Secret Seven – were included in the drawings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td>(6.3%)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bean Bag/ Couch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing and Accessories</td>
<td>(5.7%)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessories/ Jewellery</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Drink</td>
<td>(3.1%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>(2.4%)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>(1.2%)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>(3.9%)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>414</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 1
FAVORITE PRODUCTS – GIRL AGED 10.
Despite the reference to some brand names there was a complete absence of any reference to brands in a number of drawings produced by the children (Figure 1). For example, in figure 1, six product categories are represented in the drawing including a soft toy, pets (two), a keyboard and clothes. In addition, money is drawn as a favourite thing, and as something that allows the child to acquire some of these other favourite things. The drawings of food show pizza as a favourite food item and emphasise the breadth of interpretation and imagination of favourite things.

Young children’s automatic and natural association of brands with particular possessions was noticeable in one major product category: computer game consoles. Both Play Station 2 and X Box game consoles featured in a number of drawings along with specific games such as Crash Bandicoots, Spyro and Tekken. Although the game consoles are branded, respectively, by Sony and Microsoft, the parent brands were subsumed under their more ‘generic’ titles (Figure 2). The drawings reveal significant detail - the inclusion of two control pads with individual buttons identified, connecting leads and the brand logo on the console. Children referred to Play Station 2 and X Box, for example, as if these were the names of the product category itself, rather than a particular choice from a range of competing options. This might be a reflection of limited advertising awareness and its potential for brand consolidation is an interesting issue for marketers. In contrast to the work of Hite and Hite (1995), this could be evidence that children are unable to understand the concept of brand extension and cannot associate brand names from different product categories. This is an interesting reflection on the salience of brands and the assimilatory nature of concepts such as reputation, status and quality. Transfer of symbolic and associational values, key components of brand promotion, were not assimilated by these children in accordance with conventional expectations. However, a number of the children talked about the differences between the games consoles and the merits of one over the other, but in relation to concrete aspects as opposed to symbolic differences or personalities.

What is more likely, however, is the effect of the salience of Play Station 2 and X Box as market leaders that are seen as synonymous with the product in the same way that Hoover is both a product and a domestic function. This provides support for the idea that, especially for younger children, brand associations are concrete as opposed to abstract (Chaplin and John 2005). The authors would also agree that for younger children there is less evidence of them using brands for anything other than the intrinsic properties or qualities of the product and there was limited discussion or comment on what the brands meant for the children, beyond being fun to play. The use of drawings to reveal explicit brand references is also in keeping with the notion that younger children rely more heavily on brand images and symbols as product attributes (Ward, Wackman and Wartella 1977). Furthermore, the reference to games consoles was predominantly made by boys, reflecting the gender bias in gaming towards males (Kline et al. 2003).
Another category that featured specific brands was toys. Character motifs such as Bratz dolls (Figure 3), exclusively among the girl’s drawings, and Pooh bears featured prominently. Other merchandised products such as Star Wars figures and Incredibles puzzles were also mentioned. In contrast to the synonymous identification of brand and product in relation to Play Station and X-Box, these children made a distinction between particular branded products and their more generic counterparts. That is, they mentioned ‘dolls’ and Bratz dolls, and ‘teddy bears’ and Pooh bears. Again, the detail is in the drawings, revealing the children’s intricate knowledge of the dolls and the differences between the character versions available in the range.

By far the largest single category of favourite possessions was pets, with a large number of children including more than one in their selections. Many of these pets were named in the drawing exercise and described as ‘friends’. The largest category of pets was dogs. An interesting diversion prompted by this research, is the notion of breeds of dogs as brands. With the exception of a single reference to a ‘poodle’ in the drawings, all other descriptions were for non-specific breeds. However, during the post-drawing discussion certain breeds of dog were identified. Labradors, for example, were described as friendly, loyal and family-friendly. In contrast, pit-bull terriers were associated with security, protection and aggression. Such branded associations were commonly shared and strongly agreed.

Although this category of ‘possessions’ is not branded, the source of their acquisition is. Places such as The Pet Warehouse and the SPCA were identified. Similarly a number of children were specific in the sources of other possessions. For example, certain discount shops, such as the $2 Shop, were mentioned as were particular second-hand outlets. This is an interesting addition to the socialisation of consumption research and reveals an exposure to, and awareness of, retail outlets as branded arenas of consumption where children can acquire products. This may reflect the children’s exposure to retail outlets on accompanied and unaccompanied shopping trips. Much of the work in this area focuses on aspects of socialisation such as family decision-making, brand and product preferences and usage behaviours but there is little account of the socialisation of consumption location preferences. The preference for particular brands is complemented, for some, with a preference for certain acquisition sources and retail brands. Such association of products and brands with particular retail sources has interesting implications for retail positioning and brand promotion.

CONCLUSIONS

This drawing exercise revealed somewhat limited reference to brands among young New Zealand school children aged between 8 and 11, perhaps allaying some of the concerns about the branding of childhood (Langer 2004). Although branded goods were evident in the children’s preferences, in the main, their drawings made reference to generic categories of toys and included electrical goods, game consoles and stereos, as well as clothes and pets in their repertoire of favourite things. In the case of games consoles Playstation 2 and X-Box were synonymous with the product categories although there was no specific reference to either Sony or Microsoft brand. This may relate, in part, to the relatively limited competition in the sector and the promotion of specific product features of each console. It is clear that the boys relate to the specific console brand name but in doing so this also ties them into certain games and in turn may be related as much to what their friends own and play with than any ‘brand loyalty’. Boys talked most about games and games consoles, reflecting the gender bias in this category (Kline et al. 2003; Seiter 1993). Other research reports no gender differences in brand requests (O’Cass and Clarke 2001) but in this study more of the boys referred to brands in their drawings. This may be related, in part, to the gender bias towards the more heavily branded games consoles in their drawings but as a group they referred to a broader range of brand names.

References to brands were more prevalent in the drawings of older children than for younger ones and particularly strong in relation to games and toys, lending some support to the idea that brands become more
important as children get older (Caplin and John 2003; Dixon and Street 1975). Interestingly, while clothing featured in the drawing exercise for both age groups references to brands were somewhat. Although some of the older boys referred to certain brands of skateboard and surf clothing.

However, the findings provide limited evidence of brands being used as part of an individuation process as an extension of the self. Indeed, the idea of self appears to be expressed through the use of or ownership of certain products, rather than certain brands. Although this is not unexpected, given the nature of the research context, it does raise the question of the salience of brands in the mind’s eye of the beholders. The merits of different brands are more likely to be discussed in terms of what the product can do, or its play value, rather than in relation to any notion of self image. Perhaps somewhat surprising, was the reference to retail brands as children identified certain retail outlets in both their discussion and drawings. These represent an important part of their exposure to brands and an aspect of brand exposure that warrants further investigation.

Overall the attachment, for this group of children, was to products rather than to brands, reiterating the idea that the self-brand connection may be somewhat limited. When not asked to ‘talk’ specifically about brands the children tended to draw products that they owned rather than brands, reflecting structural rather than symbolic aspects of their favourite things. This may reflect the fact that some of the items they drew, for example pets, were not ‘branded’. Their attachment to certain products, and any group integration, may derive from familiarity and ownership of certain items, as much as it does from marketing (Paul 2002). Indeed, if brand marketing and advertising are so persuasive we might ask why brands were not more prominent in their drawings. This does not constitute a ‘rejection’ of brands, indeed the same children talked about brands in a related exercise, but it indicates that their reference point to these possessions in not necessarily framed in terms of the brand.

This research has been limited to one approach and a small sample of children from a specific region. Further research into the role of brands in the everyday lives of young consumers might explore the unprompted recall of brands in a more representative sample of young children, investigate what brands they actually own and how they feel about these brands in terms of their attachment and identity. Brands clearly play a different role in the lives of these young consumers and this research questions the centrality of brands in their everyday lives. The question raised in this research is whether brands are simply incidental to the product for these young consumers and the real value lies in both intrinsic qualities of the product and its integrative value. There seems little question over their materialism and willingness to become consumers but there are questions about children’s access to material goods and their influence on what they (can) consume. Finally, the drawing exercise provides a rich data source and an interesting approach to researching children’s preferences offering a mechanism around which to elicit further discussion and debate surrounding how children relate to and engage with brands.

*For example, a number of the boys drew motorbikes and it emerged that several of the boys did actually own small motorbikes which they rode at the weekend under parental supervision. But in terms of inclusion most identified with the product rather than the specific brand.

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ABSTRACT
This paper aims to replicate and build on the research study by Signorielli and Staples (1997) which tested the two hypothesis: “(1) there is a positive relation between watching television and expressing preferences for more unhealthy foods and (2) there is a positive relation between watching television and conceptions about which foods are unhealthy.” Therefore the purpose of the study was to investigate whether a correlation exists between the duration of television watched and the (1) knowledge of relatively healthy or unhealthy products, (2) criteria given for the choice of products, (3) the hypothetical choice of healthy or unhealthy products and (4) actual product choice.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY
Childhood obesity is an increasing problem in all developed countries (Guillaume et al 2002 cited in Caroli 2004; Lustig 2001) and the World Health Organisation has gone as far as declaring obesity a public health epidemic (Atkinson and Nitzke 2001). Obesity is also perceived as an emerging issue in developing countries (WHO International Obesity Task Force 1997, cited in Rossner 1998). Greger and Edwin (2001) found that the number of overweight children in America has doubled within the last 30 years. Styn (2001) estimated that 22% of children in the US are overweight (as defined by a body mass index (BMI) of greater than the 85th percentile, and that 11% of children are obese (greater than the 95th percentile). Chinn and Rona (2001) found that the number of overweight children in England increased by 100 to 180% over the 10 years to 1994. Rudolf et al (2001) estimated that the incidence of obesity in UK children ranged from 6% in preschool children to 17% at age 15.

Approximately 80% of obese children become obese adults, and their morbidity and mortality are worse than if the obesity developed in adulthood (Freedman et al 2001; Strauss 2002). However, physical effects of obesity are already present in young children, with hypertension, high cholesterol levels, hyperinsulinism, Type II diabetes, gallstones, hepatitis, sleep apnoea, liver disease and intracranial pressure, all recorded in the medical literature (Strauss 2002). Long-term health risks of obesity include the increased incidence of Type II diabetes, hypertension, certain types of cancers, osteoarthritis and cardiac disease (Manson and Bassuk 2003). In addition, these children may suffer teasing, discrimination, victimisation and psychosocial problems (Rossner 1998; Miller et al 2003).

Unfortunately, the causes of the increasing incidence of obesity are less clearcut. Genetic factors have been discounted since the trend has been too rapid for genetic change to occur over this time period (Miller et al 2003; Crawford 2002). Environmental factors are therefore widely seen as being responsible for the epidemic, however there is little agreement regarding and extent played by the individual factors (Seidors 2004). The most commonly cited causes are an increasingly sedentary lifestyle (e.g. Strauss 2002), decreasing food prices (Mikta 2003 in Seiders 2004), food industry marketing practices such as production of energy dense product formulations, increased unit size, (non) disclosure of nutritional information, advertising and promotional practices (Seiders 2004) and increased incidence of television viewing (Karet 2004; Francis et al 2003; Strauss 2002; Ebbeling 2002; Kaur 2003). Indeed television comes under scrutiny for four different reasons. Firstly, the nonactive nature of time spent watching television, that is the ‘couch potato’ syndrome (Epstein et al 2000); secondly, the increased likelihood of snacking whilst watching television (Francis et al 2003; Halford 2004); thirdly, the portrayal of food, eating and body size and shape within the programs and finally advertising per se. This research focuses on the last factor, investigating the impact of television advertising on childhood obesity.

TV Advertising
Television is now an integral component of the life of most children in developed countries (Karet 2004) with Signorielli and Staples (1997) stating that an average child in the US spends more time watching television than any other activity except sleeping. Bryd-Bredbenner and Grasso (1999) calculated that an average person will spend 10 years of his or her life watching television by the time they are 75 years old. This would represent 2.6 million 30 second television commercials or 40,000 commercials per year (Signorielli and Staples 1997). Signorielli and Staples (1997) therefore postulate that children learn acceptable standards of behaviour from television. Several studies have conducted content analyses of food advertisements and found that the products advertised did not reflect dietary guidelines with Bryd-Bredbenner and Grasso (1999) stating that "Foods advertised during prime time...(were) calorie laden, fatty, salty, sweet and low in fiber." Similarly, a New Zealand study found that 63% of advertisements monitored were for foods high in fat and sugar (Wilson et al 1999). An Australian study found that the major categories of foods advertised were fast food outlets (25%) and (22%) (Hall and Radimer 1997). A Canadian study concluded that prime time commercials emphasise low nutrient beverages, snacks and candy (Osbye 1993). The contradiction between these food types and the idealised body images presented in both the advertisements and the programs has not yet been studied.

The role of television advertising as a cause of obesity is a fiercely debated topic (e.g. Clarke 2003; Young 2003; Lvovich 2003) with a significant number of review and discussion articles published (e.g. Caroli 2004; Seiders 2004; Hunter 2002; Brown and Witherspoon 2002; Gamble and Cotugna 1999). The entire spectrum of opinion regarding causality is represented with Dickinson and Leader (1997) stating that "in fact a simple causal relationship between television advertising and young people's diets cannot be established" (p.1) and conversely Robinson (2000) stating that "the results of this randomised controlled trial provide evidence that television viewing is a cause of increased body fatness and that reducing television viewing is a promising strategy for preventing childhood obesity" (p.1017).

However relatively few studies have been conducted which empirically test the hypothesis that television viewing causes obesity. Frequently cited landmark studies were conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Goldberg et al (1978) and Gorn and Goldberg (1982) who found that children who were exposed to commercials for highly sugared products opted for more advertised and nonadvertised sugar foods when offered a choice. More
recently, Eagle et al (2004) questioned parents of primary school age children regarding their own knowledge of nutrition issues, their perceptions regarding the impact of advertising on the children and their opinions regarding their children's perceptions of a balanced diet and the amount of television the children watched.

This study found that parents did not consider that advertising was “an overwhelming influence on children in terms of their wanting products”. However this study relied completely on perceptions of parents and did not ask for purchase or consumption history, nor did it research children directly. Signorielli and Staples (1997) questioned 427 children about the amount of television they viewed and their knowledge of healthy foods and gave them a hypothetical choice between six healthy and unhealthy food pairs. It was found that there was a positive relationship between watching television and expressing preferences for more unhealthy foods, and also between watching television and their knowledge of healthy and unhealthy foods. Francis et al (2003) claimed that “the relationship between television viewing and weight status is well established.” And in an empirical study searching for the mediators of this relationship, using 24-hour dietary recall, they found that girls who watched more television consumed more snacks in front of the television. Whilst these studies identified various correlations, evidence of causality is not possible given the methodology of the studies.

Hypotheses

Nutrition Knowledge: The conclusion that there is little association between nutrition knowledge and food intake (Axelson et al, 1984; Shepherd and Stockley, 1987; Shepherd and Towler, 1992; Stafleu et al 1996) has been challenged by Wardle, Parmenter and Waller (2000) who claim that the measures used for the determination of nutritional knowledge have been flawed. Whilst most studies investigating the relation between nutritional knowledge and food intake have been conducted with adults, four studies (Douglas and Douglas, 1984; Osler and Hansen, 1993; Pirouznia, 2001 and Trexler and Sargent, 1993) have found positive relationships between nutritional knowledge and healthy food choice in children or adolescents. Berg et al (2002) note that “in most of these studies nutrition knowledge was assessed with variables representing aspects of knowledge that did not necessarily correspond with the investigated dietary behaviour. None of these studies examined the knowledge required to make a particular food choice in relation to consumption of that food.” Berg et al (2002) therefore studied the relationship between food choices and knowledge of fat and fibre in the same products and found that knowledge did correlate with increased choice of healthy products.

The only study identified to date which investigates the relationship between duration of television watched and children's conception of nutrition is Signorielli and Staples (1997). This research listed six pairs of foods (one healthy and one relatively unhealthy) and asked which one of each pair was healthier and which one of each pair the child would choose to eat. These answers were combined into two additive indices named ‘healthy food index’ and ‘eating index’ respectively. These indices were correlated with the amount of television viewed per day and statistically significant relationships were found between an increased duration of television watching and a belief that the unhealthy food is the healthier one and between watching an increased amount of television and expressing preferences for the relatively unhealthy foods. Replicating Signorielli and Staples (1997), the following hypothesis is proposed.

H 1: Children who watch more television will have a lower knowledge of nutrition.

Criteria for choice: No studies were found which investigated children's stated criteria for the choice of a snack food. However preliminary discussions with children and an understanding of marketers’ advertising objectives led to the next hypothesis.

H 2: Children who watch more television will be more likely to give ‘have seen the television advertisement’ as a criterion for snack food choice than those who watch less television.

Hypothetical Choice: Again, following Signorielli and Staples (1997), an hypothesis regarding hypothetical choice is proposed. The same six pairs of foods as given for the knowledge question are used, thus addressing Berg et al’s (2002) point regarding the importance of matching foods used for the knowledge and consumption choice questions.

H 3: Children who watch more television will be more likely to choose the relatively unhealthy option when offered a hypothetical choice.

Actual Choice: Halford et al (2003) is one of the few studies since Gorn and Goldberg (1982) to actually offer children a choice of snack foods in a study regarding the effect of television advertising. Using results from 42 children, they found that the consumption of all snack foods offered increased after advertisements were shown to the children, with the exception of low-fat savoury snacks.

H 4a: Children who watch more television will be more likely to choose an advertised snack food rather than a non-advertised snack or a piece of fruit.

H 4b: Children who watch more television will be more likely to choose the relatively unhealthy option when offered an actual choice.

METHOD

Subjects: The 67 participants in this research study were school children aged between 7 and 12. This age group was chosen because they were considered mature enough to coherently express their beliefs and opinions and to interact effectively with the interviewer. This age group also represents a significant part of the target segment for snack food marketers. Roedder John (1999) describes this age group as being in the analytic stage of consumer socialization where children are capable of distinguishing advertisements from programs, understand that advertisements may contain bias and deception and have increasing brand awareness, especially for child relevant product categories.

Two public primary schools in Sydney, Australia were approached regarding involvement in the study and both agreed to participate. Thirty-one school students were from an inner-city school of mixed socio-economic background and 36 were from a school in an area of upper middle sociodemographic background. Both institutions were chosen as a convenience sample and it is recognised that they are not representative of the broader population. In both cases, one class from each of the four grades was randomly chosen by the school principal and information sheets and consent forms were sent home with every child in these four classes. Every child who returned a consent form signed by both the parent and child was included in the research. The return rate was 42% (31/73) for one school and 33% (36/109) for the second, making an overall
return rate of 37%. Thus the respondents self-selected. 30 (44.8%) of the respondents were male, and the distribution in terms of age was 21 (31.3%) 7-8 years old, 30 (44.8%) 9-10 years old and 16 (23.9%) 11-12 years old.

Procedure
Each child was interviewed by one of the researchers or one of the research assistants, using a structured questionnaire format. Each interview was of 15 to 20 minutes duration, and all were conducted at the school in a quiet, private room. No names or identifying information were required from the subjects. Firstly the children were asked to indicate for how long during the past week they watched TV. A television guide was used to enable them to describe when and for how long they watched television. The hours per week were later summed and groupings of 0 to less than 10 hours per week, 10 to less than 20 hours per week and 20 or more hours per week were used for the analyses. Then the two questions from Signorielli and Staples (1997) regarding knowledge and preference concerning the 6 pairs of relatively healthy and unhealthy foods were asked. Only minor modifications were made to these questions in order to use language familiar to Australian children. For example, ‘fizzy drink’ replaced ‘soda’ and ‘chocolate bar’ replaced ‘chocolate candy bar’. The children were then given a list of criteria for snack food choice which had been developed from prior qualitative research and asked to choose the top three reasons, in priority order. Finally each child was then offered a snack by the researcher from a choice of eight snack foods. These included the high, medium and low advertised snacks as well as unadvertised healthy alternatives. The child was given the snack to eat later.

RESULTS
Nutrition Knowledge: The knowledge of nutrition measure was the total of the number of correct answers given to the six pairs of healthy/relatively unhealthy foods. Table 1 presents the frequency distribution and as can be seen, the majority of the children were extremely knowledgeable with 95.5 % achieving scores of 5/6 (17.9 %) and 6/6 (77.6%). Whilst this is laudable in terms of health awareness, it presented problems for this study in that there was not a sufficient range of answers to test associations. The cross tabulation calculations could not be used since there were too few numbers in several of the cells. Therefore H1 could not be tested.

TABLE 1
Number of Correct Answers re Healthy Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total correct</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criteria for Choice. The three answers to the question "when you choose a snack food, do you choose it because........?" are included in table 2 and the correlations between the amount of television viewed and the reason for choice are given in table 3. Whilst it is acknowledged that different food advertisements appear at different frequencies at certain times of the day (for example adult versus child programming hours), scheduling data regarding the incidence of each type of food advertisement was not available, and therefore analysis of television watching habits by time of day was not valuable. Therefore only the total amount of television viewed was included in the analyses. Eleven children gave only two criteria for choice, and seven gave only one. The most frequent reasons for choice were ‘like the taste’ (92.5%), ‘it’s healthy’ (49.3%), ‘friends eat it’ (25.4%) and ‘it’s cheap’ (23.9%). 15 children (22.4%) gave ‘seen the advertisement’ as a reason for choice.

TABLE 2
Three Reasons for Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for choice</th>
<th>One of the three reasons for choice</th>
<th>One of the three reasons for choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like the taste</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen the advertise</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends eat it</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

279
The only reasons with a significant correlation with duration of television watched are ‘have seen the advertisement’ (\( p = 0.000 \)), and ‘friends eat it’ (\( p = 0.041 \)). Thus H2 is accepted.

**TABLE 3**

Reasons for choice by amount of TV watched.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>0 -&lt; 10 hours TV</th>
<th>10 -&lt; 20 hours TV</th>
<th>20 hours and above TV</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like the taste</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s healthy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s filling</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen the advertisement***</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No choice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s cheap</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends eat it*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like the packaging</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - P-Value less than 0.05  
** - P-Value less than 0.01  
*** - P-Value less than 0.001

Hypothetical Choice. The number of healthy products chosen from the six pairs of foods is given in table 4. The children were asked “if you could eat one of these two foods, which would you prefer?” therefore the choice was a hypothetical one. 38 (57 %) of the children chose only three or less of the healthy options, and only five (7%) chose all six of the healthy options. No correlation with hours of television watched was apparent and therefore hypothesis 3 is rejected.

**TABLE 4**

Number of Hypothetical Healthy Choices by Hours of TV watched

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of healthy choices</th>
<th>0 -&lt; 10 hours TV</th>
<th>10 -&lt; 20 hours TV</th>
<th>20 hours and above TV</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actual Choice. Cross tabulations between the amount of television viewed and the actual choice of product classified by advertising spend are presented in Table 5. No statistically significant correlation was found and thus H4a is rejected.

**TABLE 5**

Product chosen by advertising category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertising Category chosen</th>
<th>0 -&lt; 10 hours TV</th>
<th>10 -&lt; 20 hours TV</th>
<th>20 hours and above TV</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly advertised</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium advertised</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low advertised</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not advertised/Fruit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross tabulations between the amount of television viewed and the actual choice of product classified by healthy/relatively unhealthy are presented in Table 6. Similarly to the hypothetical product choice, when offered an actual choice (“choose one of these eight products and we will give it to you to eat later”), 83% of the children chose the relatively unhealthy products. Only eleven (17 %) chose the relatively healthy fruit or dried fruit options. No statistically significant correlation was found between the amount of television viewed and the actual choice of healthy or relatively unhealthy product and thus H4b is also rejected.
DISCUSSION

With respect to the hypothetical choice, it was impossible to statistically analyse the correlation with nutritional knowledge due to the narrow spread of results where 95.5% of the responses regarding knowledge were in two of the seven categories. However, given that 95.5% of the children achieved a score of five or six from the six questions, it is apparent that either the children have a very high understanding of nutritional facts, or that the questions were too basic. But despite this, 57% of these children chose only three or less healthy options when presented with the same list of six pairs of products. When asked why they opted for their particular choices, the answers were most commonly around preference for the taste of that product. Other replies included that they didn't like the taste of the relatively healthy options and that they chose the bigger product. This finding is repeated in the analysis of actual choice where 83% of children chose the relatively unhealthy snack food products compared to the healthy options of fresh or dried fruit. They do know what is healthy, they just do not choose to eat it. This finding confirms previous research and is particularly concerning given the time and resources being expended by governments with the objective of teaching children the benefits of healthy eating.

‘It’s healthy’ was the second most common reason for choice in the general scenario, however given that this result was not replicated in the reasons for choice given in the specific hypothetical or actual scenarios, it is possible that this result was affected by the prior question on nutritional knowledge. Future research should rotate the question. The finding that there was a significant correlation between the reason for choosing a snack food is "have seen the advertisement" and the amount of television viewed is of interest since it however confirms that children are aware of advertisements for snack foods, and do consider them when choosing a snack food. However when offered a hypothetical or an actual choice, no correlation between the choice of product and amount of television viewed was found. If this finding is supported in future studies, it will lend credence to the arguments used by manufacturers of snack foods that advertising does not affect children’s choice of healthy or non healthy products. However significant methodological limitations exist in this study and it is considered premature to make such a claim based on these results.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

It is acknowledged that the major limitation of this study is derived from the convenience method of choosing the schools. This limited the sociodemographic background of the respondents and therefore further research should include children from a wider range of backgrounds. In particular, studies need to be conducted including a more balanced gender mix, children of varying ethnicities and family incomes, and from rural and remote communities. In addition, it would be of value to broaden the research to include both preprimary aged children as well as high school students. A second limitation of the methodology was that the children’s self reported recall was used for the measurement of the hours that they spent watching TV in a typical week. Whilst a published television guide was used to assist them make accurate estimates, a real time diary was not used. Thirdly, age differences are likely to be apparent regarding knowledge, however an analysis by age was not possible in this paper due to space constraints, however will be undertaken in future.

The methodology of this study could have been improved by requiring children to maintain a diary of all advertisements viewed. This would have made it possible to correlate the number of advertisements seen for a particular product with the actual choice of that product. However the practical difficulties inherent in this option were considered too daunting to implement in this study. The difficulties of researching children are well known and this study proved to be no exception. One of the key issues revolves around self selection, the only possible recruitment method acceptable to ethics committees. Overweight and obese children were underrepresented in this study compared to the general population, a fact which is not really surprising. Is an overweight or obese child likely to volunteer for a study which asks them to discuss healthy and unhealthy food?... probably not.

The study focused on television advertising. Whilst this is a high profile marketing strategy, other forms of marketing communications are becoming increasingly important, with sales promotions, product placements, viral marketing and e marketing becoming frequently integrated into the marketing campaigns for children's food. Studies of these alternate forms of marketing communications are warranted. Children may influence snack food purchase, however in most situations, the parents act as gatekeepers and actually purchase the product for the school lunches or provide the money for the purchase. Further studies of the joint decision-making inherent in many snack food purchases would therefore be of interest.

CONCLUSION

This study represents an initial investigation into the correlation between television advertising, knowledge of nutrition, criteria for choice and hypothetical and actual product choice. Whilst the limited sociodemographic range of the children makes generalizations difficult, this study does represent a contribution to the literature in that it is the first study that the authors are aware of which combines an analysis of the child’s television watched with nutritional knowledge and criteria for choice, together with hypothetical and actual product choice. As such, the research represents a valuable starting point for further investigations.

REFERENCES


CONSUMERS’ RESPONSE TO TRANSGENIC PORK: THE ROLE OF INFORMATION
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Public acceptance of biotechnology innovation is the single greatest uncertainty lying between inventing new biotechnology and its adoption in the marketplace. One way to reduce this uncertainty is to consult the public in advance to determine if they see it to be in their best interest. Without the knowledge of what the public thinks, policy makers cannot regulate with the public’s interests in mind. New types of GM foods, e.g. transgenic pork, provide opportunities to proactively learn how potential consumers react to the technologies, and how their reactions are affected by more information about the technologies.

We report on a study based on the links between risk assessment and information impacts. A representative sample of 1365 Canadians was consulted about their views concerning genetically modified pork before attempts to commercialise products based on this technology are visible to the public. Baseline data was collected that informs the commercialization decision and assesses what kind of information the public requires. The EnviroPig™ was developed to lessen environmental nutrient loading caused by high intensity pig farming operations in which large amounts of fecal phosphorous contaminate ground water. The transgenic EnviroPig™ excretes 75% less phosphorous than its conventional counterpart and has a slight feed efficiency, making the EnviroPig™ an economically viable means of achieving more environmentally sustainable agriculture.

METHODOLOGY
The sample consisted of 1365 consumers. Qualitative data were collected using individual booklets where respondents wrote answers to open-ended questions, later transcribed to text and theme-analysed using NVivo software. Quantitative data were collected using individual wireless handheld units and Resolver Ballot software. Resolver software permitted research sessions to include up to 30 respondents in a theatre-style setting. Respondents were first asked to “take a moment and describe everything that comes to mind when you hear the term transgenic pig.” Respondents indicated their free association responses in an individual booklet. The next set of questions appeared on the screen, asking respondents to rate transgenic pigs on four, 7-point attitudinal scales and a purchase intent scale using their handheld units. Additional information was provided in two stages and after each subjects again provided free association responses and attitude and intention responses. The content of information interventions was determined in pre-tests. Interventions were chosen which provided consumers with levels perceived understandable, while not overly-taxing in terms of information load.

RESULTS
Providing information increased consumer opinions about transgenic pork, most significantly after the first information intervention (attitudes rose significantly from the baseline 4.00 to 4.36, $g(507)=10.23$, $p<0.00$). This may have resulted since respondents learned at that point that the transgenic pig has meaningful environmental benefits. Also, there appear to be effects of information provision on risk reduction. Almost half of open-ended responses to the concept after the first information intervention related to phosphorous while 33% related to the environment. Phosphorous comments were 73% unfavourable while environmental mentions were 54% positive.
CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD: THE ROLE OF PRICE.

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Genetically modified (GM) crops were grown by approximately 8 million farmers in 17 countries in 2004, with the USA, Argentina, Canada, Brazil, China, Paraguay, India and South Africa (James 2004). Despite farmers in many countries adopting GM technology, activist groups – particularly in Europe – have continued to fight the introduction of GM foods. Consumer concerns regarding GM foods have been categorised as: concern for public safety, moral concerns, and fear of loss of individual life (Bredahl, et al., 1998). Consumers have been found to be most concerned by lack of control over what was happening (Miles & Frewer, 2003).

The research reported here has been conducted in New Zealand, where the GM issue has experienced major controversy. New Zealand lifted its moratorium on GMOS in October 2003, and each application is to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. In this evolving climate, it becomes important to know whether a proportion of consumers will accept GM food products when consumer benefits are made explicit. The aim of the present study was to determine whether actual purchasing behavior reflects the stated negative attitudes that consumers in general appear to have towards GM foods, in a situation where consumer benefits are made explicit.

METHODOLOGY

An experimental fruit stall was set up in New Zealand alongside a major highway. On sale in this fruit stall were cherries labeled in three ways: (a) “ORGANIC, Biogrow certified”, (b) “LOW RESIDUE, Cromwell cherries” (Cromwell being a nearby locality famous for cherry-growing), and (c)”100% SPRAY-FREE, genetically modified.” Prices were set at three levels: (1) prevailing or average market price (PMP), (2) PMP plus 15 percent, and (3) PMP minus 15 percent. The different prices were assigned to each fruit category using a balanced fractional factorial experimental design, with price design points (runs) changing every fifty customers. Before money changed hands, customers were made aware that this was a university-run experiment, and that all cherries were in fact the same local, low spray residue type. They were given the opportunity of purchasing their chosen cherries at the lowest price shown. Part-whorts for each cherry category and the three category-specific price coefficients were identified with a conditional multinomial logit (or discrete choice) regression model.

DOES LABELING AFFECT GM FOOD ACCEPTANCE?

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Current estimates are that 60-70% of processed foods in North America contain GM ingredients from soy, corn, or canola. However, consumers are not generally aware of this prevalence nor can they choose whether or not they consume these foods since there is no mandatory labeling. GM advocates say there is no reason to label GM presence, since there is no risk of harm. GM critics argue that consumers have a right to know and would, in fact, reject them. This study focuses on the effects of GM ingredient labels on evaluations of food products.

METHODOLOGY

This study used an experimental approach to assess the impact of labeling information on responses – perceived healthfulness, taste, interest in trying and buying -- to a new consumer food product. Female cereal shoppers were used through a mall intercept approach and screening. Labelling information was manipulated, and consumer responses were compared. Four label conditions were used and two brand conditions – well-known brand and fictitious/unknown brand -- were compared. The testing environment was designed to assist in consumer attention to...
labelling information through use of a novel product. The role of consumer knowledge about genetics and genetic engineering was also studied as a characteristic that might affect label information use and response under different brand conditions.

The brand manipulation (well-known vs. unknown) was confirmed through the series of questions on brand knowledge and experience. All measures were significantly different between the well-known and fictitious brands. Brand image of the fictitious brand did support the intended positioning of the brand as a credible and wholesome brand. Perceptions of the well-known brand were positive as would be expected for a successful market leader.

Results

Analysis of variance indicated a significant interaction effect for the combined response measure. The pattern of response to the labels was quite different between the well-known and the unknown brand. Separate brand-based analysis of variance revealed significant treatment effects for each brand. The major difference was in the unlabelled condition where the unknown cereal was more highly rated than the well-known brand, whereas in all conditions where GM information was supplied, the unknown brand received significantly lower ratings than the well-known brand. Otherwise, the pattern of response to the labels was similar in that, the no-GM label cereal was more highly rated than no label conditions and the label that provided a consumer benefit for GM use received a similar score to the no-label condition. GM-presence without benefits received ratings that were much lower than the no-label condition for the unknown cereal brand but not for the well-known brand.

GM labelling had less effect when respondents were evaluating a well-known brand. For the manufacturer of the leading brands, the effort to remove GM ingredients and to so label the product may not improve assessments of their products, which already are widely accepted and trusted in the marketplace. However, the presence and labelling of GM ingredients did not generate a measurable negative impact. In the case of well-known, trusted brands, genetically modified ingredients do not create a situation where consumers feel their health is at risk, and such claims by anti-GM activists appear to be disregarded. However, for an unknown brand, some respondent scepticism may be perceived. The product was given a strong endorsement when there was no mention of GM ingredients. As designed, the product presents many market signals of “wholesomeness.” However, an unknown manufacturer’s labelling of GM-free may not be helpful for sales and may raise more concerns than it relieves. Consumers may not have enough trust in the unknown brand manufacturer.

Respondents were further studied by dividing them into groups based on level of knowledge of genetics, genetic modifications and use of GM technologies in foods and other applications. High knowledge consumers responded to the GM information much more than did low knowledge consumers. They also were most positive to the well-known branded product with the GM label that explained the advantages of the technology in terms of lowered pesticide use.

DISCUSSION

Many GM advocates believe that misinformation and lack of knowledge turn consumers against genetically modified foods because of fear what is not understood. However, this study notes that knowledgeable consumers are not, by definition, pro-science, pro-innovation, and pro-GM but they are looking for information. However, the current marketplace does not provide it. Food manufacturers whose foods contain GM ingredients are not anxious to provide information for fear the information will arouse concerns. Specialty foods and stores that see a growing market in “natural” foods recognise that target market segments are willing to pay more for non-GM foods, and often foster uncertainty and concerns about foods containing genetically modified organisms. This is easy when mainstream marketers are leaving an information void.

This study concludes that major food manufacturers should consider detailed informative labeling that includes the consumer benefit of GM technology to position their products against no-GM competitors. Such an approach will also prepare consumers for the next generation of GM foods, which will have direct consumer benefits, such as nutritional advantages. Also, it would likely be more successful than simply trying to pretend consumers don’t care.
Consumers often rely on the advice of agents who provide product recommendations and evaluations (Solomon 1986). Such agents can include experts and professional critics, as well as lay people such as friends and internet posters (Gershoff, Broniarczyk and West 2001; Schlosser 2005). When evaluating an agent as a potential source of advice, consumers often rely on the extent to which they have agreed with the agent in the past (West 1996; Gershoff and Johar 2006). Furthermore, recent research by Gershoff, Mukherjee, and Mukhopadhyay (2003, 2006) indicates that agreements on previously loved alternatives are considered be more informative by consumers than agreements on previously hated alternatives, when evaluating similarity of taste with the agent, and suitability of the agent as a source of future advice. In the present article, we develop and test an attribute ambiguity account for the positivity effect in agent evaluation. In a nutshell, we propose that the positivity effect arises from the greater ambiguity, or uncertainty, about an agent’s attribute ratings of loved, compared to hated alternatives. This basic proposition is tested in two pilot studies and three main studies. In the pilot studies, hated alternatives are shown to have greater attribute ambiguity than loved alternatives, as revealed by variance and perceived ambiguity of attribute ratings. Then, in the main studies, as predicted by the attribute ambiguity account, the positivity effect is moderated by the number of attributes, number of alternatives, and by revelation of the agent’s attribute ratings. Specifically, the positivity effect is amplified when there were more attributes to describe the alternative (study 1); when the number of alternatives was low (study 2); and when the agent’s underlying attribute ratings were revealed to the consumer (study 3). Notably, study 3 also demonstrates that, consistent with our proposed attribute ambiguity mechanism, the positivity effect is mediated by perceived attribute ambiguity.

These results make several important theoretical contributions to the literature. First, we establish a new mechanism for the positivity effect, namely the attribute ambiguity mechanism, and three new moderators for the positivity effect, namely number of attributes, number of alternatives, and revelation of attribute ratings. Thus, our work adds to recent research that has begun to identify boundary conditions of the positivity effect in agent evaluation, such as the valence of future agent advice (Gershoff et al. 2003) and agreement versus disagreement with a prospective agent (Gershoff et al. 2006). Second, our attribute ambiguity account extends previous research, which has investigated an attribute-accessibility account for the positivity effect (e.g., Gershoff et al. 2003, 2006; Herr and Page 2004). It is worth noting that these two accounts of the positivity effect are complementary, in the sense that they focus on different dimensions on which loved and hated alternatives can differ. The attribute accessibility account focuses on the greater memory accessibility of the attributes of loved alternatives, compared to hated alternatives. In contrast, the attribute ambiguity mechanism focuses on the greater ambiguity, or uncertainty about attribute ratings, of loved alternatives compared to hated alternatives. By demonstrating for the first time the role of attribute ambiguity in the positivity effect, our findings contribute to a fuller understanding of the mechanisms underlying the positivity effect in agent evaluation.

Our results also extend the literature on word-of-mouth communications, which has generally found a negativity effect whereby negative word-of-mouth about products is weighed more heavily than corresponding positive word-of-mouth in judgment and choice (Folkes and Kamins 1999; Herr et al. 1991). In contrast, we show that a positivity effect can emerge when the object of evaluation is the agent instead of the product, and that this effect can be traced back to the differential ambiguity of the agent’s positive and negative preference structures. More broadly, our studies fit into a larger framework of research that explores asymmetries between positive and negative stimuli, and the conditions under which each is likely to be dominant (Ahluwalia 2002; Baumeister et al. 2001; Folkes and Patrick 2003; Herr et al. 1991; Skowronski and Carlton 1987). The underlying theme in this area of research is that the emergence of positivity or negativity effects depends on the relative diagnosticity of positive or negative stimuli which, in turn, may be influenced by a range of factors including task characteristics, product familiarity, and heterogeneity in the product category.

REFERENCES


FEEDBACK VALENCE AND CONSUMER MOTIVATION: THE MODERATING EFFECTS OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE REFERENCE VALUES IN SELF-REGULATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Contrasting findings have been reported in goal literature about the impact of feedback valence on subsequent motivation (e.g., Carver and Scheier 1990; Ford 1987; Locke and Latham 1990). This suggests that there might be some personality variables that moderate the effects of feedback valence on performance (Kluger and DeNisi 1996, 1998).

Recent work about approach and avoidance goals Carver, Sutton, and Scheier 2000; Emmons 1996) claims that some individuals have chronic tendencies to regulate towards positive end states – approach strivers. Others have tendencies to regulate away from negative end states – avoidance strivers. Carver et al (2000) argue that these tendencies can be mapped into the personality traits of extraversion and neurotism, respectively.

Approach and avoidance tendencies are relevant to consider in a consumption context because many of the products and services available on the market are consumed as means of reducing the discrepancy or gap between actual states and desired end states or as means of increasing the distance between current states and negative end states (Hogg and Banister 2001; Morgan 1993; Patrick, McNes, and Folks 2002; Sobh, Vaughan, Lee, and Brodie 2005).

Although individuals differ in their predispositions to adopt one or the other type of self-regulation, these orientations can be situationally activated through marketing communication such as advertising and message frames.

Building and expanding on feedback control theory in social psychology (Carver and Scheier 1990, 1992, 2000), this study examines how the type of goal-directed behaviour engaged (discrepancy reducing vs. discrepancy enlarging) moderates the impact of feedback valence (positive vs. negative) on women’s subsequent motivation to deal with visible signs of skin aging. Carver and Scheier’s (1992, 1996) control model was the first to draw a clear distinction between self-regulatory systems that have positive versus negative reference values. A self-regulatory system with a positive reference value has a desired end-state as the reference point. The system is discrepancy reducing and involves attempts to move one’s current self-state as close as possible to the desired outcome. In contrast, a self-regulatory system with a negative reference value has an undesired end-state as the reference point. This system is discrepancy amplifying and involves attempts to move the current self-state as far away as possible from the undesired end-state. Some studies conducted by Carver and his associates (e.g., Carver, Lawrence, and Scheier 1999) revealed that negative and positive feedback loops lead to qualitatively different emotional qualities; agitation-related emotion and dejection related emotion respectively. It has also been suggested that negative agitation-related emotions (e.g., fear) are more energizing than negative agitation-related emotions (e.g., sadness). Alternatively, positive dejection-related emotions (e.g., excitement and joy) are believed to be more motivating than positive agitation-related emotion (e.g., relief and contentment) (Carver 2001). One would expect that a negative feedback (doing worse than expected) is more motivating for those regulating away from an anti-goal than for those regulating towards goals. The opposite will be true when feedback is positive.

To address this issue, an experiment was conducted among 98 women from an Anglo-European descent ranging in age from 30 to 60 (M = 41.11, SD = 6.87). A 2 (discrepancy type: reducing vs. enlarging) × 2 (feedback valence: positive vs. negative) analysis of variance (ANOVA) performed on women’s intentions to use a set of procedures/products/services to deal with visible signs of aging. Participants were randomly assigned to receive one of two versions of a survey designed to activate one of the two types of discrepancy regulation systems. The type of discrepancy regulation was engaged through a guided imagery task aiming to activate either a positive reference value, in particular a hoped-for possible self (e.g. looking younger than other people of my age), or a negative reference value, in particular a feared possible self (e.g., looking older than other people of my age) (Markus and Ruvolo 1986). Consistent with control theory (Carver and Scheier 1992), feedback about current performance in dealing with visible signs of skin aging consisted of women’s judgments about their success or failure in dealing with skin aging so far.

Results revealed a significant interaction effect between feedback valence and type of goal-directed behaviour engaged. More specifically, findings suggest that success (positive feedback) maintains motivational intensity more than failure (negative feedback) when behaviour aims to reduce the discrepancy between a current state and a positive reference value, whereas failure maintains motivational intensity more than success when behaviour aims to enlarge the gap between a current state and a negative reference value. These findings contribute to explain some of the previous contradicting results about feedback-performance relationship in social psychology. Further, they suggest the importance of studying discrepancy-reducing behaviours in distinction from discrepancy-enlarging behaviours in the context of consumer goal-directed behaviour. Findings may also be extended to other types of goal-directed behaviours and yield significant implications in a social marketing context.

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UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENT BELIEFS AND INTENTION TO SMOKE: THE EFFECT OF ANTISMOKING INFORMATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Cigarette consumption has been the subject of growing interest among academics and public policymakers. A primary concern has been the efficacy of antismoking campaigns and messages (Netemeyer, Andrews, and Burton 2005; Pechmann Goldberg, and Reibling 2003; Peracchio and Luna 1998; Smith and Stutts 2003; Wolburg, 2004). Authors suggest that exposure to antismoking information and messages may enhance prior beliefs about smoking and thus affect smoking-related behavioral intentions and attitudes. However, others argue that adolescents’ exposure to antismoking messages or information has little effect on smoking behavior or smoking-related beliefs (Pechmann and Rameshwar 1994).

Researchers have been also concerned with the factors which influence smoking (Pechmann and Knight 2002; Stanton, Barnett, and Silva 2004). These include family smoking habits, peer pressure, parental factors, antismoking information and cigarette advertising (Harakeh et al. 2004; Smith and Stutts 1999), prior smoking behavior (Collins et al. 1987) prior beliefs and attitudes (Peracchio and Luna 1998) and behavioral intention. Many studies have measured intention to smoke cigarettes, some reporting an association between intention to smoke and current smoking status. Others suggest that intention is a significant predictor of later smoking behavior (Stanton et al. 2004). Behavioral intention models, including the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975) which incorporates behavioral intention to perform a behavior, has been used to predict adolescent smoking behavior (Chassin et al. 1984; Harakeh et al. 2004). The theory suggests that actual behavior is determined by a person’s intention to perform the behavior which in turn is determined by attitudes (beliefs about behavior) and subjective norms (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Thus attitudes are said to be determined by prior beliefs about a behavior based on knowledge about the benefits or dangers of cigarette consumption. Heightened knowledge resulting from exposure to tobacco advertising or antismoking messages and information has been found to affect prior beliefs about the advantages and disadvantages of smoking among adolescents (Higgins and Bargh 1987). In the context of the theory of reasoned action, individuals’ intention to smoke is affected by what others think about smoking.

Using the theory of reasoned action as the theoretical basis, the focus of this study is to explore the effect of antismoking school presentations on adolescent beliefs and intention to smoke. The objective is to explore linkages between prior beliefs about smoking and future intention to smoke. The context for the research was a school-based intervention similar to the approaches recommended by the Centre for Disease control as potentially effective means of communicating with adolescents. Interventions that address individual attitudes with respect to tobacco have been recommended in adolescent anti-smoking campaigns (Castrucci et al. 2002), since attitudes can influence initiation and continuation of smoking behavior (Botvin et al. 1998). Research respondents represented pupils from six schools in England who took part in a three-stage anti-smoking program designed to teach adolescents to resist social pressure and refuse tobacco when offered. The respondents, who were aged 12-14, took part in a single, participative forty-minute presentation made by a trained counselor. Respondents were also provided with information packs to take away and all of the pupils attending the sessions were asked to complete questionnaires. A three-step research process was devised which fitted around the presentation. Stage one involved the completion of a questionnaire a week before the intervention presentation. Pupils were asked to respond to a series of statements which tested their knowledge of smoking hazards. Immediately after the intervention, pupils were asked to respond to a set of identical questions about smoking effects and their attitudes towards smoking (stage 2). One month after the presentation respondents were asked to respond to the same series of questions as stages one and two (stage 3).

A total of 1300 questionnaires were received for all three stages. Adolescents’ beliefs about smoking were captured by nine items derived from a scale used in a previous study in Australia. Each item was treated as independent following reliability analysis which indicated low a values and correlations among items. In line with previous research (Stanton et al. 2004) adolescents’ intention to smoke was measured by a single categorical item. The analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved generalised linear modeling to detect the independent variables (prior beliefs about smoking) explaining the variance in the dependent variable (intention to smoke) at each stage of the study. Different combinations of the independent variables were grouped and tested on the basis of goodness of fit (Deviance). The second phase of the analysis used the significant independent variables emerging from the first phase to determine the functional form of the models expressed as Poisson log-linear. Model coefficients were derived to examine the effects of prior beliefs on intention to smoke at each stage of the study. Non-response was also estimated by comparing pupils who participated in all three stages with those that did not (Lin and Schaeffer 1995). Findings indicated that there are no significant differences between the two groups of respondents.

The findings of the analysis reflected the positive impact of the anti-smoking presentation in that more adolescents agreed about smoking’s harmful effects at stage 3 of the study compared to stage 1. In addition, the positive effect of adolescents’ belief about smoking’s harmful effects on their intention to smoke was highlighted since the majority of respondents indicated in all three stages that they do not intend to smoke in the future. This is consistent with the theory of reasoned action in that a link is demonstrated between prior beliefs and intention to smoke (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). In addition, the findings reveal the importance of specific message content in determining the effectiveness of anti-smoking interventions. For the age group studied in this research, the impact of smoking on health and ability to play sport, has been shown to be particularly powerful. This has implications for message design in future anti-smoking interventions and communications. Future research should explore the detailed make up and efficacy of such messages for different target groups. An improved understanding of the extent to which these messages impact upon long-term views about smoking is also required.
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PREDICTING CONSUMERS’ ADOPTION OF REALLY NEW COMMUNICATION AND ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTS*

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current research is to examine how characteristic differences between really-new products (RNPs) and incrementally-new or just-new products (JNPs) influence people’s formation of long-term product adoption intentions and affect the likelihood that people will ultimately acquire those new products. Hoeffler (2003) distinguishes the psychological newness of products along four dimensions. He notes that newer products are characterised by greater uncertainty in consumers’ estimates of the utility of the new product and their ability to assess cost-benefit tradeoffs, by more changes in consumers’ behavior required to realise the products’ benefits, and by the products’ ability to deliver more new or enhanced benefits.

We reason from this framework that when consumers consider RNPs and JNPs, they generate fewer potential benefits and more potential costs and constraints for newer products. Thus, when considering adoption of new products well in advance of an acquisition opportunity, we expect consumers are less likely to form intentions to adopt newer products. Moving from long-term intention formation to acquisition opportunities, consumers who intend to adopt new products construe those products differently—giving increased weight to products’ potential costs and constraints (Trope and Liberman 2000, 2003). With potential costs and constraints receiving greater weight, we expect consumers now evaluate new products less favorably than when forming intentions to adopt them and so are less likely to follow through on those intentions. With consumers generating more potential costs and constraints for RNPs, we expect that consumers are less likely to follow through on their intentions for newer products.

We also explore the effect of characteristic differences between RNPs and JNPs on when consumers actually acquire new products after forming an adoption intention. We find that after stating an intention to adopt a JNP in the next six months, consumers become more likely each month to follow through if they have not done so already. For RNPs, the opposite is true. Consumers are progressively less likely to follow through each month after stating an intention to adopt in the next 6 months.

We find support for an explanation of this latter finding. We present evidence that the rate of exposure to new information is less for RNPs than for JNPs. We hypothesise that forming an acquisition intention temporarily increases attitude accessibility (Morwitz and Fitzsimons 2004), producing the classic findings of selective perception of attitude-consistent new information (Fazio and Williams 1986). If this state of heightened attitude accessibility is maintained, the positive intentions underlying an intention to adopt a new product will become stronger over time. If, on the other hand, attitude accessibility dissipates shortly after forming an acquisition intention, this makes the consumer less selective in processing new information, so that those who had positive attitudes and intentions will “regress to the mean” and become less likely over time to follow through. We find support for our conjecture that people are less frequently exposed to information about RNPs than for JNPs. Consequently, attitude accessibility dissipates at a faster rate over time for those forming intentions for RNPs than for those forming intentions for JNPs. The implication of this set of findings is that marketing techniques that encourage consumers’ to form long-term adoption intentions build momentum toward product acquisition for JNPs, but these techniques have little longer-term effect on acquisition of RNPs.

We examine the temporal stability of consumers’ new product adoption intentions in a set of four field studies. In Study 1, we examine the likelihood that consumers form intentions to adopt new products by surveying 12,237 members of the CBS Television City online panel on their actual intentions to acquire each of a set of 28 new products (e.g., plasma flat screen television, blogging service, DVR, digital camera, cell phone with walkie-talkie feature) in the coming six months. For each new product, we measured average product newness among participants actually in the market for that product using a formative measure developed from Hoeffler (2003). Using this average product newness measure as a predictor, we find that participants were less likely to state an intention to acquire newer products. In Study 2, we examine the likelihood that consumers actually follow through on their intentions to adopt new products by resurveying a group of Study 1 participants four months after Study 1 on whether they actually acquired the new products they had earlier said they would buy in the next six months. As we expected, we find that product newness had a negative effect on the likelihood that participants reported acquiring the new products they stated an intention to acquire. That is, participants followed through on their acquisition intentions less often for newer products.

In Study 2, we also examined our expectation that the likelihood that consumers will acquire JNPs increases relative to that for RNPs as time passes after intention formation. As expected, we found a significant interaction between product newness and the months since intention formation on the timing of intention follow through. Put differently, the hazard rate for follow-through changed over months, with a different pattern for psychologically newer versus less new technologies. Participants became more likely to acquire the JNPs they stated intentions to acquire as time passed since intention formation while they were less likely to follow through on acquiring RNPs as time passed.

In Study 3, we tested our conjecture that this difference in follow-through rates for JNPs and RNPs across time resulted because of differences in the state of their information networks and so differences in exposure to new information. As expected, we found that participants reported encountering more new information for JNPs than RNPs in the weeks after forming acquisition intentions. These differences in exposure to new information were also
expected to affect the rate of decay in consumers’ attitudes towards the products they intended to acquire. We expected that consumers’ attitude accessibility would decay at a faster rate for RNPs than for JNPs. In Study 3 and Study 4, we found support for our expectations as attitude accessibility decayed at a faster rate for RNPs in a one-and-one-half-week period commencing with intention formation and in a four-week period commencing 24-48 hours after intention formation.

These results extend our understanding of the link between consumers’ adoption intentions and their actual acquisition of new products. They highlight for marketers that the newer a product is positioned to be, the less likely consumers are to want to adopt it (Hoeffler, Moreau, and Malhotra 2005). Similarly, our findings have implications for market research methods that use intentions to forecast demand. It is common in new product forecasting models (e.g., BASES) to deflate intention to buy measures. Our findings show that the more psychologically new the product, the more adoption intentions require deflating. Our findings also highlight the effect of differences in new products’ information environments. Marketers of JNPs are able to build adoption momentum with consumers by marketing well in advance of product launch while marketers of RNPs may not.

These results also offer clear distinctions between the newness of a product and the newness of the technology underlying the product. For example, PDAs—a chronologically old technology—scored high on psychological newness for those who had not yet acquired one. We hope that these results serve as a catalyst for research on the effect of psychological newness on consumers’ use of the new products they acquire, on how consumers then share their new product experiences within their social networks, and on the effects of this word-of-mouth communication on subsequent new product adoption within the social network.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT
This article identifies the marketing variables that best predict customer switching attitude and intention using Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and relationship marketing theory. 172 customers from the UK deregulated utility service industry completed a questionnaire that provides the empirical data for the analysis using structural equation modelling. Prediction was improved by including specific beliefs on the importance of the various relationship marketing tactics (RMTs) and incorporating past switching behaviour as co-predictors of switching intention. The findings provided useful academic insights and have several managerial implications for the service providers in retaining existing customers and acquiring new customers.

INTRODUCTION
For more than a decade, businesses have recognised that improving the retention rate of profitable customers can reduce the levels of customer “churn” (Reichheld and Sasser 1990; Webster 1992). In order to attract as well as to retain customers, companies need to develop two sets of relationship marketing strategies; one aimed at keeping existing customers and the other aimed at acquiring new customers (Payne and Frow 1997). A number of empirical studies have provided evidence on the impact of relationship marketing strategy on behavioural loyalty which leads to customer retention (Bolton, et al. 2000; Crosby and Stephens 1987; Verhoeef 2003). Other researchers have identified specific relationship marketing tactics (RMTs) and examined their individual effect on customer’s behavioural intention to remain loyal or switch their service providers. These specific RMTs include Service factors (De Wulf et al. 2001; Fornell and Wernerfelt 1987), Pricing factors (Verhoef, 2003; Keaveney 1995) Reputation factors (Moorman et al.1992; Pritchard et al. 1999; Bloemer et al. 1998), Value Offers (Blackwell et al. 1999; Cronin et al. 2000; Zeithaml, V.A 1988), Communication factors (De Wulf et al. 2001; Bawa and Shoemaker 1987), and Past Behaviour (Stephen et al.1998; Ganesh et al. 2000).

However, despite the empirical evidence demonstrating the effect of RMTs on customer switching intention little has been done to explain the underlying mechanism of such effect (with the exception of Bansal and Taylor 1999, Bansal, Taylor and James 2005). For example, several studies have shown that individual differences variables such as past behaviour affect future intentions either directly or mediated by attitudes and/or subjective norms (e.g. Bagozzi et al. 2000; Bentler and Speckart 1981; Fredericks and Dossett 1983). The direct effect of past behaviour on switching intention derives from its role as another type of informational input to the decision in addition to attitude (Bagozzi et al. 1992). Following the same logic, we reason that the effect of RMTs on switching intention can be explained in terms of its role in shaping customer beliefs about the service providers. Customer beliefs about the service providers in turn affect future switching intention either directly or mediated by attitudes. The direct effect of customer beliefs on switching intention derives from its role as another type of informational input to the decision in addition to the influence of attitude. In addition, most of the research on RMTs and past switching behaviour studies customers who are highly involved in the product/service category or in the purchasing situation. Involvement is defined as an individual’s perceived importance of the object based upon inherent needs, values and interests (Mittal 1995). It is found that high involvement products are less susceptible to changes in evaluation after discrepant information than low involvement product. The rationale is that high involvement implies that beliefs about product/service attributes are firmly held and only influenced by strong quality arguments (Zaichkowsky 1986). Thus, although various customer beliefs about service providers’ RMTs and past switching behaviour have been found (when present individually) to correlate significantly with future switching intention in high involvement context, it is unclear how the effect of individual RMT-related beliefs will vary when more than one RMT-related beliefs are measured at the same time, and whether this effect will be significant for low involvement industry. Therefore based on the above argument, our paper aims to fill the gaps by asking the following research questions:

1. Among the various customer beliefs about the service providers’ RMTs, which specific beliefs have stronger influence on customer attitude towards switching and their switching intention?
2. How do customer beliefs about the service providers’ RMT affect customer switching intentions: is the effect direct or mediated by attitude towards switching?
3. Does past switching behaviour have a significant effect (either directly, indirectly via attitude, or both) on switching intention in a low involvement product/service context?

This paper identifies and investigates a comprehensive list of customer beliefs about service provider’s RMTs, and it is one of the first studies to adapt the Theory of Reasoned Action to examine the relative impact of customer beliefs about their service providers’ RMTs on customer attitude towards switching and switching intention. In the following sections, we begin by discussing the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). We then investigate the specific beliefs that customers have about their service provider’s RMTs by reviewing previous empirical studies on customer relationship marketing. Next, based on the application of TRA and past research findings, we develop a conceptual framework and a set of hypotheses to postulate: (1) the relationship between the specific customer beliefs and their attitude towards switching (ATS) and their switching intention (SI) and (2) the influence of past switching behaviour (PSB) on attitude and switching intentions. Then we describe the research instrument, data collection methods, measures and constructs, and data collection methods.
analysis using structural equation modelling techniques (LISREL8.54). Finally, we discuss the main findings and managerial implications of our paper.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Theory of Reasoned Action

Numerous studies in modelling consumer behaviour research have used Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action. Support for this model is rather extensive in both the social psychological and marketing literatures (Bagozzi 1982; Bettencourt and Page 1982; Oliver and Bearden 1985; Sheppard, Hartwick, and Warshaw 1988). TRA views consumers as rational beings and make systematic use of information available to them (i.e. consider the implications of their actions) before they decide to engage in a given behaviour. The aim is to predict and understand an individual’s behaviour. It postulates an individual’s intention to perform a particular behaviour as the immediate determinant of the action. The person’s intention is a function of two basic determinants namely attitude towards the behaviour and the person’s perception of others (social pressures) towards performing the behaviour called ‘subjective norm’. Attitude is a function of beliefs i.e. a person who believes that performing a particular behaviour will lead to positive (negative) outcome will hold a favourable (unfavourable) attitude towards the behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, 5-7).

In this study we focus on the effects of customer beliefs about their service providers’ RMTs as the predictor of attitude towards the act of switching the service provider. We apply the TRA model to examine the links between the specific customer beliefs about their service providers’ RMTs, customer attitude toward switching and their decision to stay or switch their service providers. The adoption of TRA model provides a suitable framework for conceptualising such behaviour with two minor modifications. Firstly, we dropped the subjective norm (SN) component in predicting switching intention. This is supported by Warshaw’s (1980) detailed expository based upon the following reasons: (1) attitudes (A\textsubscript{0}) were the primary determinants of intention, (2) SN adds little predictive power to the attitudinal component (Harel and Bennett 1974; Lutz 1973), (3) the frequent weak explanatory power of SN due to high multicollinearity with A\textsubscript{0} reflects that, most studied behaviour is directed by attitudinal rather than normative considerations. In another study by Mitchell and Olson (1981), they too dropped the SN component citing the operational and conceptual problems associated with SN and raises the question of whether SN is really a separate construct as mentioned by Miniard and Cohen (1979).

Secondly, we used the belief only model (A\textsubscript{act} = \Sigma b\textsubscript{ij}) instead of the standard evaluation times belief model (A\textsubscript{act} = \Sigma a\textsubscript{ibij})\textsuperscript{10} to examine the effect of customer beliefs about their service providers’ RMTs on customer attitude and switching intention. This is supported by a number of studies (see Masao and Bettman 1974 and Beckwith and Lehmann 1973). These studies found that in certain situations (e.g. low involvement product class) the beliefs only model and the standard evaluation times belief model are almost indistinguishable in predicting attitude towards the act and that at the individual level the explanatory power of the two models are virtually identical. These findings indicate that for a low involvement product class, a simplistic decision process is likely to fit better with the rational behaviour.

Customer Beliefs about Service providers’ RMTs

This paper proposes that the effect of a service provider’s RMTs on customer switching intention can be explained in terms of their role in shaping customer beliefs about the benefit of switching service provider. Beliefs are the cognitive aspect of attitudes. For instance, a smoker’s belief about the harmful effects of cigarette smoking is likely to influence his or her intention to quit smoking. Shimp and Kavas (1984) provided empirical evidence that the TRA belief’s cognitive structure is multi dimensional instead of unidimensional. Consumers form cognitive beliefs concerning the benefits of switching service providers, based on their experience or through word of mouth communication or other information sources. Service provider’s RMTs are an important source of information and experience that influence such beliefs. A comprehensive list of specific customer beliefs was compiled based on an extensive literature search and a pilot study of managers and consumers in the utility industry (see the methods section for more details). These include (1) price-related beliefs such as higher and unfair pricing practices; (2) service-related beliefs such as inconvenience, unpleasant service encounters, response to service failures; (3) value offers related beliefs such as attractive offers from competitors; (4) reputation-related beliefs such as dishonourable behaviour, intimidating behaviour, unsafe or unhealthy practices, conflict of interest ; and (5) involuntary switching such as relocation to another town (Keaveney 1995).

Predicting Attitude towards Switching from Customers’ Belief on RMTs

Service Quality

Drawing on the studies by Parasuraman et al. (1988, 15), service quality is defined as ‘the consumers’ judgment or belief about a firm’s overall excellence or superiority’. Zeithaml et al. (1996) indicated that customer’s beliefs concerning service quality results in favourable behavioural intentions and leads to customer retention. Numerous studies have linked service quality or service quality-related beliefs to switching intention, repurchasing behaviour, and behavioural intentions that leads to customer retention (see Bansal and Taylor 1999; Cronin and Taylor 1992; Keaveney 1995; Mittal and Laser 1998). Although these studies did not compare the relative impact of service quality with other RMTs, they have provided empirical evidence linking service quality or service quality-related beliefs to attitude toward switching. Therefore, based on these empirical studies and the TRA model, we hypothesise that:

H1: A more favourable customer belief about the current service provider’s service quality will have a significantly negative effect on their attitude towards switching their service provider.

Value Offers

Value is considered as an important constituent of relationship marketing, and firms providing superior value through enhanced offers can improve customer satisfaction by increasing the customer’s perceived benefits and reducing the sacrifice (Ravald and Gronroos 1996). We adopt the definition of value ‘as the consumer’s overall evaluation of the utility of the service provision based on perceptions of what one gets for what one gives’ (Zeithaml 1988,14). Numerous studies have shown that a firm’s value offers through rewards, loyalty programmes, etc. will enhance customer retention (De Wulf et al. 2001; Blackwell et al. 1999; Cronin et al. 2000). In addition, sales promotion that offers different customer benefits (monetary and non monetary) has positive impact on consumers purchase decisions (Sunil 1988; Chandon et al. 2000) and loyalty

\textsuperscript{10} Where ai is the evaluative aspect of consequence i of that act.
programmes that provide economic incentives positively affect customer retention (Bolton et al. 2000). Although these studies did not compare the relative impact of value offers with other RMTs, they have provided empirical evidence linking value offers or value-related beliefs to attitude toward switching. Therefore, based on these empirical studies and the TRA model, we hypothesise that:

H2: A more favourable customer belief about the current service provider’s value offers will have a significantly negative effect on their attitude towards switching their service provider.

Reputation
We adopt the definition of reputation from Weiss et al. (1999, 755) as ‘an overall belief or judgement regarding the extent to which a firm is held in high esteem or regard’. Reputation plays a special role in service companies because strong brands and reputation increase customers’ trust, enables customers to better understand intangible products, and reduce customers’ perceived monetary, social or safety risk in buying services. Trust is generally viewed as a key element for successful relationships (Morgan and Hunt 1994). A number of other studies have also found that reputation related factors help to build loyalty, trust and commitment with the service providers (see Bloemer et al. 1998; Moorman et al. 1992; Pritchard et al. 1999; Ranaweera and Prabhu 2003). Although these studies did not compare the relative impact of reputation with other RMTs, they have provided empirical evidence linking reputation or reputation-related beliefs to attitude toward switching. Therefore, based on these empirical studies and the TRA model, we hypothesise that:

H3: A more favourable customer belief about the current service provider’s reputation will have a significantly negative effect on their attitude towards switching their service provider.

Price Perception
Perceived price is what a consumer gives up or sacrifices in order to obtain a product (Zeithaml 1988). Price is unquestionably one of the most important marketplace cues in all purchase situations. Customer’s beliefs on being charged an unfair or high price for a product or service negatively affect their purchase probabilities and positively affect their switching intention. Lichtenstein et al. (1993) suggest that customers’ price perception comprises four dimensions namely, price consciousness, value consciousness, sale proneness and coupon proneness11. Empirical studies found that price factors are strongly linked to customer switching behaviour and switching intention (see Colgate and Hodge 2001; Keaveney 1995; Mittal and Lasser 1998; Verhoef 2003). Although these studies did not compare the relative impact of price factors with all the other RMTs, they have provided empirical evidence linking price factors or price-related beliefs to attitude toward switching. Therefore, based on these empirical studies and the TRA model, we hypothesise that:

H4: A stronger customer belief about the pricing level of the current service provider will have a significantly positive effect on their attitude towards switching their service provider.

Marketing Communication
The primary aim of relationship marketing is to decrease the exchange uncertainty and to create customer collaboration and commitment (Andersen 2001). The specific focus on marketing communication in providing information satisfaction directly impacts trust (Mohr and Nevin 1990). Information satisfaction is consumer’s subjective satisfaction judgment of the information used in choosing a product or service (Spreng et al. 1996). It represents their beliefs about service providers’ marketing communication activity. In Keaveney’s (1995) exploratory study, 20% of customers found a new service provider through persuasion by marketing communications. Although these studies did not compare the relative impact of marketing communications with other RMTs, they have provided empirical evidence linking marketing communications or market communication-related beliefs (i.e. information satisfaction) to attitude toward switching. Therefore, based on these empirical studies and the TRA model, we hypothesise that:

H5: A more favourable customer belief about the service provider’s marketing communication (i.e. information satisfaction) will have a significantly negative effect on their attitude towards switching their service provider.

Predicting Switching Intention from Attitude Toward Switching
Previous research indicates that the more favourable the attitude with respect to the behaviour, the greater the customer’s intention to perform the behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Bansal and Taylor 1999; Baggozzi et al 2000; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). The various RMT-related beliefs are postulated to affect customer attitude toward switching. In turn, customer attitude toward switching should affect their switching intention. Therefore, based on empirical evidence and the TRA model, we hypothesise that:

H6: A more favourable customer attitude towards switching their service provider will have a significantly positive effect on their switching intentions.

Predicting Switching Intention from Past Switching Behaviour
As mentioned earlier, past behaviour affect future intentions either directly or mediated by attitudes (e.g. Baggozzi et al. 2000; Bentler and Speckart 1981; Fredericks and Dossett 1983). The direct effect of past behaviour on switching intention derives from its role as another type of informational input to the decision in addition to attitude (Bagoozzi et al. 1992). The direct effect of past behaviour on intention derives from its role as another type of informational input to the decision in addition to attitude. There is however insufficient evidence to suggest that such effect exists for low involvement products or services. Therefore we test the conjunctures that:

H7a: A customer’s past switching behaviour has a significant positive effect on their attitude towards switching their service provider.

H7b: A customer’s past switching behaviour has a
significant positive effect on their switching intentions. The specific hypotheses are presented in Figure 1.

![Conceptual Framework](image)

**FIGURE 1**

Conceptual Framework

The research was carried out in the UK utility service industry which was deregulated more than ten years ago and intense competition had resulted in high incidences (47%) of customer switching (OFGEM 2006). Companies have increasingly recognised the importance of building mutually beneficial relationship with valued customers. Scale development measures following Churchill’s (1979) mutu

### RESEARCH METHOD

**Research Setting, Instrument Design and Data Collection**

The research was carried out in the UK utility service industry which was deregulated more than ten years ago and intense competition had resulted in high incidences (47%) of customer switching (OFGEM 2006). Companies have increasingly recognised the importance of building mutually beneficial relationship with valued customers. Scale development measures following Churchill’s (1979) approach were adopted. The questionnaire was developed following a review of the extant literature and exploratory interviews with five service providers and a small group of consumers in the West Midland region. Originally, 8 new items were generated using verbal protocols (Bettman and Park 1980) and Steenkamp and van Trijp (1991) approach were followed. The resulting items were measured on 7 point scales. Measures and sources for the constructs are listed in Table 2.

The research instrument was pre-tested on a convenient sample of 28 consumers before administering it to a random sample of 1000 domestic consumers (resulting in an effective response rate of 17.2%). Respondents were asked a screening question requesting a member of the household who is solely or jointly responsible for choosing the energy supplier to fill in the questionnaire.

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

**Measurement Properties**

Of the 172 respondents (52.1% male and 47.9% female), 32.4% were stayed (switched none), 38.2% switched once, 20.6% switched twice, 7.6% switched three times and 1.2% switched more than three times, 25.9% below the age of 35, 37.1% between the ages of 36-45 and 25.3% between the ages of 46-55. Overall, the data indicated good variance in the responses as shown in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>stdev</th>
<th>ats</th>
<th>si</th>
<th>price</th>
<th>repute</th>
<th>comm</th>
<th>sq</th>
<th>value</th>
<th>experin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ats</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.526</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>price</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repute</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>-0.174</td>
<td>-0.243</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comm</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>-0.229</td>
<td>-0.202</td>
<td>-0.066</td>
<td>0.506</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sq</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>-0.258</td>
<td>-0.219</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.602</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>value</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>0.379</td>
<td>0.336</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experin</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.219</td>
<td>0.281</td>
<td>-0.223</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>-0.146</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 1**

Correlation Matrix of Latent Variables
Note: ats – attitude toward switching; si – switching intention; repute – reputation; comm. - marketing communication, sq – service quality; value – value offers; experin – past switching behaviour.

**Nonresponse Bias**
Testing of nonresponse bias was done by assessing the differences between the early and late respondents following Armstrong and Overton’s (1977) method. Late respondents were defined as the last 25% of the returned questionnaires, while early respondents were the first 75% of the returned questionnaires. No significant differences in means were found between the two groups, at p<0.05, on any measured variables.

**Measures and Constructs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor Loading/ t-values/ R2</th>
<th>Scale based on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Quality</td>
<td>Opinion on the various aspects of service quality provided that influenced your decision to choose your current service provider…...</td>
<td></td>
<td>adapted from Bettencourt and Brown 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Service Quality                | 1. The service provider follows up in a timely manner to customer requests.  
2. Regardless of circumstances, the employees are exceptionally courteous and respectful to customers.  
3. The service provider follows through in a conscientious manner on promises to customers. | 0.79/0.62                    | adapted from Bettencourt and Brown 2003                                      |
|                                | 4. The service provider provides accurate billing on a regular basis.  
5. The service provider employees are always willing to help me.  
6. When something goes wrong, the problem gets resolved swiftly. | 0.74/0.680/0.55              | adapted from Bettencourt and Brown 2003                                      |
|                                |                                                                       | 0.87/14.327/0.76             | adapted from Bettencourt and Brown 2003                                      |
| Price Perception               | Opinion on the various aspects of pricing that influenced your decision to choose your current service provider…... |                              | adapted from Lichtenstein et al. 1993                                        |
| Price Consciousness            | 1. I am willing to make every effort to find lower prices.  
2. The money saved by finding low prices is usually worth the time and effort.  
3. I would never look around to find low price.* | 0.83/0.69                    | adapted from Lichtenstein et al. 1993                                        |
|                                |                                                                       | 0.89/12.331/0.79             | adapted from Lichtenstein et al. 1993                                        |
|                                |                                                                       | 0.45/5.55/0.20               | adapted from Lichtenstein et al. 1993                                        |
| Sale Proneness                 | 1. If the price is cheaper, that is an important reason to stay with the service provider.  
2. I am more likely to stay with the service provider that offers price savings.  
3. When I choose a service provider that is offering a cheaper rate, I feel that I am getting a good deal. | 0.71/0.500                   | adapted from Lichtenstein et al. 1993                                        |
|                                |                                                                       | 0.80/7.26/0.64               | adapted from Lichtenstein et al. 1993                                        |
|                                |                                                                       | 0.69/7.04/0.48               | adapted from Lichtenstein et al. 1993                                        |
| Past Switching Behaviour       | 1. How many times have you changed your electricity supplier?         | 1.0/1.0                      | adapted from Bagozzi et al 2000                                              |
| Switching Intention            | 1. How likely are you to switch to a competing service provider in the next six months? | 1.0/1.0                      | adapted from Bansal et al. 2005                                              |
| Marketing                      | Satisfaction with the information provided by the service provider in helping you to choose your current |                              |                                                                              |

12 Out of the original ? new items generated from exploratory interviews, ? items were removed due to low factor loading on the corresponding construct. 1 item remained after CFA analysis.
Communication
electricity supplier……

Information satisfaction
\( \rho_c / \rho_{ave} \)
\( 0.89/0.62/0.831 \)

1. Information on the pricing of electricity.
2. Regular billing information.
3. Regular updates on new products and services.
4. Accurate billing information.
5. Your satisfaction overall with the information provided.

\[ 0.61/-0.374 \]
\[ 0.69/8.385/0.478 \]
\[ 0.54/6.822/0.287 \]
\[ 0.83/7.541/0.683 \]
\[ 0.84/7.931/0.705 \]

adapted from Spreng et al. 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Offers</th>
<th>Underlying reasons for selecting the promotional offers……</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Perceived Value
\( \rho_c / \rho_{ave} \)
\( 0.85/0.66/0.851 \) | 1. The loyalty scheme offered has a high cash value.
2. It is highly likely that I will achieve the proposed reward.
3. The proposed rewards were what I wanted.

\[ 0.73/-0.535 \]
\[ 0.85/9.886/0.726 \]
\[ 0.84/10.38/0.699 \]

adapted from Youjae and Ho 2003

| Monetary Value
\( \rho_c / \rho_{ave} \)
\( 0.96/0.84/0.955 \) | 1. The promotional offer was reasonably Priced
2. The promotional offer was worth the money.
3. The promotional offer was a good buy.
4. It is easy to get the benefits from the promotional offer.

\[ 0.94/-0.887 \]
\[ 0.94/28.01/0.878 \]
\[ 0.95/28.254/0.90 \]

adapted from Petrick 2002

| Reputaion
\( \rho_c / \rho_{ave} \)
\( 0.69/0.54/0.690 \) | 1. Supports good causes.
2. I admire and respect.

\[ 0.68/-0.46 \]
\[ 0.78/4.42/0.61 \]

adapted from Fombrum et al 2000

| Trusting Products
\( \rho_c / \rho_{ave} \)
\( 0.83/0.55/0.829 \) | 1. I can trust.
2. Offers high quality products and services.
4. Is honest.

\[ 0.72/-0.52 \]
\[ 0.78/10.25/0.61 \]
\[ 0.78/9.62/0.61 \]
\[ 0.67/5.54/0.45 \]

adapted from Fombrum et al 2000

| Attitude Towards Switching
\( \rho_c / \rho_{ave} \)
\( 0.89/0.86/0.922 \) | For me, switching my electricity supplier would be a……
1. A bad/good idea.
2. Harmful/beneficial.
3. Foolish/wise.
4. Undesirable/desirable.

\[ 0.85/-0.72 \]
\[ 0.81/11.34/0.66 \]
\[ 0.88/14.03/0.77 \]
\[ 0.92/18.67/0.85 \]

adapted from Bansal et al. 2005

Note: *Reverse coded items; \( \rho_c \) - Composite Reliability; \( \rho_{ave} \) – Average Variance Extracted ; \( \alpha \) – Cronbach Alpha. All the items for service quality, value offers, price and reputation constructs were measured on a seven point Likert scale that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Marketing Communication was measured on a seven point Likert scale anchored by “very dissatisfied” and “very satisfied”. Attitude towards switching was measured on a 7 point semantic differential scale. Past switching behaviour responses were transformed into a seven point scale with the following descriptors centered above the appropriate seven points (adapted from Bagozzi et al 2000, 101): 1 (none), 3 (switched once), 5 (switched twice), 7 (switched more than twice).

Measurement Model

The measurement model for each of the constructs suggested good fit to the data (refer to Table 3). The results of the CFA with factor loadings, t-values, cronbach alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted and reliability is shown in Table 2. All the constructs are above the desirable levels of composite reliability (i.e. above 0.7, Bagozzi 1980) except for social responsibility dimension at 0.69. All AVE values exceeded the recommended level of 0.5 ranging from 0.54 to 0.86, demonstrating support for convergent validity (Bagozzi and Yi 1988). Coefficient alpha and composite reliability range from 0.69 to 0.96 indicating our measures are reliable. Discriminant validity was evaluated using Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Anderson and Gerbing (1988) requirements. On the basis of our reliability, convergent and discriminant validity tests, we concluded that our measurement model satisfied all the psychometric requirements (refer to Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Goodness of Fit Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Price</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNFI</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Structural Model and Model Fit

We developed two models to test the hypotheses. Model 1 only included the five RMT beliefs, attitude toward switching and switching intention, whereas Model 2 included past switching behaviour as an extra independent variable. All the latent construct variances, covariances between constructs, and error variances were freely estimated. The overall goodness of fit statistics for the structural model indicates satisfactory levels of fit (Table 3). The values of CFI, NFI, IFI and NNFI are greater than 0.90 and RMSEA is less than or equal to 0.08 (Browne and Cudeck 1993; Bentler 1990). Model 1 ($\chi^2 = 24.49$, df= 21, Pvalue = 0.10277, RMSEA = 0.049, CFI= 0.971, IFI= 0.955, NFI = 0.938, NNFI= 0.938) accounts for 28.1% of the variance in attitude towards switching and 19.6% of the variance in switching intention. Model 2 ($\chi^2 = 31.81$, df= 24, Pvalue = 0.13167, RMSEA = 0.044, CFI= 0.973, IFI=0.953, NFI = 0.938, NNFI= 0.939) accounts for 27.6% of the variance in attitude towards switching and 18.6% of the variance in switching intention.

Validation of Hypotheses

The results indicate that although the directions for all hypothesised path were as predicted for both models (see Figures 2 and 3), only H2 (value offer belief – attitude, p < 0.10), H4 (price belief – attitude, p < 0.01) and H6 (Attitude – intention, p < 0.01) were supported. The path coefficient from value offer belief to attitude towards switching ($\gamma_{15} = -0.18$ and -0.16) was weak (i.e. 0.10 $< \gamma$ < 0.20). The path coefficient from price belief to attitude towards switching ($\gamma_{11} = 0.51$ and 0.46) was moderately strong (i.e 0.40 $< \gamma$ < 0.60). The path coefficient from attitude towards switching to switching intention ($\beta_{21} = 0.42$ and 0.43) was moderately strong.

In addition, although we postulated that the effects of customer beliefs about service provider’s RMTs on switching intention are mediated by attitude towards switching, we found two direct paths from beliefs to intention to be significant. These are: the path from price belief to switching intention (p < 0.05, $\gamma_{21} = 0.17$ and 0.14) and the path from reputation to switching intention (p < 0.05, $\gamma_{22} = -0.20$ and -0.18). Finally in model 2, where an additional path is added to predict attitude towards switching and switching intention from past switching behaviour, the path from past switching behaviour to attitude ($\gamma_{16}$) and to intention ($\gamma_{26}$) was found to be non significant. This is unexpected and the implications of this finding along with other findings will be discussed in the discussion and implication section next.
### TABLE 3
Summary of Path Coefficients & Validation of Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2 (with Pexp)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standardised</td>
<td>Unstandardised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>ATS γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>Repute</td>
<td>ATS γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>Comm</td>
<td>ATS γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>S.Quality</td>
<td>ATS γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Value offers</td>
<td>ATS γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>ATS</td>
<td>SI β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7a</td>
<td>PSB</td>
<td>ATS γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7b</td>
<td>PSB</td>
<td>SI γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>SI γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9</td>
<td>Repute</td>
<td>SI γ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.10(1tail); + p<0.05 (1 tail); ** p < 0.05 (2 tailed ); *** p< 0.01 (2 tailed ); ns - non significant; Pexp- past switching behaviour; # total effects on SI
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper makes several contributions. First, it identifies a set of specific customer beliefs about service providers’ relationship marketing tactics (RMTs) that best predict customer attitude and intention to switch their service providers. The results indicate that customers differ in their specific belief about the various RMTs. Some have stronger beliefs about the impact of price, whereas others have stronger belief about the impact of value offers on their attitude towards switching their service providers. We found that among the five customer beliefs, price seems to be the predominant factor (p < 0.01, γ = 0.51, 0.46) followed by value offers (p < 0.10, γ = -0.18, 0.16) in affecting attitude towards switching. This finding indicates that customer belief on price has a significant positive effect on their switching attitude, whereas customer belief on value offers has a significant negative effect on their switching attitude. We found a non significant and negative effect of customer service quality and marketing communication beliefs on customer’s attitude towards switching.

Secondly, the paper shows that while the effects of some specific customer beliefs on customer switching intention are fully mediated by their attitude toward switching (i.e. value offers), others are only partially mediated by their attitude toward switching (i.e. price), and still others are not mediated but directly affect customer switching intention (i.e. reputation). The unexpected direct and strong effect of reputation and price related beliefs on switching intention is intriguing. We wonder whether this is due to the fact that reputation is perceived by consumers to be universal for all customers, whereas other RMTs such as service quality are perceived to be tailored to individual consumers. Thus consumers may stay with service providers for their strong reputation without forming a favourable or unfavourable attitude towards the service provider. Further research will be required to explore this result.

Thirdly, previous studies of high involvement industry have shown that individual differences variables such as past behaviour have a direct effect on future intentions (e.g. Bagozzi, 1992; Bentler and Speckart 1981). However, in this paper we tested the causal link between past switching behaviour and future switching intention and found that past switching behaviour has no significant influence on attitude and switching intention. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explain the underlying mechanism for this finding. Nevertheless we have reason to think that this may be due to the low involvement context of our study. In other words, low involvement products are more susceptible to changes in evaluation after discrepant information (Zaichkowsky 1986). Thus it is conceivable that beliefs about a low involvement product/service attributes that led to previous switching may have been subsequently changed or no longer accessible. Further empirical research will be needed to test this proposition.

This paper has a number of important implications for all service providers. For instance, if their strategy is to retain customers, they will need to develop innovative ‘value offers (i.e. with high cash value; easy to achieve the reward; reasonably priced and value for money). On the other hand if the strategy is to acquire customers, creative pricing strategy (i.e. positioning the perceived price consciousness in the consumers mind as been cheaper and offer savings) will be most effective.

In addition, the paper has several important implications for the low involvement industry in particular. Our results show that attitude is a strong predictor of intention to act even for low involvement industry, even though the type and number of customer RMT-specific beliefs that affect the attitude may differ. Furthermore, the results are contrary to the current understanding that ‘price’ is the predominant factor in influencing switching decisions (OFGEM, 2006). Thus service providers will need to investing in reputation building programmes (i.e. improve social responsibility and providing trusting product/services), instead of merely focusing on the pricing and value offers which were found to have lesser impact than reputation.

In terms of the limitations of this paper, we caution that these results are derived from the utility service industry. Further research is needed to validate and generalise these results to broader settings, especially to those industries that share a number of important characteristics with the utility service industry, such as land line telecommunication and internet services where switching is largely initiated by the service providers as a competitive poaching tactic and consumer involvement with the product/service is low.

Finally this is a cross sectional study on customer beliefs, attitude and switching intention. Customer switching costs, satisfaction and loyalty, which are likely to influence customer switching behaviour, have not been included in the study. To answer Lehmann’s (1999) call for the “development of a conceptual and structural model that brings together all the important variables concerning marketing tactics, consumer attitude, intention, satisfaction, preference and loyalty”, future studies will need to extend to longitudinal data and incorporate a more comprehensive list of consumer variables.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Ruth Bolton, Amitava Chattopadhyay, and the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on a previous version of this manuscript and the editor for their support and guidance.

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CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY-BASED SELF-SERVICE – EXAMINATION OF THEORY OF SELF REGULATION
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Ajay Kolhatkar, Shailesh J. Mehta School of Management, Indian Institute of Tech.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In order to meet ever-growing demands of customers and stay a step ahead of competition, service providers are searching for more avenues to involve customers in the production and delivery of service. The concept of self-service is increasingly being introduced in all kinds of service interactions. The infusion of technology in production and delivery of service has added a completely new dimension to the meaning of self-service. Since large investments are being made in such technologies, service providers expect customers to use these technology-based self-service. While the service provider has several motivations for introducing technology in service interaction, such as standardization of service offering, extended working hours, wider geographical coverage without expensive infrastructure, and above all reduction in cost of operation, consumer’s motivations for using technology-based self-service could vary between convenience of place and time to sense of control, perceived improvement in service quality, lower costs and in some cases avoidance of service personnel. It’s obvious that there are very few overlaps between the respective motivations. Hence, from a service provider’s perspective, it has become imperative to understand the more basic, psychological explanation of consumer acceptance of TBSS. Although there exist attitudinal theories such as Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) or Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as well as some specific application of these theories such as Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) or Attitudinal Model of TBSS, that have been extended to explain consumer acceptance of technology, there is still a need felt for a more comprehensive yet parsimonious theory to explain consumer usage of TBSS. In this research we examine the applicability of Theory of Self Regulation for explaining the acceptance of TBSS.

Theory of Self Regulation (TSR) (Bagoozi 1992) examined several conative, motivational and emotional processes in the enactment of intentions and behaviour. Bagoozi (1992) argued that attitudes do not necessarily lead to intentions to act because oftentimes they lack the motivational content required for the enactment. He conceived that desire was the missing motivational link between attitude and intention. Desire was conceptualised as the motivational commitment to do something. According to the TSR desire was hypothesised to be the immediately proximal cause of intentions, whereas attitudes were considered as a distal cause, although they could stimulate desires. TSR proposed that desire provided the necessary motivational impetus to intentions and suggested that attitude, subjective norm and (even PBC from the TPB) worked through desire in order to influence intentions.

The TSR provided rationale for inclusion of desire as a mediating variable. It argued that attitudes, usually conceived as evaluative appraisals of an action, did not imply motivational commitment and unless there was a motivational push intentions could not be formed. Other distinctions that were presented were: while desire referred to future state, attitudes could be applicable to past, present or future; desires were time-bound, while attitudes were more enduring, attitudes could be qualified as favourable or unfavourable while desires were not susceptible to such qualifications. Distinctions between desires and intentions were also put forth in a subsequent article by Perugini and Bagozzi (2004). Intentions were more strongly connected with outcomes or goals and hence showed more action-connectedness involving some planning to achieve these goals. On the other hand desires were connected with mental states pre-intention formation and hence were more abstract in nature. While intentions were associated with some kind of self-confidence about an ability to perform an action, no such ability was connected with a desire. Another distinction identified was that intentions were more now-oriented while desires were more time-indefinite and could even entail postponement until an appropriate time. TSR also specified the underlying process between desires and intentions. It elucidated that on the formation of a desire, an outcome-desire appraisal was set in motion that compared the desires and the possible end-states. Appraisals related to the various end-states led to emotional reactions and coping responses as intentions. According to the TSR, intentions have an important role in predicting behaviours, without over-riding the influence of any past experience. In fact intentions could partly explain the past behaviour.

In view of the above, if the theory of self regulation was valid, we expect that desires would mediate the relation between attitude and intention. Further if desires also exhibited higher explanatory power over and above that provided by subjective norm and past behaviour, then it follows that they would predict intentions even when these other variables were included in the model. Finally if the TSR was a strong theory then it should be able to explain the consumer acceptance of technology-based self-service and would therefore efficiently model the relations between the constructs in the context of TBSS. These were the three basic hypotheses we intend to test in this research.

The scales used to operationalise the constructs were examined through the estimation of measurement model using AMOS 4.0. Two statistics, composite reliability and variance extracted estimates, were used to assess the psychometric properties of the scaled measures as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The overall model was assessed using structural equation modelling using the various fit indices as recommended by Jöreskog and Sörbom (1989) and Bollen (1989).

Results indicate validation of the mediating role of desires, although the direct effect of attitude on intention was observed (albeit in a limited capacity). Subjective norm did not have any effect on intentions. The recency of past behaviour did not have an effect on behaviour, while the frequency of past behaviour had an effect only on the behaviour and not on the intention.

It could be argued whether Technology-based service behaviour can be classified under the volitional behaviour, at least as yet. Some of the results actually indicate to the fact that it might not be so. Considering the level of sophistication of the current technologies in terms of user friendliness and meeting the expectations of the customers, we feel we have come a long way, but we still haven’t reached far enough. Further the results also indicate that we might have to investigate several other factors such
as ease of use, usefulness, novelty etc. with respect to the technologies and need for service provider interaction, fear of the technology, and risk propensity etc. with respect to the individuals, before we can well explain the consumer’s TBSS acceptance behaviour. The specific contribution of this study is that it examined the theory of self-regulation, including the model of goal directed behaviour, in the context of consumer acceptance of technology-based self-service (more specifically ATM service) and particularly in the Asian culture.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Fueled by advances in technology and distribution, companies can more easily expand existing product lines than ever before. In addition to broadening product lines in order to satisfy and retain current customers, marketers may also do so to increase the likelihood that current non-users will find an enticing option among their relatively large product assortments. Though such a strategy has intuitive appeal, the traditional economic notion that larger product assortments lead to better choices and greater choice satisfaction than smaller assortments (e.g., Benartzi and Thaler 2002; Miller 1978) has more recently been updated to incorporate the possibility that larger assortments are not always superior to smaller assortments (Chernev 2003, Huffman and Kahn 1998; Iyengar and Lepper 2000; Kahn and McAlister 1997; Lehmann 1988).

The goal of the present research is to examine how large versus small assortments might influence consumers’ willingness to try new (unfamiliar) products. On the one hand, relative to smaller assortments, larger assortments have been shown to provide greater real and perceived freedom of choice (Broniarczyk, Hoyer and McAlister 1998), more positive affect, and increased task enjoyment and performance (Brehm 1966; Botti and Iyengar 2005). In addition, larger assortments may provide individuals with more opportunities to “choose well” (Chernev 2003, Iyengar and Lepper 2000), which may be especially attractive when individuals are trying new products (van Herpen and Pieters 2002). As a result, one might expect consumers’ trial intentions to be higher for large versus small assortments of new products.

On the other hand, larger assortments provide more information and may therefore require more effort to make accurate choices, especially for those with a low level of product familiarity. Such task-related effort has been associated with negative affect (e.g., decreased task enjoyment) and choice satisfaction (Garbarino and Edell 1997), and may lead to a corresponding decrease in trial intentions. In other words, larger assortments may be particularly demotivating for those choosing among larger assortments of new products (Iyengar and Lepper 2000). Thus, one might expect the contrary: trial intentions may be lower with a large than small assortment. We reconcile these seemingly contradictory predictions by arguing that both can be true depending on the relationship between (1) individuals’ beliefs about adoption (i.e., whether individuals attend to the benefits versus risks of adopting new products), and (2) how the products in the assortment are described (i.e., whether products are described in terms of objective (search) versus subjective (experiential) characteristics).

Specifically, our framework suggests that large assortments are only superior to small assortments when the products in the assortment are described in a manner that is congruent with individuals’ beliefs about adoption. Although large assortments may seem overwhelming and arduous when product descriptions are incongruent with individuals’ adoption beliefs, they may seem overwhelming and arduous when product descriptions are congruent with these adoption beliefs. Consequently, consistent with schema congruity theory (Mandler 1982), the moderately difficult, yet ultimately “doable,” task of choosing among a large assortment of items described in a congruent manner was predicted to be associated with significantly higher levels of task enjoyment, and corresponding trial intentions, than was the frustrating, and therefore less enjoyable task of choosing from a large/incongruent assortment. The results of two experiments support our predictions. Specifically, regardless of whether beliefs about adoption were situationally induced (experiment 1) or dispositional (experiment 2), both experiments demonstrate that when the product descriptions are congruent with individuals’ adoption beliefs, large assortments lead to higher trial intentions than small assortments.

On the other hand, when the product descriptions are incongruent with individuals’ adoption beliefs, the superiority of large over small assortments disappears. In fact, although large assortments led to trial intentions that were no higher than those of small assortments when the products in the assortment contained descriptive names (experiment 1), they led to lower trial intentions when the products in the assortment contained nondescript names (experiment 2)—that is, when individuals were “forced” to rely on the incongruent product descriptions to make a choice. Furthermore, our results suggest that product descriptions that are congruent (incongruent) with individuals’ adoption beliefs do not always produce higher (lower) trial intentions. Rather, whether congruity increased task enjoyment and trial intentions depended on assortment size. Although the task of choosing from large congruent versus incongruent assortments was associated with higher task enjoyment and trial intentions, the opposite was true for small congruent versus incongruent assortments, which appeared to be less, rather than more interesting and enjoyable, and therefore associated with relatively lower trial intentions.

Our account contributes to the existing research in the area of schema congruity theory (Mandler 1982). In particular, while others have demonstrated the facilitating effects of congruity on message elaboration in product evaluation tasks (e.g., Meyers-Levy, Louie and Current 1994), particularly among those with limited – versus extensive - product category knowledge (e.g., Perrachio and Tybout 1996), our research appears to be among the first to empirically demonstrate the mediating role of task enjoyment and the moderating role of assortment size on the relationship between congruity and purchase intentions.

Finally, in addition to contributing to an understanding of how assortment size influences individuals’ intentions to try new products, we contribute to the findings of prior research (Chernev 2003) by demonstrating that the superiority of a large over a small product assortment is moderated by another individual differences variable, namely the extent to which individuals are situationally or chronically inclined to consider the risk versus the benefits of adopting new products. We also demonstrate the importance of incorporating a broader array of assortment characteristics into our understanding of the effect of assortment size on intentions. In particular, our results highlight that the effect of assortment size on trial intentions can depend on how the products in an assortment are described (e.g., whether the descriptions are congruent
with consumers’ beliefs about adoption and how these products are named (i.e., whether the products in the assortment contain descriptive or nondescriptive names).

REFERENCES
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Extant research suggests that how consumers react to critical disagreement depends upon what they expect from the product under review (West and Broniarczyk, 1998). For example, suppose Consumer A expects a newly released film to be of three-star quality, and Consumer B expects the film to be of two-star quality. Further, imagine that, in one case, the reviewers disagree about the quality of the film (the film gets ratings of three stars, two stars, and one star), and, in the other case, the reviewers agree (all three reviewers give the film two stars). West and Broniarczyk (1998) invoke Prospect Theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979) to show that Consumer A should favor critical disagreement to critical agreement, whereas Consumer B should prefer critical agreement to critical disagreement. Extending this argument, we propose that, if stars, production budgets (that often translate into lavish sets, exciting locations, state of the art special effects), and studio advertising heighten consumer expectations of films, then critical disagreement should help such films fare better at the box office than critical agreement.

We test our proposition in three ways. First, we asked twenty-nine undergraduate business students to identify the factors that they generally use to form their expectations of new films. We collected 131 responses, or an average of 4.5 items per participant, and found that the three main sources of consumer expectations are stars (including directors; cited by 26% of our participants), budget (including money spent on advertising in the different media as well as in the production of the film; 22%) and the film’s genre (including the story; 18%).

Second, we designed experimental scenarios where we endowed participants with higher or neutral expectations for a newly released film. Thus, participants in the higher (neutral) expectations conditions read that the film is a big-budget (low-budget) film, belongs to the genre that they like (neither like nor dislike) and has their favorite stars (new stars) in lead roles. Subsequently, some participants read that three reviewers had rated the film as excellent, average, and poor (reviewer disagreement), while others read that three reviewers had each rated the film as average (reviewer agreement). One hundred and seven business students were randomly assigned to the four conditions of the 2 (reviewer agreement, reviewer disagreement) by 2 (higher expectations, neutral expectations) between subjects design.

We measured the participants’ judgment of the film after exposure to the reviewer information, and subjected those judgments to an ANOVA with expectations (higher, neutral) and critical disagreement (agreement, disagreement) as manipulated predictors. The main effect of expectations was significant, and showed that participants who expect more judge the film more positively than participants with neutral expectations. The main effect, however, was qualified by reviewer disagreement. Consistent with the Prospect Theory prediction, participants holding higher expectations prefer critical disagreement to agreement, whereas neutral participants react equally to critical disagreement and critical agreement.

Third, we collected opening weekend box office earnings for a random sample of 500 films released between December 1997 and March 2001. The data came from two sources: Baseline Services in California and Variety magazine. To assess critical disagreement, we created a measure similar to the Herfindahl index (HI) in economics, defined as the sum of the squares of the market shares of each individual firm. For each film, we calculated the proportion of positive (POSRATIO), mixed (MIXRATIO), and negative (NEGRATIO) reviews received by each film and then computed a DISAGREE index measure by subtracting the HI equivalent from 1. In line with our laboratory study, we used three variables to serve as proxy for consumer expectations, star power, production budget, and advertising spending. For each film, we created a variable STAR by identifying all cast members who had won or been nominated a Best Actor or Best Actress or Best Director Award (Oscar) in prior years (prior to the release of the current film). We assigned a score of 1 for each of the actor/actress/director who had previously been nominated for an award, and doubled that number if the person in question actually won the award. Similarly, for each film, we computed a COST variable by summing the production budget numbers from Baseline Services, and the money spent on advertising, from various issues of Leading National Advertisers (1998-2001).

Our dependent variable is the first week box office revenue. We focus on opening weekend box office numbers given past research which suggests that the ability of critics to influence box office earnings is strongest in the opening week, and then declines as other factors including stepped up studio promotions and word of mouth take over. The results of four regressions show that, as far as critical reviews are concerned, the variables POSRATIO and NEGRATIO are significant predictors of box office revenues, and replicates prior research. However, over and above the effects of positive and negative reviews, we find that critical disagreement has a significant effect on box office earnings, but its effect is qualified by the film’s production and advertising budget (DISAGREE by COST interaction). To explicate the interaction, we separate the films into lower and higher disagreement categories based upon a median split of the DISAGREE scores. Similarly, we split the films into lower and higher cost categories using a median split of the COST variable. Consistent with the laboratory study, we find that for films with higher production and advertising budgets, an increase in critical disagreement helps box office revenues. However, for films with lower production and advertising budgets, there is no effect of critical disagreement.

Taken together, our results support the Prospect Theory contention that consumers are risk seeking in losses. They do not show support, however, for the corresponding risk aversion in gains. We speculate that, in the laboratory setting, participants endowed with neutral expectations could at best hope for an average film, and therefore may not have envisioned the situation as a gain. Similarly, when we analyse actual box office revenues, since the films with lower production and advertising budgets make so little money on the average (around $3.5 million in our sample), it may be difficult to disentangle any effects of review.
REFERENCES
Extended Abstract

By defining regret as the reaction to a simple difference between the outcomes of a chosen and rejected alternative in a set, economic theorists seem to have limited the applicability of their work more than, perhaps, is necessary (Gilovich and Medvec 1995). Nowadays, consumers are increasingly faced with information overload and consequently are hard pressed to process all available product or service information, before making a choice. Individuals may thus receive unexpected outcomes regarding some brands they were unaware of, and had never considered, after a purchase has been made. How do individuals respond to those similar, but unknown brands that emerge from Consumer Reports at this post-purchase stage? To compare with a superior unknown brand (upward comparison, Wills 1981) or leave it out of the consideration?

The present study was encouraged to explore the relationship between consumers’ consideration behaviors and their feelings of experienced regret towards these brands; this was done in the context of a comparative set, comprising three alternatives; one being a brand the consumer was unaware of and the other two being brands in the original consideration set. We specifically focused on the chosen brand, which became a compromised option, when the consumer was unaware of, was added. In addition, research has shown that the order in which information is encountered has a strong impact on the judgment of products (Kardes and Herr 1990). Based on this, we also expect that order effects in judgments of sequentially presented brands, resulting in different strengths of experienced regret in a consumer’s post-purchase evaluation.

Hypotheses

We test the following hypotheses:

H1: Adding a superior unknown brand to an existing consideration set of two alternatives at the post-purchase evaluation stage will make the better performing chosen brand (relative to the rejected brand) a compromise or middle option, which leads to consumer regret (upward comparison).

H2: Adding an inferior unknown brand to an existing consideration set of two alternatives at the post-purchase evaluation stage will make the poorly performing chosen brand (relative to the rejected brand) a compromise or middle option and that decreases consumer regret (downward comparison).

H3: Order effects will moderate consumer regret in post-purchase comparisons.

Methods

Design. This study used a 2 (performance of a chosen brand, relative to a rejected brand, in the initial two-alternative consideration set: better vs. poorer) x 3 (performance of an unknown brand, relative to the consideration set: none vs. superior vs. inferior) x 2 (direction of performance comparison: high-to-low vs. low-to-high) between-subjects factorial design.

Procedure. Data were collected at two large shopping malls in a northwestern city (sample size was 579). Each participant was assigned randomly. They were instructed to read the scenario; the first page described one of the twelve conditions. Each participant assumed the role of Mr. George who unfortunately had broken his mobile phone and needed a new one as soon as possible. After narrowing the search, Mr. George considered two brands (A and B, in the initial consideration set), and decided to buy brand A due to his expectations that it would perform better than brand B. One month later, when Mr. George was reading a morning newspaper, he saw the “Annual Consumer Report on the quality of 2004 newly-developed mobile phone” list, which compared information about brands C, A and B, which were described and organised in a matrix format.

Results

There was a significant interaction effect between the chosen brand and the brand, of which the consumer was unaware, in the experience of regret, F(1, 567) = 88.41, p < .001, ω² = .238. Simple main effects further revealed that the brand, of which the consumer was unaware, had a significant effect on regret when the chosen brand was in a favorable condition, F (2, 290) = 190.25, p < .001, but not when the chosen brand was in an unfavorable condition, F (2, 287) = .25, p > .50. In addition, results of the contrast analysis showed that participants, whose product was favoured, and who encountered a superior brand they had been unaware of, reported significantly higher regret than those that had not encountered a brand they were unaware of, F(2, 288) = 380.44, p < .001. Thus, H1 was supported. On the other hand, the other contrasts showed that participants, whose product was not the favoured one, and who encountered a inferior brand they had been unaware of, reported no significant difference in regret than those that had not encountered a brand they were unaware of, F(2, 285) = .03, p = .87, n.s. H2 was not supported.

In addition, a three-way interaction for chosen brand by unknown brand by direction-of-comparison was significant, F (2, 567) = 7.68, p < .01, ω² = .026. Specific contrasts showed that participants who had purchased a favoured brand, and who then encountered a superior brand of which they had been unaware of, reported significantly higher regret when the direction-of-comparison was presented from high-to-low than when it was presented from low-to-high, F(1, 94) = 8.04, p < .01. On the contrary, participants who had purchased a product that was not the favoured one, and who then encountered an inferior brand of which they had been unaware of, reported no significant effect on the lowering of regret, no matter the direction-of-comparison was presented from low-to-high or from high-to-low, F(1, 93) = .91, p = .34, n.s. Therefore, H3 was partially supported.

Discussion

The results of the present study supported H1 and partially H3, which demonstrated that the brand, of which the consumer had been unaware, did influence consumer regret, especially when it was a superior unknown brand.
added into an existing consideration set of two alternatives. This finding also suggested that consumers in an upward comparison situation suffered higher experienced regret when the order of comparison information of the three brands was ranked from high to low performance than when they were ranked from low to high performance.

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TO BE OR NOT TO BE? THE INFLUENCE OF DISSOCIATIVE REFERENCE GROUPS ON CONSUMER PREFERENCES

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Reference groups refer to those groups or group members who are "psychologically significant for one's attitudes and behavior" (Turner 1991, p. 5). The current paper focuses on an underrepresented topic in the marketing and psychology literatures - the role of dissociative reference groups (i.e., those groups we wish to avoid being associated with) in influencing consumer preferences. There are many examples of consumers avoiding products associated with particular groups: the teenager who doesn't want to wear his dad’s aftershave, the baby boomer who won’t use products associated with being "elderly," the college student who avoids dressing "geeky," etc. Although anecdotal evidence suggests that people are often motivated to avoid being associated with particular groups, we empirically examine the hypothesis that dissociative reference groups can influence consumer judgment and behavior and identify key boundary conditions of these effects. The majority of extant research on reference groups has focused on the role of membership reference groups (i.e., those groups we are currently members of [e.g., a family, one's gender group, etc.]) and aspirational reference groups (i.e., those groups we aspire to be members of [e.g., celebrities, athletes, etc.]) in influencing consumer preferences. The current research suggests that not only are people often motivated to attain positive outcomes (as might be attained by aligning the self with membership and aspirational reference groups), but they often are motivated to avoid negative outcomes (as might be accomplished by avoiding dissociative reference groups). Thus, it is predicted that dissociative reference groups can exert social influence over consumer judgment and choice.

In study 1, we used gender to manipulate reference group and predicted that males would be less inclined to choose and would have more negative evaluations of a product that is associated with a dissociative (i.e., female) reference group than a product that is not associated with a dissociative reference group. We tested these predictions by having participants imagine they would be attending a banquet for work. They were asked to choose from among various menu options. In the chef’s cut condition participants’ choices of the key item—steak—included the chef’s cut (10 oz) or the house cut (12 oz). In the ladies’ cut condition participants’ choices of steak included the ladies’ cut (10 oz) or the house cut (12 oz). Thus, this study used a 2(participant gender: male vs. female) x 2(reference group label: ladies’ cut vs. chef’s cut) x 2(steak size: 10 oz vs. 12 oz) mixed model design (with steak size as the within subjects measure). Specifically, we predicted that, in the ladies cut condition, males would be less likely to choose and would have less positive evaluations of the ladies’ cut (10 oz) than the house cut (12 oz) steak. We did not predict a similar difference in choice or evaluations in the chef’s cut condition (i.e., between the chef’s cut (10 oz) and the house cut (12 oz) steaks). Finally, we predicted that females would not be influenced by the alternative reference group labels because being a “lady” is not a dissociative reference group for them. The first dependent variable was the proportion of males and females who indicated they would choose the 10 oz versus the 12 oz steak for their entrée. The second dependent variable was participants’ evaluations of the different steaks. The results revealed that, as predicted, males were significantly less likely to select and had more negative evaluations of the ladies’ cut than the house cut steak. There was no difference in choice or evaluations when the 10 oz steak was called chef’s cut. In addition, females were not differentially influenced by the reference group label.

In study 2, we used a similar methodology as study 1, but also manipulated whether male participants were consuming the steak in public or private. The findings of this study demonstrated that males were less likely to choose and had more negative evaluations of the ladies’ cut steak when consumption was to occur in public rather than private.

Finally, in study 3, we operationalised dissociative reference groups in a different way—by examining national identity. In this study, Canadian students were primed (versus not primed) with their own national identity and were asked to evaluate a variety of stationery items, including the key item—a pen. In the American condition the pen was called “American” (which represents a dissociative reference group for Canadians) and in the neutral condition the pen was called “Vintage.” Once again, participants were motivated to avoid a product associated with a dissociative reference group. In particular, Canadian students rated a pen that was associated with American identity (“American Pen”) more negatively then a pen that was neutral (“Vintage Pen”), particularly when participants own identity was primed.

Taken together, these three studies provide evidence that consumers can indeed be influenced by the desire to avoid particular group memberships. The current studies extend the classic literature on reference group influence on consumer preferences by examining the influence of dissociative associations on consumer evaluations and choice. In addition, we demonstrated that dissociative effects can be stronger and more reliable than associative effects. In study 1, although males were motivated to avoid the product associated with a dissociative group, females did not favor an alternative that was associated with a membership group. Important moderators of these dissociative reference group effects were also identified. In particular, the impact of reference groups on consumer preferences was heightened when consumption was to occur in public rather than private and when group membership was primed rather than not primed. It is suggested that the role of dissociative influence is an important consideration for both consumers and marketing managers.

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'LET'S GO ONLINE': A CONTEXTUAL REVIEW OF THE CONSUMPTION OF INTERNET IN MAINLAND CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The Internet has accelerated China’s transformation into a modern society by helping its people become more enlightened and empowered. Online games, chatrooms, instant message communications, online stores and auctions, forums, blogs, and bulletin boards, are creating a new culture and a new horizon for communication and consumption. This study reviews the consumption of the Internet in mainland China from a socio-cultural perspective. It explores how Chinese “netizens” construct their new individual and collective identities in the cyberspace. The study also discusses issues related to the negotiation of traditional Chinese culture, and the freedom and equality in the Internet. Impacts raised by the Internet are discussed in the last part of the paper.

INTRODUCTION

“I was excited about the prospect of introducing the Internet to China because it would create an open platform where six billion people on earth could suddenly share the same central nervous system, allowing them to communicate with each other”

– Dr. Charles Chao Yang Zhang, founder of SOHU.com Inc. (2004, 145)

The rapid socioeconomic changes of the previous two decades have created a new phenomenon in mainland China: a huge active community of Internet users. During this process, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had to give way to new social and political actors, even if it still claims absolute political power. The rise of the market economy, increasing exposure to the “Western” world, advances in technology, and the rising influence of China in the global market, have constructed a dual society in contemporary China, simultaneously dominated by both the state and the market.

The Internet, which was introduced to mainland China during the early 1990s, has become a “necessity” for most urban Chinese in the past decade. One of the main reasons that the Internet was not popular in China until recently was the scarcity of Chinese language content on the Internet (Kennedy 2000; Rayburn and Conrad 2004). The situation is changing now, it was projected that the number of broadband subscribers by the end of 2007 will be 57 million broadband subscribers (R. Rayburn and Conrad 2004, 471). According to a survey conducted by the China Internet Network Information Center (2005), there were 103 million Internet users in mainland China. Further, China is expected to have 57 million broadband subscribers by the end of 2007 (Electronic News 2005). The rapid emergence of the Internet in China is an unexpected and unaccountable process because the Internet presents a whole range of challenges, ambiguities, and contradictions, not only to the existing political, technological, and economic infrastructure of the society, but also to our understanding of the adoption and use of the media, old and new, in all societies (Zhu and He 2002, 489).

According to Miller and Slater (2000), the Internet, is no longer a monolithic or placeless “cyberspace”; rather, it is numerous new technologies, used by diverse people, in diverse real-world locations. Internet consumption in China may be seen as a kind of socio-cultural reformation process. The adoption of Internet and the construction of cyber culture are critical events in this rapid growing information society. The aim of this paper is to study the changing behavioral patterns involving consumption of the Internet in mainland China, with particular reference to socio-economic change. The construction of new “net” identities, places for “freedom” and “equality”, and the re-negotiation of traditional Chinese beliefs and values on the Internet will be discussed. Three research propositions will be proposed as future research opportunities. The impacts of the Internet will be discussed in the last part of this article.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE IN CHINA

The economic reforms initiated by the Chinese government some 25 years ago created rapid economic, social, and culture changes. The growing integration of the world market, and the influences of globalisation and technological innovations all have had a great impact on changing Chinese life spheres – most visible among today’s younger generation in the modern urban conglomerations (Giese 2004, 20). The launch of the “Open-door Policy” in 1977 increased the interaction and communication between mainland China and the rest of the world. The introduction of the “One-child Policy” created a “4-2-1 syndrome”, meaning four grandparents and two parents pampering one child, (Su 1994; Jing 2000). The rapid growth of the economy led to current conditions in which an urban middle class Chinese family can afford more luxury goods like fashions, high-end home furniture, cars, home electronics, and various kinds of entertainments. With the growth in use of information technologies in the world market, increasing demands on computer and telecommunication products have been noticed in China. Most Chinese seem to want to take their places in the “information society” in order to obtain more information, knowledge and freedom in cyberspace.

INTERNET USAGE IN CHINA

The Chinese government has paid much attention to developing new consumer technology along with the economy. During the last decade, information and communication technology in China has been developing enormously fast. The magazine Computer World states that China will be the biggest information technology market in the world by 2010 as it continues to grow in various sectors (Li, Kirkup, and Hodgson 2001, 417). The increasing number of Internet and telecommunication users in Mainland China has created a new “information” era. Paper magazines and newspaper are being replaced by online versions, consumer photographs are more commonly presented in the digital format than hardcopies, email and instant messages have replaced handwritten letters and documents. As in the West, new communication and information sharing methods have been introduced to the Internet, like blogs, online dairies, bit-torrent downloads, online forums, e-tailing, and so on.

As telecommunication has contributed to the creation of peer-to-peer private spaces for communication, the...
Internet in China has created multiple symbolic spaces for public communication and discourse, thus bridging individuals and groups independent of space and time (Giese 2004, 22). With the introduction of inexpensive hardware, most Chinese people, and especially those living in the urban districts, can afford the limited cost of accessing to Internet, and becoming new members of the “information society”. Among users in major cities (such as Beijing in the north and Guangzhou in the south), going online has become the second most popular leisure activity after watching television (Zhu and He 2002; Zhu and Wang 2005, 50). The Internet is used primarily as an interpersonal communication medium (email and peer-to-peer and group interaction) and secondly as an information medium (search, news, browsing). Further, online entertainment, like games, music, and movies, has become increasingly popular (Zhu and Wang 2005). Despite the relatively short history of the Internet in mainland China, usage of this medium already represents an integrated leisure activity for the urban middle classes, and particularly the younger generation (Giese 2004, 22-23).

**DISCUSSION**

A Reconstruction of “individual and collective identities in virtual space

As a medium used by nearly 100 million people, the Internet has doubtless brought fundamental changes to Chinese society (Zhu and Wang 2005, 52). Social change, globalisation and the general uncertainty about possible outcomes of the processes all have created a strong desire for commonality and the emotional security of shared identity. The resulting widespread search for individual and collective “self” – almost unnecessary to say – seldom follow the Chinese Communist lines (Giese 2004, 20). The Internet offers consumers both new models of the mind and a new medium on which to project their ideas and fantasies (Turkle 1995). Therefore, new typologies of “self” have been created in virtual space as well. These new identities were not restricted by age, race, gender, religious background, education, career, cultural background, or language. At the same time, a strong desire for “collective” self has been observed in China. Common virtual spaces like forums, blogs, bulletin boards (BBSs), and so on attract over a million Chinese “netisens” to share their information and feelings, often with extreme passion. Thousands of BBSs, what can be called “virtual Good Places” or “Third Places” (Oldenburg 2001) on the Internet, provide users spaces that facilitate the discursive construction of identities. Furthermore, in contrast to past decades in China, this process now is self-organised and takes place in public (Giese 2004, 23).

Collective action in itself is an indication that the actors involved have achieved a certain extent of collective identity (Melucci 1995; Nip 2004), while at the same time acting as a process for building a collective identity (Calhoun 1991; Melucci 1995; Nip 2004). Online games are one of the most popular Internet activities in China, particularly for the teenagers and young adults. These online games create a new “third place” (Oldenburg 2001) for the “netisens”, where they are able to step through the looking glass and live in the virtual world (Turkle 1995, 1). Online games like SimLife, SimCity, and SimAnt provide a platform for the “netisens” to build up their virtual communities in the hyperreal world. A high degree of specialization can be seen as the “netisens” are able to construct their individual identities in the games. At the same time, a high degree of collectivism can also be observed. The players, like the people in the real world, have to build up their own community and networks in the virtual world. They build up a collective identity in order to achieve the acceptance by “others” in the virtual world. For example, one of the popular chatrooms in China, QQ.com, has a function that allows the members to buy clothes, jewelry, and accessories to decorate their virtual images in the chatroom and instant message systems. The users use “Q-money” to purchase these fashionable products to dress up their virtual selves. At the same time, they can purchase these goods and give them to their net friends as virtual gifts in the chatroom. Fashion trends and social behavioral activities like gift-giving all exist in the virtual space. Users also build up social hierarchies and class distinction in cyberspace; in Bourdieu’s term (1984), fashion capital, social capital and cultural capital all exist in the virtual world. Users try to distinguish themselves from others through acquiring fashionable and “virtually expensive” fashion items. As a result, a new community and new social discipline, based on the cultural practice and behaviors in the real world, are developed in the cyberspace.

In addition, the construction of collective identities also appears in the online games arena. The top games in China differ fundamentally from their counterparts in the U.S. (Entertainment Software Association 2005) and Japan (Tsang 2004), where video and online games emphasise individual competition and achievement, as well as personal development. In contrast, the Chinese “netisens” are most attracted to massively-multi-player online role-playing games (Figure 1) where players take on roles within a social hierarchy and engage in coordinated strategies or other collective activity (Martinsons 2005b, 51). In comparison, Americans and Japanese have a strong desire to succeed on their own, while Chinese game players tend to seek to be part of a successful group or team. For examples, the most frequently played game genre in America was puzzle, board games, game show, trivia and card games (Entertainment Software Association 2005) (Figure 2) and the most frequently played game genre in Japan were action games (e.g. Mario Brothers) and role-playing games (e.g. Final Fantasy Series) (Tsang 2004).
In sum, the individual and collective identities of the Chinese Internet consumers are a form of the “presentation of self” (Goffman 1967). The Internet is not only a “private” place for the Internet consumers, but also a “public” place for gathering by Internet consumers (e.g. in chatrooms, forum, online games, etc.). The social hierarchy and order are the same as the real world in the Internet; the only different is that the “identities” (either individual or collective) are more malleable and are varied from time to time. Internet consumers are no longer limited by their cultural, social, and demographic background in the cyberspace. The first research proposition regarding the construction of identities is proposed as follows:

**Proposition 1:** The Internet is a place for creating fantasy and virtual community. Interactions between the Internet users bridge the “private” self to the “public” community. The virtual space of the Internet provide room for Chinese Internet users to construct their individual and collective identities regardless of physical boundaries like age, gender, ethnicity, family background, and education.

**THE RE-NEGOTIATION OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE VALUES AND BELIEFS IN THE ONLINE GAMES**

The imaginary world of cyberspace is extensively influenced by culture. In our imaginary social relationships, as in our actual social behavior, our lives are dominated by cultural forces (Caughey 1984). The increasing popularity of massive multi-player online role-playing games (MMORPG) can be seen in Figure 1.
Also, Chinese game players tend to seek to be part of a successful group or team. The social interaction in online fantasy games also appeals to the youth who often lack siblings due to China’s One-Child Policy (officially adopted in 1979). Further Chinese legends of knights (Figure 3) and other Chinese myths are the favorite game themes in mainland China\(^\text{14}\) (Figure 4). As a result, interactive games not only transform leisure time in China, they also expose young people to traditional Chinese cultural artifacts and values while giving them opportunities to develop their social skills (Martinsons 2005b, 51).

\[\text{FIGURE 3}\]
Popular Online Games in mainland China with the theme of Chinese legends of knights (Trade Development Council, http://www.tdctrade.com/imn/02032804/ecomm09.htm)

\[\text{FIGURE 4}\]
The most favorite Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG) theme in Mainland China (Shanghai iResearch Co., Ltd. 2005, 24).

\[^{14}\text{According to the China Online Game Research Report 2004, the top three MMORPG Gamers’ Favorite Game Theme were (1) Chinese style knight legend (30.6%), (2) Western style fantasy (24.9%), and (3) Chinese style myth (20.8%) (Shanghai iResearch Co., Ltd. 2005, 24).}\]
another world with its own distinctive structure and patterns. At the same time, traditional Chinese cultural artifacts and values are “reconstructed” in cyberspace. For example, the online game players can construct their own “Chinese history” in these games. The reconstructed Chinese culture and values created a new “net-culture” in cyberspace. In summary, the “net-sens” were “attached” to traditional Chinese culture and values, and at the same time, were “detached” from these traditional values in the newly constructed cyber-world. The fantasy world is not only a place for the Chinese consumers to create their own imaginaries, but also a place for them to create new experiences and social relations (Caughey 1984). The “new” experiences, social relations, and social orders in the hyperreal world might become one of the elements of the “new” Chinese culture. For example, in “Jin Yong the Story Chivalrous” (Figure 5), which is the one of the most frequently played online games in Mainland China (Hong Kong Trade Development Council 2002), the game players have to deal with the characters in the novels by Jin Yong. As Chinese nationalism is a strong theme in Jin Yong’s work, Jin Yong places great emphasis on Han Chinese self-determination and identity, and many of his novels are set in time periods when China proper was occupied or under the threat of occupation by northern peoples such as Khitans, Jurchens, Mongols, or Manchus.

**FIGURE 5**

![Part of the Scenery in “Jin Yong the Story Chivalrous”](http://online-game.com.cn/jy/jy/xkd/xkd-1.html)

In sum, game players will deal with issues of Chinese nationalism, cultural identities, ethnic majority and minorities, Chinese history in different periods of time, and the classic novels when playing the Chinese-oriented online games. A re-negotiation of Chinese culture and values will be the side-product of the online game in contemporary China. The second research proposition which involves the re-negotiation of traditional Chinese values and beliefs is proposed as follows:

**Proposition 2:** As traditional Chinese values and beliefs become the “ingredients” for online games, game players can freely mix and match the historical events and characters during the games. The social hierarchy is reconstructed in the online games which allow the game players to create the only disciplines and laws in the virtual society. The interactions between traditional Chinese values and the power of creating the “fantasy” develop a new preception of “Chineseness” among the “online generation”.

**THE CONTROLLED BODY IN THE PLACE OF “EQUALITY” AND “FREEDOM”**

The Internet might be the place where people can gain access to true “equality.” Differences between their genders (Li, Kirkup, and Hodgson 2001), races, cultures, age groups, class, and language backgrounds are non-existent in cyberspace. There is an equal chance for women, ethnic minorities, the elderly, teenagers, and working class people to obtain information and engage in the electronic communication, although literacy and Internet access are needed. The country’s opening to the outside world. The rapid expansion of access to the Internet and reforms in state-owned media reveal a greater flow of information within China and between China and the rest of the world. The rise of usage of the Internet has provided Chinese with unprecedented opportunities to access a diverse range of information and perspectives. Furthermore, citizens’ rising demands for greater freedom of expression, combined with new technologies, are challenging government controls and facilitating conditions for the growth of civil society and the emergence of free press (Qiang 2003, 70).

The Internet is the first medium to realise the principles of free speech and self-governance, effectively breaking the Communist Party’s monopoly on public information (Martinsons, Ng, Wong, and Yuen 2005, 67). An increasing numbers of “self-media” (zi meiti) sites, which are run by individuals, gather, organise, and spread news and commentary, have created a new information era in mainland China (Qiang 2003, 72). People not only can read messages from these “self-media” sites, but also post their messages and expressions on these sites. Interactive
communications and a corresponding “freedom” are achieved in this way. Before the Internet emerged as a source of information dissemination, the Chinese media were not a forum for public discussion and debate. Now, the Internet facilitates discussion on public affairs, especially through online bulletin boards. As authorities stifle citizens’ newly emerging freedom to express themselves and access information, many people who were indifferent to politics have been galvanised to defend their fundamental rights. And because their sense of identity has been fostered by the Internet’s culture of free expression and individuality, they are willing to express their dissatisfaction publicly (Qiang 2003, 73-74). Internet consumers are concerned about the democratization of structures of everyday life and work for the creation of new life spaces (Cohen 1985; Ofte 1985; Johnston, Laráñua, and Gusfield 1994; Giddens 1999; Nip 2004). An increasing number of new areas of “content” can be found on the websites which link with sensitive issues, in other word – taboos, in mainland China – for example, religious beliefs, gay and lesbian issues (e.g. Chinese Gay and Lesbian Website, address: http://www.txl.com) , and political discussions. This reflects a variety of ideas being generated in the netizens’ minds in contemporary China. However, the Chinese government’s censorship system on the Internet has inhibited the “freedom” of Internet users. According to research by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School (Einhorn 2002), up to 15% of foreign websites have been rendered inaccessible to the Internet user in China. The key foreign news sources, such as BBC News Online, are routinely blocked from Chinese Internet users. Other major sites, such as CNN and TIME magazine, are generally available only on a content-filtered basis (Burkholder 2005). “Sensitive” websites are closed by the Internet police and the developer will be arrested in extreme cases. Also, the state is also trying to consolidate and gain control of Internet cafes while systematically deleting discussion of Taiwan, Tibet, the Falun Gong spiritual movements, and democracy from online chatrooms (Martinsons, et al. 2005, 67). For example, after the mass demonstration at Zhongnanhai by the Falun Gong practitioners and general public on August 24, 1999, the Chinese government blocked all Falun Gong websites in the Internet. Furthermore, a dozen of anti-Falun Gong websites have been created by various government agencies (Palmer 2004). In the new cybernetics (Wiener 1961; 1989) world of the Internet, netizens can control and communicate with others in cyberspace freely, which means that they are the real “governors” in the cyberspace (Rossak 1986). On the surface, the Internet is a totally “free” platform for Internet consumers to express their ideas and opinions; however, such “total freedom” does not exist in China.

Bulletin Boards (BBs) act as public spaces where experimenting with alternative identities can be negotiated without regard to ethnic, regional or local divisions, gender or sexual orientation, shared biographical experiences, or political opinions (Giese 2004, 24). However, Internet knowledge is restricted by the education level and language ability of the users, and lowiterate users can only access to limited space on the Internet. Therefore, the Internet is not fully a place for “equality.”

In sum, the Internet is a “double-edged sword;” it offers new venues for discussion; the technology also allows the government vastly greater ability to spy on its citizens (Menon 2000, 82). On one hand, the Chinese government provides an “open” platform for Internet consumers; on the other hand, the Chinese government still monitors the Internet closely and censors undesirable content and usage (such as criticism of the Communist Party and calls for political reform) (Martinsons et al. 2005, 67). Due to lower education levels and language abilities among rural users. The Internet, is not fully a place for “equality”. The third research proposition regarding the “equality” and “freedom” in the Internet is proposed as follows:

**Proposition 3:** The Internet is perceived as a place of “freedom” and “equality” among the Chinese Internet users because of the abundance of information and the user-centric platform. However, the censorship policy of the Chinese government has limited the freedom and equality of Chinese Internet users. In other words, Chinese Internet users, compared to Internet users in the rest of the world, are enjoying the “fake” or partial freedom and equality in the virtual space. Furthermore, the censorship system inhibits freedom of speech in virtual space. A more disciplined society with marginal freedom and equality was created.

**CONCLUSION**

On August 21, 2000, President Jiang Zemin gave an important lecture to the World Computer Congress 2000 in Beijing; he stressed the full use of the Internet in China (CNNIC 2003). From a global perspective, China has gone from near irrelevance during the 1960s to being seen by the West as quaint, exotic, and inscrutable, before more recently emerging as a computer and economic heavyweight. The Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 will celebrate the country’s latest rise to prominence and they represent an important milestone in its transformation from an isolated Maoist state to a full-fledged member of the international community (Martinsons 2005a, 46). The current Internet consumption patterns in China are closely related to the construction of individual and collective identities. The “self” construction process also interacts with the traditional Chinese cultural value and beliefs. A renegotiation of cultural identities and a re-construction of social hierarchy and order are taking place in the cyberspace. The censorship system in China limits the accessibility of information and creates a “pseudo-free” and “pseudo-equal” arena for the Chinese Internet consumers.

In conclusion, with the dramatic growth of the Internet and online communications in mainland China, we should aware the drawbacks and the dark side of the “information society”, such as the addiction to the hyperreal life in the young generation. This may create a “detached” generation in Chinese society which might affect the development of China in the coming decades. The young generation in China spend most of its leisure time in online games, chatrooms, and Internet surfing and often neglects studies and social life. The social interactions are only taking place in the virtual world rather than the real world. The re-negotiation of Chinese culture and values creates a hybrid culture and affects the continuity of traditional Chinese culture and values in China. The future opportunity for research in this area is to study how the individuals interact with “others” in the virtual community. How the Chinese Internet users present themselves in the worldwide web and how their build up their collective identities is one of the promising directions for future study. How the Chinese values and beliefs are re-negotiated and what is the form of such values and beliefs presented in the virtual and fantasy world is another fruitful research direction. Also, the conflict between the centralised control and the “power”
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INTERACTION DYNAMICS IN AN ONLINE COMMUNITY: A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION GENRES
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The growth of online communities has created borderless and virtual spaces where geographically dispersed consumers can become participants in informational and commercial exchanges. In developed economies, online communities play an important role in the social and economic life of consumers. For instance, 40 percent of Americans participate in online communities (Parker, 2004) and one-third of visitors to e-commerce sites used community features such as chat rooms and bulletin boards (Brown, Tilton & Woodside, 2002). While the importance of this phenomenon is undeniable, consumer researchers, public policy makers, and marketers do not have a full understanding of the relationship dynamics in these communities. Although we can build on insights from research with traditional communities, there are some dissimilarities between real/traditional and virtual communities (e.g., anonymity, nature of relationship etc.) that must be acknowledged. One such key difference (and also research opportunity) is that online communities are an environment in which member-generated content is encouraged and can be captured (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997). The emerging question is how to explore and understand the social interactions within a community and the ways interactions evolve and change over time?

This article seeks to depart from traditional life-cycle community development models, by using rhetorical genre repertoires as an analytic apparatus for investigating a community’s communicative practices. Accordingly, in order to understand a community’s communicative practices, we must examine the repertoire of genres that are routinely enacted by members of the community. A classification of community’s interactions will be rhetorically sound if it contributes to an understanding of how communicative practices work – that is, if it reflects the experience of the people who create and interpret the communicative practices (see Miller, 1984).

In this ethnography (Kozinets, 2002), we analysed text data from the discourse of bulletin boards hosted at a selected Internet community, BabyCenter.com (a website for new and expectant parents). The unit of analysis was the verbatim thread transcript, which was operationalised as a post (seed) with all of the replies. During the initial phase of data collection, messages were collected for a one-month period from five different bulletin boards (cross sectional) at two points in time (semi-longitudinal, September 1999 and November 2000). Across the five boards and two periods, these data reflected different community life stages (as communities are organised by pregnancy due-dates). In the second phase of data collection, a full longitudinal study was conducted. The complete text of all messages of one bulletin board was captured for a nine months period starting with the inception of the community.

This analysis highlights the role that communicative genres play in a community’s evolution. The tremendous variety of communicative genres observed in the data called for a deeper understanding of the sources of shifts in communicative genres, and of the ways in which these dynamics inspire communities’ transformational processes. Based on analysis of communities’ communicative practices, we developed a two-dimensional typology of communicative genre repertoires. This typology enabled us to develop a deeper understanding of the sources of shifts in communicative genre, and of the ways in which these dynamics inspire communities’ transformational processes. The two dimensions are: (1) identity orientation (i.e., the focus of the communicative genre) and (2) patterns of interaction (i.e., the functions that communicative genres serve). First, we show that the expression and nature of communicative genres change as a result of members’ contrasting struggle between social identity and personal identity. Online communities’ communicative practices are co-determined by the simultaneous and dynamic forces of members’ desires for involvement (i.e., social identity or commitment) and independence (i.e., personal identity or individualism). Second, we propose that communicative genres reflect two overarching and conceptually distinct interaction patterns: (1) an informational/instrumental/task-oriented communicative act, and (2) a symbolic/expressive/socio-emotional communicative act.

Our analysis of the longitudinal data collected in phase 2 uncovered eight periods in the life of this community, demonstrating that community’s development is a continuous process of reciprocal social construction. As such, this novel perspective provides guidance on the interplay between a community’s development and circumstances events, on triggers of change, and the mechanisms that cause a community to remain in any stable period. This analysis calls attention to the fact that complex systems like online communities never settle on a fixed state. On the contrary, these systems are subject to constant perturbations, which drive bursts of transient behavior. The netnographic account demonstrates that change events encompass both macro-level forces such as periods in a community’s life span (e.g., acquaintance period, first trimester of pregnancy, etc.) and immediate situations (e.g., a specific thread) that form the context for the community’s interpersonal communication processes. Our findings illustrate that events have a dynamic and relativistic meanings and that “a same event can evoke different responses from different groups or from the same group at different times” (Arrow, McGrath & Berdahl, 2000: 195). Thus, a particular event (e.g., a debated topic), at different times, has different implications for group’s communicative practices because the group and the context will have changed.

Through this study, it is hoped that consumer researchers will realise that there are many opportunities to leverage the unique assets of member-generated content, and that future research can advance our theoretical and practical understanding of this rich consumption arena. Also, we hope that future inquiries on how communities operate and the ways in which they can be improved in order to serve and protect consumers’ interests more efficiently will provide guidance for practitioners and policy-makers who create, manage and regulate these online communities. Understanding the detailed dynamics of a community’s interactions can provide directions for better managing and facilitating consumer-to-consumer interactions. This is critical because different types of communication within social groups can have very distinct and often unintended impacts on a group’s sense of...
satisfaction. It is assumed that the more satisfactory the experience, the less likely consumers are to switch to a competing community, and the more likely they are to spend more time on each visit, and hopefully getting benefits for themselves, their families, and society as a whole.

REFERENCES
Sacks, H. (1992 [1972]), Lectures on Conversation,
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

As connectedness is assumed to be of the utmost importance for positive word of mouth communication, we need an empirical, emic understanding of what constitutes connectedness between visitor and the website. This study aims to understand more deeply the meaning of connectedness from the consumer’s point of view, and uncover the underlying meaning of emotional ties between visitor and the website.

Interestingly, in the information technology and telecommunication literatures, connectedness is mostly interpreted as a ‘physical’ connection, either among users or between users and the virtual world (Dholakia et al. 2001; Townsend 2001) or in a website context, where Ha and James (1998) categorised connectedness as one of the physical interactivity dimensions. The intensity of relationships between brand and individual visitors through the interaction between members of brand communities have been discussed at length (Kozinets 2002; McAlexander et al. 2002). However, only recently have many researchers begun to explore the ‘emotional connection’ between visitor and the website as a media. Jung et al. (2004) introduced the Internet Connectedness Index (ICI), which includes the measurement of the emotional dependency of a person to Internet.

This study aims to extend the knowledge of emotional connectedness created in the digital environment. We suggest that the ‘customer-brand’ relationship concept and ‘program connectedness’ are appropriate to be applied in the context of website use. The relationship between website and visitors will grow over time, and the stronger the connection between visitor and the site, spreading the positive WOM about the website will likely to happen. We label this relationship construct as “website connectedness”. Deriving from Hagerty et al. (1993), our broad definition for website connectedness is: the intensity of emotional ties and relational proximity between a visitor and a website.

In this study, we use three qualitative research methods: (1) Online interviews, (2) Diary analysis, and (3) Observation of website usage and behavior. These three types of data collection aim for triangulation across sources and methods, which enhance the trustworthiness of the information gathered. By utilising these qualitative methods, we contribute to the development of the website connectedness construct from an emic perspective, whereby interpretation identifies emerging themes from the data gathered, and we can better understand the nature of connectedness. The analysis focused on identifying themes that emerged from the transcripts, diaries and observational data.

The findings revealed various ways consumers can become intimate with websites and the reasons why. The different type of relationships between a website and its visitors are naturally analogous to the relationship between two individuals or between customer and a brand. It is classified into three primary relationship types: just friends, good acquaintances, and soul mates.

Surprisingly, frequency of visit did not determine the depth of the relationship between websites and their visitors, as is the common assumption in the literature. The ‘just friend’ websites were visited for around 10-15 minutes duration for each visit, while the ‘soul mate’ websites could hold the interest of visitors from between 20 minutes and three hours duration per visit.

The emic perspective that we have illuminated here shows us that website connectedness consists of three major themes: (1) relatability, (2) dependency, and (3) sense of community. These correspond to many of the etic perspectives discussed in the psychology literature. These include the degree of liking an environment (Eisenberg et al. 2003), the quality of the emotional bond between one person and another (Lezin et al. 2004), or relatedness (Townsend and McWhirter 2005). Beyers et al. (2003) describe close parent-adolescent relationships as having elements of mutual reciprocity, trust and dependency. Zeldin and Topitzes (2002) explain the existence of sense of community in neighborhood connectedness. Ijsselstein et al. (2003) suggests that connectedness includes affective benefits such as a feeling of staying in touch, and a sense of belonging and intimacy.

Connectedness in a website context needs to be seen from different perspectives. We consider that it is not merely a physical connection between the visitor and the virtual world as suggested by Dholakia et al. (2001). Further, connectedness is not only about the virtual connection between people in the mobile phone or telecommunication environment (Townsend 2001). We argue that the connectedness concept in this context corresponds to the psychology and education literatures, which place greater emphasis on emotional bonding developed over time. As claimed by Russell et al. (2004), this type of connectedness reveals the intensity of emotional ties as well as the proximity between audience/visitor and the media. The stronger the emotional connection, the more likely the visitor will stay tuned in a longer period of time, and positive word-of-mouth about the website/company who owned it, can be spread. We build on Russell et al.’s (2004) conceptualization in that we outline three ways in which the emotional connection is built in the online environment.

To build an emotional connection between the visitor and the website (captured by website connectedness), these three ways are by increasing the relatability factor, increasing the dependency factor and/or to increase the community feelings. In other words, in order to transform the relationship between visitor and website from ‘just friends’ to ‘soul mate’, website owners should focus on improving one or all of the relatability, dependency and sense of community components.

The goal of maintaining a website is all about building an emotional connection between the visitors and the website. The connected visitors could be the most important group of customers in the referral process, and to create positive word-of-mouth communication. This research study gives a different and new perspective to non-meter website performance measurements, providing a means of detecting whether a transformation from ‘just friends’ to ‘soul mates’ has been made in the relationship.
between visitors and website.

REFERENCES

This article considers issues of online identity communication in forum-based virtual communities of consumption (VCCs). Specifically, this exploratory research is novel in its investigation of how the interpretations of identity cues vary among participants. The online interaction of ten online community members was observed for a six month period and face-to-face, semi-structured interviews captured their subjective understanding of the experience. We report that “motive” to participate in VCCs and “focus of attention” appear to affect interpretations of online identity. The findings contribute to our understanding of VCCs as places and objects of consumption as well as contexts for consumer socialization.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer socialization in groups, whether in subcultures of consumption or brand communities, has been widely recognised as an important topic in consumer research. These types of contexts have been shown to effect consumers in several ways, through, for example, the help and sharing of information (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001), advocating the product use to outsiders (Muniz and Schau 2005), exerting normative pressures on insiders in regard consumption practices in some contexts (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Hermann 2005) while facilitating the transformative and emancipatory aspects of consumption in others (Muniz and Schau 2005).

Many of these affiliations based upon consumption activities are now occurring online (Virtual Communities of Consumption - VCCs) (Kozinets 1999). They, and more broadly the internet, have been described as a place and object of consumption (Maignan and Lukas 1997) as well as context for consumer socialisation.

Previous research has highlighted the value of VCCs to marketing as relationship tools and revenue sources (Armstrong and Hagel 1996), as brand building platforms (McWilliam 2000), for their role in the word-of-mouth process (e.g. Bailey 2005; Bickart and Schindler 2001; Chatterjee 2001) and more generally as sources of information for customers (Okleshen and Grossbart 1998) and about customers (Catterall and Maclaran 2002) as well as a research strategy (Kozinets 1998, 2002). Several VCCs have been studied, such as the X-files (Kozinets 1997), Disney (Hausman and Minor 2001) and Apple Newton (Muniz and Schau 2005). Offline communities can also have an online manifestation as in the case of the European Car Clubs (Algesheimer, et al. 2005) and Star Trek (Kozinets 2001). In this paper we focus in particular on forum-based VCCs.

A few consumer research studies have looked at online identity communication issues by focusing on products and brands as sources of identity. For example Schau and Gilly (2003) considered symbolic consumption of products and brands in personal web pages to represent individual identity, Algesheimer et al. (2005) explored social identity as a result of brand affiliation, while others looked at the online community as part of the way in which consumer deeply experience a product or brand (c. f., Kozinets 1997; Muniz and Schau 2005). While products and brands are part of the repertoires of symbols used to communicate identity in online forums (Rutter and Smith 1999), they are not the only ones. In this research, starting from a Symbolic Interactionist view of social interaction (c. f., Blumer 1969; Goffman 1959; Mead 1913), we depart from previous consumer studies by focusing on the more fundamental issue of overall identity communication (not just through products and brands) and we explore how people interpret identity cues in forum based VCCs. More specifically this research aims to explore how the meaning of identity cues/symbols varies between participants. We believe that understanding this will offer insights into (1) how consumers relate to others in VCCs and how they experience the online interaction; this last point is important to clarify (2) the nature of the consumption of these experiences as well as how they (3) link into consumer socialization.

The focused literature review that follows is necessarily multi-disciplinary, as the issue of identity communication has attracted the interest of researchers from a number of disciplines. This can help our understanding in the marketing field.

FOCUSED LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on online identity is deceptively abundant. A number of researchers, across a number of disciplines, have investigated how people communicate identity in online forums; fewer have examined the interpretative processes involved.

Some researchers argue that the characteristics of the medium fundamentally limit one’s ability to communicate identity and therefore establish truly meaningful social relationships. For example Tanis and Postmes (2003) suggested that media vary in their capacity to transmit identity cues and meaning cues. Identity cues are often visual cues, which lack in computer-mediated-communication (CMC). This is consistent with the “cues-filtered out” approaches to technology effects (Culnan and Markus 1987), which in turn leads to uninhibited communication and, generally, antisocial and/or impersonal communication in CMC. “Flaming” or “trolling” phenomena (i.e., insults, swearing and hostile language online) are often quoted as real examples of this occurring.

Since then several studies reported examples of cues that people actually use to signal or infer identity online and many of these are in fact textual, hence demonstrating that identity is communicated and read online via textual cues as well (e. g., paralanguage in Lea and Spears 1992). Other studies have also shown that relationships can develop with time via textual cues (e. g., Precece 1999; Walther 1995). However, a full explanation of the interpretative processes behind this is still a matter for investigation.

Some theoretical and conceptual advances have been made in this regard. A stream of research is striving to explain the cognitive processes linked to the process of reading identity online. For example, the SIDE model offers...
insights on the cognitive processes by which communicators make inferences about others based on social stereotypes in conditions of visual anonymity (Spears and Lea 1992). Walther’s (1996) hyper-personal theory highlights the impression management aspects of CMC communication whereby senders selectively communicate the positive aspects about themselves and the receiver is likely to engage in idealised attributions, which, through a feedback loop, lead to an exaggerated perception of the other’s identity. Both the SIDE and hyper-personal theories have received strong empirical support within the experimental tradition (e.g., Postmes, Spears and Lea 2000; Walther, Slovacek and Tidwell 2001 respectively). More conceptual work through “field research” can be found in Jacobson (1999). He proposed the idea of a prototype based process of interpretation. Other researchers took an established theory, such as Symbolic Interactionism, as an assumption of the interpretive process and moved on to describing the strategies used to communicate identity in online interactions (e.g., Rutter and Smith 1999). A number of studies in fact discuss the meaning of the singles cues such as paralinguistic cues (Lea and Spears 1992) or naming practises (Jacobson 1996) as well as the general verbal representation of relational cues to convey affinity (Walther, Loh and Granka 2005).

Surprisingly, interpretative research has paid little or no attention to how interpretations of online identity vary between members of the online community and what explanations could be given to account for this variation in the interpretation. This exploratory research aims to this gap. Specifically, the researcher sought to identify the different meanings across consumers’ identity-related comments and then endeavoured to uncover underlying relations between them.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design was needed to capture subjective understanding of online identity. The empirical data were collected during face-to-face, in-depth and semi-structured interviews with ten members of VCCs. Their online interactions were traced and studied over a period of six months. Participation to the research was advertised within and outside the university and potential participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire as an initial screening regarding their current online activity. Nine distinct online communities were included in the study; five participants belonged to one large online community while two participants participated in more than one. These communities are forum based and communication between members is asynchronous and mainly textual (written word). Furthermore, they have in common a focus on consumption to varying degrees (i.e., Virtual Communities of Consumption, Kozinets 1999). The communities chosen reflect the spectrum of forum-based Virtual Communities of Consumption and were chosen from 134 online forums in the initial screening (i.e., maximum variation sampling, Miles and Huberman 1994). Four communities were brand communities: sites where consumers’ discussion is focused on a particular brand, although not completely limited to it. Two communities were product categories communities: sites where consumers’ discussion is focused on a particular product category (e.g., cars or collectables). One was a consumer review site where consumers’ discussions evolve around reviews of products. One was an auction site. Each person’s experience represents a case.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Participants were interviewed 3 times about their online experience over an 18-month period. The interviews aimed to capture respondent’s identity related experience and the meaning making process (in relation to identity communication). By seeing the issue of identity communication from the perspective of the interviewee, it aims to understand how and why s/he came to that particular perspective (King 1994). The semi-structured nature of the interview schedule allowed for key issues to be touched upon in all cases (and consequently be compared) (McCracken 1988) and enabled the free expression of the meaning making process. Participants were asked to describe other posters that they knew from their online experience and then to explain how they came to those impressions. People would choose the participants by looking at the community “live” online and explain their views using past experiences as well as examples from the messages currently on the screen. Also a few general questions were included such as what the best thing about participating in the community was or what they would like to change in the community. The use of naturally occurring interaction is also extremely important as the definitions of symbols are both social context and situation specific (within a Symbolic Interactionist framework). The issue of situation specific symbols was particularly challenging, as the researcher needed to ask people for generalisation as well as to probe for situation specific examples of that generalisation in interview settings. The use of Virtual Network Computing (VNC) recording proved invaluable. Through the VNC server, a remote computer recorded the interface being used by the interviewee, which allowed the respondent to interact on the community in real time and choose the examples freely, while, at the same time, the researcher to keep full record of the interaction without disrupting the flow of the interview.

The findings are the results of qualitative analysis of the interviews’ transcripts and the web pages reflecting the naturally occurring online interaction. The analytical process followed the inductive method, using coding and analytical comparison (Neuman 2003; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Interview transcripts were first coded openly, then compared across cases to discover differences and similarities. Categories / concepts therefore emerged inductively and their dimensions defined on the basis of the comparison. Invivo codes were used were possible and member check (at the final interview) (Kozinets 1998) to enhance ecological validity. NVivo software was used to help ensuring the reliability of the analysis by maintaining an accessible chain of evidence (Yin 2003).

FINDINGS

The focus here is on an observed variation in interpretations of cues across participants. The concept of motive is introduced with its inductively derived dimensions and its properties in relation to meaning attribution to identity cues. Through analytical comparison, the role of a further inductive concept, “focus of attention”, is explained, together with its dimensions and effect on interpretation. Given the space limitations of this article, only selected, but representative, quotes can be included to illustrate the participants’ views.

Motive

As participants explained their impressions of other posters, they often, indirectly referred to their motive for
participating to that community or thread. Motive here is defined as the main reason to participate in the community. Initial motives where established by asking the participants what was the best thing about participating in the community and what they would look for in a substitute community and other similar questions. Four distinct dimensions to their motives could be identified: “fun” (Invivo P7), “meeting people with common interests” (Invivo P3), “usefulness” (Invivo P3) and “money” (Invivo P4). “Fun” relates to participating to the community for their entertainment value, as a light-hearted endeavour.

“Meeting people with common interests” refers to participating to the community to communicate with people who have similar interests. “Usefulness” refers to participating to the community as a mean to an end, to achieve a goal, such as gaining specific information. “Money” refers to an economic motive, i.e. making money through the online interaction. Participants could be then grouped on the basis of their motive as shown in Table 1, although in some cases a secondary motive was introduced when more than one motive was mentioned several times (people may enter different threads for different reasons).

TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motive (1st)</td>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Meet People</td>
<td>Meet People</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motive (2nd, if close)</td>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>Meet People</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Useful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the interviews transcripts, where the participants explained their impressions of other posters and how they came to form those impressions, a link can be observed between their motive to participate in the community and their interpretations of the cues. For example, participant P1, whose main motive to participate in a community is its usefulness as an information source, looks at the posters’ country of origin to decide whether they are likely to have the information that she needs.

“Now they have a really huge member-list, you have a diverse profile of people. You have people from the US and people from the US are really important. Not because they are from the US, but because they have the right TV magazines and they have the shows. (…) It is really important to be on the right board or you will never get what you are looking for” (P1)

On the other hand, P7, whose main reason to be a community member is having fun and being entertained, appreciates people on the basis of their ability to carry on a joke and generally been amusing.

“P7: C., who runs the coffee shop, is gay and has had quite a passionate affair with another poster. It wasn’t real. It was a fantasy affair. We all knew that. So we all joined in their splitting up and getting back together. And the bit that I have enjoyed most was when they had an argument online, it was scripted and they planned to do it. (…)"

Interviewer: So, how do you get an impression of these people?

P7: If someone makes me laugh or could carry on a joke or a story in the same way. In the coffee shop [thread] everyone carries on this fantasy of it being a coffee shop with drinks. Various things happen and they are either ignored or not. (…) It is often amusing and very lively.” (P7)

In Table 2 a summary of the correspondence between motive and interpretation is presented. Strong correspondence is identified when explanations of cues meaning are often and clearly linked to their motives as in the examples above. Less correspondence is found in two cases, where interpretations vary more greatly. For example, P3 has quite diverse motives to enter different parts of the community, corresponding to different ways to interpret identity cues (even though within the same threads the link between motive and interpretation can still be noticed). Further illustration of the fit between motive and interpretations can be found in the appendix. Table 2 also highlights a polarisation between utilitarian and hedonistic motives, as each participant (with the exception of P3) had recourse to use either “usefulness” or “fun” motive at some level.

Even though the relationship appeared to be strong in most cases, by taking a closer look at the comments, one could also notice that “motive” did not capture the totality of meaning variation. If the comments of two “fun” motivated participants are compared, for example P7 (see quote above) and P8 (see quote below), one can see that they are similar but not fully overlapping. P7 seems to focus on keeping up the “fantasy” in the thread as an entertaining way to relate to other posters. P8 also focuses on the humour and fun side of the poster’s personality; however, unlike P7, she expresses a care and attention for the person posting beyond simple entertainment. This unaccounted-for variation led to further analysis to identify other mediating factors that might account for differences in meaning. This was how a further moderating concept was identified: focus of attention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>P1</th>
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<th>P3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>Usef</td>
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<td>Fun</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Meet People</td>
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<td>Useful</td>
<td>Meet People</td>
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<td>Useful</td>
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332
### TABLE 2

**SUMMARY OF THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS’ MOTIVES AND THEIR INTERPRETATIONS OF IDENTITY CUES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant with motive (1st and 2nd)</th>
<th>Correspondence with interpretation of identity cues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1 (usefulness)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2 (usefulness)</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3 (fun, usefulness)</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4 (money, usefulness)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5 (fun)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6 (fun, meeting people)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7 (fun)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8 (fun)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9 (meeting people, fun)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10 (meeting people, usefulness)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“"She comes across as being very funny, she has a very dry sense of humour, she used sarcasm quite a lot, which appeals to me. (…) She always shows real interest in what other people are talking about, and that’s appealing as well. She is not just there to talk about herself.” (P8)

**Focus of attention**

Focus of attention relates to what the participant pays attention to when reading the messages. It emerged quite clearly that participants experience online interaction in different ways. Some use it to get to know people and are concerned with forging friendships and generally whether people are friendly or not. Their attention seems to be focused on the *people behind the screen* (“People focus” in P5, P6, P7, P8, and P10).

“With the ones that I talk to on a regularly basis, I actually think of them as friends. Yeah, I have a good relationship. I say, it is actually very supportive. It feels that everyone cares about each other and whether they are ok.” (P8)

Some see it as a source of intellectual stimulation and often use it to learn more and to test their own level of understanding. They are *focused on themselves* and on the *intellectual dimension* of the interaction (“inward – intellectual” focus in P2, P4, and P9). In the quote below, how the participant keeps on referring to and checking his own knowledge when interacting comes through very clearly.

“Poster message: “1) KM is strictly a function of storing and accessing cumulative knowledge in an IT/IS environment. (your references) 2) KM is the management of human knowledge assets.” P2 comments: Now, my personal view is more into his opinion, I am more for the human treatment, and the management of human knowledge (…) Poster message: “(…) this seems to fall along the lines of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences.” P2 comments: I don’t know Gardner”. (P2)

Others see it simply as an opportunity to exchange information. People are important but mainly because they *have knowledge which can be exchanged* (“information exchange” focus in P9, P2, P1, P3, and P4)

“I had a hard time finding this one, after I was disappointed by the other one. I had another one as well, in the other one people spent a lot of time talking about themselves, you know, dating, etc. and I am just reading about the TV series, not the dating. This is why this was more appealing to me. (…) I am a real fan. Sometime you can even find things that have not been broadcasted yet.” (P1)

Others still see online interaction as “just some text on screen” (Invivo, P3). They enjoy the *activity on the screen* as if there were no real people behind it. Here arguments are often seen as “a bit of fun” with no real consequence, as explained clearly by P3 in the following comment (screen dynamics focus in P3, P5, P6, and P7).

“I just love to wind people up in education. (…) I just go there to take the piss. It is strange. I used to go there regularly and seriously irritate the teachers because they used to say what a difficult job that was and I used to say “no, I used to roll in at 9am and then be in the pub until 4 o’clock” (…) Bizarrely, I went out with T., my partner, and I got talking at this party. As it turns out, it was a poster on here and they said that “it was horrible what you said about teaching. Please don’t do it”. (…) So now I don’t. It is fine when it is anonymous JoeBlog9297, but when you have actually met people, real people; it is very difficult to take the piss. (…) It is interesting how meeting people changes totally how you post, it is very interesting why that happens.” (P3, second online interviews)
Again, some participants may present different focuses of attention (on different threads), while others are fairly polarised as shown in Table 3. If the participants’ interpretations are compared with their motives and focuses of attention, a clear correspondence between the two factors and the meaning attached to the cues/symbols can be observed. Only the key points are reported here in Table 3, with more details in the Appendix. The validity of the two separate concepts can be appreciated by looking at the extremely similar explanations offered by the participants with equivalent motive and focus profile (e.g., P1 and P2) and the difference between participants with similar profiles in one dimension and different in the other (e.g., P2 vs. P9).

**TABLE 3**

**SUMMARY OF THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS’ MOTIVES AND FOCUS OF ATTENTION WITH THEIR INTERPRETATIONS OF IDENTITY CUES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant with Motive (1st and 2nd)</th>
<th>Correspondence with interpretation</th>
<th>Focus of attention (1st and 2nd)</th>
<th>Correspondence with interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1 (usefulness)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Information exchange</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2 (usefulness)</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Information exchange</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3 (fun, usefulness)</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Screen dynamic, Information exchange</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4 (money, usefulness)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Information exchange, inward intellectual</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5 (fun)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>People focus, screen dynamics</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6 (fun, meeting people)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>People focus, screen dynamics</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7 (fun)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Screen dynamics, people focus</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8 (fun)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>People focus</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9 (meeting people, fun)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Inward –intellectual, Information exchange</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10 (meeting people, usefulness)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>People focus</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The recognition of the role that motive and focus of attention play in the interpretative process of reading identity online is relevant to current customer research and practice in several ways. Here how they contribute to our understanding of VCCs as place and objects of consumption as well as contexts for consumer socialization is explained. The limitations of this research are also discussed.

As a place of consumption, VCCs are a virtual location in which consumer can get together and relate to one another. Community members relate to fellow members in different way, using cues that selectively interpret their identity to suit their needs/motives. Motive then appears to influence the type of emerging relationships, in particular, a polarisation between utilitarian and hedonistic motives (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). This suggest a need to be cautious about over-emphasizing VCCs as information sources (Okleshen and Grossbart 1998), since part of the membership will be more socially motivated.

The dimensions of motive highlighted in this research are similar to motives highlighted in the emerging literature on electronic word-of-mouth. “Meeting people with common interest” is similar to the “social benefits” by Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler (2004); “usefulness” is similar “advice seeking” (Hennig-Thurau, et al. 2004) or “instrumental” (Wang and Fesenmaier 2003); and finally “money” is similar to “economic incentives” (Hennig-Thurau, et al. 2004). Further work is needed to explore the link between motive to participate in social interaction and satisfaction; different motives are likely to have different dimensions of satisfaction. Also the composite nature of motive, i.e. the fact that people may participate in an online community with more than one motive, which was present here and in the literature (Hennig-Thurau, et al. 2004), needs to be better understood. This may support a qualitative and situation-specific approach to research, as the one adopted here, which enables the researcher to grasp the multidimensionality of the participants’ experiences in the different threads.

This research has also highlighted a new concept: focus of attention. Different focuses of attention may help explain the contradicting findings in previous experimental research, especially the more “problematic” or anti-social forms of social interaction. This concept offers the opportunity to place communities’ members along a continuum: from highly personal (people focus) to impersonal focus (screen dynamics) as represented in Figure 1. The “screen dynamics” focus of attention is the case in which participants see other communities members just as “text on the screen” rather than actual people. This is where the impersonal and often aggressive nature of online communication is most evident. This is in line with “cues-filtered out” approach. However, this is only an aspect of the phenomenon, as other focuses of attention exist. A typological approach might help enlighten the debate
between the impersonal, hyper-personal and SIDE views of online social interaction. On a practical level, different focuses of attention may lead to different types of social relationships, not necessarily compatible with one another, but also not necessarily better or worse than one another. Being able to distinguish between them and understand their characteristics would help to define their value to the consumer and to provide better environments to support them. Researchers may also be interested in exploring the tensions between the different focuses of attention and strategies to reduce them.

FIGURE 1
FOCUS OF ATTENTION: FROM PERSONAL TO IMPERSONAL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal focus</th>
<th>People focus</th>
<th>Information exchange</th>
<th>Inward intellectual</th>
<th>Screen dynamics</th>
<th>Impersonal focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

As an object of consumption, VCCs are themselves experienced by the consumers as some form of “virtual product”. The varied focuses of attention highlight the fact that as an object of consumption VCCs are multidimensional, they are real people, simply people as sources of information, a mirror to test our own knowledge/understanding, or pure screen dynamics. Most recent research has started to investigate the ontological fluidity of knowledge- and communication-based consumption (c.f., "epistemic consumption" in Zwick and Dholakia 2006) and this research further adds urgency to the exploration of new frameworks to understand what online consumption objects entail (in addition to the traditional products and services).

Different motives and focuses of attention place also show how people experience the “burden of the medium” in different ways. As we have seen some members are not interested in getting to know people, and some just consider VCCs as sources of information (usefulness motive) or see it as “just text on screen”. For these types of members, the limited cues available online, when compared to face to face, may not be a problem; on the contrary, they are part of the appeal of interacting online. For the others, those trying to form relationship with the real people behind the screen, media literacy may be more of an issue which needs to be addressed to help them use the medium more productively.

VCCs can also link to consumer socialisation since what is discussed online may inform their consumption decisions/knowledge. Some research has already looked at the link between motives and normative influence (c.f., Dholakia, Bagozzi and Klein Pearo 2004), and further research may explore the role of “focus of attention” as a mediating factor of normative influence. “Focus of attention” highlights how the individual experiences the interaction. “Inward intellectual” is a deep way to experience the information offered on the site, while “screen dynamics” is a much more superficial way to relate to what happens on the screen; in fact at times this is linked to a disregard for fellow community’s members. Different depths in the experience may affect the strength of normative influence.

The findings of this research are necessarily restricted by its exploratory design. The interest in understanding individual meaningful experiences and their subjective views of actual online community interactions, placed heavy demands on the research in terms of the way data should be collected. This has resulted in rich data in terms of detail and ecological validity, but only a limited number of cases could be considered. External validity (to forums communities in general) of these findings requires further investigation although maximum variation sampling goes some way towards giving confidence that the main configurations of forum-based Virtual Communities of Consumption were included. The applicability of the findings of this research to other online settings such as chat rooms or MUDs would also need to be tested empirically.
**APPENDIX**

Selected participants’ quotes, motive and focus of attention summary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected cases:</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motive (1st)</td>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Meeting people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motive (2nd, if close)</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quotes illustrating comments about people posts**

- “Now they have a really huge member list, you have a diverse profile of people. You have people from the US and people from the US are really important. Not because they are from the US, but because they have the right TV magazines and they have the shows. These are the people that you can go to and ask when you don’t have the TV shows, because they are the ones that actually rip it from the TV and put it on exchange boards. It is really important to be on the right board or you will never get what you are looking for” (P1, first interview online)
- “(Reads post with question on screen) Ok, this is not an experienced person about knowledge management. Interviewer: Why do you say that? P2: He has just asked what are the benefits of knowledge management and disadvantages. [sic] Now, if you have a very basic understanding of knowledge management you would know the advantages and disadvantages. (...) And basically I would not really answer this question. I tell you why. Because this is not in line with my research. If I give him a suggestion, I don’t really know much about the internet and extranets and I would not want to put him on the wrong track.” (P2, first online interview)
- “She comes across as being very funny, she has a very dry sense of humour, she used sarcasm quite a lot, which appeals to me. She is… I was drawn to her because there was an ore of mystery around her at first; she was very evasive at first about who she was. She actually ended up emailing me to tell me why she was so evasive, so I guess that took it out of that forum. (...) I was quite flattered that she trusted me to email me and tell me that. She is now very open about where she lives. She always shows real interest in what other people are talking about, and that’s appealing as well. She is not just there to talk about herself. She remembers things. If someone is not around for quite a while she would ask “has anyone heard form so and so?” That sort of thing. She has also a cheeky, naughty side to herself. She can also stand up for herself. I get that sense” (P8, first interview online)
- “There is a debate about dead bodies, which I don’t remember reading, I wonder if this is a serious one or not. Ok, “simply starting a whimsical thread about corps” (reading from the site). Not pleasant! And he appears to be displaying some erudition here. He is talking about rituals around burial, so he is certainly displaying a lot more knowledge than I know. This person may have studied history at the university or something.” (P9, first online interview)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit*:</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Strong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason:</td>
<td>Country of origin interpreted in terms of how much and the quality of information that they can provide.</td>
<td>Evaluates people on the basis of their level of knowledge and the relevance to what they post about to his own knowledge/expertise</td>
<td>The humour and fun side of the posters personality are noted most, as well as a care for the fellow community members.</td>
<td>Interest in the person knowledge displaying an openness to enter both light hearted and serious threads.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus -Main</th>
<th>Information exchange</th>
<th>Inward intellectual</th>
<th>People focus</th>
<th>Inward intellectual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus – 2nd</td>
<td>Information exchange</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Information exchange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit*:</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Strong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason:</td>
<td>Pure information exchange about the TV series of interest. Other people are seen simply as information source.</td>
<td>Both checking his own knowledge again request of poster and then evaluate whether the information he could offer is of any use.</td>
<td>Flattered of trust developed between the people and notices people who display concern for other posters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Developing Grounded Theory, London: SAGE.
SESSIO N OVERVIEW

Values can be thought of as higher order social cognitions that shape consumer attitudes and behavior. Over the past three decades, marketing researchers have examined role values play in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. Values provide insight into the world view of consumers in a variety of domains. Kropp, Lavack, and Silvera (2005) identified more than 20 studies demonstrating relationships between values and a wide variety of marketing and consumer behaviors, including food consumption, fashion, brand choice, gift giving, mall shopping, car ownership, travel and tourism, pet ownership, stereotyping in international business, and salesperson performance. Values also relate to risky consumer behaviors such as smoking and drinking behavior (Kropp et al. 2004; Lavack and Kropp 2003a; Kropp, Lavack, and Holden 1999). The special session examined the development of values in marketing, and current and future directions in values research.

The first presentation, “A Brief History of the Measurement of Consumer Social Values,” presented a historical overview of values research. This included a discussion of cultural values, including work by Hofstede, Bond, and Triandis, and personal values, including work by Maslow, Rokeach, Kahle, and Schwartz. Motivational and other psychological aspects of values were presented, as were measurement issues.

The second presentation, “Consumer Values: Correlates and Current Uses,” examined the extent to which values correlated with other psychosocial correlates, such as the normative component of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence variables and positive and negative affect. It also described relationships of values to an assortment of consumer behaviors.

The third presentation, “New World of Consumer Values: Conflict and Why Nothing Works,” explored potential future changes in values. The basic premise of the presentation was that fundamental changes in the nature of work have caused changes in the way society organises, causing changes in societal values. This change is dynamic and will continue into the future, restructuring the underpinnings of consumer behavior. The causes, nature of change, cultural conflicts, and implications for marketing were discussed.

ABSTRACTS

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MEASUREMENT OF CONSUMER SOCIAL VALUES

Lynn R. Kahle, University of Oregon
Guang-xin Xie, University of Oregon
Gregory M. Rose, University of Washington

The scientific inquiries about the role of consumer values in marketing have been exciting and fruitful over the past three decades, generating a significant stream of theoretical models and empirical evidence that link values with goals, motivations, attitudes, behaviors, and other constructs in the field of consumer research (Kahle 1996). Currently, most researchers would agree that consumer values are an abstraction of belief systems that in part guide purchase behaviors such as choosing between product categories and brand selection; however, using consumer values to predict marketplace behaviors may lead to ambiguous and sometimes frustrating results, and a combination of values, motivations, and personal goals may prove to be superior (Homer and Kahle 1988; Jolibert and Baumgartner 1997).

Rokeach (1973) suggested the existence of fundamental values derived from the Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs and other sources, and he proposed the Rokeach Value Survey for measurement purposes. The Rokeach Values Survey operationalised behavioral modes using 18 instrumental values and end-states with 18 terminal values, where instrumental and terminal values each can be placed in order from most to the least important. Academic researchers have also used the List of Values (LOV) which has nine major values that can be classified into three underlying dimensions: external values (security, sense of belonging, warm relationships with others, and being well-respected), internal values (self-fulfillment, self-respect, and sense of accomplishment) and interpersonal values (fun and enjoyment in life and excitement; Kahle 1983). The Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz and Bilsky 1987), which contains 56 values, has also been used to examine consumers. Some academic research has emphasised qualitative approaches (e.g., Lastovicka, Murry, and Joachimsthaler 1990).

Practitioners have relied on other proprietary measures, such as VALS and VALS2. These measures may or may not adequately represent the constructs they are trying to contain. Because of the proprietary nature, it is difficult to evaluate validity and reliability of these measures. Nonetheless, they are widely used in industry.

A number of challenges exist with cross-geographic and cross-cultural surveys. While it is necessary to translate the meaning into another language, it is not sufficient. Meanings must also be translated into another culture. Researchers must convey the meaning of questions accurately and in a way respondents in another culture can grasp. They must correctly incorporate subtleties and nuances of language. They must select the most effective method of communication (e.g., mail, telephone, or personal interview). Methods that work in one culture may not work in another due to mores and cultural norms. Construction of a representative sample is potentially far more complex for researchers in some countries than in others, because sources similar to the ones used to describe populations in some countries may not be available in others. Finally, certain questions to
which some cultures are willing to respond may be considered sensitive or inappropriate by others.

Future monitoring of consumer values will probably prove more useful when applied thoughtfully and carefully to a specific product area in conjunction with other useful measures and with an understanding of the adaptive significance of the values in respondents’ lives. The principles of reliability and validity that guide all measurement are also useful in contemplating the utility of value measurement devices. Cultural factors matter. Level of measurement—nominal, ordinal, or interval—discriminates among the measures. With the development of technology and change, it is crucial to reexamine the measurement accuracy at regular intervals to catch up with emerging trends and nuances. Fisher and Katz (2000) suggested that early control techniques could be helpful through adding statistical control, increasing response anonymity, and being sensitive to sample characteristics. We propose future directions for improved measurement based on this review of the history of measurement.

CONSUMER VALUES: CORRELATES AND CURRENT USES
Anne M. Lavack, University of Regina
Lisa Watson, University of Regina

Personal identity and consumption are inextricably linked with values, which can be defined as “enduring beliefs that a particular mode of behavior or end-state of existence is preferable to opposite modes of behavior or end-state” (Rokeach 1973, 5). Values are described as stable and desirable end-states that are developed through life experiences (Kahle 1983). Furthermore, values are believed to be related to cognitive processing style and personality differences (Claxton et al. 1996; 1997).

Rokeach (1973) operationalised behavioral modes with 18 instrumental values and end-states with 18 terminal values. In the Rokeach inventory, instrumental and terminal values each can be placed in order from most to the least important (Rokeach 1973). A more parsimonious alternative to Rokeach’s values was developed by Kahle and associates (Beatty et al. 1985; Kahle 1983; Kahle, Beatty, and Homer 1986) that has the advantage of being simpler to administer and more easily understood by subjects. Kahle’s List of Values (LOV) is based on social adaptation theory and on Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs. The LOV contains nine basic values: sense of belonging, fun and enjoyment in life, warm relationships with others, self-fulfillment, being well respected, excitement, security, self-respect, and sense of accomplishment. Becker (1998) has endorsed the importance of using well-established values scales with known reliability and validity in consumer research, and has cited both Rokeach’s (1973) value survey and Kahle’s (1983) List of Values as meeting this requirement for reliability and validity.

Previous empirical research using LOV has shown that the LOV scale is multi-dimensional (Homer and Kahle 1988; Kahle 1983), and can be grouped into three underlying dimensions: internal values (self-fulfillment, self-respect, and sense of accomplishment), external values (security, sense of belonging, warm relationships with others, and being well-respected), and interpersonal values (fun and enjoyment in life and excitement; Kahle 1983, 1991). In general, internal values do not require the judgments or opinions of others. These values are predominantly internally motivated, and individuals who rate internal values highly believe that they can influence or control outcomes (Madrigal and Kahle 1994; Swenson and Herche 1994). In contrast, external values generally require the presence, judgments, or opinions of others (Homer and Kahle 1988; Kahle 1983). Interpersonal values combine some aspects of both internal and external values; however, by definition, they focus upon interactions between people. People who consider interpersonal values important might be more likely to place a higher value on dyadic relationships and, perhaps, might care more about the other person’s opinion or evaluations (Netemeyer, Bearden, and Teel 1992).

Over the last decade, most academic marketing research on values has used LOV, as it is more parsimonious than other approaches (Shoham et al. 1996). As well, the LOV instrument has acceptable psychometric properties in domestic (Fish and Katz 2000) and cross-cultural settings (Grunert and Scherhorn 1990; Keng et al. 2000). While a large majority of values research has been conducted in North America, there is a growing body of cross-cultural research in this area.

Examples of studies that demonstrate links between values and consumer behavior are numerous, and include: brand choice (Dibley and Baker 2001); food consumption (Homer and Kahle 1988); clothing and fashion (Goldsmith, Freiden, and Kilshheimer 1993); travel and tourism (Madrigal and Kahle 1994); gift-giving (Beatty et al. 1993); mall shopping (Swinyard 1998); car ownership (Sukhdial, Chakraborty, and Steger 1995); and pet ownership (Kropp et al. 1992). Values are also related to areas within social marketing, including: smoking behavior (Lavack and Kropp 2003a); drinking behavior (Kropp, Lavack, and Holden 1999); cause-related marketing (Kropp, Holden, and Lavack 1999; Lavack and Kropp 2003b); and ethics (Nonis and Swift 2001; Rallapalli, Vitell, and Szeinbach 2000). Values have also been shown to affect other aspects of marketing, such as stereotyping in international business (Soutar, Grainger, and Hedges 1999) and salesperson performance (Weeks and Kahle 1990; Swenson and Herche 1994). Values can explain and predict attitudes and behaviors in such a diversity of situations and contexts because they provide an abstract set of behavior-guiding principles (Rose et al. 1994).

This session will examine the correlates of values, and discuss the wide variety of current consumer research that is making use of the values construct.
According to Gertrude Himmelfarb, a social historian, America has become two cultures, “One is religious, puritanical, family centered and somewhat conformist. The other is tolerant, hedonistic, secular, predominantly single and celebrates multiculturalism” (The Economist 2003, 7). Although polarities in values have long existed in the United States and Canada, the severity of the polarity is exacerbating to a level not seen since before the US Civil War. Kropp (2003) argues that the cultural conflicts are a manifestation of a paradigm shift in the fullest sense of the term, i.e., a shift in the “beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community” (Kuhn 1970, 9).

The cultural materialist paradigm explains the fundamental causation of the paradigm shift as changes in the infrastructure (production and reproduction), which cause changes in the structure of society (the way societies organise), which in turn cause changes in superstructure (where values reside). For example, North American and European women entered the labor force in large numbers over the past two decades and are now a permanent part of the infrastructure. This has caused substantial changes in the organisation of society and societal institutions, redefining values for both women and the family. In essence, with some feedback loops, the way we work affects the way society organises which affects our values.

According to MacNulty (1989), a paradigm shift involves five stages: 1) steady state, where the existing paradigm works well and the dominant values are generally accepted, 2) polarization where deep irreconcilable splits occur along the principal dimension of the existing paradigm, 3) emergence of the new paradigm, where the seed of the emergent paradigm appears 4) metaphorical or real culture ways, and 5) emergence of the new paradigm. Based on literature reviews, depth interviews and Delphi interviews, future studies and a monitoring of social change, a strong argument can be made that society is somewhere between stages three and four of a paradigm shift. Phase three is the emergence of the new paradigm. Phase four is conflict, actual or metaphorical, which occurs when “the paradigm war in which the remaining energy of the incumbent paradigm is spent in intra-paradigm conflict” (MacNulty 1989, 40).

The western world has transitioned from an industrial society to a post-industrial society and we have not yet seen the end of the transition. As much as the nature of work has changed over the past two decades, the change in the next two decades will be magnified with new emerging concepts of work, workplace, and work space. At the same time, human beings have cracked the genetic code and are engineering future evolution of the species. These developments have and will have significant impacts on the structure of society shaping the way it organises, including, but not limited to, division of labor, family structure, age and sex roles, fluidity of change, and new relational norms. This, in turn, will lead to new changes in values including a shift from external to internal authority, self-defined spirituality, and reshaping of sense of accomplishment, security, and relationship with others.

This trend will not be limited to the developed western world. The Pew Global Attitudes Project (2003) is a major research project conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and Press that has surveyed over 66,000 people in 49 nations plus the Palestinian Authority. The study found that although there were differences in attitudes among predominantly Islamic countries and the other countries surveyed, increasing participation of women in the labor force is supported in most of the countries surveyed. The study also showed strong global support in the use of birth control. In the cultural materialist paradigm, these two aspects—the way we produce and reproduce—are the cornerstones of a society’s infrastructure. These changes, coupled with many of the other aspects of the diffusion of information and technology transfer, will cause changes in other societies’ structures and superstructures. While the paradigm shift may not touch every country in the world, it will have profound impacts on most of the world.

This session will integrate findings from a literature review, depth-interviews, a Delphi interview series, the World Values Study and, Views of a Changing World (Pew 2003). It discusses the ways in which events over the past three years further support the paradigm shift and will discuss how values might change in the future, presenting alternate scenarios. Finally, the impact of changing values on consumer behavior will be discussed.

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and Marketing, 10 (5), 399-412.


ABSTRACT

The most significant driver of consumption emotions is whether the stimulus causing the emotion is deemed to be good or bad. Some theorists argue that this good/bad appraisal is related to personal goals, while others believe that it is driven by intrinsic pleasantness. This paper explores this controversy and offers empirical evidence that pleasantness and goal relatedness both significantly affect emotions. Importantly, these two appraisal dimensions are shown to influence emotions of the same valence differently, affording marketers a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of positive and negative emotions.

INTRODUCTION

Marketers have shown that emotions influence buying and consumption behaviors. However, valence and level of arousal have proven inadequate in explaining the different effects that similarly aroused emotions of the same valence have on consumer purchasing behavior. In an attempt to explain these differences, some consumer psychologists have adopted a cognitive appraisals approach to studying emotions. This approach looks at the underlying cognitive evaluations of situations that lead to emotional responses. It argues that one’s cognitive appraisal of situations or objects, such as how good or bad the situation, who has caused the situation, and how certain its outcome, combine to elicit particular emotions felt in response to those stimuli. These underlying appraisal dimensions can offer a deeper explanation of what causes specific emotions, and how elicited emotions influence consumer behavior.

However, marketers have yet to establish an agreed upon set of appraisal dimensions nor have they agreed upon definitions and measures for the appraisals that are established (for a review, see Watson and Spence 2005). The single most significant underlying explanatory component of an emotion is whether the stimulus causing the emotion is deemed to be good or bad (Ruth, Brunel and Otnes 2002). This evaluation is commonly said to determine emotional valence. Some theorists argue that this good/bad appraisal is related to personal goals (cf. Roseman 1991; Weiner 1985), while others believe that it is driven by intrinsic pleasantness (cf. Smith and Ellsworth 1985). Such controversies need to be resolved in order to effectively advance this field of inquiry and ultimately increase our understanding of consumer emotions.

This research offers empirical evidence that two distinct appraisal dimensions, pleasantness and goal relatedness, significantly affect emotions and their associated valences. We further demonstrate that these two appraisals have unique effects on emotions of the same valence, adding to our understanding of how different emotions of the same valence are formed. These findings may be used in future studies to explain why emotions of the same valence have different influences on consumer behaviour.

Cognitive Appraisals Approach to Studying Emotions

A popular approach to studying emotions uses common dimensions of emotions, including positive and negative valence and high and low levels of arousal, to link emotions to antecedents and consequences. Marketers have used these dimensions to explain how different types of feelings influence consumer behaviour. However, different positive and negative feelings, such as pride and gratitude or guilt and anger, can also have different effects on behaviour. For example, anger and sadness lead to the selection of more active and passive vacation options, respectively (Rucker and Petty 2004), a finding valence alone cannot account for. The level of arousal dimension can also not account for all differences between emotions of the same valence. The two highly negative emotions of anger and fear have significantly different effects on risk judgment: fearful people make pessimistic judgments whereas angry people are more optimistic (Lerner and Keltner 2000). As such, marketers need a deeper understanding of how various positive and negative emotions are elicited in order to better understand their resultant behaviors. The cognitive appraisals approach affords us that opportunity. For example, in service failure situations, if customer anger is primarily derived from hindrance of a personal goal, then customer service agents need only put angry customer back on course to achieving their goals. However, if there is some other unpleasant cause that is unrelated to goals, rectifying the situation could require a different course of action. Looking to academic research, Tiedens and Linton (2001) argue that differences in angry and fearful people’s risk judgments are caused by the different underlying levels of certainty associated with each of the emotions. The source of anger is certain, thus leading to more confidence when making risky decisions, while fear has an element of uncertainty which leads to caution when making risky decisions. Thus, while the dimensions approach is still strongly embraced, a new paradigm is emerging.

Interpretations of whether a situation is good or bad are said to elicit positive and negative emotions, respectively. Consumer psychologists such as Johnson and Stewart (2005) and Nyer (1997) embrace the idea that goals guide these interpretations, thus driving subsequent emotions and behaviour. However, others, such as Ruth, Brunel and Otnes (2002) believe that situational responses need not all be goal driven, but may simply be intrinsically pleasing. Indeed, many emotion theorists have recognised both goals and pleasantness as possible appraisals that influence emotions (cf. Frijda 1987; Scherer 1988). To date no empirical evidence has been offered to indicate that both pleasantness and goal related appraisals have significant independent effects when eliciting different positive and negative emotions. The purpose of this paper is to rectify that shortcoming.

Distinguishing Between Pleasanliness and Goal Related Appraisals

Pleasantness may be differentiated from valence in...
that valence is an inherent dimension of a feeling (positive or negative), whereas pleasantness is a cognitive assessment of whether a situation is good or bad with respect to some benchmark of personal well-being. Gap theories suggest that a situation is deemed to be good or bad relative to a social comparison or an ideal. This approach is adaptable to a wide variety of personal contexts, such as running into an old friend in a shopping mall, a situation which may serve no intended purpose and may in fact hinder goal attainment by making one late, but may still elicit a positive emotion. The concept of pleasantness has been identified under a variety of terms by such leading emotion theorists as Frijda (1987), Ortony, Clore and Collins (1988), Scherer (1988), and Smith and Ellsworth (1985). Pleasantness accounts for the majority (as much as 88%) of variance explained in attempts to categorise emotions (Ruth et al. 2002).

Systems theorists would argue that the benchmark for determining whether something is good or bad is relative to a goal. Indeed many of the aforementioned emotions theorists also identified at least one type of goal related appraisal as relevant in determining emotions, such as Ortony, Clore and Collins (1988), Roseman (1991), Scherer (1988), Smith and Ellsworth (1985), and Weiner (1985). In the marketing literature, Johnson and Stewart (2005) included the word goal in three of their six proposed appraisal dimensions: direction of goal congruence, degree of goal congruence, and goal importance. These authors state: “Everyone has goals, no matter how broad or vague. The goals of a particular individual in a specific situation are the most important determinant of emotional reactions” (12). Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer (1990) also take a goal-oriented perspective, noting that goal relevance and goal congruence are crucial for forming emotions, commenting that “...a necessary condition for an emotional response to an event or happening is that a person has a personal stake in it and at the same time judges the event or happening to facilitate or thwart this stake” (185). In an earlier empirical work by Nyer (1997), two of the four proposed appraisal dimensions were goal relevance and goal congruence. Citing Smith and Ellsworth (1985) and Scherer (1984), Nyer states that goal congruence is synonymous with pleasantness. However, Scherer (1988) emphasises the importance of distinguishing intrinsic pleasantness from goal related responses in his review of emotion antecedent appraisals. Smith and Ellsworth (1985) also included both goal-path obstacle and pleasantness measures in their empirical investigation, but the goal related responses were absorbed into the pleasantness dimension. In contrast to most marketers, their conclusion was to not include the word goal in any of their six empirically derived dimensions. In a recent consumer focused replication, Ruth, Brunel and Ottes (2002) found pleasantness to be the most powerful discriminating factor between emotions, far exceeding the perceived goal-path obstacle appraisal.

Weiner (1985), in an early seminal article, cautioned that most of the research forming the foundation for his theory of how motives influence emotions are drawn from an achievement context, hence having a goal orientation bias. While he argues that his theory should be robust, his contention is proposed tentatively, leaving room for other non-achievement based effects on emotional valence. Smith and Ellsworth (1985) and Ruth, Brunel and Ottes (2002) findings would suggest that Weiner’s (1985) theory is indeed bounded by context; however, their findings may also stem from measurement issues. They measured perceived goal-path obstacles, which by definition imply hindrances in meeting goals. However, appraisals may be related to goal achievement without necessarily hindering it. Their implication may have diluted their findings because perceived obstacles would only have been relevant to negative contexts. So while Weiner and those embracing his view may be biased towards goals, Smith and Ellsworth and their proponents may be biased towards pleasantness. Combined, this evidence would suggest that goal appraisals and Pleasantness may be two distinctly significant constructs and that each may serve to determine whether a situation is good or bad. We propose that pleasantness and goal relatedness of a situation work in concert to elicit emotions. Whether pleasantness and goal appraisals have different effects in eliciting specific emotions has not been empirically studied.

In the next section we guardedly advance several hypotheses pertaining to the relative contribution of pleasantness and goals on the formation of emotions. We acknowledge these hypotheses are derived abruptly because of the paucity of research from which to draw. Although there is evidence to suggest different relative effect size, our primary objective is to establish (or not) the independence of pleasantness and goals.

**How Pleasantness and Goal Related Appraisals Influence Emotions**

Feelings of pride generally involve achievement, or fulfilling some personal goal or expectation (Lewis 1993). As a result, many theorists would argue that pride would be more strongly related to goals than to pleasantness (cf. Roseman 1991; Weiner 1985). However, Hareli and Weiner (2002) point out that it is also possible to be proud of someone else for an outcome that is unrelated to a personal goal. Intuitively this makes sense. Socially derived pride and personal pride both result from feelings associated with a successful outcome, while only personal pride is directly associated with the attainment of a goal. We guardedly advance that, overall, pride will be more strongly influenced by perceived pleasantness than by appraisals pertaining to goal attainment.

**H1:** Pride will be more strongly affected by pleasantness than by goal related appraisal.

Gratitude occurs most strongly when one is the recipient of a valuable benefit or gift that is costly to the giver (McCullough, Tsang and Emmons 2004); but there is little research on this emotion (Hareli and Weiner 2002) and what distinguishes between giving situations that lead to feelings of gratitude as opposed to indebtedness, guilt or embarrassment. Attribution theorists would likely attribute the difference to the intention or goal of the giver, with gratitude deriving from perceptions of altruistic giving or lack of reciprocal expectation. Because the motives of the giver are as important as the pleasantness of the gift itself, it is believed that pleasantness and goal related appraisals will have relatively equal influence in eliciting feelings of gratitude.

**H2:** Gratitude will be equally affected by pleasantness and goal related appraisals.
Guilt results from failing to achieve some standard (Hareli and Weiner 2002) or from interpersonal transgression (Baumeister, Stillwell and Heatherton 1994). Guilt stemming from personal failure may be associated with a lack of effort; it is possible that the standard that has not been met is normative rather than being a personal goal. As such, guilt may be driven by the failure to achieve a desired outcome, the outcome itself, or social sanctions resulting from the failure. In the case of personal transgression, the guilty party may feel that they have hindered someone else’s personal progress, often feeling a need to offer reparation for the harm done (Dahl, Honea, and Manchanda 2005). Thus, while guilt is always associated with a negative outcome, it may be caused not only by one’s own sense of failure, but by feelings of hindering someone else. Thus, it is believed that, overall, guilt will be more strongly influenced by goal appraisals than by pleasantness.

H3: Guilt will be more strongly affected by goal related appraisals than by pleasantness.

Anger arises from a negative outcome for some victim where there is a belief that the person who caused the negative outcome could have acted differently (Hareli and Weiner 2002). The negative outcome may hinder the victim’s progress in goal attainment, but this need not always be the case. This is demonstrated by the facts that anger may be felt by someone other than the victim and that it usually leads to seeking reparation for the victim. Anger, therefore, may be more strongly related to normative issues and fairness of outcomes than to achievement. Therefore, this emotion seems to be more strongly related to unpleasantness than to failure to achieve some goal.

H4: Anger will be more strongly affected by pleasantness than by goal related appraisals.

Study 1
The objectives of Study 1 were twofold. The first was to determine whether pleasantness and goal relatedness are two distinct appraisals. If so, the second was to examine the different levels of influence that pleasantness and goal related appraisals have on different positive and negative emotions.

Design
This study examined people’s appraisals and associated emotions during a car purchasing process. Members of a local sporting association were recruited to participate in the research in exchange for a $2 donation to their club. 162 respondents were asked to describe in detail the circumstances that led to the decision to buy a new car. Respondents were then asked to report on their recalled appraisals of the situation and the various emotional responses that were elicited. Pleasantness and goal related appraisals were measured to determine the amount of influence each had on the four emotions under investigation.

Appraisals were each measured by two items that employed seven point semantic differential scales. Pleasantness was measured with: “How pleasant was this situation?”, and “How good was this situation?” (α = .944). The goal related appraisal scale (α = .848) used the questions “Do you believe that this situation was helping you achieve something?”, and “To what extent do you feel like this situation helped you gain something?”

Dependent variables were also measured with two item scales. Respondents were asked to indicate the number that best described the degree to which they felt each of several emotions on a scale of one to seven, where one was “not at all” and seven was “extremely”. Each emotion was represented by two similar emotion terms: pride (α = .928) was represented by “proud and “pleased with yourself”; gratitude (α = .928) used “appreciative” and “grateful”; guilt (α = .870) used “guilty” and “ashamed”; and, anger (α = .904) was measured with “angry” and “annoyed”.

RESULTS
The first step in analyzing the effects that pleasantness and goal related appraisals have on emotions was to determine if they represent empirically distinct constructs. Factor analysis of the four measures extracted a single factor explaining 67.7% of model variance (Table 1). The next highest component’s Eigenvalue of 0.986 was marginally below the standard cutoff value of 1.00 and explained almost 25% of variance in the model. When two factors were forced and the second component structure uncovered, the two different appraisals were extracted as predicted. Pleasantness explained 67.7% of factor variance while goals explained another 24.6%. Thus, there is both theoretical and empirical support that pleasantness and goal related appraisals are distinct constructs.
Regression analyses were then conducted to examine the different effects that pleasantness and goals had on the different positive and negative emotions. Differences in the sizes and significance levels of standardised beta coefficients were used to consider the relative influences that the two appraisals had on the four emotions under study. Comparative results may be found in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Standardised Beta Coefficients</th>
<th>Adjusted R2</th>
<th>Model F statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pleasantness</td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>.486*</td>
<td>.225*</td>
<td>.379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>.324*</td>
<td>.352*</td>
<td>.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>-.260*</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>-.434*</td>
<td>-.256*</td>
<td>.346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05

Both pleasantness and goal related appraisals had significant effects on three of the four emotions, a finding that demonstrates both appraisals influence emotions. Furthermore, examination of the beta coefficients indicates that the appraisals influence emotions in different ways. Pleasantness was more than twice as influential as goal related appraisal in eliciting pride, while the two appraisals had virtually equal levels of influence on appreciation. Thus, hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported.

There were also differences between the two negative emotions. The appraisals’ effects on anger were in similar proportion to their effects on pride, but in the opposite (negative) direction, as hypothesis 4 predicts. Guilt, however, had an overall weaker relationship with these two variables than the other three emotions. Further, only pleasantness had a significant influence on guilt, counter to hypothesis 3 that anticipated a stronger relationship with goals. These results may suggest that some appraisal other than goal relatedness is more critical to guilt elicitation. Alternatively, the observed effects may be because car buying is not associated with guilt.

Study 1 results indicate that goals and pleasantness have distinctly different effects on emotions. The differences do not just span positive and negative emotions, but are evident between similarly valenced emotions.

**Study 2**

A second study was undertaken to try replicate Study 1 and to uncover why guilt was not as strongly related to pleasantness and goals as the other emotions under study. A different research design and purchasing context were used, and an expanded set of appraisals analysed to see if the cause of the discrepancy could be uncovered.

The four emotions under consideration are related not only to pleasantness and goal related appraisals, but also to appraisals of causation. Each of these emotions is related to how positive or negative a situation is perceived to be, as well as to the agent perceived to have caused the situation. Situations may be perceived as
being caused by oneself or someone else. Interactions between either pleasantness or goal relatedness and causation may cause some of the influence of pleasantness or goal relatedness to go undetected in the previous study’s main effects analysis.

**Design**

Study 2 employed an experiment designed to evoke appraisal combinations that are said to elicit the four emotions under investigation in Study 1. Positive self caused situations elicit pride, positive other caused situations elicit gratitude, negative self caused situations evoke guilt, and negative other caused events bring about anger (Ortony et al. 1988; Weiner 1985). Thus, a two (positive/negative outcome) by two (self caused/other caused agent) between subjects design was employed to determine the extent to which goal and pleasantness appraisal effects may have been previously confounded by interactions with agency appraisals.

The experimental design required the creation of four scenarios that elicited specific pleasantness and goal related appraisal combinations. The four emotions were expected to be affected by pleasantness and goals in the same ratios as the hypotheses predicted. (To see the vignettes that were provided to participants, please contact the lead author.)

A sample of 110 students took part in the experiment. The participants were assigned to one of four groups using a balanced block design. Within a computer interactive environment respondents were shown one of the four vignettes that would lead them to purchase a new mobile telephone. They were then asked to respond to questions regarding their appraisals of the provided scenario and the level to which they would feel a variety of emotions in that situation.

Question formats were similar to those described in Study 1 for the four emotion measures and the pleasantness measure. The goal related two item measure was modified slightly to ensure that goals and achievement were highlighted; thus, the first item remained the same “Do you believe that this situation was helping you to achieve something?,” while the second item was changed to “To what extent did this situation help you to meet a goal?” The data collection instrument also included two 7-point single item measures of agency. The questions were “To what extent did you feel like you caused the outcome of this situation?” and “To what extent did you feel like someone else caused the outcome of this situation?” Reliabilities for all multi-item measures were well above accepted cut-off levels, with all Cronbach’s alphas above \( \alpha = .850 \).

**RESULTS**

Manipulation checks showed significant main and interaction effects across scenarios (see Table 3).

<p>| Table 3 |
| Manipulation checks for outcome and Causal Agent Related appraisal effects in Study 2 |
| ANOVA F-statistic |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pleasant</th>
<th>Goal Related</th>
<th>Self caused</th>
<th>Other caused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>275.996*</td>
<td>56.885*</td>
<td>19.559*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td>4.180*</td>
<td>12.265*</td>
<td>28.184*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome x Agent</td>
<td>4.855*</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>11.448*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

Factor analysis revealed less distinct separation between factor components than Study 1 (Table 4). The initial solution produced a single factor, as before, but the Eigenvalue for the second variable was much lower than the first. Upon forcing two factors, the second goal related item loaded both with the achievement measure and the pleasant and good measures. This finding would indicate that gaining something is more strongly associated with achievement than attainment of a goal. This result is consistent with Johnson and Stewart’s (2005) position that goals may relate to a wide variety of outcomes and circumstances, rather than just achievement oriented ones.

| Table 4 |
| Factor Analytic Results Separating Pleasantness and Goal related Appraisals in Study 2 |
| Initial Eigenvalues | Rotated Components |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Component | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | One Factor | Two Factors |
| 1 | 3.214 | 80.350 | 80.350 | Pleasant | .937 | .919 |
| | | | | Good | .936 | .918 |
| 2 | .501 | 12.524 | 92.874 | Achieve | .888 | .920 |
| | | | | Goal | .819 | .547 | .727 |

347
Stepwise regression analyses were conducted using pleasantness, goal relatedness, self caused and other caused main effects, as well as the four possible pleasantness and goal interaction effects (pleasant by self caused, pleasant by other caused, goal related by self caused, and goal related by other caused). The eight independent variables were regressed on each of the four emotion variables: pride, gratitude, guilt and anger. The appraisals variables that were significantly related to each of the four dependent emotion variables are reported in Table 5, along with each of their standardised beta weights.

**TABLE 5**
The Effects of Pleasantness Goal Relatedness and Causation Appraisals on Different Positive and Negative Emotions in Study 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Valence</th>
<th>Agency Appraisals</th>
<th>Self caused</th>
<th>Other caused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Pride:</td>
<td>R² = .560</td>
<td>R² = .771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model F = 56.857*</td>
<td>Model F = 135.299*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Pleasant</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Goal x self caused</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>-.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Goal</td>
<td>-.519</td>
<td>.397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Other caused</td>
<td>-1.141</td>
<td>.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Pleasant x other caused</td>
<td>.917</td>
<td>.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt:</td>
<td>R² = .426</td>
<td>Model F = 18.236*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model F = 197.030*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Pleasant</td>
<td>-.519</td>
<td>-.874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Goal</td>
<td>.917</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Self caused</td>
<td>-1.141</td>
<td>.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Goal x self caused</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>.544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, all values have *p < .05

The overarching hypothesis that pleasantness and goals are distinct underlying elements of emotions was supported by Study 2. While several of the relationships between pleasantness, goals and emotions were different than those in Study 1, pleasantness and goal relatedness continued to demonstrate different relative influences on emotions of the same valence. Pride was more strongly related to pleasantness, as was the case in Study 1. However, goal attainment on its own was not significant. Goals were only significant in conjunction with being self caused, a finding consistent with the rationale behind hypothesis 1. For gratitude, pleasantness and goals were both significant, although not in equal proportion. In fact, goal relatedness had a significant negative influence on feelings of gratitude (p = .047), as did causation being attributed to someone else, a result that may possibly be attributed to the provided vignette. Appraisal effects on guilt in this study were much stronger than in Study 1 and were consistent with predictions. In Study 2, guilt was significantly related to pleasantness, goals, self causation and a goal by self caused interaction. Because a main effect was found in Study 2, perhaps the Study 1 findings were related to the purchase context and its lack of association with guilt emotions, as opposed to appraisal effects being weakened by agency interactions. As such, it seems reasonable to tentatively accept hypothesis 3 with the caveat that the effects will only be evidenced when the emotion under investigation is relevant to the purchasing context. Consistent with Study 1, anger was driven much more strongly by pleasantness than goals.

**DISCUSSION**
While all research hypotheses received support, clearly there were inconsistencies between studies. First, goals did not have a significant main effect on pride or anger in Study 2 and did have a significant main effect on guilt in Study 2. Goals did interact with self causation to affect pride, but there were no such significant interactions uncovered with respect to anger. It is possible that strong appraisals of other causation overshadowed the importance of goals in the provided scenario, placing less emphasis on goals than would be the case in everyday purchase situations. Second, goals had a directionally unanticipated effect on gratitude in Study 2, an effect that could be attributed to the purchasing vignette provided. Three out of four...
hypotheses were supported by Study 1 and the fourth was supported by Study 2. As such, it seems premature to discard the theoretical premise of this research, but we do acknowledge that the theory appears to be insufficient. What can be more comfortably accepted is that pleasantness and goals are independent appraisal dimensions that have different relative effects on emotions, with the former having the largest effect overall. Inconsistencies in the directionality and relative strengths of the effects of pleasantness and goal related appraisals deserve further consideration.

General Discussion

This study contributes to our knowledge by demonstrating empirically that pleasantness and goal relatedness are distinct appraisals that have different effects on emotional responses. This evidence is important because many cognitive appraisal theories that advocate the use of one or the other of these appraisals are conceptual in nature and these theoretical biases are making their way into consumer psychology. The paper’s second contribution lies in demonstrating that pleasantness and goal related appraisals have different levels of influence on similarly valenced emotions. However, their relative strengths and directionalities require further investigation. This combined evidence may be used to better our understanding of how different emotions of similar valence are elicited. An important finding in relation to these relative effects is that they appear to be affected by purchase context. Accordingly, marketers must consider context effects carefully when considering the relative effects that pleasantness have on consumer behaviour.

Directions for Future Research

Emotions influence consumer behaviour. Our continued exploration of how appraisals influence emotions may serve to enlighten our understanding of how the underlying elements of emotions drive such consumer behaviors as information search, decision-making and satisfaction. Exploring the effects of context will be critical in these investigations. Another issue that should be explored in relation to these combined appraisal effects are mixed emotions, which have only recently become of interest to marketers. Awareness into how our many emotions work and the influence they have on our consumption related behaviour will be useful to marketers and consumers alike.

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CONSUMER GUILT: PRELIMINARY CONSTRUCT ASSESSMENT AND SCALE DEVELOPMENT
Sammy Bonsu, Schulich Schoool of Business, York University
Kelley Main, Schulich Schoool of Business, York University

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Emotions constitute an important dynamic of human action (Elster 1998) and in consumer research emotions have been found to influence consumer action. Despite this understanding of the importance of consumer emotions, the majority of research has focused on positive emotions and negative emotions such as anger, fear or guilt have received very little attention in this discipline. This is notwithstanding the fact that negative emotions are the most common appeals used in advertising (e.g., Huhmann and Brotherton 1997). This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by providing a conceptualization of consumer guilt and proposing a measurement instrument for it.

Guilt regulates interpersonal social functioning and mitigates against primordial instincts by enforcing social rules and norms (De Rivera 1984). Theorizing in the field has suggested that psychological and social goals interact to make guilt a potentially potent tool to regulate consumer action. Thus, guilt is a consequence of action or inaction and is an interpersonal emotion resulting from one’s recognition of having violated internalised personal or social moral standards. Guilt manifests itself in intense experiences of self-blame, remorse, and a perceived lack of control over the source of guilt (Baumeister et al 1994; Mosher 1980; Tangney and Dearing 2003). This understanding of how guilt can manifest itself informs our conceptualization of the underlying dimensions of guilt in the consumption context in the current study.

For guilt to be aroused, the consumer must accept responsibility for its origin or source. Consumer guilt indicates a strong sense of self-awareness that enhances a consumer’s sense of self-inadequacy and prompts the individual to seek corrective action (Izard 1977; Mosher 1980). A consumer in this situation acknowledges a mistake and accepts blame for that mistake. So described, guilt seems similar to the concept of regret as defined in the consumer literature (e.g., Yi and Baumgartner 2004). However, while it acknowledges a mistake and calls for corrective action, regret is neither indicative of the necessary violation of moral/social standards, nor does it involve the generalised expectation of self-mediated punishment that is associated with guilt (Mosher 1988). Like Simonson (1992) and consistent with the broader literature in psychology and sociology, we differentiate regret from feelings of responsibility, although we acknowledge that both are independent components of consumer guilt. In sum, consumer guilt is conceptualised as a three-dimension construct comprised of regret, self-blame, and self-control failure.

Guilt has been conceptualised and measured in a number of different ways in the literature and most measures have been criticised for measuring a person’s ascription to moral standards rather than the experience of guilt as affect Kugler (1989). In addition, the scales were found to have robust psychometric properties only in the specific domains of guilt for which they were defined. Only one scale – the Tulsa Guilt Inventory (Jones 199x) – exhibits robustness across conceptual domains and contexts (Kugler and Jones 1992). The current evidence seems to suggest then that the effectiveness of any guilt scale depends on the domain for which it is defined. It is in light of this that we set out to develop a reliable measure of consumer guilt.

This study reports on a preliminary investigation of consumer guilt. Our empirical examination suggests that there are three dimensions to consumer guilt namely remorse, self-blame and self-control failure. The factor structure and their related internal consistencies demonstrate the viability of these measures as representing the construct of consumer guilt. By providing a measure of consumer guilt, we hope to motivate increased research into negative emotions in general and their relevance in the consumer experience.

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DO EXPERTS FEEL DIFFERENTLY THAN NOVICES? A RE-EXAMINATION AND EXTENSION OF THE DUALITY HYPOTHESIS
Reto Felix, University of Monterrey

ABSTRACT

Previous research on expertise has predominantly focused on differences of cognitive constructs such as information processing and decision making. This study adds to previous research by investigating the dimensionality of emotions experts and novices experience in the postpurchase period. Based on factor analysis and Multidimensional Random Coefficient Multinomial Logit modeling, the results suggest that the tendency to experience positive and negative emotions simultaneously is significantly higher for novices than for experts. The results are contrasted with earlier findings on the duality hypothesis, and the implications and limitations of the study are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Many efforts in consumer research have been focused on determining how specific segments of consumers are different from each other, and expertise has been identified as one of the segmentation variables that may provide guidance in this task. Expertise has been defined as "the ability to perform product-related tasks successfully," and differs from familiarity which is defined as "the number of product-related experiences that have been accumulated by the consumer" (Alba and Hutchinson 1987, 411). This, expertise is a performance rather than a time-oriented construct and does not necessarily increase with product use. Consistent with these definitions, Hoch (2002) suggests that familiarity may be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the development of expertise, and claims that many people believe that they have learned more from product experience than they actually have.

However, expertise has been related predominantly to cognitive constructs such as information processing and decision making (e.g., Kardes, Sanbonmatsu, and Herr 1990, Kuusela, Spence, and Kanto 1998, Maheswaran 1994, Rao and Monroe 1988, Roehm and Sternthal 2001). Overall, the results of previous studies suggest that experts have an advantage when it comes to information processing and decision making in a consumption-related context, as compared to novices. This extensive knowledge about the cognitive processes related to expertise is contrasted by a vast knowledge gap on how experts and novices experience emotions in the different consumption stages. Considering that previous research has repeatedly suggested to integrate affect into the postpurchase period, and more specifically, into the satisfaction response (Dubé and Morgan 1996, Fournier and Mick 1999, Gardial et al. 1994, Oliver 1993, Phillips and Baumgartner 2002, Westbrook and Oliver 1981), this observation is even more surprising.

This article aims to explore the dimensionality of emotions for experts and novices. Researchers such as Bagozzi, Baumgartner, and Pieters (1998) and Larsen, McGraw, and Cacioppo (2001) suggest that positive and negative emotions can be experienced by an individual at the same time and be related to the same event. The idea that positive and negative emotions may be experienced simultaneously seems to be an attractive one, especially for those researchers familiar with the duality in Confucian and Buddhist traditions (for a short overview of duality in philosophy and in different cultures, see Williams and Aaker 2002). However, some authors suggest that the unipolarity of emotions found in these studies may be a statistical artifact, and that emotions are largely bipolar, with positive and negative emotions representing the opposite ends of a single dimension (Green, Goldman, and Salovey 1993, Russell and Carroll 1999).

Previous research presents evidence that culture, age and gender influence the dimensionality of positive and negative emotions (Bagozzi, Wong, and Yi 1999, Williams and Aaker 2002). It is difficult, though, to construct a hypothesis related to the dimensionality of emotions for expertise. If experts are different from novices in their information processing and choice behavior (i.e., cognition), there should be a good chance that experts and novices are also different in the way how they perceive emotions. However, will experts perceive positive and negative emotions as more independent from each other or as less independent, in comparison to novices? It may be argued that experts are able to see things in a more differentiated way than novices, suggesting that experts should experience positive and negative emotions as more independent from each other.

On the other hand, novices may perceive situations as new, complex, or contradictory to them, suggesting that the ambiguity resulting from these situations may open the door to experience both positive and negative feelings at the same time. The results presented in this paper provide some preliminary insights that will advance our knowledge concerning this question.

THE DIMENSIONALITY OF CONSUMER EMOTIONS

Because of the great number of different emotions, researchers have tried to identify the underlying dimensions or factors which may explain the variance in their models. For example, Mehrabian and Russell (1974, Russell and Mehrabian 1977) suggest a scale based on three factors: pleasure, arousal, and dominance. Watson and Tellegen (1985) obtain similar results from their second-order factor analysis by proposing positive affect and negative affect on the one hand, and engagement/disengagement on the other hand. Edell and Burke (1987) report three factors resulting from a factor analysis of their 69-item inventory: upbeat feelings, negative feelings, and warm feelings. Holbrook and Batra (1987), using factor analysis as well, obtain a three-factor division.

15 In their study with written descriptions of real consumption experiences, Havlena and Holbrook (1986) find that the Mehrabian and Russell (1974) factors capture more information about the emotional character of consumption experiences than Plutchik’s (1980) eight basic emotional categories of fear, anger, joy, sadness, disgust, acceptance, expectancy, and surprise.
solution consisting of pleasure, arousal, and domination. A more complex solution has been suggested by Richins (1997), who uses multidimensional scaling to identify a total of 16 clusters of emotion descriptors: anger, discontent, worry, sadness, fear, shame, envy, loneliness, romantic love, love, peacefulness, contentment, optimism, joy, excitement, and surprise. The latter emotion, surprise, is part of several taxonomies of emotions (e.g., Holbrook and Batra 1987, Plutchik 1980, Watson and Tellegen 1985) and has been defined as a neutral emotion (Reisenzein 2000, Vanhamme and Snelders 2001). However, it is easy to argue that for any taxonomy which includes direction (i.e., pleasant/unpleasant or positive/negative affect) as one of its dimensions, surprise by definition should not be an emotion, because it would load on neither factor. Consequently, Richins (1997), based on Ortony, Clore, and their colleagues (Clore, Ortony, and Foss 1987, Ortony, Clore, and Collins 1988), suggests to classify surprise as a nonvalenced cognition, rather than an emotion.

Concerning the dimensionality of positive and negative affect, many researchers agree that positive and negative emotions are unipolar dimensions and can in fact be experienced by an individual at the same time and be related to the same event (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, and Pieters 1998, Edell and Burke 1987, Larsen, McGraw, and Cacioppo 2001, Mano and Oliver 1993, Oliver, 1993, 1994, Westbrook 1987). However, Russell and Carroll (1999) note that previous analyses of bipolarity have required a unipolar response format and at the same time a correlation of $-1.00$ between positive and negative affect, such as pleasant and unpleasant. Based on Yik, Russell, and Feldman Barrett (1999), the authors argue that depending on the distribution of the data and using a unipolar response format, a correlation as low as -.47 can be reconcilable with bipolarity. Green, Goldman and Salovey (1993) present an even more radical position, suggesting that low correlations between positive and negative affect frequently are the result of failures to consider biases due to random and nonrandom response error. In a series of studies using a multimethod research design, the authors show that when considering random and nonrandom response error, correlations originally estimated in the neighborhood of -.25 may be in reality as high as -.85. Preliminary evidence suggests that culture, gender, and age influence how individuals experience positive and negative emotions. Results of two studies suggest that individuals in independent-based cultures (e.g., the United States) tend to experience emotions as being oppositional (bipolar), whereas individuals in interdependent-based cultures (e.g., China) tend to experience emotions in dialectic ways (Bagozzi, Wong, and Yi 1999, Williams and Aaker 2002). Male individuals seem to be more inclined towards bipolarity, whereas female individuals seem to be more inclined towards unipolarity (Bagozzi, Wong, and Yi 1999). Finally, older subjects show a higher propensity to accept conflicting emotions than younger subjects, when presented with stimuli that conveyed mixed emotions (happiness and sadness) simultaneously (Williams and Aaker 2002). However, the relationship between emotions and expertise has been largely neglected by researchers.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Sample and Procedure**

A field study was performed in order to measure consumption experiences in actual usage situations. Thus, before the measurement instrument could be applied, a decision had to be made about the product or product category on which expertise and emotion measures would be based. Cars were selected as the reference product category because of the expected high variance in the expertise measure which was needed in order to distinguish experts from novices in the study. Further, a large portion of the population has purchased at least one car, and cars have been proven to be adequate in previous studies of consumer emotions and satisfaction (e.g., Oliver 1993, Oliver and Westbrook 1993, Richins and Bloch 1988, Westbrook 1987, Westbrook and Oliver 1991).

A first version of a questionnaire was translated into Spanish and backtranslated into English. A total of four pilot studies with approximately 15 subjects each suggested minor adjustments in grammar and expression to the original questionnaire. A sampling procedure similar to snowball sampling (see Lohr 1999) was used. Questionnaire coordinators were identified via the university network in 20 companies in the Northern region of Mexico (10 from manufacturing, 8 from service, 2 from higher education institutions). These individuals committed themselves to administering 20 questionnaires in their respective organisation. The procedure of building on the commitment of the participating individuals in the organisations and limiting the responsibility for every company leader to 20 questionnaires produced 400 usable surveys.

**Measures**

**Expertise.** Building on the research of Mitchell and Dacin (1996) on alternative measures of consumer expertise, expertise for automobiles was measured with a series of seven specific knowledge questions. These questions asked how familiar individuals were with certain car concepts or parts, such as transmission, exhaust, suspension, or catalytic converter. All questions were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (no knowledge/familiarity) to 5 (very high knowledge/familiarity). The seven items load on one common factor with an eigenvalue of 4.39, explaining 62.71% of the variance in the data. Factor loadings range from .69 to .85, and the internal consistency of the scale is very satisfying (Cronbach Alpha = .90).

**Consumer Emotions.** Based on the Izard (1977) typology, positive emotions were operationalised as interest and joy, and negative emotions as anger, contempt, disgust, shame, guilt, sadness, and fear. Surprise was excluded from the list, due to its conceptualization as either neutral emotion (Reisenzein 2000, Vanhamme and Snelders 2001) or nonvalenced cognition (Richins 1997). Five-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), were used to measure the intensity of these emotions. Because Izard’s typology only includes two positive emotions, pleasure was added as a third positive affect to the scale. Pleasure has been shown to be an important dimension of affect in previous research (Holbrook and Batra 1987, Oliver and Westbrook 1993, Russell and Mehrabian 1977) and is supposed to be different from joy or interest. Because the dimensionality of emotions is part of the research
question of this article, factor loadings and internal consistency of the positive and negative emotion scale are reported below.

RESULTS

Demographics

Of the respondents in the sample, 46.2% were female and 53.8% were male. Age distribution was skewed towards younger respondents, with 56.5% of the participants being between 18 and 29 years old, 26% being between 30 and 40 years old, 12% being between 41 and 51 years old, and 5.5% being 52 years or older. Participants were relatively educated, with 13.8% having a high school degree, 6.8% a technical school degree, 60% a bachelor degree, 17.8% a masters degree, 5% a doctorate, and only 1.3% a degree lower than high school.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis for the expertise and emotion measures. On a scale from one to five, expertise has a mean of 2.79 with a standard deviation of 1.12. Positive emotions show a relatively high mean of 3.94 with a standard deviation of .79, whereas negative emotions show a relatively low mean of 1.23 with a standard deviation of .42. Skewness for negative emotions is 3.32, indicating that the distribution is heavily skewed to the right.

Dimensionality of Consumer Emotions

To test the dimensionality of consumer emotions, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied on the overall sample as well as on experts and novices separately. A median split with a cut-off value of 2.86 for the continuous expertise variable resulted in 207 novices and 193 experts. The results strongly suggest that both experts and novices perceive postpurchase emotions on two separate dimensions, positive and negative affect. Table 2 shows factor loadings, eigenvalues, and internal consistency for the overall sample and the two subsamples. For all three groups, the positive emotions of interest, joy, and pleasure load on one factor, whereas the negative emotions of anger, contempt, disgust, shame, guilt, sadness, and fear load on a second factor. Although internal consistency is only moderate for positive affect (ranging from .64 for novices to .69 for the overall sample), the factor pattern is similar for experts, novices, and the overall sample.

Although exploratory factor analysis provides support for the two-dimensionality of consumer emotions, it does not answer the question whether the two-factor solution is in fact superior to a bipolar solution where positive and negative emotions are extreme poles on the same dimension. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to compare model fits for two alternative models, a two-factor model with positive and negative affect, and a bipolar model with positive and negative affect loading on one common factor. The comparison of the two competing models was done for the overall sample as well as for experts and novices separately.

As can be seen from Table 3, the one-factor model with 35 degrees of freedom is a slightly more parsimonious model than the two-factor model with 34 degrees of freedom. However, the difference in Chi Square values at one degree of freedom is highly significant (p < .001) for all three groups, so that the two-factor model represents the data much better than the more parsimonious one-factor model. Table 3 also shows several fit indices for the two models. The normed fit index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) for the two-factor model are not very close to one and indicate a moderate model fit. However, these indices deteriorate substantially for the one-factor model, indicating that the two-factor model is superior in its ability to represent the underlying data adequately. Similarly, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) for the two-factor model does not reach the value for good model fit of .05 or less (.08 for the overall sample, .11 for experts, and .07 for novices). However, for the one-factor model, RMSEA increases substantially, to .13 for the overall sample, .15 for experts, and .12 for novices. Finally, several fit indices that impose penalties on model complexity, such as Akaike’s information criterion (AIC) and Bayes information criterion, or which consider model complexity as well as sample size, such as the consistent version of the AIC (CAIC), are worse (i.e., larger) for the one-factor model than for the two-factor model.

The factor loadings for the two-factor model are similar to the factor loadings which resulted from the exploratory factor analysis. Finally, factor correlations for all three groups are negative and sufficiently close to zero (-.33 for the overall sample, -.44 for experts, and -.22 for novices), indicating that positive and negative affect are not the extreme poles of a common dimension, but rather separate dimensions which can be experienced simultaneously by both experts and novices. However, the tendency to experience positive and negative emotions at the same time seems to be stronger for novices than for experts. The difference between these two correlations is statistically significant (p < .05).

Despite the fact that EFA and CFA are used widely in scale development and validation, they suffer from an important limitation: both methods are based on the covariance or correlation matrix of the data as the only input source, and therefore use linear relationships between observed variables only. A more direct way to measure scale dimensionality has been suggested with the Multidimensional Random Coefficient Multinomial Logit (MRCML) model (Adams, Wilson, and Wang 1997; Briggs and Wilson 2003), an extension of the unidimensional Rasch model. This model has been used primarily in educational contexts, for example, in order to determine the item difficulties in a test applied to students, and the ability distributions for these students. Although in a first instance the notion of item difficulty seems to be somewhat strange to the concept of consumer oriented scales, the MRCML is perfectly capable of handling items which have been measured with a Likert scale format. Besides making greater use of the available information contained in the data set, MRCML also provides fit statistics for each item separately. The MRCML is a generalised model which allows the

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16 A strong negative correlation between positive and negative emotions indicates unipolarity, i.e., individuals perceive positive and negative emotions as being oppositional (bipolar), whereas a correlation close to zero indicates that individuals experience positive and negative emotions simultaneously.
### TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>-.88</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>14.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 2
EMOTIONS: EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Sample (N=400)</th>
<th>Experts (N=193)</th>
<th>Novices (N=207)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Component</td>
<td>Component</td>
<td>Component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgust</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Variance Explained</td>
<td>36.79</td>
<td>16.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach Alpha</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Only loadings greater than .4 are shown. A five-point Likert scale response format was used.

### TABLE 3
EMOTIONS: CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Sample (N=400)</th>
<th>Experts (N=193)</th>
<th>Novices (N=207)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Factor</td>
<td>One Factor</td>
<td>Two Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>-.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>-.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>-.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgust</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
inclusion of a wide range of more specialised models, such as the simple logistic model, Masters’ partial credit model, Fischer’s linear logistic model, Whitley’s multicomponent latent trait model, and Andersen’s multidimensional Rasch model for repeated testing. In the following analysis, a scale model (Andrich 1978) was employed, using the computer program ConQuest (Wu, Adams, and Wilson 1998) to estimate a two-factor and a one-factor model for experts and novices. The principal purpose of applying this method was to compare overall model fit for the two-factor solution with the fit for the one-factor solution and to validate the factor correlations obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis.

The two-factor and one-factor models tested here are structured similarly to the models tested with the CFA above. For the two-factor model, interest, joy, and pleasure are supposed to load on positive affect, whereas anger, contempt, disgust, shame, guilt, sadness, and fear are supposed to load on negative affect. For the one-factor model, all items load on one common factor. There are a total of 16 parameters estimated for the two-factor model (two means and two variances for the latent variables, one correlation between the latent variables, eight item parameters, and three step parameters). For the one-factor model, a total of 14 parameters are estimated (one mean and one variance for the common latent variable, nine item parameters, and three step parameters). For experts, final deviance, an indicator of overall model fit, is 2539.25 for the two factor model and 2809.69 for the one-factor model. Because the models are hierarchically nested, a Chi-square significance test, based on the difference of the deviance and the difference in degrees of freedoms, can guide the decision as to which of the two models represent the underlying data best. The difference in deviance of 270.44 with two degrees of freedoms is statistically significant (p < .001), suggesting that the two-factor model is a better representation of the data than the one-factor model. Similarly, the difference in deviance with two degrees of freedom for the novices sub-sample is significant as well. Finally, the factor correlation is -.38 for experts and -.19 for novices, and the difference between the two correlations is statistically significant (p < .05). Although the rating scale factor correlation is lower than the CFA correlation for experts (-.38 versus -.44) as well as for novices (-.19 versus -.22), both CFA and MRCML suggest that the factor correlations are sufficiently low to be in support of two separate dimensions of affect for both experts and novices. However, the results from the MRCML support the finding from CFA that the tendency to experience positive and negative emotions at the same time (i.e., duality) is stronger for novices than for experts.

### DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to investigate differences between experts and novices in their emotional response during the postpurchase period. The results of this study reveal a relatively low negative correlation between positive and negative emotions for both experts and novices. The results might be taken as an evidence for the duality hypothesis, i.e., experts as well as novices perceive positive and negative emotions at the same time. Though, some caution should be applied when interpreting the findings. Specifically, the warning that the low correlations between positive and negative affect presented in many studies of consumer emotions are a mere artifact of the response format should be taken seriously. For example, in this study, negative emotions have a relatively low mean of 1.23 and high skewness of 3.32, which may have biased the correlations. This issue is emphasised by the following observation of Green et al. (1993), who complain that “a virtual cottage industry developed with the goal of demonstrating that positive and negative affect were indeed independent across a variety of contexts” (page 1031). Although the study presented here did not follow the suggestion of Green et al. to use a multimethod approach to measure affect, it may be argued that this limitation does not affect the main contribution of the results presented here. The main finding suggests that novices have a significantly stronger tendency to experience positive and negative emotions simultaneously than experts, and it is this relative distance in the dimensionality of emotions that was the main interest of this study.

Besides biases in the response format as an
exploration for consistently low correlations between positive and negative emotions, it also has been argued that the time span for which emotions are measured is of importance. Diener and Emmons (1984) suggest that positive and negative affect may be strongly and inversely related at any given moment in time and yet still be independent in terms of how people reflect on their mood over a longer period of time. In the present study, emotions were measured for the postpurchase period of a car purchase (i.e., for a longer period of time), which may explain the relatively low correlations of positive and negative affect revealed here. However, it may be argued that consumer attitudes, satisfaction, and the willingness to repurchase a high involvement product such as automobiles are influenced by the emotions that emerge over a longer time span during the postpurchase period, so that the findings of this study may be more relevant for actual consumer behavior than the emotions measured during a very short time span, e.g., immediately after the car purchase.

In order to understand why experts are less prone than novices to experience both positive and negative emotions simultaneously after their purchase, it may be helpful to return to previous findings on differences in cognition between the two consumer segments. Previous research suggests that when incoming information matches category-based knowledge, experts rapidly reach final evaluations and generate fewer thoughts related to the product’s attributes, whereas when incoming information is discrepant from category knowledge, experts engage in more analytical processing and take more time to form an impression of the product (Sujan 1985). Overall, dependent on the context, experts may have more than novices the ability to make efficient decisions and to avoid ambiguity in their solutions. Less ambiguity, however, may explain why experts show less propensity than novices to experience positive and negative emotions simultaneously. Novices also have shown less consistency in final choices than experts (Kuusela, Spence, and Kanto 1998), which may further explain the simultaneous occurrence of positive and negative affect. Future research should try to explicitly incorporate the mediating variables that may establish the link between cognition and emotion for different consumer segments. Further, this study measures postpurchase emotions for a high involvement product (cars), and it might be interesting to replicate the study with a low involvement product in order to determine if the findings hold across product categories.

### Table 4

| Emotions: Multidimensional Random Coefficient Multinomial Logit (Rating Scale) Model |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Experts                         | Two-factor model | Deviance 2539.25 |
|                                 |                 | Estimated Parameters 16 |
|                                 | Experts         | Factor Correlation 0.38 |
| Novices                         | Two-factor model | Deviance 2970.40 |
|                                 |                 | Estimated Parameters 14 |
|                                 | Novices         | Factor Correlation 0.19 |
|                                 | One-factor model | Deviance 3146.74 |
|                                 |                 | Estimated Parameters 14 |
|                                 |                | Factor Correlation n/a |

### References

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THE ROLE OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING, POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT, AND CONSUMER SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCE IN PREDICTING IMPULSE BUYING TENDENCIES

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Anne M. Lavack, University of Regina
Fredric Kropp, Monterey Institute of International Studies

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Impulse buying involves making spontaneous purchases, is frequently based on the presence of an immediate stimulus object, and is often accompanied by feelings of excitement and pleasure and/or a powerful urge to buy (Rook 1987). Although impulse buying is most often measured behaviourally in the context of a shopping environment (Rook and Gardner, 1993), there is also strong evidence for chronic individual differences in consumers’ propensity to buy on impulse (Verplanken and Herabadi 2001). Similar to other types of self-indulgent behavior such as alcohol consumption and smoking, it is likely that impulse buying at low to moderate levels can be an enjoyable pastime driven by the pursuit of hedonistic goals. However, high levels of these behaviors can be harmful and are potentially self-destructive. Moreover, these behaviors can be driven by avoidance of negative psychological states such as dispositional negative affect and/or low self-esteem (Verplanken et al. 2005). This potential “dark side” of impulse buying makes it a particularly interesting phenomenon, and the relative absence of work examining impulse buying from a psychological perspective suggests the need for further research in this area. The primary objective of the present article is to evaluate and extend Verplanken et al.’s (2005) theoretical model postulating negative affect as a driving force behind impulse buying. To achieve this objective, chronic impulse buying tendencies were measured in conjunction with measures of subjective well-being, positive and negative affect, social influence, and self-esteem.

A survey containing questionnaires measuring the variables of interest was administered to 277 students at a major English-speaking Canadian university. Impulse buying tendency was measured using the Impulse Buying Tendency Scale (IBTS) developed by Verplanken and Herabadi (2001). The IBTS contains two subscales: the cognitive subscale contains items related to a lack of planning and deliberation in association with purchase decisions, and the affective subscale contains items related to feelings of excitement, lack of control, and the urge to buy. Subjective well-being was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al. 1985). The SWLS is unidimensional and contains items measuring a person’s cognitive assessment of global life satisfaction. Affect was measured using the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark & Tellegen 1988). The PANAS contains 2 subscales: the positive affect subscale measures the degree to which individuals experience positive emotional states, and the negative affect subscale measures the degree to which individuals experience negative emotional states. The degree to which consumers are influenced by others was measured using the Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (CSII) scale (Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel 1989). The CSII contains two subscales: the informational influence subscale measures the degree to which individuals seek information related to purchases from their social environment, and the normative influence subscale measures the degree to which consumers gain approval or affirmation from their social environment. Self-esteem was measured using the Self-Liking and Competence Scale-Revised (SLCS-R; Tafarodi & Swann 2001). The SLCS-R contains two subscales: the self-liking subscale measures feelings of social worth, and the self-competence subscale measures feelings of efficacy and control.

Correlational results from this study were consistent with all of the hypotheses. The cognitive subscale of the IBTS is negatively related to the SWLS, positively related to the negative affect subscale of the PANAS, and negatively related to the informational subscale of the CSII. The affective subscale of the IBTS is positively related to the negative affect subscale of the PANAS, negatively related to the normative subscale of the CSII, and negatively related to both subscales of the SLCS-R.

Similar results were obtained using regression analyses. In a regression analysis predicting the cognitive subscale of the IBTS, SWLS and informational CSII were both positively related to cognitive IBTS, whereas the PANAS negative affect scale was positively related to cognitive IBTS; however, the relationships between cognitive IBTS and both SWLS and negative affect only achieved marginal significance. In the regression analysis predicting the affective subscale of the IBTS, self-liking was not a significant predictor. Self-competence was negatively associated with the affective subscale of the IBTS, whereas PANAS negative affect and normative CSII were both positively associated with the affective subscale of the IBTS. The relationship between self-competence and affective IBTS only achieved marginal significance. With the exception of the lack of a relationship between self-liking and affective IBTS, all of these regression results are consistent with the hypotheses.

The present study makes two primary contributions. First, this study supports the need to differentiate between cognitive and affective facets of impulse buying tendencies. The fact that the cognitive and affective facets of impulse buying tendencies were differentially associated with the psychological constructs used in the present study suggests that greater efforts should be made to separate these two facets of impulse buying in future research. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the present study provides empirical support for Verplanken et al.’s (2005) proposition that impulse buying is closely linked to escape from negative affective states. In particular, the fact that negative affect (but not positive affect) was related to both the cognitive and affective facets of impulse buying tendencies, provides strong support for this proposition. Although further research is needed in this area, these findings suggest that impulse buying should perhaps no longer be viewed simply as “harmless fun.”
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EXPLORING CONSUMER EVALUATION OF FREE SERVICE TRIAL OFFERS

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David Bednall, Deakin University
Harmen Oppewal, Monash University

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research in marketing has largely focused on equitable exchange contexts, which involve monetary transactions. Little is known about what occurs in exchanges where offerings are made absolutely for free. The literature review revealed a significant gap in the current understanding of consumers’ evaluations of free trial offers. Service characteristics, including co-production, intangibility, perishability, and heterogeneity (Zeithaml 1981; Zeithaml and Bitner 1996; Zeithaml et al. 1985), imply that evaluating a free trial offer can be more problematic than evaluating a product sample. While Garretson and Clow (1999) have suggested that service sampling is an area requiring further research, this research was also justified by a lack of exploratory investigation into the area of evaluating a product sample or a free trial offer before trialling a product/service. Thus, research justifications were drawn from two aspects left ambiguous in the current literature: 1) free trial, and 2) service trial.

This paper explores how consumers evaluate free service trial offers, which occurs when firms provide consumers an option to trial a service without charge. Recent studies in marketing have pointed out that trialling a product or a service for free generates a direct experience for consumers to learn about the product and hence it reduces consumers’ risks in a purchase. While research has focused on trial-to-purchase aspects, it is still unclear as to what occurs in pre-trial decision making.

The study aimed to identify salient factors that influence free trial offer evaluations. There were 13 in-depth interviews conducted in this study. Respondents were asked to evaluate advertisements of free service trial offers and tell their stories of redeeming a free trial offer. An analysis was carried out by identifying evaluation themes that distinguish trialling a free initial service from purchasing a service for the first time. Coding procedures suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) were used to analyse the data. An independent judge was trained and coded 10 percent of the entire transcripts. Differences in interpretation and coding between the researcher and the second coder were reconciled by reviewing the passage to reach a consensus of judgement.

The outcomes consisted of four major themes; attribution, perceived obligation, coping strategies, and genuine free trial offers. Within these themes, attribution and perceived obligation were the most salient evaluation factors. We found that when exposed to a free service trial offer, individuals may make a positive or a negative attribution about the offer. Using attribution taxonomy by Lichtenstein and Bearden (1986), we divided the attribution into three types, service provider, service quality, and situation. Those who make a negative attribution or are skeptical about the offer may be concerned about the service quality, personal obligation reinforced by the service provider, and negative publicity about free trials. While the three attribution categories also applied to those who make a positive attribution, these individuals are likely to make a trial decision by using conventional evaluation factors as occurred in first-time purchase contexts and deal evaluation, e.g., coupon face value and perceived sacrifices.

Current research on price signaling quality (e.g., Raghurib 1998; Raghurib and Corfman 1999) can be used to explain the negative attribution about free trial service quality. Our primary contribution lies in the relationship between negative attribution or skepticism about the provider’s motive and perceived obligation associated with receiving a free service. Some consumers understand that the provider’s motive of offering a free trial is to impose a sales pressure by reinforcing the imbalance of exchange after they have received the free service. Such perceptions raise the level of perceived obligation inherent in receiving a free trial offer. We highlight that perceived obligation occurs in this context because of service co-production and the inequity of the exchange.

In addition to the two salient evaluation factors, consumers’ coping strategies also emerged from our interviews. In particular, consumers use script and role playing, refraining from providing their contact details, and trading off between trial benefits and subsequent obligation. This emerging theme suggests that despite skepticism about the provider’s motive and perceived obligation, tough-minded consumers who perceive trial benefits exceeding perceived obligation, tend to develop such strategies to avoid reciprocating to the trial offer provider by purchasing the service.

Despite the negative attitude towards free trial offers, the merit of this promotional tool is not discounted entirely. Consumers termed ‘genuine free trial offers’ as the free trial offers that signal no personal obligation and are easy to redeem. This suggests that free trials are most likely to be accepted if they are perceived as truly free offers.

REFERENCES


CONCEPTUALISATION, CONSUMER AND COGNITION: THE 3 CS THAT WILL ADVANCE PRODUCT PLACEMENT RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Before useful product placement research and effective practice can occur, several conceptual issues must be resolved. Specifically, product placement needs to be clearly distinguished from advertising message embeds, endorsement, sponsorship, advertisement and other liminal activities. Essentially this involves defining and establishing the parameters of product placement, identifying the factors that affect placement processing, developing an ontology of placement context, and identifying what effects are possible and effective ways for measuring these effects. This paper aims to address all of these issues, thus offering a framework for future product placement research.

INTRODUCTION

As traditional means of delivering advertising messages lose their ability to reach and effectively communicate with those target audiences judged most desirable by advertisers, the need for alternative vehicles for communication becomes more urgent (Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993). Product placement, and its variant, advertisement, has arisen as tools to penetrate the audiences’ awareness, catching the audience when they are relatively ‘captive’ during a program, when their ‘this is advertising’ evaluation is turned off. It is this unobtrusive entry of the commercial message that makes product placement different from most other forms of marketing communication (McCarty 2004).

Current estimates valued the net worth of the overall product placement market to be $3.5 billion in 2004, a rise of 30.5% from 2003 (Kaplan 2005). Yet considering its use in practice, there has been a disproportionate amount of product placement research and there remains a considerable paucity of research in a number of areas. A fundamental problem is the lack of a strong conceptual foundation, with no overriding theoretical framework to describe how product placement may work. A myriad of definitions of product placement exist, but it is argued that none of these really capture what product placement is about and what it hopes to achieve, or the different forms it can take in various media contexts. Moreover, product placement needs to be properly distinguished from related forms of communication such as sponsorship, endorsement and advertisement. Finally, we also need to understand what effects are possible and what factors impact on these effects. Most research into product placement effectiveness has focused on memory for the placement, with the complexity of this research varying from simply determining how many brands could be remembered and offering no explanation (e.g. Babin and Carder 1996), to trying to explain results by considering certain executional characteristics of the actual placement (e.g. modality, prominence). These effects have been measured via explicit memory tests, thus assuming conscious memory. Yet given that product placement is a form of embedding, we cannot ignore the possibility of unconscious processing and memory and thus the value of implicit memory measures.

Most empirical research to date has focused on examining the effects of one or more executional variables under the control of the sponsor and program creator (e.g. program-induced mood, placement modality) on placement memory. In doing so, these studies have ignored how the characteristics of the audience member themselves affect placement processing. Though the quality of the placement can influence the degree of attention paid to the placement, other factors will also have an impact. This paper argues that the success of a product placement could well lie with the audience, being a function of their level of engagement with the entertainment they are consuming, their familiarity with the product or brand that is placed, and their adopted information processing style, and presents a placement processing framework that incorporates these factors. Furthermore, it also offers a resolution to the aforementioned definition and construct problems.

DEFINING PRODUCT PLACEMENT

A necessary condition for adequately measuring a construct is to specify the domain of the construct, with the researcher delineating what is and is not included within the definition (Churchill 1979). With no such parameters yet established for product placement, it remains somewhat ill-defined and difficult to operationalise. A starting point is therefore to define the construct. Since research in this area began a number of definitions have been proffered and these are listed in Exhibit 1. These definitions differ considerably in their level of inclusivity, namely which media product placements can feature in, what forms of payment may be made, and how a product placement is executed within a specific medium. It would therefore seem that the most comprehensive definition of product placement has been offered by Karrh (1998, 33) who defines it as “the paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers, through audio and/or visual means, within mass media programming”.

He argues that his is the most inclusive definition because it describes the paid nature of product placement (c.f. Steortz 1987; c.f. Balasubramanian 1994), it explains that brands can appear both visually and / or aurally (c.f. Steortz 1987), and infers that product placement encompasses many more mediums than just television or movies (c.f. Balasubramanian 1994; Gupta and Lord 1998; d’Astous and Chartier 2000). Indeed, no other definition in current circulation has all of these characteristics. However, shortcomings can also be found with Karrh’s definition. Firstly, “brand identifier” is a tautology, given that a brand is an identifier, so this phrase is redundant. Secondly, it reduces product placement to the placement of brands only. Thirdly, since placement can occur in a variety of entertainment mediums, the focus on audio/visual would also seem unnecessary. Finally, as with most other definitions, it (wrongly) limits product placement to activities that are paid for. This would be acceptable provided that all product placements were contingent on a reward factor, but often, this is not the case, with the purpose being to enhance the program or story. For these reasons, product
placement is better described by defining it in terms of the actual act, namely, “the inclusion of products - branded and/or unbranded – to support content in entertainment programs”.

Note the term ‘paid’ has been removed. Karrh’s definition infers that product placement only refers to cash payments, and it is unclear whether he is also considering the notion that product placement extends to different forms of payment such as the lending of products, uses of sets, or marketing support for the entertainment program. The coverage of product placement in the press generally focuses on the more explicit monetary component, leading many to believe that cash payments are made for each and every placement, thus neglecting the rich history of product placement which saw it evolve from a simple barter system, which is now encompassed by many of these other indirect payment methods or no payment at all. Further justifying the decision to remove the concept of ‘paid’ from the definition is that the issue of whether or not the placement is paid for by any of these means may ultimately be irrelevant since it is the audiences’ perceptions which are most important (Englis 1998), and increasing coverage of product placement in the press, as well as increasing cynicism from audiences may signal that they believe all placements to be paid for. They may feel that no brand appears in an entertainment program by accident. But whilst they do not appear by accident, it is not because they are necessarily there to influence (c.f. Balasubramanian 1994; Law and Braun-LaTour 2004). To make such a statement would be to say that directors and writers have lost complete control of their creative processes and that it is advertisers who are making entertainment, not them.

As both consumers and researchers, we can not always know which products appear as a result of a deal and which ones appear purely for creative purposes. Therefore, the way that we process all the different props, costumes and settings in entertainment programs is the same, regardless of whether it was the result of a formal placement or not. So relative to processing, the paid nature of product placement is irrelevant, as it is the questions surrounding processing that lie at the heart of both social and ethical concerns and commercial accountability. The paid nature of the product placement is only relevant from a commercial perspective, for advertisers who need to know what they are buying, and who need some way of measuring whether they are getting value for money and gaining value from their advertising spend.

### FIGURE 1

**DEFINITIONS OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT**

- “the inclusion of a brand name, product, package, signage or other trademark merchandise within a motion picture, television show, or music video” (Steortz 1987)
- “the inclusion of consumer products and services in motion pictures distributed to theatres by major Hollywood studios in return for cash fees or reciprocal promotional exposure for the films in marketing advertising programs” (Clark 1991, in Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993).
- “the planned entries of products into movies or television shows that may influence viewers’ product beliefs and/or behaviors favourably” (Balasubramanian 1994)
- “the practice of placing brand name products in movies as props” (Gupta and Gould 1997)
- “incorporating brands in movies in return for money or for some promotional or other consideration” (Gupta and Gould 1997)
- “the paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers, through audio and/or visual means, within mass media programming” (Karrh 1998)
- “a paid product message aimed at influencing movie (or television) audiences via the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a movie (or television program)” (Gupta and Lord 1998)
- “the placement of a brand or a firm in a movie or in a television program by different means and for promotional purposes” (d’Astous and Seguin 1999)
- “the inclusion of a product, a brand name, or the name of a firm in a movie or in a television program for promotional purposes” (d’Astous and Chartier 2000)
- “commercial insertions within a particular media program intended to heighten the visibility of a brand, type of product, or service” (La Pastina 2001)

### ESTABLISHING PARAMETERS

Establishing parameters necessitates the clarification of the relationship between product placement, sponsorship, endorsement and advertisement. Separating the sponsorship and endorsement elements is relatively straightforward. To sponsor means to be surety for, to favour or support strongly; to support (someone) in a fund-raising activity by pledging a certain sum for each unit completed; and in a marketing context to pay or contribute towards the expenses of a media program, performance or other event or work, in return for advertising space or rights. Conversely, to endorse is to confirm, sanction, countenance, or vouch for, through an endorsement. Underlying sponsorship is the notion that some tangible or material act must be given to enhance the well-being of the entity sponsored. Endorsement is merely approval and does not require such tangible or material acts. In this way, sponsorship could be viewed as
a form of endorsement, but endorsement is not a form of sponsorship. There are a number of ways in which endorsement and sponsorship can be manifested – for example, celebrities directly (or indirectly) endorsing a brand, or one brand endorsing another. Our definition of product placement now envelopes both endorsement and sponsorship. For example, the use or reference to, in a positive context, by a star or character in an entertainment vehicle can be seen as an endorsement, and depending on the story context, a brand can be associated with a sponsorship act within a storyline. So in essence, placement under certain conditions can be associated with endorsement and/or sponsorship, but it is not by itself either of these two activities.

The relationship between product placement and advertainment is somewhat more complex. The term advertainment (also known as branded entertainment, brandtainment, brandexploitation, and brand integration) emerged in the late 1990s and was originally associated with the use of a short film format, but other genres such as computer games and music video clips have also adopted this format. Advertisers are now focussing on not interrupting audiences and working on a multitude of ways in which to seamlessly incorporate the advertisement into the entertainment vehicle, thus making the advertisement all but invisible. The key element of advertainment is that the messages do not appear to be advertisements, but entertainment and hence capture attention whilst the brand takes either a central or incidental role.

Kretchmer (2004) associates advertainment with entertainment vehicles created solely to spotlight specific advertisers. She argues that two forms can be identified - one where the advertisement is the entertainment; the other where the entertainment is the advertisement. The former is exemplified by Anheuser-Busch’s Bud Bowls that originated in 1989, where the Bud and Bud-Light battled for gridiron glory. The advertisement migrated to the Internet and transformed in the real domain with people betting on the outcome. For the latter she gives the example of Heather Locklear endorsing Preference during ads in ‘Spin City’, Katie Holmes endorsing Lumia in ads during ‘Dawson’s Creek’ and Jessica Alba supporting Feria in ads during ‘Dark Angel’, arguing that when we watch the show, we are primed to think of the product when we see the stars from the ad sporting their beautifully coloured hair. Since she defines advertainment as vehicles created solely to spotlight advertisers, one then presumes, using Kretchmer’s logic, that ‘Spin City’, ‘Dawson’s Creek’ and ‘Dark Angel’ were programs initiated and paid for by the advertisers. She also argues that both are forms of product placement and that endorsement and sponsorship elements are also features of the activity. Her linking of advertainment to entertainment vehicles created solely to spotlight specific advertisers does not create a problem, but her description of the two forms is not totally clear. It seems reasonable that advertainment should describe a situation where the advertisement is the entertainment, and the Anheuser-Busch’s Bud Bowls advertisement seems a reasonable example. However the other form, that the entertainment is the advertisement in the ‘Spin City’, ‘Dawson’s Creek’ and ‘Dark Angel’ examples are confusing as it suggests that the purpose of these programs is to advertise products. In the traditional understanding of product placement, the program content is developed independently of the needs of the product or brand, and the product or brand takes advantage of the existing program content. Essentially, there is a difference in the degree of ownership and control that the advertiser has over the process.

It seems therefore that advertainment and product placement are different, but related, activities, and that an ‘umbrella’ label for this evolved practice needs to be considered. Product placement was coined at a time when the practice was geared towards products as props and the strategic value was not fully realised by brand managers. This realisation, coupled with the emergence of advertainment suggests that it may be useful to create a new term and a new definition. Hence, this research offers the term ‘brandcasting’ as an umbrella term for both concepts. It is a nice play on words – not only stemming from the word broadcasting, but it also denotes that the brand is deliberately cast in the story. Brandcasting relates then to “the inclusion of products – branded or unbranded - in an entertainment program”, and it can take two forms – advertainment or product placement. More specifically, advertainment relates to program content designed to support a brand. The inclusion of a brand in an advertainment is always purposeful (as this is its raison d’être) and hence paid for, and the advertiser has more creative control. Product placement on the other hand relates to a product or brand used to support content and may or may not be deliberate or paid for. Furthermore, while both are forms of brandcasting, the purpose, function and viewer’s processing of the brand is likely to be different. For this reason, it may be useful to view the relationship between advertainment and product placement as two opposite ends of a continuum.

FIGURE 2
THE BRANDCASTING CONTINUUM: A BASIC THEORETICAL MODEL OF BRANDCAST PROCESSING
DEVELOPING A BRANDCAST PROCESSING FRAMEWORK

The uses and gratifications research stream is an audience-centred perspective that looks at what people do with the media rather than what the media does to them (Wakefield et al. 1998). An essential assumption of this perspective is that mass media use is controlled by the individual audience member, thus taking a user-level view as opposed to a mass exposure perspective in understanding media use (Stafford et al. 2004).

Pavelchak, Antil and Munch (1988) found that program induced emotional reactions will influence ad recall, especially during the encoding stage when program-induced emotion is likely to have its effect. Because brandcasts do not interrupt the movies or programs in which they are embedded, the issue is to determine how factors related to the processing of a program affect the concurrent processing of a brandcast. The answer may depend on the relative balance of three potentially countervailing forces – the program context, the brandcast quality and the recipient’s level of engrossment with the story. The brandcast processing framework presented in this paper is based on the assumption that a desired outcome of a brandcast is a memory of the brand and/or product and that the placement quality in any program is a ‘given’ (i.e. determined by the program designers). For this reason, audience characteristics are deemed to have a moderating effect on the placement stimulus.

Brandcast Effects

A significant issue for brandcasting is determining what audience effects are possible. This debate is magnified as there is little consensus or knowledge as to what effects practitioners are hoping to gain from brandcasting, what effects could theoretically arise, and what effects have actually been demonstrated through empirical studies. With the goal of marketing effort being to build and sustain purchase, the ultimate goal of communication planning is also purchase. Purchase, in turn, is influenced by a range of factors - some controllable by marketers, others not - so the most that one can expect from advertising efforts, including brandcasts, is that preference for the brand is created and/or sustained. Furthermore, the entwined nature of joint promotional campaigns makes it difficult to tease apart the effects of brandcasts from other forms of marketing efforts.

Thus it can be presumed that the intention is to create brand awareness and to influence preference. Though brandcasts involve parallel processing, memory effects (conscious / unconscious) are still the desired outcome. Whereas explicit memory tests are viable in traditional advertising, because placement awareness must result from parallel processing, the liminal factor in placement needs to be recognised, thus validating an argument for implicit measures. The value of implicit memory testing is gaining acceptance (Shapiro et al. 1997; Hair et al. 1998; Law and Braun 2000; Shapiro and Krishnan 2001). The choice of implicit or explicit could vary depending on the brandcast platform (i.e. advertisement or product placement). It may be that explicit measures may be more beneficial for measuring advertisement as the program has been designed to support the brand effects, and implicit better in the case of product placement. It seems sensible to assume that the costs associated with the strategic use of product placement would require an impact on brand awareness and image associations. This being so, some form of memory measure (conscious or unconscious) would seem appropriate either alone or in conjunction with attitude and/or preference measures.

Brandcast Quality

With the goal of brandcast research to understand what audience do with the brandcast, research is understandably geared towards examining the relationship between the quality of the brandcast and memory of it. Gupta and Lord (1998) were the first researchers to extend the product placement literature, by considering the effects of the placement quality. They found, as did Brennan, Dubas and Babin (1999), d’Astous and Chartier (2000) and Russell (2002) that prominence, modality and plot connection affected recall. A scrutiny of the previous studies indicates that any measure of brandcast quality should include prominence, modality, frequency and exposure length, use by star and plot connection.

Prominence. Determined by assessing whether the placement is creative or on-set. Creative (subtle) placements occur when a brand appears as a prop in the background of a shot, is small in size, is lost in an array of multiple products or objects, or has a low time of exposure (Murdock 1992). In contrast, on-set placements are more central to the action in the scene and one would expect them to be more easily recalled.

Modality. There are three main ways this can occur. Visual-only brandcasts show a product, logo, or some other visual brand identifier without any relevant message or sounds. In contrast, audio-only placements exist when the brand name is mentioned or heard without showing the product. Audio-visual placements exist when the brand is both seen and its name spoken.

Temporal Quality. Frequency and length of exposure represent repetition and time, which both help slow down the process of forgetting or decay, thus increasing the ability to retrieve information from the memory store. The more screen time a product is given, the greater the chance it has of being noticed and subsequently recalled. Audiences should therefore be more aware of a brand that is shown frequently and has long exposure times.

Plot Connection. Relates to the degree that the placement is integrated with the plot of the story (Russell 1998). Whereas lower plot placements do not contribute much to the story, higher plot placements constitute a major thematic element (Holbrook and Grayson 1986).

Used by Star. Prominence may also result from the fact that the product (or other brand identifier) is consumed or mentioned by one of the leading actors (Babin and Carder 1996). Such a brandcast is termed ‘use by star’ (Removed during review process).

Our model (see Exhibit 3) considers the role that these five different factors of brandcast quality have on memory for the brandcast. Because it is the brandcast to which the audience member is exposed, the characteristics of this stimulus are depicted as having a direct effect on the audience’s stages of processing.
Audience Characteristics
Adopting the stance of the uses and gratifications research stream, it seems sensible to argue that the recall of a product placement will be moderated by an audience member’s characteristics. Simply because a person is counted as being in the audience for a particular program does not mean that an advertisement or program segment has been seen. The environment in which an ad appears may have a significant effect on the viewer, and this effect may be caused by viewer attitudes towards the vehicle, mood engendered by it, the degree of involvement of the audience member and how the message content is processed (Lloyd and Clancy 1991; Norris and Colman 1993). Understanding the impact of context and audience state on advertising effectiveness is therefore important and raises both a theoretical issue – the role of the viewer in the communication process – and a methodological problem – how we can investigate different interpretations and their influence on effects (Livingstone 1990).

Level of Audience Engrossment
The term engrossment was selected to identify the components of the audiences’ mental and emotional engagement with a program. Engrossment means to occupy exclusively; to absorb, to give complete attention, concentration and intense mental effort; it is the mental state of being preoccupied by something. Essentially it is the degree to which individuals are engaged, affectively, cognitively and behaviorally, with the media they are consuming, at the time of consumption. It is characterised by the degree of cognitive effort (the degree of mental engagement) and the level of emotional arousal and pleasure experienced.

Audience activity is multi-dimensional and is best conceptualised as an unixed construct, with audiences exhibiting varying degrees of activity both within and between programs. Intensively focused viewing is only one way of watching. Most people have different intensity levels of viewing which vary with the content of what they are watching, what else they are doing, time of day, motivation for viewing, and who else is watching with them (Lee 2002). For this reason, it may be more accurate to think of watching not as a binary condition, but along a continuum (Kim and Rubin 1997; Lee 2002).

An individual’s unique interests, personality predispositions, need for entertainment, media selectivity, prior exposure to the content, empathy with and desirability of the character, level of distraction, arousal states, or mood may influence their affective reactions, willingness, and ability to become engrossed with a program. In other words, this engrossment may be more strongly linked to individual-level variables than to content variables. Whist this concept of engrossment is yet to be properly clarified, based on a review of the literature, and extending the work of (reviewed during review process), it is anticipated that factors such as pleasure, arousal, cognitive effort, and program and star liking will emerge as components of audience engrossment.

Level of Product Knowledge and Involvement
There is empirical evidence for the role of product familiarity in relation to formal advertising messages (e.g. Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Rao and Monroe 1988; Coupey et al. 1998), but not in the context of product placement except for (removed during review process). Product familiarity provides consumers with a superior ability to accumulate, integrate and judge the relevance of product information, thereby creating a sophisticated memory schema (Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Rao and Monroe 1988). With familiarity affecting what, how and how much product category information is stored in the brain, audiences are more willing to process personally relevant messages and find it easier to process information about products that are familiar to them (Petty et al. 1983; Celsi and Olson 1988; Babin and Carder 1996; DeLorme and Reid 1999). In the context of brandcasting, the perceived personal relevance may allow faster recognition (either conscious or unconscious) and facilitate concurrent processing of the embedded placement, hence impacting on the direct relationship between the product placement characteristics and retention.

Information Processing Style
It is well established that consumers have different processing skills, relating to their acquisition of information, the strategies they employ during acquisition, and their utilisation of acquired information when forming judgements (Childers et al. 1985). Two information processing styles are an individual’s propensity to process visual information (pictures) as opposed to verbal information (words). Such predispositions for processing orientation (i.e. visual or verbal) may stem from differing abilities to process information (Capon and Davis 1984) or a preference for a particular style (Richardson 1978).

This audience characteristic is thought to have a moderating effect on brandcast characteristics and subsequent retention of that brandcast. In the case of visual versus verbal processing, an individual with a preference for visual information would process pictures and images, whilst a person with a preference for verbal information would process words, text and dialogue. So, when exposed to the same brandcast, individuals would respond differently to the visual and verbal brandcasts based on their predisposition for visual or verbal information (Sojka and Giese 2001).

THE BRANDCAST PROCESSING FRAMEWORK
Given the nature and character of these factors, the framework shown in exhibit 3 shows how these factors interact. The audience characteristics have a moderating effect on the stimulus - the brandcast quality. Additional audience characteristics such as age, culture and media usage and frequency will be controlled for and compared, and delivery context will be limited to film. Future research should test different contexts in order to develop generalisations.

CONCLUSION
Product placement research is in its infancy and if it is to develop into a viable and meaningful research area in marketing communications, definition, construct and framework issues need to be resolved. This paper has argued for the use of the term brandcasting (the inclusion of products - branded and / or unbranded - in mass media programs) as an umbrella term for the practices of advertisement and product placement. Whilst both make use of brands and products in entertainment programs, they are in essence different forms and their differences
need to be taken into account when examining effects. A brandcasting framework was proposed, based on the premise that the effects of a brandcast are determined by the quality of that brandcast and that the audience characteristics (i.e. brand familiarity, engrossment and processing styles) will moderate the effects of the brandcast quality. It is hoped that the framework developed in this paper will have a seminal affect on how placement effects are examined.

FIGURE 3
Brandcast Processing Framework

Figure 3.1 – Basic Theoretical Model of Brandcast Processing

REFERENCES


YOUNG THAI AND UK CONSUMERS’ EXPERIENCES OF TELEVISION PRODUCT PLACEMENT—ENGAGEMENT, RESISTANCE AND OBJECTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports an interpretive study of young consumers’ subjective experience of television product placement in Thailand and the UK. The discussion of findings is structured by three pre-eminent themes induced from the data, labeled “engagement,” “resistance,” and “objectification.” The paper elaborates on these themes drawing on supporting data extracts and sets its analysis within an overall review of TV product placement research and practice in the respective countries. In conclusion, there was some evidence that young Thai consumers exhibit “Generation Y” resistance to incongruent placement practices, but that this limited resistance occurred within a general climate of acquiescence to, engagement with, and reflexive understanding of, product placement practices.

INTRODUCTION: TV PRODUCT PLACEMENT AND “EXPERIENTIAL” MARKETING

Brand marketing organisations have typically been content with seeing brand exposure in mediated entertainment as an add-on, but many are now putting specific resources into the technique. One of its perceived advantages over traditional advertising is the access it affords to consumers’ daily experience. Unilever, for example, recently announced a 20% reduction in its global TV advertising expenditure and an increased expenditure on product placement in television shows.9 Proctor and Gamble have announced a similar diversion of cable TV advertising “spend” to new media to reflect their “experiential” marketing approach.20 Through placement in TV soap operas, situation comedies, quiz shows, dramas, and other genres, brands can feature as meaningful artifacts in narrative contexts which have a powerful resonance for consumers. This resonance is recognised by brand clients, who, according to one Thai TV product placement practitioner interviewed in the course of this study, are “increasingly [concerned with] consumer engagement, not just consumer reach but engaging the consumers…connecting them emotionally….with your brands…connection, emotional connection, not just contact point but emotion, [a]deeper route.” It is the quality of the engagement with TV product placement that this study sets out to explore with respect to young Thai and UK consumers.

Brand clients are extremely keen to get their brands exposed within TV programming. A recent exposé in The Sunday Times newspaper revealed the wide extent of product placement exposure in a TV entertainment program. In the UK, the Ofcom22 regulatory framework also forbids paid-for product placement on commercial TV channels. The UK product placement industry operates ostensibly as a free prop service for cash-strapped production studios that want to enhance the dramatic realism of their shows with branded props. Agencies take substantial fees from clients to ensure that it is the clients’ brands which appear. No financial consideration is supposed to be involved, but the Sunday Times showed that this rule is regularly transgressed with payments in cash or kind changing hands in exchange for coveted exposure in popular TV shows.

Some four months before the scandal of product placements at the BBC broke, a practitioner in a top Thai advertising and media agency casually mentioned during a depth interview for this research study that “…despite what they say, commercial TV in the UK has product placement…technically I’ve seen it in the BBC, even though its very subliminal…that’s because I look, I like watching product placement.” It appears from this comment that the pressure on TV studios to place branded products is considerable, and may be understood more thoroughly by the industry than by the UK TV channels, the regulators, or the public.

Brand clients feel that product placement is a cost-effective yet powerful way to engage with consumers in an experiential context. Audiences may be aware that brand appearances in entertainment are probably not accidental, but most viewers do not have detailed knowledge of how placements are negotiated between studios and brands. Product placements or related sponsorship techniques cannot easily be evaded by “zapping” through pre-recorded programming slots to avoid the advertising.

In this paper we will firstly outline our interpretation of the strategic rationale lying behind the rising expenditure on product placement by the brand marketing industry. We will then offer a review of published research in the field. This review will illustrate that, while several robust findings have emerged, relatively few previous studies have adopted an interpretive perspective to explore the nature of the engagement between consumer and brand within the dramatically heightened experience of a product placement exposure in a TV entertainment program. In addition, previous research has normally focused on movie product placement rather than TV. Finally, there have been relatively few cross-cultural studies, and none involving young Thai and UK TV-show consumers. We will then describe the data-gathering method used and the theoretical frame adopted. After this, we establish a context of the material practices of product placement in each country, drawing on depth interviews with leading practitioners and secondary sources. The findings section offers our interpretations of the consumer data, and the discussion following will elaborate on the major themes that emerged.

9 “Consumer Giant Cuts TV Advertising Expenditure by One-Fifth,” The Independent, September 17, 2005.
PRODUCT PLACEMENT RESEARCH STUDIES

Product placement is seen as a “hybrid” marketing communications technique that combines elements of sponsorship, celebrity endorsement, and publicity (Balasubramanian 1994; d’Astous and Chartier 2000; Ford 1993). Many variations on this “hybrid” technique share one feature: the promotional intent of the brand exposure is not made explicit. Product placement, also referred to as co-branding or “embedded” marketing or “entertainment” marketing (Hackley 2003; Twasakul et al. 2005) has been popular in movies from Hollywood to Bollywood since the 1920s (Barn 2005; Fristoe 2005). Most product placement research to date has focused on movies (Gupta and Lord 1998; Karrh 1998) with some attention paid to placement in computer games (Nelson 2002). Exceptions are provided in the work of Russell (1998, 2002) who has studied the effect of modality and plot connection on attitude and brand recall, though with a limited sample. In Stern and Russell (2004), gendered responses to product placements in an artificially created mock TV sitcom were analysed. Some studies have taken a comparative cross-cultural perspective (e.g. Gould et al. 2000; Karrh et al. 2001; McKechnie and Zhou 2003). Most product placement studies have been located within the attitude measurement theoretical paradigm (Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993) using questionnaire methodology to elicit attitudes, measure brand recall, and to link these with purchase intention (Mortan and Friedman 2002). Findings have confirmed generally positive consumer attitudes to product placement in comparison with advertising, though with some expressed reservations where a) placements are too contrived or overt and detract from the quality of the entertainment, and b) where ethically problematic products such as weapons or medicinal drugs are placed. The ethically problematic aspect of product placement’s covert promotional motive has been explored in some studies with regard to public policy implications (Avery and Ferraro 2000).

A relatively small number of studies have explored the experiential dimension of this topic (e.g., DeLorme and Reid 1999) and fewer still have done so broadly within the hedonic, experiential consumption methodological paradigm (Hirschman and Thompson 1997; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). An exception, as noted earlier, is Stern and Russell (2004), who explore the responses of young US consumers to product placement in a TV soap opera focusing on genre and gender. It is important to understand the differing dramatic roles product placement can play in differing narrative genres of TV programming. It is also important to appreciate that “reading” strategies applied to social texts are gendered, as Stern and Russell (2004) show. Nonetheless, the priority of the present study was to generate insights into a general category of engagement with TV product placement in a previously un-researched comparative context, so issues of genre and gendered responses were not the primary focus.

There are studies outside the product placement field which might hold some clues about the nature of the engagement between viewer and brand in the dramatic context of a TV show. For example, studies in advertising have shown how young consumers use ads in their daily discourse to signify their “literacy” or competence in this young person’s discourse (O’Donohoe 1997; Ritson and Elliott 1999). Young consumers use ads and appropriate the meanings within them for their own social uses. While advertising is generally considered an explicit form of persuasive communication, studies of rhetoric show that implicit communication forms such as product placement can also be resonant. In spoken rhetoric, what is left unsaid but implied can be more powerfully suggestive than what is made explicit (Billig 1987, 1991). This principle has been applied to research into advertising, which can be seen as visual rhetoric (Schroeder 2002). Tanaka’s (1994) distinction (referred to in Hackley 2005) between “ostensive” and “covert” meaning operationalises the rhetoric of implicit-ness in advertising. Ostensive meaning is explicit in the sense that the sender is known and the message is explicit. Covert meaning differs in that the sender is not known and the message is not explicit. It is never made clear in a TV show whether placed brands are there because of a directorial decision or because of a contract with the brand. Moreover, in product placements, there is rarely an explicit message as such. The brand is merely a presence in the scene. Studies such as these may provide opportunities for developing new theories of the engagement between consumer and brand in TV product placement.

The present study has been devised to develop three main areas of the literature. Firstly, it focuses on television product placement rather than that in movies. Product placement in movies may have attracted more research attention because of its high visibility and easy access, but it is clear that television placement is more accessible for many brand clients and less risky. Daily TV shows guarantee a regular audience, while some expensive movie placement deals come to nothing because the movie is not a commercial success. Moreover, if the goal of product placement is to weave the brand into the consumers’ daily subjective experience, then TV shows are potentially a more resonant, localised, and immediate medium. Secondly, comparative cross-cultural studies have also been relatively rare. This study places two very different cultural economies in juxtaposition. The UK is an advanced economy with a well-established television broadcasting and regulatory system. Thailand is a rapidly growing economy with one of the most sophisticated advertising and media environments in Asia. Thirdly, this study develops a relatively neglected methodological perspective by taking an interpretive approach to qualitative data to elicit an experiential perspective. The overall aim is to generate new insights into the way these young international consumers experience and engage with product placement.

METHOD

The research approach was qualitative, consisting of depth interviews, discussion groups, and auto-ethnographic narratives. Pilot interviews were conducted among international consumers in the UK in summer 2003. These highlighted the need for an experiential perspective to build on findings from previous survey-based research studies. Pilot discussion groups were conducted in London, UK in 2004. The main data-gathering phase took place between June and October 2005 and consisted of depth interviews with practitioners and discussion groups with young consumers. In addition, auto-ethnographic narratives were elicited in the UK and Thailand. Participants were asked to write a short passage about their experience of product placement on TV. No distinction was made between differing categories of product placement, and participants’ responses covered all main categories. Neither was there any differentiation made between genres (game show, soap opera).
The purposive sample of research participants was categorised into five groups: 1) UK or Thai practitioners; 2) UK-based, English-speaking, non-Thai young consumers; 3) UK-based, English speaking, Thai young consumers; 4) Thai-based, English-speaking, Thai young consumers; and 5) Thai-based non-English-speaking, Thai young consumers (transcripts were translated from the Thai). Consumer participants were between the ages of 20 and 30, with one exception. Most had a university education, some were current under- or post-graduate students, others were full-time workers who had previously attended higher education. Some respondents had no post-16 education.

The aim in sampling was to pragmatically access a group which would provide as much range as possible within the category. In all, data consisted of six depth interviews with product placement experts, six focus groups, and 42 autoethnographic narratives, 26 from females, 16 from males.

### PRODUCT PLACEMENT PRACTICES IN THAILAND AND THE UK

Thailand has one of the most highly developed advertising and media infrastructures in Southeast Asia and has experienced the fastest rate of growth in advertising expenditure in that region in recent times (Punyapiroje et al. 2002). Thai urban centers are heavily consumption oriented and domestic economic growth is rapid. Thais love creativity and humor in their advertising, reflecting their culture. Virtually every Thai has access to a TV, even in rural areas. Thai consumer culture has been influenced by the West since the outward-looking reigns of Kings Rama IV (1851–1868) and King Rama V (1868–1910). Western education, ownership of Western goods, and Western clothing are in evidence and associated with wealth and sophistication during this time. Western brands still retain this prestige, to the relative detriment of indigenous brands, although some Thai brands such as Chang Beer, Singha Beer, and Jim Thompson silk are beginning to gain exposure in Western markets. The Thai advertising industry has been heavily influenced by Western norms of advertising practice, though the many Japanese- and American-owned ad agencies tend to have a more flexible creative approach in their Thai branches than their domestic counterparts, reflecting the preference of Thai consumers for sofistication. 

Product placements are ubiquitous on Thai TV, and are even seen in news broadcasts and documentaries. Coffee mugs in the color of a well-known coffee brand are placed conspicuously on the newsreader’s desk in early morning news broadcasts. The studio receives contracted payment for these placements. There is no direct translation for product placement in Thai, and it is known colloquially as kodsana fhaeng, literally, “implicit advertising.” Product placement is generally more conspicuous on Thai than UK TV. The regulatory framework for television product placement in each country is quite different. As mentioned earlier, paid-for product placement in UK TV is not permitted under Ofcom rules. TV studios are keen to enhance the realism of their drama shows with branded props which are officially provided by the “free prop” supply product placement agencies. As we note above, product placement appears to be a thriving business in the UK in spite of the “no fee” rules. In Thailand, TV product placement is permitted, and it is ubiquitous. There are rules covering certain categories of placement, though these can differ in application since each channel has its own scrutiny committee. The Thai Food and Drug Agency (FDA) rules on food and drug placements. There is no “written rule book” as one practitioner put it, but each product placement incident is negotiated (and paid for) separately. However, as in the UK, there are ways of getting around the various rules that exist. For example, in Thailand, medicinal products such as contact lenses and asthma inhalers cannot be advertised or placed, but they are shown in mini-documentaries, 30-second to 1 minute advertisement-like slots which are written as instructional aids, showing consumers how to correctly apply the items. The only hint that the slot was paid for by a brand manufacturer is the conspicuously “in-shot” presence of the branded item.

### FINDINGS

A thematic interpretative analysis of the transcribed consumer data was grouped into three main overlapping themes. We called these engagement, resistance (to placement that lacked subtlety and credibility), and objectification.

#### Engagement

Regarding engagement, it seemed from many responses that young consumers of both nationalities used product placement events in their social discourse. They expressed a sense of engagement with it, as a normal and typical part of their cultural landscape, illustrated by comments such as “TV programs such as Friends make me feel happy…you want to go to the café and drink coffee with your friends…the clothes they wear are normally designer brand labels like Guess, Armani, Gucci…” (T., female, 22, UK). Some participants were clearly tuned in to the placement spotting game as a credible source of consumption cues: “Well, Matrix, with the Nokia phone, the Nokia 7610, rocked! Blade Trinity, there was a reference to one of the characters…it was with reference to the IPOD…she was clever and independent as a woman and went against all odds…while slaying vampires at the end, a scene where she is about to die, she managed to find her IPOD and save tunes to it! Pimp My Ride—there are many references to alloy wheels called Lexi and Giovanni rims…The OC has many nice cars in it. The parents own a Land Rover Vogue in the series. They are rich, trendy, and caring parents” (D., male, 19, UK). General approval of the technique was evident from most comments: “…this is the modern form of advertising…the good points are not hard selling, not annoying…” (S. female, 24, Thai). Other respondents were keen to offer their consumer expertise on the topic: “Sponsorship of programs has become more prominent. For instance, Friends sponsored by Blossom Hill, Desperate Housewives sponsored by Herbal Essences and Sex and the City…I rarely notice to be quite honest” (C., female, 24, UK).

The “I rarely notice” comment seems to betray some lack of self awareness, given the unprompted list of TV sponsorships which preceded it. Others were more insightful about the effect TV placement had on their behavior: “I used to order a delivery pizza because I saw an actor eating it on TV…it happens the same for products like Starbucks Coffee and Dairy Queen ice cream…the way products were presented were persuasive, for example in a scene, people walked into a Dairy Queen kiosk to buy an ice cream. Later on, it reminded me when I walked past Dairy Queen and bought one” (J., female, 24, Thai).

This last comment might be significant in showing how product placement triggers delayed recall in an experiential context. Psychologists differentiate between semantic memory (factual, decontextualised) and episodic memory, which is located within an experiential narrative.
The Dairy Queen brand in the example above may not have been recalled at all on a simple post-exposure recall measure. However, just as contextualised recall assists in police witness programs, a memory of the scene may be stimulated when the consumer is next in the environment that was portrayed in the TV show. Brands shown in typical settings of experience and behavior might resonate with TV viewing consumers who identify with the characters in the show.

**Resistance**

One main cultural difference emerged concerning resistance to TV product placement. More Thai participants expressed negative views about product placement than UK participants. We categorised such responses as “resistance” to product placement. Resistance was a response to the relative lack of subtlety with which products are often placed in Thai TV, in contrast to typical UK practice in which brands are integrated into the plot or scene, or clearly placed in sponsorship announcements within the show’s slot, but are distinct from the advertising. UK participants were approving of placement, possibly because they were used to seeing it integrated into the programming in a way which does not appear obtrusive, as shown by the following comments: “I don’t mind product placements at all because they are quite subtle. I don’t necessarily remember seeing a product in a TV program, but when I see a brand later on in a shop I’ll remember it from the program” (S., female, 24, UK). “I do not have any negative views about product placement in TV programs” (H., male, 27, UK).

Thai consumers, in contrast, had experienced more obtrusive placement techniques: “The use of product placement techniques in Thailand can often be seen in soap operas, where the brand owners try to have their products in the scenes, such as a posh car an actor drives or a mobile phone he uses. Sometimes a camera zooms onto the name of a famous department store or hotel in close up” (N., female, 29, Thai). Some expressed irritation with such clumsy techniques as zooming in on the brand: “When I watch TV shows and see presenters, guests or characters mention branded products I feel uncomfortable sometimes…instead of providing audiences with entertainment they want to sell the products” (S., female, 25, Thai). “Sometimes I feel its too obvious…in Thailand, product placement isn’t subtle” (S. female, 24, Thai).

Two participants expressed their limits of tolerance with regard to TV product placement: “Product placement is acceptable if it’s realistic and fits into the program” (V., female, 25, Thai). “When the product placement is good and may be funny, to the point, for example Bailey’s in Sex and the City, I have neutral and positive feelings. However, when it is tacky and thoughtless, for example Appletiser in Friends, I have negative feelings” (D., female, 22, UK). This resistance may reflect what Stern and Russell (2004) refer to as the Generation Y phenomenon, whereby young consumers previously regarded as Generation X are now more jaded and cynical towards marketing strategies designed to reach them. Thai consumers seemed to show the effect of much greater exposure to TV product placement than their UK-based counterparts in this respect. However, it was noticeable that the resistance was limited to clumsy techniques of product placement and not to product placement itself.

**Objectification**

The third category of response was labeled “objectification.” Even though participants were asked to relate their own experiences of TV placement, a proportion objectified their responses, offering authoritative views as if they felt a need to be au fait with a contemporary discourse of young consumers like themselves: “I think product placement is a less invasive form of advertising…consumers are less easy to persuade by traditional advertising methods” (J., female, 24, UK). More quasi-expertise was offered: “In my opinion, product placement affects audiences mentally. They watch programs, just for fun…but when they go shopping, see branded products that their favorite characters mention, they might want to buy the products’ (K., female, 25, Thai). “I think advertising embedded to TV programs is better than traditional advertising because audiences don’t feel interrupted when they’re watching TV programs. The audiences see products as part of the scenes—that makes it look natural. Seeing other people using the products can make the audiences feel like they want use those products themselves” (K., male, 27, Thai).

These behavioral theorizations positioned the speaker outside the discourse of product placement, yet also within it, portraying the speakers as detached experts. One participant offered another dimension on this, giving some plausible insight into the change in UK TV placement culture: “I would say that I first remember seeing overt product placement in East Enders in the 1990s. Breakfast cereals were placed square-on to camera, when previously the BBC would actually get their props department to make up fake FMCG products to adorn sets. It adds a sense that the brand is mainstream and ‘out there’ ” (C., male, 27, UK). In general, the category “objectification” seemed to reflect a relatively sophisticated, reflexive understanding of product placement. Research participants seemed aware of their awareness of it, and also that their awareness did not render them immune to influence from the practice.

We do not suggest that our three interpretive categories are the only possible ways to sort these data thematically, but we do feel that they offer compelling abstraction that have explanatory value in understanding the quality of the engagement of young international consumers with TV product placement.

**DISCUSSION**

This study has used a purposive and pragmatic sampling frame to seek qualitative insights into the quality of engagement young international consumers have with TV product placement. In the tradition of scholarly interpretive studies we have drawn extensively on direct quotes from our data sets to make the reasoning behind the inferences drawn as transparent as possible. Acknowledging the limitations, several insights have emerged. TV product placement, known as kodsana phaeng in Thailand TV, is a marketing technique which young international consumers are not merely aware of, but are attuned to its nuances and engaged with the brands involved. Many research participants excitedly recounted placement incidents in their favorite shows. This sense of engagement evinced research into advertising as a discourse which young consumers actively deploy in their self-identification and group identification social strategies. Just as some ads are cool and some are not (Ritson and Elliott 1999), some TV placements are seen as cool, and some not. Product placement has a quality of being marginal yet also central to TV entertainment, which makes it an attractive source of comment and discussion for young people. Spotting the placements could be a game to test.
one’s media-savvy credibility. Product placement brings another dimension of inter-textuality (O’Donohoe 1997) to young peoples’ media experiences as they can connect the social texts of advertising, branding, movies (well-known sources of product placement) and TV show genres from soap operas and TV dramas to quiz, game, chat shows, and even documentaries and news broadcasts. In effect, this is strengthening the cultural presence of the brand in a powerfully self-reinforcing way.

A further category of response added to the sense of engagement. “Objectification” occurred where participants used the cue to describe their experience of TV product placement to offer an expert judgment on the effects of the technique. We interpreted this in terms of a perceived need to seem competent in young peoples’ discourse. If participants had expressed worry that they were not aware of placement incidents they opened themselves up to the suspicion that they may not be competent in this important discourse for young people. By objectifying their responses, they positioned themselves as experts within that discourse. In this sense, opinions expressed may betray something of the ideological character of product placement as a form of persuasive communication which naturalises certain social practices and sustains the belief that they are benign, inevitable, and unremarkable (Eagleton 1991). The particular quality of TV product placement is that it promotes consumption in a context that is self-evidently disguised, but which produces a sense not merely of acquiescence but of active complicity. Consumers know that brand marketing organisations are playing a game with them, a game that, by and large, they seem to enjoy. In resisting the game, consumers are expressing their preference for controlling the rules of the game.

We found that young consumers’ engagement with TV product placement has a reflexive quality. They are aware of their awareness of the technique, and also aware that they are far from immune to its persuasive force. They do not feel that the technique necessarily compromises their enjoyment of entertainment; indeed, it enhances the realism of their entertainment experiences, when there is editorial integrity to the placement. Where this integrity is lacking, resulting in clumsy or inappropriate placements intruding into the narrative contexts of the TV show, we find resistance to the practice. This resistance, though, is not towards TV product placement as such, but towards placement that impairs the quality of the entertainment. This engagement might be theorised drawing on the literature on rhetoric and its psychological force as an organising principle of communication (Billig 1991). Applied to marketing and advertising (Schroeder 2002), we can see that the visual as well as verbal aspects of promotional communication can be rhetorically powerful. Product placement makes no explicit claims about brands but places them in juxtaposition with TV stars in the narrative context of a particular TV show genre. Nothing more needs to be said: the presence of the brand in such a context sends a strong message that it is current, cool, and relevant to the audience.

Several respondents referred to the narrative contexts of the placement within a storyline and scene, explaining that viewers might mimic the consumer behavior portrayed when they themselves were in the same situation. Many research studies have measured recall of brands in controlled conditions of exposure to placements. But this relies on a particular theory of memory as a decontextualised information storage and retrieval bin. This theory, called “semantic memory” by psychologists, contrasts with the “episodic” memory theory which locates memories within narrative structures or life episodes. Episodic memory can be triggered by a small scene, an experience, an act. TV placements that mimic typical consumer experience, like walking past a Dairy Queen ice cream parlor in Bangkok, can trigger powerful recall cues when the consumer engages with the same situational contexts as those portrayed in the TV show.

**CONCLUSION**

More studies within local cultural contexts are required to develop the role of TV product placement in young consumers’ identity formation and social positioning. This study suggested that TV product placement has a profound resonance and meaning for young consumers in two very different cultural contexts though with somewhat differing attitudes towards incongruous placements. Our findings imply that brand recall may be tinged with negative associations if consumers resist having the dramatic quality of their TV viewing impaired for the sake of a spurious product placement. In the current review being undertaken on UK TV product placement guidelines by the UK media regulator Ofcom, the potentially damaging effect of TV placement on program quality and viewer enjoyment will have to be balanced against the apparently irresistible economic pressures behind the growth of TV product placement practices.

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EXPLAINING CELEBRITY MATCH-UP: CO-ACTIVATION THEORY OF DOMINANT SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT
The match-up hypothesis has been used as a general guide for selecting celebrity endorsement. However, beyond the general principle of congruence, this theory does not specify how and why match-up works. Previous theoretical frameworks have also been critiqued, and a new theory is offered to fill this theoretical gap in the literature. It revolves around the idea of finding dominant associations that support the celebrity and brand juxtaposition, and minimizing any contradictory ones.

INTRODUCTION
In the modern era, the use of celebrities to endorse products is widespread. In the U.S., this has been estimated to be for 20–25% of ads (Motavalli 1989; Shimp 1997), and has accounted for about 10% of all TV advertising budgets (Advertising Age 1987; Sherman 1985). This paper will critique a prominent theory, called the match-up hypothesis, often suggested as a guide in selecting celebrities, and then propose a better theoretical framework, called the co-activation theory of dominant support. The paper will end with some preliminary findings based on qualitative research of 10 respondents.

MATCH-UP THEORY
This theory was born out of the observation that using an attractive model is not universally effective for all products. They tend to work better for products that are beauty related (Baker and Churchill 1977; Joseph 1982; Kahle and Homer 1985). In other words, the characteristic of the product must “fit” the image of the celebrity. For instance, Kamins (1990) found that using Tom Selleck as an attractive celebrity endorser is more effective (in terms of spokesperson credibility and ad attitude) for a luxury car which is attractiveness-related, than a computer which is not attractiveness-related. Telly Savalas, on the other hand, as an unattractive celebrity is not effective for either product.

The match-up effect is also found for products that are not beauty related. Using jeans (called Unitough) and a board game (called Funnybone), among others, Misra and Beatty (1990) found that if the products were matched with Clint Eastwood and Carol Burnett respectively, they would result in a higher brand attitude than the converse. Similarly, Kamins and Gupta (1994) found the match-up effect for computers (i.e., resulting in higher spokesperson believability, attractiveness, and brand attitude) but not running shoes, provided the computer was matched with “scientific” celebrity Leonard Nimoy. However, contrary to the theory, they did not find an effect for a fictitious CEO of an accounting company even though his image “fits” the computer equally well.

The match-up effect is also found in services and corporate sponsorship. Koernig and Page (2002) found that people have more trust in their hairdresser if he/she is highly physically attractive, but not so if he/she is a dentist. Stafford et al. (2002) found that Harrison Ford achieves a better result (i.e., higher expertise and trustworthiness) if he endorses a restaurant rather than a bank. McDaniel (1999) found that if Toyota Corporation were to sponsor the US Olympic Team, the brand would achieve a better result (resulting in highest ad attitude) than if it were to sponsor the NHL Hockey or the PBA Bowler’s Tour. He claimed this to be due to the closer “fit” of Toyota to the US Olympic team.

In sum, the match-up hypothesis represents an improvement over the other theories because it clearly acknowledges the importance of contingency, and that a “one size fits all” theory is too simplistic. However, this theory has a number of problems. The following is a critique, and we will closely examine nine studies specifically designed to test this theory.

CRITIQUE OF THE MATCH-UP THEORY
Inconsistent Outcome: Mixed Results
The match-up hypothesis is not universally effective, even though it was meant to take various contingent factors into consideration. In our review of nine papers that directly test this theory, most of the results are mixed, especially when different dependent variables are used. Some support the theory, but many do not. This is summarised below:

1. Of the five studies that had purchase intention as the dependent variable (Kamins 1990; Kamins and Gupta 1994; Koernig and Page 2002; McDaniel 1999), only one study yields a significant result (Kahle and Homer 1985).
2. Of the five studies that had brand attitude as an outcome measure, two yield significant results (Kahle and Homer 1985; Misra and Beatty 1990), but two do not (Kamins 1990; McDaniel 1999), and one yields mixed results (Kamins and Gupta 1994).
3. In terms of ad attitude, three studies support the match-up theory (Kamins 1990; McDaniel 1999; Stafford et al. 2002), but one does not (Kamins and Gupta 1994).

Lack of Ecological Validity: What about Brands?
Of the nine studies reviewed, almost all used product categories of unknown or fictitious brands. Only the study by McDaniel (1999) uses a real brand, Toyota. In other words, what is being manipulated in the majority of the cases is the congruence between different product categories (e.g., typewriter versus sports car) and the celebrities, and not brands. This does not constitute a strong test of the theory. Worse still, it is not ecologically valid since in the real world, the focus of the advertiser is on his brand. And very often, the key question in his mind is which celebrity he should use. But what is being manipulated in the laboratory is product categories, often in a factorial design. Compounding this problem is the fact that in all cases, the test of the match-up hypothesis relies exclusively on the use of students as the sample. Whilst the use of students can be justified on the grounds of theory testing (Calder, Phillips, and Tybout 1981), it is less valid if the theory is an applied one, as in the present case.
Lack of Refinement: What about Degree of Fit?

Match-up theory tends to be conceptualised as a binary notion, “match” versus “non-match.” However, a marketing manager is often faced with the issue of selecting the right celebrity among many to endorse the brand, some of whom may fit better than others. Thus it is not a simple binary notion but a continuum across different celebrities. The ability to assess the “degree of match” among many celebrities and then making trade-offs is the key. Furthermore, the relationship between the “degree of match” and ad effectiveness (e.g., trustworthiness) may not be a linear one. One study found both a curvilinear as well as a linear relationship, depending on the type of service. When the service is attractiveness-related (i.e., haircuts), the more attractive the service provider (hairstylist), the more effective the ad (i.e., more trustworthy, and perceived to be more of an expert). On the other hand, when the service is not attractiveness-related (e.g., dentistry), the more attractive the service provider (dentist), the worse the ad. In the latter case, having a moderately attractive dentist is the most effective (Koernig and Page 2002).

Logically Flawed: What about Brand Repositioning or Reverse Transfer?

On one of the key reasons for using celebrity endorsements is to be able to reposition a brand (Kaikati 1987). In this regard, a certain level of incongruity is necessary (Sujan and Bettman 1989) in order to change the perception. However, if one were to strictly adhere to the concept of “match-up,” then it would imply that using a celebrity to reposition a brand would never be successful. Yet, we know this is not true because inevitably the image of a brand changes when a celebrity is used (Langmeyer and Walker 1991a, 1991b). Some brands, of course, may be more resistant than others to being repositioned. Thus, any theory of celebrity-fit must also be able to explain and predict the differential ease with which a celebrity can facilitate the repositioning task.

To add to the complication, the theory must also explain the phenomenon of reverse transfer. This means that the endorsed product can also influence the perception of the celebrity. A celebrity can lose his cachet very quickly if he/she were to endorse a negative product (e.g., cigarettes) (Carbonneau and Garland 2004; Till 2001). Current match-up theory does not help explain why reverse transfer occurs. In terms of research, all these imply that symbolic overtones of both celebrities and brands should also be measured (DeSarbo and Harshman 1985) to assess any changes, besides measuring the usual ad-related effectiveness measures, like purchase intention or brand attitude.

No Explanation of “Fit”

The match-up hypothesis also does not explain what “fit” actually means. Understanding this is fundamental to managing celebrity endorsement effectiveness, and yet this is not discussed at all in the celebrity endorsement literature. However, in other marketing literature, the issue of “fit” does arise, although still in a cursory manner. For example, in the brand extension literature, “fit” is conceptualised as the “similarity” between the product categories of the existing brand and its extension (Park, Milberg, and Lawson 1991). Aaker and Keller (1990) argue that perceived “fit” is more likely to occur if people think that the “transferability” of the firm’s skill in creating the extension is high. In the co-branding literature, “fit” is conceptualised as the degree to which the two brands are “complementary” and “consistent” with each other (Simonin and Ruth 1998). Thus, beyond this simplistic view, very little is discussed about the actual mechanism and dimensions. As Simonin and Ruth (1998) concluded, “Our measures of product fit were relatively generic...still much would be learned from investigating the underlying dimensions of product category fit...[this] would add to our understanding of brand alliances and their effectiveness” (p. 40).

Asymmetric Effects

The match-up hypothesis also cannot explain one peculiar observation: that endorsement effects do not always work symmetrically. If an attractive celebrity (e.g., Tom Selleck) is juxtaposed with an attractive product (e.g., luxury car), an image enhancement is seen for this attractive product more so than for an unattractive product (e.g., typewriter) (Kahle and Homer 1985). However, for an unattractive celebrity (e.g., Telly Savalas) he/she does not in any way influence the unattractive product (i.e., type writer) even though he/she matches this product better (i.e., typewriter). This asymmetric effect is also found in Parekh and Kaneker’s work (1994) where an attractive model (though not a celebrity) results in higher product quality evaluation for beauty-related products (e.g., shampoo) than non-beauty-related products (e.g., ballpoint pen). However, for the non-attractive model, the quality of the non-beauty-related product (e.g., ballpoint pen) did not result in higher quality ratings compared to the beauty-related product (i.e., shampoo) even though the non-beauty-related product (i.e., ballpoint pen) “fits” the non-attractive model better. Finally, Kamins and Gupta (1994) found that the fictitious CEO, George Thompson, did not significantly increase the endorsement effects of a computer over that of running shoes even though his image “fits” the computer better than the running shoes. Thus, it is not a simple match-up, or else one would not see asymmetrical effects like these.

Weak Theories: Social Adaptation? Schema?

Notwithstanding the inconsistencies above, one may ask: Why should a match-up work? What is it in the match-up that makes an ad effective? One theory suggested is the social adaptation theory (Kahle and Homer 1985). This theory states that a person will continue to process an ad until no new information is added; therefore it is the acquisition of new information that helps us adapt to our environment. Thus, an attractive celebrity is more effective for endorsing a beauty-related product because an attractive celebrity can add more information about the product than an unattractive celebrity. However, Kahle and Homer (1985) never tested this underlying assumption. For instance, what is this new information being added, and if so, how much information is added? Furthermore, wouldn’t an unattractive celebrity also add extra information to a beauty-related product because of its incongruence? This notion of more information was never assessed or verified in any of the match-up studies of which we are aware.

Another theory advanced to explain the match-up phenomenon is the schema theory. First proposed by Bartlett (1932), the schema theory says that we possess a set of knowledge structures that guide our attention and behavior, and assist us in the reconstruction of our memories. The word “schema” is therefore a generic term, and over the years, other terms like “script” (Schank and Abelson 1977), or “frame” (Minsky 1975), have been used to explain more specific circumstances.
In the context of the match-up theory, a number of researchers (Lynch and Schuler 1994; McDaniel 1999; Misra and Beatty 1990) have enlisted the concept of schema to help explain the match-up phenomenon. Misra and Beatty (1990) argue that if a product is congruent with the celebrity, it will receive the affect linked to that celebrity. On the other hand, if it is not, the transfer of affect will not occur. They found evidence for higher ad attitude when there is congruency, thus supporting the schema explanation. However, they also tested recall. They argue that if a product and a celebrity are incongruent, then respondents can either reject the whole ad (called the filter theory) leading to poor recall, or engage in extra processing, where the incongruity is “tagged” and stored uniquely (called the schema pointer + tag model). This should lead to better recall. Interestingly, Misra and Beatty (1990) did not find support for the schema theory, but instead found the filtering theory to be more compelling. Thus, there is mixed support for the schema explanation.

Lynch and Schuler (1994) wanted to see if an endorser who is perceived to be muscular is also perceived to be more knowledgeable about exercise equipment. Consistent with the schema theory, they found this to be true in their first experiment. However, in their second experiment they failed to find support for the schema explanation. It follows that if an endorser is perceived to be muscular, then according to the schema theory, respondents should also use related adjectives (e.g., strengthy or powerful) to describe strength-related products the endorser uses, like weight-lifting equipment, but not for a product like laundry detergent. But the expected interaction between muscularity and product type interaction was also not found for any of the adjectives used. The authors explained this non-match-up effect by saying either (i) that the way the ad is constructed did not trigger the right target attribute properly, or (ii) perhaps no match-up was necessary.

…that no match was required to bring about changes in the perceived durability of the products…it would appear to imply that information can be transferred indiscriminately from the spokesperson to product without regard to inherent product attributes or characteristics. In this interpretation, it would be possible to give any product any meaning if endorsed by the right spokesperson. (p. 442)

In this regard, Lynch and Schuler (1994) are echoing the same sentiments as McCracken (1989) who suggested that advertising is powerful enough for any meaning to be transferred.

Finally, McDaniel (1999) reported what he believed supported the schema theory, but on closer examination, it is actually confounded with involvement. In his study, he wanted to show that the match-up effect is observed in corporate sponsorship. The reasoning is that prominent sports events can act like celebrities in that they help draw attention to the sponsoring company which will then benefit from the goodwill. So, in testing this basic idea, he used three sporting events and juxtaposed them with Toyota as the sponsoring company. These sponsorship events were PBA bowling tour, NHL hockey, and the Olympics. What he found is that Toyota best “matches” with the Olympics, which yielded the greatest ad attitude effect. From this he concluded that matching is important. But the study is confounded with involvement level because, of the three events, the Olympics had the highest level of involvement. Thus it is not clear if it is the degree of involvement or the degree of match that is responsible for the effects. Finally, contrary to the schema-expectancy theory, he also found a gender difference where females turned out to be more interested in sports sponsorship than men.

In summary, the critique above highlights the inadequacy of the match-up hypothesis and its explanations. A new theory is thus required, but one which is sensitive to the brand level (and not just to the product category level); can explain the inconsistencies of the above theory; and elucidate what “fit” means and the mechanisms behind the matching process.

**CO-ACTIVATION THEORY OF DOMINANT SUPPORT: A THEORY OF FIT**

Our theory makes the following assumptions. Just like a brand, a celebrity possesses a set of associations (McCracken 1989). When a respondent sees a celebrity and a brand juxtaposed together, associations are spontaneously activated from the nodes of both entities. We call these co-activations. The dominant nodes from both entities are always activated first; the more dominant these nodes, the faster the activations (Burroughs and Feinberg 1987).

Activations that are consistent in both entities are called “supporting” activations. Those that are not are called “opposing” activations. For example, Sharon Stone will be a good endorser for cosmetics brands since she is attractive, which is consistent with using cosmetics (i.e., “supporting” activations). However, the fact that she had plastic surgery may act in “opposition” to the endorsement. The co-activation theory is thus similar to the notion of spreading activation (Anderson 1983), but we also hypothesised the notion of “supporting” and “opposing” activations. The “degree of fit” can then be conceptualised as the amount of “supporting” to “opposing” activations; the greater the former compared to the latter, the greater the degree of fit. When there are too many of the latter, negative reverse transfer occurs. This is a sign of severe misfit. Finally, not all activations are equally important. Some may be more influential than others in influencing purchase intention. One should note that neither the schema nor social adaptation theory postulates the notion of such activations; and it may be the varying ratio or importance of these two types of activations that can account for the inconsistent results observed in the past.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

As it is impossible to test all aspects of our new theory, we decided to explore just three aspects: the different types of activations (i.e., “supporting” and “opposing”), the bases of these activations, and the role they play for negative reverse transfer. Neither the schema nor social adaptation theory can easily explain the negative reverse transfer phenomena.

**METHOD**

A total of 10 respondents were interviewed in-depth for this study; they were six female and four males aged between 26 and 55 years old. Each interview lasted about 40 minutes. Four simple questions were asked, and extensively probed:

- Q1. I heard a rumour that Tom Cruise is advertising for Mazda. What do you think of that?
- Q2. Do you think Tom’s image will be damaged by advertising for Mazda?
• Q3: Which brand of cars will enhance Tom Cruise’s image if he were to advertise for it?
• Q4: Which brand of cars will damage Tom Cruise’s image if he were to advertise for it?

The rationale for deliberately starting with a less prestigious brand like Mazda, and couching it in terms of a “rumour” is to give the respondents more opportunities to suggest different brands. By continually probing, it helps to uncover the boundaries of the “fit” between the two entities (i.e., celebrity and brand).

RESULTS
Supporting and Opposing Activations
All subjects were surprised by the rumour. This is because they felt that Tom’s image did not fit that of Mazda. Instead they suggested more prestigious brands like Porsche and Ferrari. Below is a brief summary of the verbatim evidence of these activations:

Opposing Activations (Mazda)
• I can see a famous sportsperson endorsing Mazda, but not for a classy person like Tom Cruise; Mazda is an ordinary car.
• Tom can buy any car he wants, why would he want to endorse a Mazda?
• He is just an actor, what would he know about cars? If he is a professional race driver, yes.
• Tom’s involvement with Scientology does not endear him to his fan base who may drive Mazda.

Supporting Activations (Sports Car, Porsche, Ferrari, BMW, Jaguar)
• Tom Cruise is unattainable; thus Ferrari or Porsche is better, cos’ they are also unattainable.
• He is in Top Gun; hence the car he endorses must be a top car.
• Porsche fits better...It is a sex symbol...like Tom...I hear that he is infertile, and so it fits the image of the sports car...no kids, and sports car have no room for kids.
• BMW and Jaguar...because it is expensive and exclusive. I wouldn’t have thought that he would drive a mass-market car. Instead he should drive something that says money and prestige.

Negative Reverse Transfer
We also hypothesised the existence of negative reverse transfer when there is severe misfit. Below is some verbatim evidence of this:
• He is classy, has finesse, a lady’s man. For him to endorse Mazda is really bad. He must be getting desperate or on the way down.
• An old car—I mean a 10-year-car...one that is not in good condition. Or Ford Falcon. People will be amazed and astonished. They will say, “My god, he is lowering his image”, and this will damage this image.
• I think it will take away some of his glamour. He will be associated with a traditional middle-of-the-road small car. I guess it will be O.K. if he wants to become more stable. But if he wants to maintain a high glamour, Mazda will not fit.
• I cannot imagine him driving a South Korean car...I can see him owning a few top end European cars...but I cannot imagine him having a Hyundai or Kia in his garage...endorsing these will damage his credibility because people are saying, “What is he doing?” He is selling out...that he just sold his name...a blatant grab for money...he would just be prostituting himself.
• I think Tom endorsing dangerous products like cigarettes or environmentally damaging products will be worse...This will damage his image even more because it says he is immoral.

DISCUSSION
The qualitative research, although exploratory, revealed the following insights:

Insight #1: Reverse Transfer, Supporting, Opposing Activations Do Occur
The results above lend preliminary support to our notion of different types of activations, some of which are “supporting” while others are “opposing.” We also found evidence for negative reverse transfer when misfit occurs, something which the schema or social adaptation theory cannot easily explain. For instance, people say that if Tom were to endorse Mazda, it means that he is “desperate” or “on his way down”...and that it will only “take away his glamour.” Why does this occur? This occurs because of the misfit between his status and lifestyle as a movie star with the dominant associations of the brand, Mazda (“an ordinary car”). This creates both negative attribution (see insight #2) and affect.

Furthermore, one should note that McCracken’s (1989) symbolic transfer only postulated a forward transfer, that is, the image of the celebrity “spills over” to that of the product. Here we found evidence that the transfer can also work the opposite way, that is, the image of the brand (i.e., Mazda) is “transferred” to the celebrity; previously, this reverse negative transfer was only observed for negative products like cigarettes (Carbonneau and Garland 2004, Till 2001).

Insight #2: Surprise and Lack of Clear Image as a Sign of Misfit
In our interviews, we also found that respondents were all surprised by the “rumor” that Tom Cruise was endorsing Mazda. Their initial reaction sometimes bordered on disbelief as they scratched their heads wondering, “Why?” This is because people expect him to drive a prestigious car, given his earning power. They also say that they cannot see, in their mind’s eye Tom Cruise driving a Mazda, or imagine Tom having a Mazda in his garage. When probed, they further say that there is no logical reason why he should own a Mazda since he can buy any car he wants. Furthermore, they say that to do otherwise would be to invite suspicion and one common suspicion is that he must be only doing it for the money. They then infer that Mazda must be paying him lots of money for this endorsement, which then implies that Tom Cruise must be getting “desperate” (i.e., in need of money). This insight implies that one way of assessing fit is to ask respondents whether they are surprised by the celebrity’s endorsement, whether it is sensible, and whether they can imagine the celebrity owning and using the brand.

We speculate that when there is a fit, consumers may be more likely to attribute the endorsement to stable internal-based factors about the celebrity (e.g., his/her talent); however, when there is no fit, consumers may do one of two things: (i) continue to co-activate more nodes from both entities to try to see a link, or (ii) demagrate the celebrity attributing the endorsement to external-based reasons (e.g., “a blatant grab for money,” “prostituting himself”).
Insight #3: Fit is Multidimensional

One of the perplexing questions is: Where do these “opposing” or “supporting” activations come from? For a theory to be useful, it must be able to predict a priori the likelihood in which such activations would occur, and this means understanding the sources of these activations. Furthermore, simply saying that there is greater similarity or dissimilarity between a particular celebrity and a brand is also not helpful because it is too vague. For instance, one may ask in what ways the two entities are similar? And if one were to take the word “similar” literally, then celebrities will always be dissimilar from products since they are human beings!

Our research uncovers many potential sources in which fit (or misfit) can occur between a celebrity and a brand, resulting in supporting (or opposing) activations. Below is a model which shows the various memory nodes of a celebrity that may be activated when juxtaposed with a brand, including (though not limited) to (i) his/her status, (ii) his/her profession, (iii) the TV or movie roles he/she plays, (iv) his/her public persona, (v) his/her private lifestyle, (vi) his/her earning power and (vii) his/her personal values (see figure 1).

“Fit” can then be conceptualised as the absence of any “opposing” activations on any of the celebrity nodes activated during the endorsement process. The converse will be true for “supporting” activations. For example, in the memory node of “TV or movie roles,” people say that Porsche, being a “top” car fits better because of Tom’s previous character as a maverick in the movie “Top Gun.” Conversely, in the memory nodes of “private lifestyle” and “earning power,” people say they cannot imagine Tom Cruise owning or driving a Mazda, but can imagine him with a Porsche because the latter is more consistent with his lifestyle and earning power (i.e., “supporting” activations). To put it another way, misfit occurs when the juxtaposition creates conflict in the mind of the consumer due to “opposing” activations. This model thus implies that “fit” is not a single dimension but multifaceted in nature. The “degree of fit” can then be conceptualised as the extent to which more “supporting” activations are found in the various memory nodes vis-à-vis “opposing” ones activated during the juxtaposition.

![FIGURE 1 SOURCES OF CELEBRITY FIT](image)

Insight #4: Relationship between Sources of Fit and Purchase Intent

Finally, the above model helps us speculate about the relationship between fit and purchase intention. One can theorise that some of these nodes may be more important than others in influencing purchase intention, and it is these important ones that drive purchase intention. Furthermore, one can also theorise that there may be two levels of fit, one at the product level, and the other at the brand level. Perhaps a celebrity’s talent (e.g., profession) may be more important in convincing consumers about what product to buy (e.g., cars versus cameras), but once the consumer is in the market for that product, it is the celebrity’s other “supporting” activations (e.g., lifestyle) that will convince us about the brand. For instance, people say that they do not trust Tom Cruise’s endorsement of cars because he is just an actor, and not a racing driver. But people also say that they are more convinced of him driving a Porsche than Mazda. In other words, a celebrity’s talent may be more influential for purchase intent at the product category level (e.g., Smidts and Rossiter 2002), but it is his/her lifestyle that is more influential at the brand level. The former speaks directly to the celebrity’s technical expertise, while the latter his/her genuineness (of usage).

LIMITATIONS

There are a number of limitations to this study. First,
being qualitative, it can only be exploratory. We might be accused of being subjective and seeing only what we want to see. We recognise this, but we also argue that with any new theory, one has to start somewhere, and in our case we choose to explore a small part of the theory—namely, the existence of different types of activations, the sources of these activations, and the observations of reverse negative transfer. Our model is only tentative, but we hope to extend this research with more rigorous quantifiable data which will give us more confidence. Second, only one celebrity (i.e., Tom Cruise) is explored in this study. To the extent that other celebrities may yield different sources of fit, the current conceptualization (see figure 1) may prove incomplete. Finally, no ads were used in this exploratory study. We merely talk about the “rumors” of Tom Cruise’s endorsement. Although this might be criticised for lacking external validity, it has one distinct advantage, and that is by couching it in terms of a rumor, it allows a fuller, unrestricted exploration of the different aspects of the celebrity fit. A mock up ad may, in fact, detract from this.

CONCLUSION

The motivation for our theory arises from the dissatisfaction with existing explanations for the “match-up” hypothesis. Much of the dissatisfaction occurs because of the lack of explanation of what constitutes “fit”. In summary, our theory is a theory of fit, one which tries to elucidate both the mechanism as well as the structural element required for this to occur. We argue and show (albeit exploratory) that there are two main types of activations—“supporting” and “opposing”—that occur whenever a brand and a celebrity are juxtaposed. The source of certain activations may be traced to our memory nodes about the celebrity (e.g., his/her status or his/her lifestyle). A “fit” can be conceptualised as the ease with which the dominant associations of the brand when activated do not contradict those of the celebrity’s, but instead support various aspects of the celebrity’s life (e.g., through usage). Hence, there are no surprises. The associations of the celebrity come from various dominant memory nodes we have of the celebrity. Thus, “fit” is multifaceted, and the “degree of fit” is the extent to which more “supporting” activations occur at these nodes vis-à-vis “opposing” ones.

Such a theory can help explain inconsistent results in the past. For instance, asymmetric effects and equivocal results found in the match-up experiments may be nothing more than the varying ratio of “supporting” to “opposing” activations found across various memory nodes. And because some of these nodes may be more important than others, this can also help account for the inconsistency in purchase intention. We speculate, for instance, that a celebrity’s talent may be more influential in influencing our purchase of the product category, but his lifestyle or status more influential in purchasing the brand. Finally, we also found evidence for the phenomenon of reverse transfer which previous theories could not easily explain. Furthermore, we found preliminary evidence that this can occur at the brand level. Our explanation is that the presence of too much “opposing” activation across the different nodes results in a negative affect, and it is this that causes the negative reverse transfer. In summary, our theory represents an improvement to the existing ones in explaining celebrity match-up because it is more explicit.

REFERENCES


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THE EFFECTS OF ANXIETY AND SADNESS ON TRAVELERS’ DECISIONS AND PERCEIVED RISK: MOOD MANAGEMENT AS AN ACTIVE PROCESS OF AFFECT-ADJUSTMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Recent studies have shown that anxiety motivates individuals to prefer low risk tasks and to be risk averse, whereas sadness motivates individuals to prefer high reward tasks and to be risk seeking. The first experiment demonstrated that anxiety and sadness impact travelers’ decisions and perceived risk in a significantly different way. A further experiment revealed that the effects of anxiety and sadness on travel preferences and perceived risk were only pronounced when travelers made decisions for themselves and expected they would be affected by the outcomes. The results indicated that travelers’ mood management is like an active affect-adjustment process.

Extant studies on the influence of affective states on decision processes have found that different affects or moods (even for the same negative moods) are likely to exert sharply different impacts on individuals’ decision making (e.g., Pham 1998; Pham, Cohen, Pracejus, and Hughes 2001; Raghunathan and Pham 1999). In spite of common wisdom, many important decisions are made under emotionally taxing conditions. As for travels or leisure, vacations are a popular means of people adapting themselves or relaxing their moods. Travel or leisure have been shown to play an important role for psychological health and adjustment, and has been shown to be one of the frequent strategies for people to cope with stress (Orsiga-Smith, Mowen, Payne, and Godbey 2004; Payne 2002). Therefore, it is important to explore how affective states affect travelers’ decision making, particularly for the negative affects.

According to the affect-as-information perspective (Schwarz 1990; Schwarz and Clore 1996), people often rely on emotional information while making decisions because affects are likely to be considered as valuable information for their judgment. Two negative affects—anxiety and sadness—are focused as target affects because they are among the most widespread forms of emotional distress (Bryant and Zillman 1984; Levi 1967). In this research, the hypotheses about travelers’ mood management were derived from recent developments on the informative value of affective states (e.g., Pham 1998; Yi and Baumgartner 2004) combined with an analysis of the cognitive determinants of affect (Lazarus 1991; Roseman, Spindel and Jose 1990). These hypotheses were examined by contrasting travelers’ decisions and perceived risk under anxiety versus sadness.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Negative Affect as Information and Affect to Be Adjusted

One primary function of affect is to provide information that may activate different implicit goals (e.g., Lazarus 1991; Schwarz 1990). For example, people with anxious moods tend to prefer low-risk jobs while individuals with sad moods prefer high reward ones (Raghunathan and Pham 1999). In one study (Gallagher and Clore 1985), angry and fearful participants were asked to make judgments about the blame-worthiness of a person and about the likelihood of negative life events. While angry participants reported a higher assessment of blame and lower assessment of risk, fearful participants reported the reverse. Therefore, these studies uncovered distinct judgmental biases even though the targets were completely unrelated to the affect-inducing stimulus.

According to the affect-as-information perspective (Schwarz 1990; Schwarz and Clore 1996), people with negative affects will proactively tend to adopt some strategic actions or decisions in order to amend or change the state of negative moods. This perspective also means that mood management is likely to become an objective in decision making, and then influence the preference of choice alternatives (Schwarz and Clore 1988). In other words, the relative preference of choice alternatives may be affected by individuals’ existing affective states (Martin, Abend, Sedikides and Green 1997; Pham 1998). Moreover, negative affective states may influence decisions by shaping decision makers’ motives. A pervasive motivational shift observed under negative affect is a heightened concern for elevating or repairing ones’ mood (e.g., Morris and Reilly 1987; Zillmann 1988). Thus, the main thesis in this research is that affective states such as anxiety and sadness will have distinct influences on decision making because people experiencing them will draw different inferences from their affective experiences. As a result, they will activate different implicit goals for making decisions or judgments.

Travelers’ Mood Management under Anxiety and Sadness

The meaning structure underlying anxiety is defined by high uncertainty over an outcome and low control over a situation (e.g., Frijda, Kuipers, and ter Shure 1989). Anxiety is generally experienced in response to situations where the person is uncertain about an impending outcome of a personally relevant event, especially when the outcome is potentially harmful, and feels unable to alter the course of events. Thus, individuals who are experiencing anxiety are likely to interpret their feelings as signaling high uncertainty and lack of control (Schwarz 1990). As a result, anxious individuals are likely to bring an implicit goal of uncertainty reduction and risk avoidance to the decision-making task.

In contrast, the distinct meaning structure underlying sadness is the loss or absence of a reward according to the appraisal theorists (Lazarus 1991; Roseman 1991). Sadness-related emotions are primarily experienced in response to the loss of absence of a cherished object or person (Ortony, Clore, and Collins 1988). As a result, whenever individuals experience feelings of sadness, they should be inclined to interpret these feelings as meaning that “something (rewarding) is missing.” Therefore, it was predicted that sad individuals should be motivated by an implicit goal of reward acquisition or substitution (see Forgas 1991 for similar reasoning). This prediction is consistent with a common tendency among consumers to buy gifts for themselves when they are feeling depressed.
When considering the differential impacts of anxiety and sadness on travel decisions, travelers primarily consider travel type, which is highly related to anxiety and sadness. Group/package tours and individual budget travel are the two main kinds of travel types when choosing a travel package (e.g., Hsu and Hsieh 2004; Prideaux 2002). Examining the determinants of travelers’ preferences towards group/package tours or individual travel and their perceived risk could provide insights for leisure psychology as well as mood management in health psychology. Generally speaking, group/package tours is a travel type with a highly planned schedule and offers professional tour guides and tour leaders. Thus, travelers neither pay much attention to schedule arrangement nor worry too much about unexpected incidents that may ruin their interests and raise their sense of uncertainty about travel schedule. Uncertainty and uncontrollable risk in group/package tours are less worrying than they are in individual travel. As a result, group/packag tours should be more attractive for individuals with anxious moods rather than for individuals with sad moods.

On the other hand, individual travel usually appeals to a sense of personal achievement and it is challenging to arrange the travel schedule individually. This characteristic may serve as the potentiality of reward acquisition or substitution. Individual travel seems to accompany with it more uncertain factors and higher risk than group/package tours do. However, individuals with a sadness affect are less sensitive to risk compared to anxious individuals (Raghunathan and Pham 1999). Therefore, travelers with sad moods may have higher preferences for individual travel than group/package tours.

Risk evaluation plays an important role on travelers’ evaluating of choice alternatives (Dowling and Staelin 1994; Weber and Milliman 1997). Since anxious individuals are motivated to have an implicit goal of risk avoidance, they should be more sensitive to travel risk than sad individuals. Therefore, perceived travel risk should be different under these two negative affective states. The hypotheses are as follows:

**H1:** When other conditions in the travel choice packages are equivalent, group/package tours should be more attractive for travelers with an anxious affect rather than for those with a sad affect, whereas individual travel is more attractive for travelers with sad moods rather than for those with anxious moods.

**H2:** Travelers with an anxious affect will be more sensitive to travel risk than travelers with a sad affect. Specifically, anxious travelers will exhibit higher perceived risk than sad travelers.

### The Nature of Mood Management for Negative Affects

Based on the notion of negative affects to be repaired, mood management should be an important mechanism underlying travelers’ making decisions and judgments about travel risk. Another main object in this research, however, was to examine more closely the underlying process. Two types of processes would be consistent with the explanation that anxiety and sadness prime different goals in decision making. One explanation is a generalised motivational shift. Over time, people may have learned to attend to sources of uncertainty when experiencing anxiety and to attend to sources of reward when experiencing sadness. In other words, they seek uncertainty reduction when experiencing anxiety and a pursuit of personal achievement for reward when experiencing sadness. Because these tendencies are learned over numerous experiences, these motivational shifts would presumably be passive rather than active or strategic.

Alternatively, anxiety and sadness may bias decisions through an active process of affect adjustment. Anxious and sad individuals may actively assess the feeling of implications of their options by asking themselves, “What would I feel better about?” (see Martin et al. 1997, for a related idea). Given that different goals are presumably salient among anxious and sad people, the options would have different feeling implications in making decisions and judgments. An option that minimised (increased) uncertainty would feel better (worse) if the traveler were anxious, whereas an option that has high (low) reward potential would feel better (worse) if the traveler were sad.

The predictions were as follows. If anxiety and sadness bias travel preferences and risk perceptions by prompting a generalised motivational shift, the bias should not depend on whether individuals would be affected by the outcome of their decisions. If, on the other hand, anxiety and sadness bias decision making and risk perceptions because individuals actively monitor the feelings associated with their decisions, the magnitude of this bias should depend on whether they expect to experience the consequences of their decision. The effects of anxiety versus sadness on travel decisions and risk perceptions should be more prominent when they (and their feelings) can be influenced by the outcome of their decisions than when they cannot be affected (see Manucia, Baumann, and Cialdini 1984 for a similar reasoning).

**H3:** The impacts of anxiety and sadness on travelers’ preferences for group/package tours or individual travel should be more pronounced in making decisions for themselves (the self decision condition) than for someone else (the agent decision condition).

### PRETEST

This research primarily focused on examining the differential impacts of anxiety and sadness on travel preferences and perceived risk. The first necessary step was to be able to manipulate these two negative affective states independently. The emotional-event recollections technique used by Leith and Baumesiter (1996) was adapted. This made participants recall emotional events which had a significant impact on their lives and re-experience anxiety or sadness affects vigorously.

### Participants and Design

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three emotional-events recollection conditions (anxiety, sadness, or neutral) with block-random method in groups of three. Fifty-one college students who completed the pretest for course credit participated in this study with a between-subjects design.

### Procedure

Each session consisted of three participants arranged in independent compartments. The emotional-events recollection procedure was disguised by a self reflection study for the real purpose. Participants were informed that the major purpose of research was “to explore the
relationship between self reflection and decision-making.” Before starting to recall past emotional events, participants received a booklet describing self reflection as the “ability to re-experience individuals’ past events with significant meaning.” To increase involvement in this task, participants were further told that “people with better self reflection are found to be better parents, lovers, couples and managers, and that they tend to learn lessons from experiences which make them capable of not making the same mistakes.”

Next, each participant was presented with the instructions for one of three affect manipulation conditions. For the conditions of anxiety or sadness, participants were asked to recall the most salient and impressive events that made them feel a strong sense of anxiety or sadness. Instructions were designed according to the semi-structured and directed recollection procedure that is used commonly to investigate autobiographical memories (e.g., Bruhn 1990; Singer and Salovey 1993). In the neutral-affect condition, participants read a series of commonplace events in a day in the life of a person named Sean.

Finally, participants were required to “evaluate carefully the affective states at the moment” and “express accurately your feelings right now.” This section of the questionnaire was mainly focused on a subjective assessment of affective states and intended to verify the effectiveness of the emotional-events recollection procedure. Participants were presented with a scale consisting of six items, each phrased on the form “I am feeling [affective term],” and were asked to rate how well each item described their feelings on a seven-point scale where 1 stood for “Describes my current feelings very well” and 7 stood for “Does not describe my current feelings at all.” The affective items covered the same numbers of valence of emotions and were selected from established scales (e.g., Mebrarian and Russell 1974; Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988).

Results and Discussion

The felt anxiety and sadness scores (see table 1) were submitted to a 2 (type of affective score) x 3 (affect manipulation) mixed ANOVA, treating the type of affective score (felt anxiety and sadness) as a repeated factor, and the affect manipulation (anxiety, sadness, or neutral) as a between-subjects factor. The analysis indicated that a two-way interaction was significant ($F(2, 48) = 21.29, p < .01$), and this indicated that different types of affect manipulation could induce the different types of felt affect.

Further, the felt anxiety in the anxiety scenario condition should be significantly higher than those in the sadness and in the neutral conditions, while the felt sadness in the sadness scenario condition should be significantly higher than those in the anxiety and neutral conditions. In terms of felt sadness, follow-up contrasts showed that felt sadness in the sadness condition ($M = 4.71$) was significantly higher than in the other two conditions ($M_{anxiety} = 2.93$ and $M_{neutral} = 2.53$), and $t(22.07) = 3.57$ and $t(30.30) = 3.79$ for the two contrasts respectively (two $p$’s < .01). In terms of felt anxiety, follow-up contrasts for felt anxiety indicated that felt anxiety in the anxiety condition ($M = 5.24$) was significantly higher than in the other two conditions ($M_{sadness} = 2.94$ and $M_{neutral} = 1.88$), and $t(22.12) = 4.66$ and $t(25.38) = 2.61$ for these contrasts respectively (two $p$’s < .05). The manipulation was thus successful in inducing distinct affective states of anxiety, sadness, or neutral mood across conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF AFFECTIVE TYPE OF SCORE BY AFFECT MANIPULATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective score</td>
<td>Induced sadness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>4.71$^a$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>2.94$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $n = 17$ participants in each of the affect manipulation condition, felt affects were rated on a 7-point scale. Numbers with different superscripts in a given row were significant at $p < .01$.

Finally, additional analyses showed that the manipulation did not influence the ratings of other affective states. There were no significant differences in other felt affective states between the anxiety and the sadness conditions: $t(32) = -1.37$ for relaxation, $t(32) = -0.68$ for pleasure, $t(32) = 0.31$ for fear, and $t(32) = -0.46$ for anger respectively (all $p$’s > .05).

**EXPERIMENT 1**

This experiment aimed to verify hypotheses, which specify the effects of anxiety and sadness on travel preferences and travelers’ perceived risk. After the affect manipulation (anxiety, sadness, and neutrality), participants were asked to assess the relative preferences of the choice set (travel type: individual travel vs. group/package tours), to select one of them, and to evaluate the travel risk of one hypothetical travel destination.

**Participants and Design**

There were 102 college students who participated in
Perceived risk was rated on a point scale. Target affects were manipulated between-subjects (anxiety, sadness, or neutrality) and participants were randomly assigned to each of the affect manipulation conditions.

Procedure
The emotional-events recollection procedure was identical to that followed in the pretest. Under the guise of a self reflection study, participants were asked to read the instructions designed to induce the target affects.

Unlike the pretest, participants’ affective states were not measured because previous studies have shown that such manipulation checks can reduce the impact of the manipulated affective states on judgments (e.g., Gorn, Goldberg, and Basu 1993; Keltner, Ellsworth, and Edwards 1993). Instead, participants were asked to complete a “Traveler Decision Making Questionnaire” in which they were presented with a choice set about travel types, and a travel-risk assessment task served as the measurement of the dependent variable. Next, participants were asked to rate their willingness to travel to the destination in the travel-risk assessment task on a nine-point scale. Further, the items from Li et al. (2004) were used to measure affiliation motivation, e.g., “I feel like I have really accomplished something valuable when I am able to get close to someone.” Participants were asked to rate their affiliation motivation on a five-point scale from “totally disagree” to “totally agree.” This measurement was aimed at controlling the attractiveness of interpersonal interaction between group/package tours and individual travel.

Dependent Variables
Travel preferences. The “Traveler Decision Making Questionnaire” incorporated a choice set (travel type) and a travel-risk assessment task. Two promotional ads were displayed on desktop computers simultaneously. Except for the different appeals of the choice alternatives, the region, expense, and duration of the two advertisements were the same. These two ads were juxtaposed on the screen and the position error was controlled by counter-balanced method. Thus, half of the participants witnessed Package A to the left and Package B to the right, while the other half witnessed Package B to the right and Package A to the left. The highlight of Package A (group/package tours) was “a well-planned schedule with professional tour guide and tour leader” and “no worries about schedule arrangement and a low risk for burdensome incidents,” whereas Package B (individual travel) was “a flexible schedule tailored individually” and “an opportunity for personal achievement and challenge.”

Travel preferences were measured by two kinds of indexes: “relative preferences” and “choice probabilities.” Relative preferences were measured on a non-graded scale with two end points: “I find A is more attractive than B” and “I find B is more attractive than A.” Participants’ responses were later quantified by measuring the distance between the lower end of the scale and the mark and were then standardised on a 100-point scale. So 1 signified “strong preference for A” and 100 signified “strong preference for B.” In terms of participants’ preferences for travel type, the higher the preference score, the stronger the preference for group/package tours (Package A). Additionally, with regard to “choice probabilities,” the participants were asked to indicate which of the two travel packages (travel type) they would choose if they had to join.

Perceived risk. A travel-risk assessment task was presented with a review report for a travel destination which was selected based on the official data from World Tourism Organisation. The travel-risk level of this travel destination was moderate and was displayed by the code name of the destination in order to avoid the confounding of participants’ prior preferences towards this area. The travel risk information of the destination included “possibility of terrorism,” “traffic accident,” “hospitality for tourists,” “robbery and pilferage rate,” and “local epidemic evaluation.” After reading the travel-risk information clearly, participants were asked to rate the travel risk on a nine-point scale from “least risky” to “very risky.” The lower the scores, the lower the perceived risk was. Besides, a preliminary pretest (n = 97) had shown that the subjective mean rating (M = 5.33, SD = 1.93) of risk assessment was not significantly different from the midpoint (µ = 5) of a nine-point scale (t(96) = 1.66, ns.). The result indicated that the travel risk of the destination we employed was at a moderate level.

Results and Discussion
Before testing the hypotheses, the possible confounding from the differences of affiliation motivation in the three affect groups should be examined. The result of an ANOVA indicated that the affiliation motivation across groups was not different (F(2, 99) = 1.95, ns.). Thus, participants’ affiliation motivation could not explain the differences of travel preferences in subsequent analysis. Data from experiment 1 is shown in table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PREFERENCE RATINGS, CHOICE PROBABILITIES, AND PERCEIVED RISK IN EXPERIMENT 1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Sadness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preference ratings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>74.17</td>
<td>53.18</td>
<td>36.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>28.20</td>
<td>30.68</td>
<td>26.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice probabilities</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived risk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = 34 for each affect condition group. Higher scores imply greater preference on a 100-point scale or higher choice probability for the group/package option (Package A). Perceived risk was rated on a nine-point scale.
As shown in table 2, participants’ relative preferences tended to differ across affect conditions. An ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of affective states ($F(2, 99) = 14.42, p < .001$). A linear trend analysis indicated that preference for group/package tours was highest in the anxiety condition ($M = 74.17$) and lowest in the sadness condition ($M = 36.93$), with the neutral affect condition in between ($M = 53.18$), ($F(1, 99) = 5.45$, $p < .05$). This pattern of results supports hypothesis 1.

In terms of choice probabilities, the affect manipulation had parallel effects on them. The proportion of participants who chose group/package tours was lowest in the sadness condition (35%) and highest in the anxiety condition (71%), with the neutral affect condition again falling in between (53%). The linear trend reached significance (Mantel-Haenszel $\chi^2(1) = 8.50, p < .05, \phi = .29$). The results of choice probabilities are consistent with the hypothesis.

As to travelers’ perceived risk, an ANOVA of these ratings revealed a significant main effect of affective states ($F(2, 99) = 44.17, p < .001$). A linear trend analysis indicated that participants’ risk assessment was highest in the anxiety condition ($M = 7.05$) and lowest in the sadness condition ($M = 4.84$), with the neutral affect condition in between ($M = 3.89$), ($F(1, 99) = 7.70, p < .01$). This pattern of results supports hypothesis 2. Besides, participants’ perceived risk was negatively correlated with their willingness to travel, measured by a nine-point scale from “not at all” to “very much” ($r = -.37, p < .001$).

These results clearly indicate that negative affective states are not all equal in individuals’ decision making and judgments, and they seem to support the notion that travelers’ perceived risk will be affected by negative affective states such as anxiety and sadness. Moreover, these results cannot be explained in terms of judgment mood congruency. Both anxious and sad participants were in a negative mood. In the travel preferences data, compared to a neutral mood condition, anxious participants tended to favor one option (group/package tours), whereas sad participants tended to favor the other. Therefore, the mood-repair explanation (e.g., Schaller and Cialdini 1990; Zillmann 1988) may be more congenial with the mood management hypothesis. In other words, anxious and sad participants may have preferred one of the options because it would somehow make them “feel better.”

**EXPERIMENT 2**

This experiment was conducted to further examine whether travelers’ mood management for anxiety and sadness is an active process of affect-adjustment or a generalised motivational shift. It was predicted that the effects of anxiety and sadness on travel preferences would be stronger in the self decision condition than in the agent decision condition.

**Method**

One hundred and twenty college students were recruited for this experiment for course credits. They were randomly assigned to one of four conditions of a 2 (affective state: anxiety vs. sadness) x 2 (framing: self vs. agent) between-subjects design.

The procedure closely followed that of the first experiment, except no neutral affect condition was included. After being put into either an anxious or a sad state, participants were asked to evaluate the same choice set and travel risk as in experiment 1. The framing of the decision differed across conditions. In the self decision condition, participants received the same instructions as in experiment 1. They were instructed to evaluate the relative preferences of travel type as if they had to choose between group/package tours and individual travel for themselves. In the agent decision condition, participants were told to make the decision on behalf of someone else. The instructions emphasised that “the decision will not affect you personally.” After comparing the two options, participants first reported their relative preference of choice alternatives and then their choice between them.

**Results and Discussion**

The differences of affiliation motivation across groups were examined first. The result of an ANOVA showed that participants’ affiliation motivation across groups was not different ($F(3, 116) = 1.29$, ns.). This finding indicated that the travel preferences in subsequent analyses could not be explained by participants’ differences of affiliation motivation. Data from experiment 2 is shown in table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3</th>
<th>PREFERENCE RATINGS AND CHOICE PROBABILITIES IN EXPERIMENT 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affective state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferences ratings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>73.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>29.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>51.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>33.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice probabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$67%$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$43%$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 30 for each manipulative condition group. Higher scores imply a greater preference on a 100-point scale or higher choice probability for the group/package tours option.
The preference ratings were submitted to a 2 (affective state) x 2 (framing) ANOVA. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of mood (F(1, 116) = 8.09, p < .01), indicating that, overall, participants with an anxious affect had a higher relative preference for group/package tours (M = 62.32, SD = 33.70), whereas participants with a sad affect had a stronger relative preference for individual travel (M = 46.80, SD = 28.83). This finding replicates the first experiment’s main results. More importantly, the analysis also revealed a significant affective state by framing interaction (F(1, 116) = 13.87, p < .001). Planned contrasts show that the simple main effect of affective states was significant in the self decision condition (F(1, 58) = 23.89, p < .01) but not in the agent decision condition (F(1, 58) = 0.53, ns). The findings indicated that the effects of affective states on travel decisions were only prominent when the outcome would affect them (the self decision condition) and thus seemed to support an active affect-adjustment explanation as opposed to a more passive attentional shift.

The choice probabilities between the two travel types exhibited a directionally consistent pattern (see Table 3). A two-way (affective state by framing) log-linear analysis revealed a significant affective state by framing interaction ($\chi^2(1) = 6.97, p < .01$), showing that the probability of choosing the travel type was different between the self decision condition and the agent decision condition. For the main effect of affective state ($\chi^2(1) = 4.85, p < .05, \phi = .20$), the probability of choosing group/package tours (Package A) was higher among participants with an anxious affect (55%) than among participants with a sad affect (35%). This tendency was primarily driven by participants in the self decision condition (anxiety = 67%, sadness = 23%, z = 3.82, p < .01, $\phi = .44$). This tendency was not significant in the agent decision condition (anxiety = 43%, sadness = 47%, z = 0.31, ns).

As in the first experiment, anxious participants again tended to prefer group/package tours, whereas sad participants were found to exhibit greater preference for individual travel. Moreover, the pattern of travel preferences was contingent upon the framing of the decision. The findings of perceived risk also revealed that the effects of affective states on perceived risk were only prominent when the outcome would influence them (the self decision condition). Thus, an active affect-adjustment explanation appears more consistent with the data of travel preferences and judgments.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

According to the perspective of affect-as-information, moods or affective states influence decision making. Individuals with different affective states tend to motivate them to adopt different ways of coping and mood adjustment (Schaller and Cialdini 1990; Zillmann 1988). Thus, different negative affective states will exert differential impacts on decision making and trigger varied implicit goals (Schwarz 1990). This paper shows that two affect states of the same negative valence—anxiety and sadness—can generate distinct influences on travelers’ preferences for travel type as well as their risk perceptions.

In terms of choice situation in travel type examined in this study, it was found that individuals with an anxious affect were likely to prefer group/package tours in which uncertainty and risk are less worrying, whereas individuals with a sad affect were inclined to selecting individual travel, which provides a sense of personal achievement and challenge as a potential reward. Furthermore, travelers’ perceived risk was affected by their negative affective states. The results in risk perceptions indicate that anxious participants were more sensitive to travel risk and showed higher perceived risk (see also Schwarz 1990), whereas sad participants were less sensitive to travel risk and exhibited lower perceived risk (see also Forgas 1991). In general, research findings supported the derived predictions.

In experiment 2, the pattern of travel preferences for group/package tours or individual travel depended on the framing of the decision. While travel preferences showed the predicted affective bias in the self decision condition, the preferences were insensitive to participants’ affective states in the agent decision condition. This contingency appears to rule out a passive, generalised, motivational shift. If the process had been beyond participants’ control, a parallel affective bias should have been observed in the agent decision condition. Therefore, the data in this research appears more consistent with an active affect-adjustment explanation. Individuals with anxiety or sadness may be inclined to assess the feeling implications of their decisions or judgments, asking themselves, “What would I feel better about?” When travelers have to choose between group/package tours or individual travel, those with an anxious affect may intuit that they would feel better about the travel type which can satisfy the emerging need for reducing uncertainty and risk, whereas those with a sad affect may intuit that they would feel better if they chose the option from which they could obtain a potential reward. However, if the task is framed as an agent decision task, anxiety and sadness cease to influence people’s decisions or judgments, presumably because people’s feelings are less relevant when they are making decisions on behalf of someone else (see Forgas 1991).

The findings have substantive theoretical implications. These motivational inclinations from individuals’ mood management may shape decision making above and beyond the previously identified effects of negative affects, such as coloring and processing interference (e.g., Kelner, et al. 1993; Pham 1988). It is noteworthy that the observed biases occurred even though the affect-inducing events (manipulated by the emotional-event recollection technique) and the decision targets (travel type) were completely unrelated. Findings in this study also have implications for coping strategies in mood management. If travelers tend to use affective information in making decisions, coping strategies that address specific effects of affective states could be an important way of better understanding the repertoire of travelers.

With respect to limitations and future directions, perceived risk was measured by a single item. Future research may examine whether the summation score approach exhibits a different picture from the single global rating approach. In real-life travel choices, travel planning is a process that takes more time than in the experimental condition and during this time consumers are highly involved. Future research may use a more vivid scenario or adopt a field study to expand the external validity by demonstrating the impacts of anxiety and sadness in a real consumer setting. Moreover, the framing of self versus agent was employed in our manipulation. The differential effects of these negative moods became undermined when participants made decisions on behalf of others. Though the findings were more consistent with the active affect-
adjustment process explanation, the importance of consequences or personal relevance may also serve as substitute explanations. Future research should be geared to formalise the conditions under which one explanation (e.g., active affect-adjustment) is more likely to apply than other explanations, and it should scrutinise the impacts of negative affective states on travel decisions by taking need relevance into consideration. Finally, since the choice domain in our studies revolved around trade-offs, it would be interesting to investigate how anxiety and sadness influence decision processes about purely potential gains.

As travel and leisure are playing increasingly important roles for human life in the 21st century, they are also a prevalent way for people to accommodate, balance, or compensate their negative moods or affective states in everyday life (Orsega-Smith et al. 2004; Payne 2002). Marketers in the travel and leisure industry as well as health counselors can, based on the mood management approach, work out tailor-made travel packages or schedules for travelers with different moods and design activities to satisfy the corresponding needs induced by different affective states.

REFERENCES


Schwarz, N. and G. Clore (1996), “Feelings and
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

We are living in an increasingly complex and information-rich world. Complexity and variations within consumer decision processes has forced researchers to constrain decision alternatives to yield statistically valid results in empirical decision research. These constraints have limited the representativeness of decision models and the ability of these models to predict consumer decision outcomes. The extant consumer decision research literature is predominantly outcome focussed, utility-estimated (Klein and Yadav, 1989; Hauser and Wernerfelt, 1990; Harlam and Lodish, 1995; Fader and Hardie, 1996), attribute-driven quantitative analysed (Klein and Yadav, 1989; Huber and Klein, 1991; Bröder and Schiffer, 2003), with constraints. The primary focus on quantitative analysis of attributes and outcomes in consumer decision theory has led to research with simplified decision rules (Andrews and Manrai, 1998), assumed rational decision makers with defined preferences (Bettman, Luce and Payne, 1998) and homogeneity in decision process (Gensch, 1987, Kalwani et al, 1994). Traditional consumer decision research is based on a single-phase model (Savage, 1954; Bettman, Luce and Payne, 1998) and understanding the relationship between attributes and decision outcomes (Malhotra, 1982; Kivetz and Simonson, 2000). Expanding product choice and a proliferation of information has increased decision complexity leading to the empirical validation of two-stage decision processes (Payne, 1976; Svenson, 1979; Bettman and Park, 1980; Andrews and Srinivasan, 1995). More recently Klein and Yadav (1989) and Russo and Leclerc (1994) have empirically verified an elimination and a choice process, with both suggesting three phases based on their underlying assumptions for data interpretation.

There is no empirical literature specifically supporting a three-phase consumer decision process. “The simulation results therefore seem to underscore a need to develop decision models that more accurately capture the process underlying consumer decisions” (Johnson et al, 1989, p. 268). “Eliminations are clearly done in more than one phase” (Klein and Yadav, 1989, p. 418). Researchers have been unable to clearly identify decision phase boundaries and there are currently questions as to whether boundaries exist (Russo and Leclerc, 1994).

The primary focus of this research is to identify those phase boundaries and the number of decision waves within a decision process. In this research we utilise the information processing approach to consumer decision making, capturing data through process tracing methodologies. The computerised data capture is supplemented with neutral ‘think aloud’ verbal protocols (Williamson, Ranyard and Cuthbert, 2000). This method has several advantages over its predecessors in that the computerised data capture is objective in the manner it gathers data through ‘mouse clicks’, data collection is automated and time stamped, and the data capture equipment (laptop) is transportable to the respondent.

The research scenario is a consumer durable purchase, in this instance an air conditioner, with the respondent requested to decide between 9 alternatives based on data for 6 attributes. The air conditioner is to be selected based on an 18 m² room, with information available on the appropriateness of the models for a room of that size. The product attributes were determined through a qualitative purchase decision attribute analysis of a convenience sample in the same market as the primary research. A convenience sample of 262 Chinese adults from two major cities in the Special Economic Zone of the People’s Republic of China participated in this research. Respondents were drawn from the professions, including teaching, the police force, government and medical. Professionals were deemed to represent the Chinese consumers who would be economically capable of purchasing an air conditioner.

The raw data logs were summarised into respondent summary sheets with elimination and choice decisions clearly identified. These sheets were then analysed for the specific decisions made by the respondent. Implied decisions were not included in the results and the results may be considered conservative as more decisions may have been made that were not ‘positively’ identified by the data capture approach. Our analysis reveals that consumers made up to 11 decisions within the decision process to choose an air conditioner. Approximately one third of respondents (37%) used a single decision phase, while one in seven (14%) made two decisions and almost half (49%) used a multi-stage process. Interestingly, more than one-third of respondents (37%) engaged in between three and six decision phases in their decision process.

It is interesting that that four in ten (37%) of respondents engaged in three to six decision waves, which is similar to the number of single-phase decision makers. This may suggest that as many as four out of every ten decision are not catered for in the one and two-phase models currently incorporated in our decision research. The results of this research suggest that the inclusion of screening in consumer decision-making models will enhance the explanatory potential of consumer decision-making models because many consumer decisions involve multiple phases. Our empirical support for almost half the decision processes being outside our existing decision models presents a strong argument for a review of our decision models and a broadening of data capture constraints to ensure representativeness with consumers’ decisions.

These results also raise interesting practical implications for marketers. Products must survive the multiple screening decisions to be considered for selection and our promotional approach may require modification to meet these requirements. The result that two-thirds of respondents chose sub-optimal alternatives is encouraging for those with products that are not optimal, however it also means that those marketing the optimal product must educate their customers and communicate the advantage of their product more clearly to increase market share.

REFERENCES


CONSUMER CHOICES BASED ON SIGNALS: THE CASE OF MOBILE PHONE SERVICES IN VIETNAM
Tho D. Nguyen, University of Technology, Sydney and University of Economics
Trang T. M. Nguyen, University of Technology, Sydney and Vietnam National University,
Nigel J. Barrett, University of Technology, Sydney

ABSTRACT
Although it is well known that firms can use signals to inform consumers about the unobservable of their products or services in a market where asymmetric information exists, research on the role of signal characteristics in consumer choices of service brands is largely ignored. Using a choice experiment with best-worst scaling, the authors found that signal credibility, consistency, and clarity have positive impacts on consumer choices. Further, the interaction between signal clarity and consistency also affects the choice of consumers. These findings suggest that service providers should send clear, consistent, and credible signals to assist consumers in making purchase decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES
When information asymmetry exists and service providers know more about their service quality than do buyers, several marketing signals can serve as signals of quality of service brands (see Kirmani and Rao 2000 for an extensive review). Herbig and Milewicz (1996, 35) define “a marketing signal is a marketing activity which provides information beyond the activity itself and which reveals insights into the unobservable.” Marketing signals convey information about service brands to consumers such as service attributes, prices, and warranties (Boulding and Kirmani 1993; Herbig and Milewicz 1994).

Under the condition of asymmetric information, a service consumer is generally confronted with a problem of distinguishing between high- and low-quality service providers. Also, a service provider may face difficulties in positioning itself against low-quality service providers in the mind of the consumer (Mishra, Heide, and Cort 1998). The inability of consumers to assess the quality of the service provider can create two problems—adverse selection and moral hazard. The adverse selection problem involves certain fixed characteristics of the service provider that have the potential to influence the level of quality delivered, however, they are unobservable to the consumer. The moral hazard problem relates to the ability and motivation of the service provider to cheat the consumer, such as to change the levels of quality provided for each transaction (Mishra et al. 1998). Under such conditions, the service provider can use a number of marketing signals such as service quality, price, warranties, advertising, and brand names to show its ability to meet the need of the consumer and to differentiate it from other service providers (i.e., to influence the consumer’s choice and to help the consumer to distinguish it from less-qualified service providers; Boulding and Kirmani 1993; Rao and Ruekert 1994). Hence, it is important that the service provider’s signaling scenarios should not be easily imitated by less qualified service providers (Koku 1995).

A signal is not part of a product or service itself. It is a piece of information about the product or service that assists consumers in making inferences about the quality and value of the product or service (Herbig and Milewicz 1994). As signaling is a learning process in which consumers receive the signal, read and interpret it in the light of experience, and react accordingly (Heil and Robertson 1991; Herbig and Milewicz 1994), the characteristics of a signal plays a crucial role in facilitating this learning process. Three important characteristics of a signal have been found in the literature: signal clarity; credibility; and, consistency (Erdem and Swait 1998; Heil and Robertson 1991). Signal clarity refers to “the absence of ambiguity in the information conveyed by the brand’s past and present marketing mix strategies and associated activities”. Signal consistency is “the degree to which each marketing mix component or decision reflects the intended whole”, and signal credibility “underlies consumer confidence in a firm’s product claims” (Erdem and Swait 1998, 137).

Signal clarity assists consumers in identifying what a service provider would like to communicate with them,
such as service attributes and position (Heil and Robertson 1991). To make a signal clear, every marketing-mix element should be consistent (i.e., reflecting the same attributes, objectives, and position), and stable over time (Erdem and Swait 1998). A clear signal enables consumers to quickly understand and interpret it, preventing any reaction delays. Together with signal clarity, signal credibility is another key characteristic of the signal because it determines the effectiveness of information conveyed (Erdem and Swait 1998; Tirole 1988). Any effects of the signal will happen only if its credibility has been perceived (Sternthal, Dholakia, and Leavitt 1978). As discussed previously, signaling is a learning process and consumers interpret the signal and adjust their interpretation based on the history of the sender and previous transactions (Herbig and Milewicz 1994). To assess the meaning as well as the credibility of the signal, consumers may carry out consistency checks. Therefore, signal consistency will make the interpretation process faster and more precise (Heil and Robertson 1991). In addition, signaling theory suggests that most rational firms are unlikely to send false signals if the signals increase costs in terms of immediate profits, future profits, and reputation (Tirole 1988). Accordingly, consumers may believe that only high quality service providers would send clear, consistent, and credible signals to their consumers. As a result, these signal characteristics are vital to the evaluation of the quality and choice of a service by consumers. Hence,

H1: Higher signal clarity of a service brand will increase the probability of consumer choices of that brand.

H2: Higher signal credibility of a service brand will increase the probability of consumer choices of that brand.

H3: Higher signal consistency of a service brand will increase the probability of consumer choices of that brand.

The effectiveness of information received by consumers depends heavily on whether signals sent are credible or not (Erdem and Swait 1998; Tirole 1988). Therefore, the credibility of brand signals is perhaps the most important characteristic. For that reason, it is important for a service provider to send credible signals to consumers. In so doing, signals will create greater consumers’ confidence in the firm’s product or service claims (Erdem and Swait 1998). However, the confidence of consumers depends on what they receive and make inferences overtime, that is, signal credibility is sensitive to time (Herbig and Milewicz 1993). Clear and consistent signals facilitate consumers to interpret the content signaled by the firm, reinforcing consumers’ belief that the firm’s willingness and ability to offer the promised service (Erdem and Swait 1998). Consequently, the clarity and consistency of signals will increase consumers’ confidence in the claims. In other words, the interaction effects between signal credibility and clarity, between signal credibility and consistency, and between signal consistency and signal clarity are likely to exist. Thus,

H4: The impact of signal credibility on the probability of consumer choices will be stronger with high signal clarity than with low signal clarity.

H5: The impact of signal credibility on the probability of consumer choices will be stronger with high signal consistency than with low signal consistency.

METHODOLOGY

Experimental Design

A choice experiment with a best-worst scaling method was employed in this study. There were three attributes, that is, clarity, consistency, and credibility. Each attribute had two levels: low and high. Three options, coded as A, B, and C, were used for each choice set. Consequently, the total profiles for the full factorial design were 512 ($2^9$). Several strategies to construct such a design can be found in the literature (Street, Burgess, and Louviere 2005). For example, we can utilise a software package such as SAS to generate an OMEP (Orthogonal Main Effects Plan) and then, using a search algorithm to construct choice sets (Kuhfeld 2004). Another way is to use a L$^{MA}$ approach (Louviere, Hensher, and Swait 2000). The first strategy gives us an efficient design, however, we do not know if a better design is available. The second approach requires the number of choice sets much larger than needed to estimate the effects of interest (Street et al. 2005).

In order to minimise the number of choice sets and to estimate all main and two-way interaction effects, we utilised a method of optimal designs developed by Street et al. (2005). The construction of the choice sets in this study is as follows: For the first option (option A), a full factorial design was used ($2^3 = 8$ profiles). The profiles in option B were obtained by leaving the levels of the second attribute unchanged and systematically changing the levels of the first and third attributes by adding 1 (mod 2) to the respective attributes of the profiles in option A. For example, the levels of signal clarity for choice sets 1 and 4 (option B) were obtained by adding 1 to those of in option A: $0 + 1 = 1$ and $1 + 1 = 0$ (see column 5, table 1). Similarly, the profiles in option C were obtained by leaving the levels of the third attribute unchanged and systematically changing the levels of the first and second attributes by adding 1 (mod 2) to the respective attributes of the profiles in option A. This design is 100% efficient and is shown table 1 (see Street et al. (2005) for detailed explanation).

The Sample and Measures

A sample of 279 in-service training students, both undergraduate and post-graduate, in the University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City and Vietnam’s Fulbright Economics Teaching Program was invited to participate in the experiment. The sample was comprised of 103 female and 176 male participants. In terms of age, 217 participants were less than or equal to 30 years of age and 62 were more than 30 years of age.

A best-worst scaling method (Finn and Louviere 1992; Marley and Louviere 2005) was used to obtain the data. Best-worst scaling has been found to have several advantages over traditional scaling methods such as containing less respondent error, more discriminating way to measure attribute importance than either rating scales or the method of pair comparisons (Charzan 2005). The format of the best-worst scaling employed in this study is shown in table 2. The questionnaire included eight choice sets. Subjects were presented 8 choice sets. In each choice set, there were three options: A; B; and, C. For each choice
set, they were requested to choose the best option and the worst option among these three options, based on their judgment about the combination of signal characteristic levels. It is also noted that the subjects were asked to make their choices based on three latent constructs, that is, signal clarity, consistency, and credibility. Therefore, prior to participating in the experiment, the participants were instructed about the meaning of these constructs. For example, signal clarity was understood that a service firm provides clear and sufficient information about its services for consumers. This information makes consumers free from trouble in figuring out what the service firm is trying to communicate with its customers. Signal consistency means that the service firm provides the information about its services for consumers is very consistent for several years and this information matches its overall image. Signal credibility is understood that the service firm delivers what it promises to consumers. It does not pretend to be something it is not, which makes consumers fully believable.

### Table 1: Choice Set Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice set</th>
<th>Option (brand) A</th>
<th>Option (brand) B</th>
<th>Option (brand) C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: The Best-Worst Measure (Choice Set 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signal characteristics</th>
<th>Option (brand) A</th>
<th>Option (brand) B</th>
<th>Option (brand) C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Coding and Entry**

The data were coded and inputted using the following procedure. There were three options for each choice set: A; B; and, C. Therefore, three pair comparisons were made for each choice set option, that is, AB, AC, and BC. For example, if the best option chosen was A and the least option chosen was C, the data for this respondent for choice set 1 would be coded as follows: AB: 10; AC: 10; and, BC:10 (1: if a respondent chose the option and 0: if he or she did not choose the option). As a result, each respondent had six rows for each choice set in the data matrix. There were eight choice sets, resulting in 48 rows for each respondent. With a sample size of 279, the data matrix had a total of 13592 (279x48) cases.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Binary logistic regression was utilised to analyse the data. We also aimed to investigate the effects of two respondent characteristics, that is, gender (female respondents, coded as 0, and male respondents, coded as 1) and age (equal or less than 30 years of age, coded as 0, and more than 30 years of age, coded as 1). The results indicate that the model fitted the data well: \( \chi^2(7) = 6323.13 \) (p < .001); -2Loglikelihood = 12242.13; Cox & Snell \( R^2 = .376 \); Nagelkerke \( R^2 = .502 \); and, overall correct choice predicted = 78.9%.

The results indicate that all main effects were significant (p < .001), supporting hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Among these characteristics of a brand signal, that is, clarity, consistency, and credibility, signal credibility had the greatest impact on consumer choices (\( \beta_{\text{credibility}} = 2.819 \), compared to \( \beta_{\text{clarity}} = 1.236 \) and \( \beta_{\text{consistency}} = 1.024 \)). Further, the interaction effect between signal clarity and credibility on the brand choice was also significant (\( \beta_{\text{clarity x credibility}} = .479 \), p < .001), supporting hypothesis 4. However, the interaction effect between signal consistency and credibility on brand choice was not significant (\( \beta_{\text{consistency x credibility}} = .084 \), p > .14). Consequently, hypothesis 5 was not supported (see table 3). In addition, the effects of signal clarity, consistency, and credibility on consumer choices were the same for young and older, as well as for male and female respondents.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of marketing signals in the choice of mobile phone services by consumers. Based on the assumption that consumers are often uncertain about the quality of services, this study examines whether the clarity, consistency, and credibility of a brand signal have any effects on consumer choices. The results of the experiment show that signal clarity, consistency, and credibility have positive impacts on consumer choice of service brands. Among these characteristics of a signal, signal credibility has the greatest impact on consumer choices. In addition, the interaction between signal clarity and credibility also affects consumer choices. However, this effect is very modest compared to the main effects. Further, our additional analysis indicates that consumers’ gender and age do not moderate consumer choices. These findings are consistent with research in the signaling theory perspective on brands (Erdem and Swait 1998; Rao, Qu, and Ruekert 1999). Thus, other things being equal, signal credibility is the key element in building a strong brand based on signaling theory.

The findings of this study suggest several implications for mobile phone service marketers. When a market is characterised by information asymmetry, signals are an appropriate mechanism to convey the unobservable quality of services to consumers. Nevertheless, not all signals are efficient. Only clear, consistent, and credible signals perceived by consumers can direct their choices. In order to have such signals, service providers should invest in their brand signals and use marketing-mix strategies to communicate the signal with consumers. This will facilitate the development of consistent brand images, fostering the relationship between brands and their consumers (Farquhar 1989). Previous research has shown that the credibility of a brand signal will be higher when the brand receives higher investments (Erdem and Swait 1998). This will benefit service firms in terms of profits and reputation (brand image) if truthful signals are received by consumers. As signaling theory suggests, consumers evaluate the quality of services based on the signals provided by service firms because they believe that only quality service providers would send clear, consistent, and credible signals to consumers. However, if discrepancies between promised and actual offerings are found to exist, that is, false signals have been sent, costs in terms of immediate profits, future profits, and reputation are likely to occur (Kirmani and Rao 2000; Tirole 1988). Therefore, service providers should invest in brand signals in order to achieve more effective signals and should keep in mind the costs associated with their false signals. In sum, signals are an appropriate and effective mechanism that service providers can employ where asymmetric information exists. The effectiveness of a signal can only be achieved when it is clear, consistent, and credible.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, it is the use of a student sample. Although research has shown that part-time students can be used as a surrogate for consumers (James and Sonners 2001), a more representative sample is of interest in future research. Secondly, this study examines only one service, that is, the mobile phone service. Different types of services should be examined to capture a wider picture of the usefulness of signaling theory. Thirdly, this study examines the choice of consumers based only on signal characteristics. Future research should incorporate other service attributes to the profile in order to make a comparison between their effects on consumer choices. Fourthly, this study employs a simple method of analysis—binary logistic regression—to analyze best-worst data. Other methods of analysis such as multinomial logit models will also be suitable for the analysis of such a data set, which can be employed in future research. Finally, signaling theory offers explanations of consumer choices under the condition of asymmetry of information, that is, how they respond to firms’ actions. Psychological research into consumers helps understand how consumers make inferences, that is, how they process signals (Boulding and Kirmani 1993). Therefore, an integration of these two approaches in future research will enhance our understanding of customers’ beliefs in and reactions to signaling.

REFERENCES


Erdem, T. and J. Swait (1998), “Brand Equity as Signaling...


SEEKING SOCIAL EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Our paper focuses on the pleasurable aspects of shopping from an experiential perspective, social factors being the focal point. It is our contention that the experiential perspective has much to offer retail literature because, as Seamon (1984) suggests, people form emotional links with their environments based upon their experiences with the environment. In marketing and retail research there has been a tendency to focus on the physical characteristics of a place to explain patronage behaviour, retail image and identity. However, if one looks at related areas in geography, psychology and sociology, the identity of place is not only restricted to its physical characteristics, it is also related to the social constructions of place (Lalli 1992). This research adopts an interpretive methodological approach and relies on phenomenological interviews with a range of women to better understand the social dimensions of the retail environment.

INTRODUCTION

In both marketing literature and sociology literature, the experiential aspects of consumption have been regularly investigated because researchers have long acknowledged that ‘consumption does not occur in a vacuum, products are integrated threads in the fabric of social life’ (Solomon 1983, p.319). As Woods (1981), cited in Holbrook et al. (1984, p.728) states: consumers ‘engage in imaginative, emotional and appreciative consumption experiences’. These types of consumption experiences are concerned with feelings, fantasies, and fun, and are very much multisensory and emotive (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982).

It is our contention that the experiential perspective has much to offer retail literature because, as Seamon (1984) suggests, people form emotional links with their environments based upon their experiences with the environment. Also, by understanding the experiential nature of consumption, further insights will be gained into why consumers regularly patronise specific retail sites whilst avoiding others; why they choose to participate in various consumption activities; and why they become emotionally attached to particular retail sites, but not to others. Essentially, the social aspects of consumption not only influence consumer decision-making, they also influence the way individuals structure their social reality (Solomon 1983). As Edgell and Hetherington (1996, p.5) contend, the experience of consuming is shaped by social relations. Whilst, it is well known that the social dimension is important to the consumption experience itself (e.g., Arnould and Price 1993; Celsi, Rose and Leigh 1993; Schouten and McAlexander 1995), this has not often been researched within a retail perspective. The aim of our study was to explore the retail environment from an experiential perspective, i.e., what kinds of consumption experiences do consumers have, and how might these experiences influence retail patronage? To support this aim, our findings focus on the social dimensions of shopping and the impact it may have on retail patronage and pleasurable shopping experiences.

BACKGROUND

Within the marketing discipline, many studies have explored why consumers patronise particular stores and service locations, i.e., make ‘repetitive store choice behaviour’ (Laaksonen 1993, p.11). Some studies have focused on retail patronage behaviour in terms of purchase intentions and buyer behaviour (e.g., Hisrich, Dornoff et al. 1972; Swinyard 1993; Yalch and Spangenberg 2000), whereas other studies have investigated retail patronage behaviour in terms of why people make repeat visits and form store/location preferences (e.g., Bellenger, Robertson et al. 1977; Darden and Babin 1994; Lee, Moschis et al. 2001).

Creating and managing a store’s atmosphere, as Turley and Milliman (2000, p.193) state, is also ‘an important marketing strategy for most exchange environments’. Kotler (1973), who coined the term, defines atmospherics as the structuring of environmental cues to produce specific emotional effects in the consumer. Many studies over the years have manipulated a number of atmospheric stimuli, such as colour (e.g., Belizzi, Crowley et al. 1983, for an overview), music (c.f., Bruner II 1990; Mattila and Wirtz 2001), olfactory cues (e.g., Mitchell, Kahn et al. 1995, p229; Spangenberg, Crowley et al. 1996), and lighting (e.g., Areni and Kim 1994), in order to evaluate consumer responses in terms of store satisfaction and store image; the amount of time spent in the store; purchase intentions and so forth (c.f., Turley and Milliman 2000, for a comprehensive review). There has also been much research in the area of image congruency, i.e., matching store image attributes with consumers’ self-images (e.g., Stern, Bush et al. 1977; Sirgy, Grewal et al. 2000). Such studies have found that individuals’ experiences of places are often shaped by internal factors, such as one’s self-concept. This can be explained using self-congruity theory (e.g., Sirgy et al. 2000). If the store’s image is congruent with the consumer’s self-concept, it is expected that this will lead to retail patronage because the consumer is motivated to seek experiences that will enhance his or her self-concept (Sirgy et al. 2000).

Despite the fact that the retail environment can be viewed as a haven for social activity, very few researchers in the area of marketing or retail have investigated the social nature of the retail environment (e.g., Goodwin and Gremler 1994; Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999); how retail sites are consumed within a social context; how people identify with retail sites and others within these sites (e.g., Sirgy et al., 2000); or the influence that such identifications may have on retail patronage (e.g., McGrath and Otnes 1995). And yet, as some sociologists contend, the retail environment is primarily a social environment (Prus and Dawson 1991; Shields 1992; Miller, Jackson et al. 1998). The reasons why people become attached to different locations extend well beyond the location’s physical characteristics, the types of products it sells and/or the level of service it provides.

This has important implications for the marketer because, as it has been suggested, consumers are forming social links with others through their consumption activities.
(Cova 1997, p.306). Accordingly, the link between consumers is perhaps becoming more significant than the actual product consumed (Cova 1997; Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999). We propose that it is not just the product that encourages these social links but it is also the environment that facilitates these links. The consequence of this is that, while some forms of consumption may decrease, others may increase because consumers will choose products and activities not for their use value but for their ‘link value’ (Cova 1997). Therefore, one could posit that social interactions within the retail environment may influence how one perceives and identifies with the environment, as well as influence how these sites are experienced and socially constructed.

Whilst we acknowledge that much research has been done within sociology with respect to the social dimensions of shopping and the retail environment (e.g., Shields 1992; Falk and Campbell 1997; Miller 1998; Miller, Jackson et al. 1998), we argue that marketers should explore this area in more detail, as past studies have framed it within a sociological perspective. Therefore, as marketers, we can take ownership of the “shopping environment” and study it from a consumer behaviour perspective.

**METHOD**

We propose that the experiential aspects of consumption and the location itself may, for some people, in some situations, become more important than the product itself. For example, the product may fulfill a purpose, e.g., clothes may be purchased to satisfy one’s self-esteem needs or the baby may need diapers and so on, but it is the experiential aspect of the shopping excursion itself that becomes equally important. For instance, the need for visual stimulation within the retail environment, the need to feel part of a social community (not to be confused with brand community), or the need to interact with other people, may be just as important as the final product. Whilst it is commonly accepted that products link consumers to each other (e.g., Cova 1997; Miller 1998), the experience of shopping together, the experience of shopping for others, the experience of patronising the location together, or the experience of for example enjoying a cup of coffee in the retail environment, may be just as meaningful. Hence, we stress the importance of acknowledging that retail locations can and do provide many different kinds of consumption experiences. Accordingly, our study employed an interpretivist methodological approach because we were interested in exploring the participants’ lived experiences. Since this study was interested in how individuals construct meaning, qualitative methods were used.

Using the snowballing technique, twenty women (19 Caucasian women and one woman of Maori/Pakeha descent) ranging in age from 18 to 74 were recruited for this study and interviewed individually. We recruited women because we wanted to eliminate any possible gender effects, as the interviewer was also a woman. Whilst we acknowledge that gender in some ways always impacts on data, in this case it is only limited to females. At the same time, one of the main tenets of hermeneutic philosophy is the concept of pre-understanding (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Gadamer 1989). Both the researcher and the subject are linked together because they both exist in a cultural world, linked by beliefs, norms, rules, language, and myths (Arnold and Fischer 1994). A researcher, therefore, goes into a research environment with some prior knowledge or pre-understanding (Hudson 1988); obviously some will enter the research environment with more knowledge than others. While some may construe this [pre-understanding] as a pre-judgement or prejudice, Arnold and Fischer (1994, p.57) suggest that ‘[pre-] understanding enables rather than constrains the interpreter’.

Additionally, since the retail environment has predominantly been viewed as a gendered environment (e.g., Jansen-Verbeke 1987; Shields 1992; Woodruff 1997; Miller, Jackson et al. 1998) it was deemed appropriate to focus on women only. In addition, in keeping with a phenomenological approach, the aim of this study was not to make generalisations therefore theoretical sampling was used. Since we were interested in obtaining “thick descriptions”, phenomenological interviewing techniques were used. Interviews varied in length ranging from one to two hours and were unstructured in nature. Pleasurable shopping experiences were restricted to physical settings, e.g., shopping centres, malls and so on.

Following phenomenological principles, thematic analysis was used. The advantage of using thematic analysis is that it not only involves systematically analysing the text and looking for patterns within the text, it is also an iterative approach, whereby initial categorisation may be changed and moved in relation to other texts (Dittmar and Drury 2000, p.119). However, one must acknowledge that the analysis is from a Western perspective, within a Western setting. In addition, we also accept that multiple realities, and hence multiple interpretations, exist in this world but from a constructionist perspective some interpretations will be better than others. Consequently, two independent judges were recruited to authenticate our findings. In addition, a variety of checks was used to ensure that the findings and conclusions were reasonable and logical. These checks included: descriptive validity (Wolcott 1990), interpretative validity (Maxwell 1992), dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Hirschman 1986; Miles and Huberman 1994).

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings revealed that a number of factors influenced participants’ perceived pleasurable shopping experiences. Atmospherics, tenant variety, the type of location (e.g., malls versus shops that line the streets), the desire to have different experiences (e.g., quiet, serene experiences versus chaotic, colourful and loud experiences), the dressing ritual, service factors and the social dimensions of the retail environment appeared to have contributed to our participants’ perceived shopping experiences to varying degrees. However, for the purpose of this paper we will only focus on the social dimensions. We define “social dimensions” as those factors that link people to each other, to their community, to society. For example, browsing links people to society indirectly, to the beauty of their society, to the possibilities within society and so on. The social dimensions of the retail environment are not restricted to interactions with people, although there may be direct and/or indirect interactions. Three main themes relating to the social dimensions of shopping emerged: voyeuristic pleasure, the social connection factor, and a sense of community.

**Voyeuristic Pleasure**

Voyeurism was an integral part of the shopping experience for many of our participants. As Sue a 52-year-old secretary states, she dresses up to go shopping because she knows she is going to be seen by other people.
Sue (52yrs): I always dress up to go to the mall [pause] because you’re going to be seen. As well as looking, seeing other people, you’re going to be seen in turn by other people.

The findings revealed that the majority of participants in our study indulged in specific ritualistic activities before going shopping. In particular, participants reported ritualistically dressing in a particular way in order to present the “right” kind of image to the outside world.

Flora (27yrs): You want to present a kind of winning person that goes there, not a loser wearing jeans. It’s pretty stupid but there you go…When you go to certain shops you have to really dress up, it’s the same when you go to hairdressers. When I go to my hairdresser, I always put on my best clothes because otherwise they just treat you like dirt (laughs). It’s the same with shops [pause] you know we’d dress up and try to look really cool because the shop assistant can be very judgmental.

As with other rituals, e.g., the wedding ceremony, there is a performance aspect to the dressing ritual. We suggest that the performance factor, i.e., the dressing ritual, enables the shopper to experiment with her appearance and to have fun in the retail environment. One could even view the dressing ritual in carnivalesque terms. For example, it may be fun and exciting to adopt a new identity each time one goes shopping as it may mark the beginning of a new adventure.

Sue (52yrs): I think shopping’s an adventure. It’s an adventure because you never know what you’re going to see.

Flora (27yrs): I like all those really dramatic clothes so I dress up. I think I like having lots of clothes and just choosing who I want to be every day, so that’s the enjoyment… changing yourself by wearing certain clothes.

People-watching was also another pleasurable pastime, as Sue’s comment below highlights.

Sue (52yrs): I think it’s nice just seeing other people and seeing what they’re wearing and, seeing all the little human dramas that are going on.

And yet, the store, its goods, as well as its patrons, become the objects of desire if one applies film theorist Laura Mulvey’s (1991) perspective to the retail environment. Mulvey (1991) applies scopophilia (the pleasure of looking – the female gaze) to narrative cinema; males look at females (i.e., the spectator observes the spectacle/object) and in turn, females are aware that they are being looked at (i.e., the spectacle is aware of the spectator).

As Berger (1972, p.47) states, men look at women and women watch themselves being looked at, which not only determines the relations between the sexes but also ‘the relations between women themselves’. And yet, one could also add that women within the retail environment are both the spectators (observes the spectacle) and the spectacle (an object of someone else’s gaze). Within this arena, women’s adornments and clothing become the objects of desire, and pleasure is derived from appreciating other women’s clothing, jewellery, make-up and hair.

Sally (28-year-old TV researcher): “Oh those are great shoes” “YES they are aren’t they. I got these from sales.” There’s this wonderful thing about girls, it’s always [pause] kind of complimentary. Girls always do that to girls all the time.

Dressing the part not only contributed to many of our participants’ personal identities but it also contributed to their social identities. The findings from this study suggest that our participants identified with other women within the retail environment based on social categories. As Tajfel and Turner (1986) state, people will often try to maintain a positive social identity in order to be accepted by others. One can relate this back to the shopping environment because people may choose to patronise stores that are congruent with their social identities, as to do otherwise may lead to rejection or alienation. Once an individual has decided on how they would like to be perceived in a given social situation, such as shopping in a particular store or in a certain location, means of expressing that self are often formulated. Summing up, observing others not only provided pleasure for many of our participants but it also contributed to their social identities. We would also suggest that the female spectator within the retail arena is an active participant, not a passive one, because she actively constructs and deconstructs her identity, as Kristy’s comment below indicates.

Kristy (22-year-old receptionist): Definitely. [Laughs] Always people watching, yeah. Seeing what other people are wearing and I’m not really shallow like that but I mean you know you pick up little tips and see what people are doing.

As Rachel’s and comments below highlight, many of the participants in this study enjoyed watching people, observing what they were wearing, what they were doing for a variety of reasons, from learning about things to daydreaming to self-reflection.

Rachel (31-yr-old financial controller): Well you know yourself, you look at other people and you look in people’s trolleys and I don’t know, I must have a wild imagination but I look at people and try and work out their life stories from what they’re buying. You know, oh you’re single or you’re about to have a party. You can just tell certain things or you’re a yuppie coz you’re buying Salmon and Perrier water or something.

Mary (40-yr-old data entry): I thought it was very tragic...an elderly woman was in front in me, and she bought out small things. Small cans, everything was small. And I looked in my trolley and thought, I’m buying for me, a large person that I am, you’re buying for you and everything is small. What does that say about me? …Hers came to $30, and she had a little bag of ham, a little bag of other stuff and I thought, that little thing of milk and I thought that’s just so tragic, she’s buying for herself and only herself and I thought, it was just so tragic, and then I actually thought to myself, well hang on a minute, look how old you are and where do you think you’re going to be when you’re the same age, about 65, 69, you’re going to be doing the same thing and this is going to be a treat for you, having this piece of ham. I thought that was just horrible, absolutely horrible. But she seemed happy enough.

However, voyeuristic pleasures also extended to...
material things. Sally, a 28-year-old television researcher, compares browsing in shops with browsing in art galleries or museums and Sue talks about aesthetically beautiful gardens and material objects as though were one and the same.

Sally (28yrs): I’m quite a visual person, I like looking at things. I really like things that are pretty, like nice stores. Like I go in and I’m just happy to sit down in Borders and look through these nice art books. And really, it’s quite nice. Clothes are a bit of a double-edged sword. If you’re in a good mood and you’re happy it’s quite nice and you go and look at the clothes that are pretty and I really just appreciate them as objects. So it’s almost like, I mean you go into a museum and you see old things you go into shops and you see kind of like the new things. It’s the same thing in a way. If you go through all the contents you say “oh yes I like that or you like this” and that’s why, you know if I go into Masterworks, half of it’s shopping but half of it’s almost like going to an art gallery it’s like appreciating it.

Sue (52yrs): Well sometimes I just think it’s nice to look at nice things sometimes. Yeah I think, sometimes just like visually, it’s just nice, the same as it is looking at a garden of flowers, you don’t want to go and pick them all. It’s nice to look at nice things, like a nice bedroom suite with a duvet on it, or beautiful glassware. I think there’s a certain satisfaction in looking at lovely things regardless of whether you could ever buy them or not. It’s just you know pleasing to the eye…same as looking at a nice bit of scenery really. This is a sort of internal scenery isn’t it?

Indeed, many of the participants received much pleasure from browsing and admiring beautiful things as well as discovering new things.

Eileen (61 years, retired, upper-middle class): Just to have a look and it just gives you a thrill, just to go and look at the lovely things.

Browsing was often perceived as a pleasurable activity because it enabled many of the participants to escape their day-to-day lives. Whether it was to unwind and mentally switch off, to fantasising about future purchases or a future life, to appreciating beautiful things, to observing other shoppers, or to feel a connection with other people, browsing fulfilled many different needs.

The Social Connection Factor

Lorna (74-year-old retired book keeper): When I used to mind the two little ones, Glenfield before it changed [old mall before it was renovated], used to have Christmas school holiday entertainment. And if I was minding the children on those particular days I would take them up to watch it. And I thought they were quite good. They used to have some wonderful artists up there at times. And you know everybody there, people chat and you chat and all the kids would sit down on the floor and watch it and participate. It’s really good.

One of the most revealing findings in this study was the social connection factor. As mentioned earlier, the social dimension aspect of the retail environment doesn’t necessarily involve direct interactions with people. Whilst Cova (1997), suggests that people purchase products in order to form links with others, we propose that the retail environment itself also facilitates these links. Some of our participants formed emotional attachments with various retail sites because they perceived it to be conducive to social interaction. These interactions were either direct or indirect and they did not necessarily take place between store personnel and the participant. It may have taken place between the participant and a stranger and/or between the participant and her friends and/or family members. For example, feeling a connection to the local community was important to some of our participants because it gave one a sense of belonging. This was particularly relevant to Kerry, a recent British immigrant, who had few friends in NZ.

Kerry (33-year-old psychology student): Certainly from going to the shopping mall I’d say because yeah, I’m very much going out to meet people. Or not to meet people, just to be around people. I mean it’s almost like you feel a connection in that you know that people are there for the same kind of reasons that you’re there for. I mean it’s a very loose connection but you know, it’s a connection of sorts I suppose.

For many of the participants, it was the social contact with others, which contributed to their pleasurable experiences.

Sue (52-year-old secretary): Oh yeah I like the social contact, all the people the buzzy people…I think it’s nice just seeing other people and seeing what they’re wearing and, seeing all the little human dramas that are going on.

The retail environment was also a place where family bonding could take place, maybe providing one of the few opportunities for family participation.

Flora (27-year-old English Postgraduate Student): When I’m in Poland it’s a form of family bonding. The whole family goes shopping together and we go to shops we like and we try on different things, clothes. We’d often go to IKEA, that’s a big store, which I really like and we’d go there together and usually when I go to Poland I go to that shop for a day with my family.

Conversely, interacting directly with people, even if they were strangers, contributed to some of our participants’ overall shopping experiences.

Lorna (74-year-old retired small business owner): Well every week I just wander in a have a look at a lot of these shops you know…I will chat to different ones [people] too. You know, I can give a smile on the way up the escalator and you know quite often if a couple of people are looking at something, you might sort of discuss it with them, although you don’t know them from Adam.

Interestingly, when participants were in a goal-oriented mood (e.g., had a purpose), older participants preferred to shop alone compared with the younger participants, but would shop with friends and family members when they wanted to make it a social occasion. In contrast, younger participants tended to shop with friends under most circumstances, not only because they perceived shopping as a social activity, but also because they relied on their friends’ advice and approval when making purchase decisions.

Nicola (20-year-old anthropology student): Yeah it is social. You don’t go by yourself. I feel really weird when I
go shopping by myself.

For some of our participants, the social connection factor, was often the primary reason for going shopping, hence supporting past research that suggests that people become attached to locations for the social connection (Low and Altman 1992).

Kerry (33yrs): And just sometimes I won’t have any particular desire to buy anything but I will go to the shopping mall just to be around people.

Essentially, shopping is a social activity. It cements friendships and maintains networks. As Solomon (1983) suggests, a large proportion of consumption is actually social consumption. Therefore, some shopping experiences may be viewed as positive because of the social interaction one has with others. And it is this factor that may encourage store patronage because it contributes to pleasurable shopping experiences.

**Sense of Community**

Sue (52yrs): Well that’s another thing. I think people maybe do go to the mall because they don’t know their neighbours now, because we’ve lost that sense of community so at least going to the mall is your NEIGHBOURHOOD.

Supporting the community or creating a “sense of community” was another recurring theme that emerged from our findings. In particular, locally owned shops were perceived by some of our participants as being representative of a community’s spirit, unlike globally owned stores. And strip centres (shops that line a street), were perceived by some of our participants, as being more in tune with community values when compared with malls because they believed it represented the community’s essence (e.g., uniqueness; hardworking values; local people; local businesses contributing to the community). This theme was probably best summed up by Toni, a 26-year-old television researcher:

Toni (26yrs): …I feel best when I buy things from people that I like…compared to say the mall [versus strip centre], there’s a sense in both of those cases of people really putting their heart and soul into something. And I think that’s the difference between going and buying at Esprit or somewhere compared to a second-hand shop that someone owns or even a designer shop that someone owns. You know they’ve actually really put some effort into it and it’s not like it’s just coming from the Swedish head office.

This is an interesting finding because we are dealing with perceptions rather than fact. In reality, the locally owned store may operate just like the globally owned store. And yet, one can relate Toni’s comments back to self-esteem motives. People will often seek experiences that will contribute to his or her self-concept (Sirgy 1982; Markus and Kunda 1986). Toni’s attitude may also tie in with the consumer resistance trend among small interest groups, or socially conscious consumers (Follows and Jobber 2000), as these sentiments are echoed by several of the participants in this study.

Sally (28yrs): I do quite often consciously buy in smaller shops. Individually rather than brand big named shops because I’d rather support buying in a smaller community rather than something you know, big…. and Borders is the kind of contention mark for me. It’s such a great shop but at the same time it is ultimately the American multinational.

One could therefore suggest that shopping as a pleasurable experience also ties in with an organisation’s identity. As Bhattacharyya and Sen (2003) maintain, consumers’ identification with certain companies often helps to satisfy one or more important self-definitional needs. If a person believes that his or her self-concept is incongruent with the store’s image, he or she may experience uneasiness. If the organisation’s identity and values are not congruent with a consumer’s values, the consumer may choose to shop elsewhere. Interestingly, some of the participants were often conflicted, as highlighted by Sally’s comments above, and Tracy’s comments below. The implication for retailers, therefore, should be to try and alleviate this tension.

Tracy (21-year-old film & media student): But I like the idea of department stores in the old fashioned way. But then I hate chain stores with a vengeance. Because I think, even though I buy at a lot of them, I just don’t agree with the politics of them, I think they’re pushing out nice boutique stores and you know, I hate to say it, but the mom and pop stores.

We would therefore suggest that the store’s identity and/or retail location’s identity is important to one’s sense of community and even one’s sense of belonging. The challenge for new shopping areas or areas that are undergoing change is to create or maintain a sense of community.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The underlying premise of our study is that the social dimensions within the retail environment may influence one’s perceived pleasurable shopping experiences and consequently, retail patronage behaviour, as well as influence how these sites are consumed and socially constructed. Understanding the social dimensions of the retail environment and the shopping experience should not be undervalued because how can we better manage the retail environment if we do not understand what, how or why people become attached to locations, identify with locations, and consume these locations? Secondly, few studies in marketing and retail literature have investigated the social and communal aspects of the retail environment and the influence this may have on retail patronage. One should view the retail environment within a social context because shopping by its very nature is a social activity, whether one is shopping for oneself, for others, by oneself or with others. How one identifies and interacts with place and others within the retail environment is important because the identity of place is not directly related to its physical characteristics, instead it is related to the social constructions of place (Lalli 1992). At the same time, it is becoming increasingly important to view these sites as ‘community spaces’ (White and Sutton 2001), because people play a role in shaping the identity of place, just as they do in shaping self-identity. While factors such as atmospherics, service and tenant variety contributed to our participants’ perceived pleasurable shopping experiences, the social dimensions of shopping were also important. For some of our participants, the social connection, whether it...
was direct or indirect, was more or equally important to one’s perceived pleasurable shopping experiences. As the findings from our study highlight, the social dimensions of shopping, and how well the retail environment can cultivate this, may be equally important to one’s perceived pleasurable shopping experiences which will consequently influence consumers’ retail patronage behaviour. Therefore, the question marketers and retailers need to ask themselves is, how well are we accommodating these needs?

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THE FLÂNEUR AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In this world of borderless consumption, consumers engage in the co-creation of experiences through hedonistic processes like imagination, perception, or fantasy, and they derive aesthetic experiences that make their lives richer, more meaningful and more enjoyable. The role of a flâneur, as an agent in co-creating their own consumer experience, is pervasive in this contemporary world, which favors the aesthetic element of an individual experience.

This research is intended to broaden the scope of existing studies on consumer aesthetic experiences by moving beyond the traditional focus on aesthetic objects (e.g. retail architecture, cultural events) to investigate the range of flâneur aesthetic experiences. The concept of flâneur, introduced by Walter Benjamin, refers to an individual who obtains pleasure from the freedom of being among people and things in a public place. In the retail environment, consumers experience interest, pleasure, and emotion in their anonymous participation with others. The experiential play of observing and being observed yields a certain urban ambience, i.e. a flâneur aesthetic experience, that exists for its own sake, independent of logical reasons or purposes. The experiences are derived from various activities such as wandering, strolling, being lost in the flow, or traveling back in time.

The methodological package of this research encompasses observations, participant-observations, interviews, and a projective technique. Data has been collected during a year’s field immersion at one of the largest retail facilities in the Midwest United States. From the results of this research, the theory developed here brings consumer research closer to its goal of accounting for different forms of consumer aesthetic experiences.

The flâneur aesthetic experience in a retail context arises when consumers develop their own enjoyment from experiential plays between themselves and other people, in this case in a shopping mall environment. Through the application of ethnographic research, the four thematic descriptions are illustrated in relation to the retail theater concept. The four major themes are the back-stage experience, the front-stage experience, the critic experience, and the spectator experience. These flâneur aesthetic experiences are grounded in the co-creative power of the individual as a consumer agency.

The back-stage aesthetic experience occurs when flâneurs create a personal perspective that is somewhat independent of the actual conditions. They mentally separate themselves from the existence of the other people and dwell in this back-stage zone behind the scene in front of them. Flâneurs co-creating back-stage experiences are able to innovate and to express their thoughts in a safe haven among all the unknown people surrounding them.

They enjoy this time with themselves whereby the ordinary mall environment is transformed into an individualistic phantasmagoria.

The front-stage experience arises when flâneurs find a connection between themselves and the other people in the shopping mall. Such an aesthetic experience is closely tied to the manifest attractions of the front stage. Flâneurs incorporate the characters of the other people in the mall into their sense of who they are and the community that they themselves come from. In this process, flâneurs identify themselves with the surrounding environment and obtain pleasure in the communitas experience.

The critic experience occurs when flâneurs use the characteristics of the people they observe (e.g. their looks, their voices) to create images that compare themselves to the others around them. Their creative processes include comparing the appearance of people that they see in the outer world to some relevant ideals or standards that they hold in their minds. The critic experience gives pleasure to flâneurs in the exercising of their analytic skills to recognise and to evaluate distinctive features of the people around them in the shopping mall. They feel enlivened by this process of aesthetic evaluation, which then heightens their self-image in comparison with the self-images projected onto the people around them.

The spectator experience refers to the pleasure arising from flâneurs’ ability to discover personalised meanings within the environment of the mall, such as stories about other people’s lives, their thoughts or feelings. In this case, flâneurs creatively manipulate possibilities seen in the people around them to obtain aesthetic experiences and are able to transform the flow of their perceptions into a distinctive form of subjectivity. Unlike the back-stage experience, the spectator experience is not completely detached from the people around them. On the other hand, the spectator experience is also not involved with communitas in the same way that flâneurs co-creating front-stage aesthetic experiences are. Instead, the spectator experience exists in a state of hyper-reality that represents a continuous swing between detachment and involvement with the surrounding context.

In summary, this article describes the four dominant categories of flâneur aesthetic experiences that are derived from the pleasure that consumers gain from watching other people in a shopping mall. This research broadens the theoretical scope of previous research, which focused mainly on the influences of designed aesthetic objects. Despite the prior extensive studies on aesthetics, this research nevertheless contributes significantly by highlighting the co-creative power of the people and furthering the understanding of theory on consumer agency in this experience economy.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Contemporary consumption life increasingly involves products, services, and experiences that are linked to the past. This trend has been identified as a “contemporary quest for history” (Goulding 1999) and employs various consumption practices that result in the “commodification of history” (Barthel 1996). Past-related consumption includes retro-style objects, collectibles, past narratives, historical societies, family histories, one-of-a-kind artifacts, heirlooms, genealogies, heritage events, and heritage sites (Retroscapes).

In the most laconic sense, the “Past Industry” is a fertile area to expand consumption research and it seems to offer tremendous marketing opportunities. Notwithstanding the importance and multiplicity of the consumption categories described above, the field of past-related activities and consumption phenomena are lacking a theoretical viewpoint that will assist in better understanding and facilitating the experience of the past. The present study uses heritage sites as the research context for the investigation of consumption phenomena related with the past. More specifically, the purpose of the present research is to study the various consumption benefits tourists experience when visiting heritage sites.

Ethnographic research was conducted at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, one of the most significant and popular heritage sites in the United States. Data collection was accomplished primarily through in-depth personal interviews with visitors at Gettysburg during September 2002. This method was supported by photo-elicitation and personal observation, both participant and non-participant. Overall, fieldwork at Gettysburg lasted two weeks and resulted in a total of 75 interviews, 238 photographs, and hundreds of hours of observation. Data analysis and interpretation provide insight for the potential benefits of heritage. Findings are classified into six categories.

A major benefit consumers derive at heritage sites is knowledge. Heritage plays an educative role that becomes apparent for both adults and children. A large number of consumers are motivated by learning, even prior to their visit.

Heritage functions as an escape route and, in this sense, expresses its inherent property of anachronism (Baudrillard 1968) that assists consumers to escape in the past. As other escape routes, Gettysburg too is a free area where consumers can act out their fantasies (Cohen and Taylor 1976).

As already acknowledged by the World Heritage Convention (2005), one of the values associated with heritage monuments, buildings, or places is their aesthetic value. The aesthetic benefit as part of the Gettysburg experience is evidenced in two ways. In a concrete sense, cannons, monuments, statues, and museum artifacts provide an aesthetically pleasing manifestation of the past. In a broader sense, the surrounding natural environment is an aesthetically appealing aspect of visitors’ experience that cannot be separated from the artifactual evidence.

Values of the past emerge in multiple ways throughout a visit at Gettysburg. Tourists admire the heroes of the past and their achievements. They feel that the values of peace, freedom, patriotism, bravery, courage, and sacrifice become our heritage and enrich the present.

A symbolic meaning inherent in the past is the “myth of origin” (Baudrillard 1968). Valuation of origins is present in many historic sites and it is crucial for a sense of identity (Lowenthal 1985). One way this benefit is expressed is through the visitors’ search for ancestors. In addition to the search for family ancestry, the myth of origin encompasses visitors’ concerns for a group identity. Gettysburg becomes the origin of the American nation and an anchoring point for national unity.

During their presence at the Gettysburg storscape, tourists connect to the past. What is very characteristic about this experiential condition is that during certain moments the past becomes “alive.” Visitors use their imagination in order to “see” a lively picture, to personally travel in the past, and to emotionally connect with those people who gave their lives for a cause.

The lessons to be learned from our exercise in the past are manifold. First, there are multiple and often overlapping, benefits of the past. Second, these benefits are embedded on a cultural narrative that is formed by the information provided in the heritage site and is enriched and completed by the consumers’ historical knowledge and their personal struggle to follow this narrative. Third, the beneficial consumption outcomes of the past are mediated by imagination.

The insight provided in the present study can benefit future research in investigating the different ways in which heritage managers can stage their experiential product in both physical and communicative ways (Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998), so that they will facilitate the consumption payoff experienced by tourists at a heritage site.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Implicit measures of attitudes have traditionally been used primarily when social desirability concerns are expected to limit the efficacy of explicit measures. We believe, however, that implicit measures might be used fruitfully in addition to explicit measures, even when social desirability is not a concern (Vargas et al., 2004). Spontaneous and deliberative implicit measures may each tap unique aspects of attitudes beyond the evaluative component assessed by most explicit measures.

Implicit measures that require primarily spontaneous information processing, such as the IAT, rely on the automatic activation of attitudes. These measures likely tap the evaluative component of attitudes, as well as the accessibility of the evaluative component. Measures that require more deliberative information processing likely tap aspects of attitudes other than just evaluation and evaluative accessibility. Deliberative measures may tap the extent to which attitudes influence perceptions of, or cognitions about, attitude-relevant objects or events. For example, Vargas et al. (2004) developed deliberative implicit measures of attitudes that draw on individuals’ tendencies to make social judgments that contrast others’ behaviors away from their own attitudes. To the extent that these different measures of attitudes are not isomorphic with the associated evaluations and their accessibility, then deliberative implicit measures may predict unique variance beyond spontaneous implicit measures (and beyond explicit measures as well).

Behavior is driven by factors other than attitudes, and thus it seems reasonable to suggest that it is driven by attitudinal components other than the evaluative component. For example, different individuals may perceive a dog wandering the streets without either leash or owner as threatening, in need of assistance, cuddly, or a yard-defiling menace. These different perceptions of the dog are evaluative, but they are distinctly more complex than mere good or bad. And these different perceptions are likely to lead to different behaviors: flight, cautious approach, warm approach, or shoo-and-chase, respectively. Attitude measures that go beyond evaluative tendencies might help predict such different behaviors.

For these various reasons, pencil and paper-based deliberative implicit measures have a lot to offer. They have the potential to add predictive power beyond what can be achieved with explicit measures or spontaneous implicit measures, and they may often be useful even when social desirability concerns are minimal. Just as importantly, these measures are easy to use, they require no special equipment, and they can be administered to large groups of respondents at the same time, even in the field.

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MEDIA MOOD MANIPULATION: EXAMINATION OF MOOD CHANGES IN A 24-HOUR ACTIVITIES DIARY

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research in psychology, communications, consumer behavior and other disciplines has suggested that some behaviors may be motivated by an attempt to alter or prolong specific mood states. People in negative moods engage in behaviors that can alter their emotional state in a more positive direction, while those in positive moods attempt to prolong these desirable feelings.

Within the consumer behavior realm, compulsive buying has been viewed as an extreme response to overcome negative emotions. Negative mood states often precede shopping for compulsive buyers, but the act of buying is typically characterised by intense positive feelings. Similarly, cheering one’s self up and reward for accomplishment are two common motivations for engaging in self-gifting behavior.

Another form of consumption that has been linked to altering mood states is media use. Television is reported to be used to alleviate boredom, enhance excitement or calm down. People in negative moods have been shown to select programs that can best alleviate these moods.

The use of media to alter mood states has generally been examined in experimental settings. Less is known about how people naturally use media to alter normally occurring moods and the degree to which media use achieves such mood changes. The current study is an effort to examine this phenomenon using activity diaries to record normal behaviors.

It was hypothesised that negative mood states would show a reduction from the period immediately preceding media use to the period during which media was being used. Additionally, positive mood states were expected to increase from the period immediately preceding media use to the period media is being used.

While prior research has found that there are immediate changes in mood when using the media, there is little evidence regarding sustained mood change. This is important since immediate changes in mood can be due to a short-term reaction to the environmental stimulus (media content). Thus, this study also sought to examine changes in moods from the period preceding media use to the period following media use.

A second set of hypotheses examined the use of program selection to alter arousal level rather than valence. People in highly arousing negative mood states, compared to those not in such mood states, were predicted to consume more slow paced media content. In contrast, people in non-arousing negative mood states were predicted to consume more fast-paced media content than those experiencing other moods.

Respondents were asked to complete an activity diary consisting of 48 half-hour episodes. The Day Reconstruction Method (DRM), recently proposed by Kahneman et al. (2004), was used for this task. The DRM asks participants to recall and record activities when convenient during the day. For each half-hour episode participants listed their primary activity. We then asked participants to rate the extent to which they experienced each of ten different feelings during this time block. The positive feelings examined were “warm/friendly,” “enjoying self,” “excited,” “capable,” and “energised.” The negative feelings included “overwhelmed,” “depressed,” “anxious,” “tired,” and “annoyed.”

Participants were 11 male and 16 female undergraduate students. On average, each participant had 3.5 media related episodes on the day when the diary was filled out. These 97 episodes served as the units of analysis.

As predicted, negative mood states were significantly reduced from the period before media use to the period when media use was occurring (p< .01). Participants reported feeling significantly less depressed (p< .05), less anxious (p = .05), less tired (p< .05), and less annoyed (p< .001) while using media.

Positive feelings significantly increased while people were consuming media. Specifically, the results showed a significant increase in feeling enjoyment (p<.001), excitement (p<.01), more energised (p< .05), and feeling warm/friendly (p< .01) from the time immediately before using media to the time they were engaged in media use. The improvement in negative mood was found to continue on after media use has ended. Three of the five negative emotions were significantly reduced from the period before media use to the period after media use ended (overwhelmed: p<.001; tired: p< .01; annoyed: p< .05). A fourth mood state, “depressed” approached, but did not reach significance (depressed: p< .10). Interestingly, however, the increase in positive emotions lasted only as long as the media was being used. After use, all of the positive emotions returned to pre-use levels. Results regarding arousal were less supportive. Respondents in negative arousing moods had a greater tendency to consume slow paced media content than when they were not in such mood states. However, the findings approached, but did not achieve significance (p< .08). Additionally, people were equally likely to consume fast paced media content when in non-arousing negative moods as when they were not in such mood states.

The present study supports the notion that media consumption serves a mood management function, and shows that this occurs in a natural setting. Negative moods that preceded an instance of media use were reduced during the period of media consumption and these changes persisted after consumption. Positive mood states were also enhanced during media use. However, unlike the change to negative mood states, the improvement in positive moods was temporary and limited to the period of actual media use.

While the data support the fact that people use media to change hedonic tone, the evidence for changing arousal was less supportive. However, two important limitations should be kept in mind. First, the sample size was small. This may partly explain why the greater tendency to consume slow paced programs in negative arousing moods approached, but did not reach, significance. Secondly, pace had to be inferred from program genre information. However, within any program genre, pacing can differ greatly. Given these limitations, the data may be a rather conservative test of the mood management hypotheses. Overall, the data are supportive of the notion that media consumption does serve to modify moods in the course of everyday lives.
REFERENCES


THE EFFECT OF COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TIME ON ONLINE TASK COMPLETION
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Between 25 and 75% of online shopping carts are abandoned by customers (Hill 2001). The quality of the website is always mentioned as one of the top reasons to explain this phenomenon. It explains, in part, why conversion rates for websites are still low, ranging from 2 to 5% (Betts 2001; Gurley 2000; Sismeiro and Bucklin 2004). The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of two potential reasons why consumers who visit a website to perform a goal-oriented activity rarely complete their task: waiting for pages to download and losing time on pages that are in retrospect useless to the task at hand, that is, losing time in informational dead ends.

Some studies have investigated consumer behavior in online goal-directed tasks such as online purchasing behaviors (Li et al. 2002; Moe 2003; Moe and Fader 2004; Sismeiro and Bucklin 2004). Other studies have investigated the effect of downloading time on consumer behavior (Dalleart and Kahn 1999; Weinberg 2000; Weinberg, Berger, and Hanna 2003). To date no study has investigated the effect of different types of online counterproductive times (i.e., downloading time and time in informational dead ends) on consumers’ likelihood of completing their online shopping task.

A first study was performed to test if time lost waiting for pages to download and time lost in informational dead ends had an effect on consumers’ task completion. One hundred and seventy four consumers were recruited for this first study. They were asked to perform a specific shopping task on a specific website. Clickstream data, verbal protocols, and questionnaires were used to collect the relevant data and binary logistic regressions were performed to analyse the data. Results of this study suggested that the relative time spent by consumers on pages that did not provide the expected utility (i.e., relative time in informational dead ends) had a significant impact on their task completion and that the relative time spent waiting for pages to download had no impact on their task completion.

A second study was performed to replicate the initial study and also to investigate in more detail the effect of different types of downloading times on task completion. For this study, 111 consumers were recruited and were asked to perform an online shopping task. Results confirmed what study 1 had shown, namely that taken as a bulk, downloading time has no impact on the likelihood of completing the task.

In both studies, the variables that discriminated between consumers who did complete their online shopping task and those who did not all pointed in the same direction: informational dead ends. The relative time spent on pages that did not provide the expected utility (informational dead end pages), the total time downloading these pages, and also the downloading time to get out of informational dead ends within a shopping session on a website were all significantly greater for consumers who did not complete their online shopping task than for those who did complete their online shopping task. Finally, results also suggest that the total downloading time and the downloading time of useful pages do not discriminate between consumers who do complete their online purchase and those who do not.

This study has many theoretical and managerial implications. First, the introduction of a new construct, namely informational dead ends, as a predictor of online task completion is a major contribution of this study. In order to address some shortcomings of clickstream data (Bucklin et al. 2002), we introduced a multi-method approach that assesses informational dead ends by identifying only those navigational loops that create frustration for the consumers. Second, results suggest that it would be more profitable for web designers to focus on minimizing the number of informational dead ends, and frustration in general, experienced by consumers while on the website than on making the website faster.

Many research avenues could be pursued following this study. First, although the proportion of time spent in informational dead ends as well as downloading time and downloading times to those informational dead ends explained a good portion of task completion variance, other determinants of task completion need to be identified. Specifically, recently introduced clickstream complexity measures such as linearity and compactness may influence consumers’ task completion (Senecal, Kalczynski, and Nantel 2005). Second, although various reasons explain why consumers have abandoned their task, the concepts of frustration and/or satisfaction need to be further investigated in order to better understand what consumers experience while shopping online (Szymanski and Hise 2000). Finally, studies such as this one, using a multi-method approach, (in this study, clickstream and verbal protocols) should be pursued in order to gain a better understanding of online consumer behavior.

This study has some limitations that should be kept in mind before applying the results to real market situations. First, only self-selected consumers participated in this study. Thus, as with most online studies, due to the possible self-selection bias, it is not possible to confirm that our participants are representative of the population of...
Internet shoppers. Second, results are based on fictitious purchases, that is, consumers were not spending their own money in order to complete their online purchases. Third, although similar results were observed across websites, results of the present study are limited to only three websites. Thus, additional studies conducted with different samples and different websites would contribute to the generalization of the present study.

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EVOKEO EMOTIONS: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF PILGRIMAGE TOURISM TO GALLIPOLI
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ABSTRACT
This paper focuses on the pilgrimage tourism to Gallipoli to attend Anzac Day commemorations. The research examines diary excerpts of pilgrimage tourists to Gallipoli using theory on emotions to gain insights into the emotions that this tourism experience elicits. Both positively and negatively valenced emotions are elicited via this experience, giving rise to the notion that not all tourism experiences elicit positive, or hedonically-related, emotions. Further research is recommended on emotions within the context of pilgrimage tourism, and to explore the emotions that are evoked within the different types of tourism, such as adventure tourism or spa tourism.

On the Gallipoli Peninsula, this remote destination, provided them with opportunities to absorb themselves in their own culture and understand how they relate to that culture.

INTRODUCTION
Emotions are affective variables, more intense in nature than moods and with a closer relationship to the stimuli that provoke them (Bigné & Andreu, 2004). An emotion is a balanced affective reaction to perceptions of situations (Rucker & Petty, 2004). Emotions are an increasingly attractive and growing research area in marketing (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). According to Bagozzi (1998), p. 312), however, “as we learn more about the affective side of consumer behavior, we are likely to find that our theories, which are by large cognitive in content, will require refinement”. It is expedient, therefore, to continue a line of inquiry on emotions to advance consumer behaviour theory generally, as well as understanding emotions more fully. Furthermore, undertaking research on emotions set within a range of consumption scenarios is beneficial for comparative analysis, and theory building and refinement in consumer behaviour.

Srirakaya (2004) noted that it is particularly important to understand experiential phenomena, such as emotions, within the context of tourism and leisure—as emotional reactions often prevail amongst consumers. There is, however, very little research on the role of emotions within the context of tourism and leisure (Bigné & Andreu, 2004). This paper focuses emotions within the context of pilgrimage tourism. Pilgrimage tourism, itself, is under-researched (Hannafor’d, 2001), and while it has been studied within the social sciences, scant attention has been paid to this phenomenon from a marketing perspective. The overall research aim of this paper is to explore the emotions that are evoked through participation in pilgrimage tourism in order to inform consumer behaviour theory so that it can be re-evaluated, refined and elaborated upon.

The paper continues by providing an overview of the extant literature on emotions. Following this, the concepts of pilgrimage and pilgrimage tourism, which is the research context for this paper, are explored to elucidate the relevance of emotions theory to them. The research method and analysis are then described, and a background to the case study—pilgrimage to the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey—is provided. Following this, the results of the analysis are presented and discussed. Research limitations and recommendations for further research are then proposed.

Emotions
Emotions play a powerful, central role in our lives. They impact our beliefs, inform our decision-making and in large measure guide how we adapt our behavior to the world around us (Burns & Neisner, 2006). Reddy (2000, p.2) posed the rhetorical question “What are emotions?” He responded by stating that “…to most of us, the question hardly needs asking; emotions are the most immediate, the most self-evident, and the most relevant of our orientations toward life. But from the moment the question is taken seriously, troubling difficulties of definition arise”.

Emotions are viewed as having evolved through their adaptive value in dealing with fundamental life-tasks. Each emotion has unique features: signal, physiology, and antecedent events. Each emotion also has characteristics in common with other emotions: rapid onset, short duration, unbidden occurrence, automatic appraisal, and coherence among responses. These shared and unique characteristics are the product of our evolution, and distinguish emotions from other affective phenomena (Ekman 1992). Originally, emotions were regarded as being multifaceted, involving different emotional states being experienced differently with each generating a specific pattern of arousal for an individual (James, 1890). More recent research, however, has questioned this conceptualization. For instance, an emotion is regarded as a general state of arousal which is interpreted through a cognitive appraisal process. Specifically, Bagozzi et al. (1999, p. 184) defined emotion as “a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; has a phenomenological tone; is accompanied by physiological processes; is often expressed physically; and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion, depending on its nature and the person having it”.

Emotions are viewed as intentional and based on specific objects or referents (G.L Clore et al., 2001; Frijda, 1993). Consequently, emotions are not merely reactions to appraisals, but also include tendencies to action (Frijda, 1986). While most apparent in moments of great stress, emotions sway even the mundane decisions we face in everyday life (G. L Clore & Gasper, 2000; Damasio, 1994). Emotions also infuse social relationships. Interactions with each other are a source of many of emotions and both a range of behaviors have been developed that communicate emotional information.
as well as an ability to recognize the emotional arousal in others (Gratch & Marsella, 2004). By virtue of their central role and wide influence, emotions arguably provide the means to coordinate the diverse mental and physical components required to respond to the world in a coherent fashion (Cosmides & Tooby, 2000).

The functional model of emotion conceives of each emotion having a particular antecedent or cause, a specific thought or appraisal, a specific feeling and expression, a specific action tendency, a specific action and a specific goal (Roseman, Antoniou, & Jose, 1996). Emotions are often described by their valence (i.e., positive or negative) or by the specific nature of the emotion (e.g., sadness, anger, contentment, happiness) (Rucker & Petty, 2004). Free description of emotional incidents have been shown to contain statements of event appraisals that are systematically different for different emotions and that can be used to construct prototypes characterizing them (Schaver, Schwartz, & O'Connor, 1987).

The role of affective processes is an important subject of study in consumer behaviour (Richins, 1997). There is a growing interest, from both the theoretical and practical perspectives, in the role of emotions in consumer behaviour. Considerable interest has been directed toward the study of emotion [c.f., Lazarus and Smith (1990); Lewis and Haviland (1993)]. Much of the literature on emotions has focussed upon the eliciting conditions for and roles of appraisals in emotions [c.f., Lazarus and Smith (1990); Roseman, Antoniou, and Jose, (1996); Scherer (1988)], as well as the categorization, measurement and structure of emotions [c.f. Bagozzi, Baumgartner, and Pieters (1998); Schaver, Shwarz, and O’Connor(1987)].

Laros (2004) noted that after a long period in which consumers were assumed to make largely rational decisions based on utilitarian products and benefits, in the past two decades, marketing scholars have started to study emotions evoked by marketing stimuli, products and brands (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) and (Wixen, 1986). Emotions have been useful within the context of advertising (Derbaix, 1995); customer satisfaction (Phillips & Baumgartner, 2002); complaining behaviour (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998); service failures (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 1999); and product attitudes (Dube, Cervellon, & JY, 2003). Emotions play a critical role, therefore, in defining consumption experiences and influencing consumer reactions (Babin, Darden, & Babin, 1998). There is potential to extend marketing theory and practice by exploring emotions within a range of consumption scenarios.

**Research Context-Pilgrimage Tourism**

Pilgrimage tourism provides a rich context in which to study emotions. Pilgrimage tourism is travel with the primary purpose of participating in an exceptional irregular journey outside of the anthropological village to a designated geographical point (Morrison, 1984). There is evidence to suggest that pilgrimages are currently resurfacings and gaining popularity in a number of cultures (Turner & Turner, 1978), and in Europe, for example, many contemporary pilgrims are noticeably young (Guth, 1995). While pilgrimages are generally associated with religion, the fragmentation of religions globally (Kale, 2004) has likely precipitated a growth in secular pilgrimages. Digance (2003, p. 154) suggested that the New Age movement eclectically borrows from religious and tribal traditions resulting in “a considerable increase in the number of tourists following their own spiritual paths outside the parameters of mainstream religious patterns”. Belk and Wallendorf (1989) suggest that for a number of consumers, many ordinary elements of life have become sacred. As such, secular pilgrimages are emerging as a new phenomenon in society.

Both religious and secular pilgrimages have the capacity to evoke spiritual emotions. The large flows of tourists attending sporting events, have been likened to the pilgrims of the historic religious pilgrimages, deriving spiritual experiences from the sport itself (Bale, 1989). Other examples of travel described as secular pilgrimages include the travel to Lords for the Ashes; Gracelands to pay homage to Elvis Presley; Uluru in Australia; or to the Grand Ol’ Opry in Nashville. Moore (1980) described travel to Disneyland in terms of ritual and pilgrimage. Furthermore, travel to battlefields is often viewed as secular pilgrimage (Hannaford, 2001; Scates, 2003).

The journey is as much part of the pilgrimage as the visit to the destination. Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, written in the fourteenth century, highlights that on the way to the destination of the pilgrimage, the cook, the clerk and the Knight, for example, interacted with each other. They formed bonds with each other that they would not have been experienced within the social structure in which they existed. In John Bunyan’s (1628-1688) Pilgrim’s Progress (Bunyan, 1678), pilgrimage was clearly a spiritual journey. Turner and Turner (1978) similarly proposed that the journey of pilgrims is not only a physical one, but also a psychological one—pilgrimage accentuates the separatedness of the sociopolitical world from the sociocultural world. In this sense, pilgrimages have the capacity to effect human relationships (Coleman & Elsner, 1995).

Coleman and Elsner (1995, p. 6) note that a “pilgrimage may be a rite of passage involving transformations on one’s inner state and outer status; it may be a quest for a transcendent goal; it may entail the long-desired healing of a spiritual or physical ailment”. According to Turner and Turner (1978), pilgrimages pass through a liminal state—a place on the threshold, before the experiencing ‘communitas’. Liminality is when ‘...the deeper levels of the self, deeply tinted by culture, are reflexively engaged, the knowledge brought back from the encounter between the self as subject and self as object may be just as valid as knowledge acquired by “neutral” observation of others” (Turner & Turner, 1978, p. XV ). During liminality, pilgrims are “betwixt and between” (Turner & Turner, 1978, p. XX ), but by passing through the threshold, they arrive at ‘communitas’—a feeling of equality, community, and togetherness—when pilgrims are at one with themselves and others.
Pilgrimage is associated with spirituality, or the “engagement to explore—deeply and meaningfully connect one’s inner self—to the known world and Beyond” (Kale, 2004, p. 93).

Research on pilgrimage, stemming from anthropology, sociology, history, geography, and theology, suggests that the processes and outcomes of pilgrimages are highly emotional. Pilgrimages elicit a range of behaviours and emotions. Pfafflenberger (1983) noted that in India, both ‘serious’ and ‘trivial’ tourists participate in the rituals of Hindu pilgrimages. Coleman and Elsner (2004, p.281) also identified the existence of ‘playful’ pilgrims resulting in the “gleeful vulgarity” in the processual rituals of the pilgrimage. Indeed, these were thought to be a “catalyst for play”, which was, however, serious (Coleman & Elsner, 2004).

The overall research aim is to explore the emotions that are evoked through participation in pilgrimage tourism. This was explored within the context of pilgrimage tourism to the Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey, for Anzac Day. Anzac Day was inaugurated in 1916 in remembrance of members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzacs) who fell on the Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey, on April 25th the preceding year. The Anzac legend symbolises the coming of the Australian nation and, as such, is now considered to be one of the most significant days on the calendar for many Australians, and New Zealanders (Hall, 2002). Carlyon (2005, p.524) asserted that the story of Gallipoli “has become Australia’s Homeric tale...no longer linked, as it was for decades, to the military causes of the day. Finally it stands alone”. Anzac Day is akin to the ‘Gettysburg Storyscape’ where a ‘war among brothers has become a celebration of national unity’ (Chronis, 2005, 387). Travel to the Gallipoli Peninsula for Anzac Day, by many who are surprisingly young (Anon., 2000), is increasingly popular. Attendance numbers at the 2005 commemorations were estimated to be about 20,000 (Berstein, 2005). While not a religious pilgrimage per se, the pilgrimage to the Gallipoli Peninsula for Anzac Day has been described as civil pilgrimage.

METHOD
A textual analysis (Mariampolski, 2001) of the journals/diaries of 17 people who had visited Gallipoli, (16 of the 17 for Anzac Day ceremonies), was undertaken. The journals were obtained from the National Museum of Australia website, “Anzac Pilgrims; Recent Australian experiences at Gallipoli” (http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/community/anzac_pilgrims/anzac_memories/).

Systematic coding of the diary excerpts was undertaken using the framework of emotional categorization developed by Shaver et al (1987). The framework is based on 135 words that describe emotions. Shaver’s typology includes two overarching dimensions of emotions, namely positive and negative (valence). In each of these dimensions, there are three emotional clusters. For the positive dimension, the emotional clusters are Love, Joy and Surprise and for the negative dimension, the emotional clusters are Anger, Sadness and Fear (categories). The Shaver typology was utilised in this study because of the broad comprehensiveness of the 135 descriptive emotions and the inherently emotional setting of this particular research setting—the battlefields of Gallipoli.

The first stage of the coding involved a structural coding process of the text using the six emotional clusters. The second stage involved the identification of the specific emotion(s) associated with the text. To ensure the quality and validity of the interpretation and coding of the text, two researchers undertook the coding analysis of the diary text separately. In the event of disparity over the coding of particular episodes a discussion with a third party took place to adjudicate, which is the process recommended by Carson (2001). Descriptive statistics were also used to identify the dominance of the various emotional clusters and singular emotions in the diaries. Qualitative analyses of the diaries provided insights into the text that could not be gained through descriptive statistics alone.

RESULTS
Table 1 presents the percentage of the total number of comments attributed to the six emotional clusters and the emotions that emerged within these clusters. The total of the six percentages relating to the emotional clusters tallies to 100%. The percentages relating to the dominant emotion, while being percentages of the total, does not add up to 100% as lower loading emotions have not been presented in the table.

As can be seen from Table 1, the emotional cluster of Joy emerged most frequently (36.3% of the overall number of emotional comments) in the transcripts. Sadness was the second most common emotional cluster in the diary excerpts (24.9% of the overall number of emotional comments). Following this, Love and Anger represented the most common emotional clusters that emerged in the diary excerpts (14.7 and 10.1% of the transcripts respectively). Pride (23.6% of the diary excerpts) was the most dominant singular emotion represented in the data, falling under the emotional cluster of the Joy.

Joy
The emotional cluster Joy was strongly represented in the responses. This is a positively valanced emotional cluster. Joy was manifested through the singular emotions of pride, thrill and jubilation. Pride emerged most strongly within this emotional cluster. Pride is reflected in a number of ways—by being proud of the soldiers who fought in the battle, through a sense of pride that the Anzacs themselves might have experienced; to being proud of Australia and its symbols, including its flag, national anthem and Anzac traditions. For example, one pilgrim felt a sense of pride when the crowd was singing Australian folksongs “...everyone seemed in tune and nobody seemed to be shouting. It sounded great and made you proud to be an Aussie.” Another pilgrim wrote that “…the sight of the flag was really special. I looked at that flag and...
thought about the many men who had died, between the beach and the hill, attempting to get their flag to the same spot. How proud they would have been to have seen it flying there.” Pride was clearly associated with national identity and as being associated with Australia. This resonates strongly with the pilgrimage literature, particularly Turner’s notion of ‘communitas’—which, as mentioned earlier, is associated with the feelings evoked as a result of the bonding with fellow pilgrims.

**TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF EMOTIONS**

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<th>Emotional cluster and % of text attributed to cluster</th>
<th>Dominant Emotion</th>
<th>% attributed to Dominant Emotion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Joy (36.3)</td>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>23.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sadness (24.9)</td>
<td>Sorrow</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love (14.7)</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>4.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anger (10.1)</td>
<td>Resentment</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprise (9.6)</td>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear (4.4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sadness**

While *Joy* was the emotional cluster that emerged most strongly in the transcripts, the emotional cluster of *Sadness* also emerged in the data, however, to a lesser extent. *Sadness* is reflected through sorrow and sympathy for the Australians that died on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915. One pilgrim said that they “…went back to Lone Pine, took a few photos and drove to the camp ground where we had a cry and chatted to four Australians”, and another said “…tears ran down my cheeks as I wandered around reading the tombstones”. The experience was ‘emotionally exhausting’ for one pilgrim, who stated that “…the end of the day we were exhausted—not just because of our coughs and lack of sleep but also emotionally exhausted. There were so many times people were moved to tears’. A feeling of sorrow emerged at the time of leaving the Gallipoli Peninsula for another pilgrim, when they wrote of their experience “…it was strange, and sad, to leave those graves behind”.

**Love**

The emotional cluster of *Love* emerged and was manifested through the singular emotions of affection, compassion, empathy and sentimentality. One pilgrim expressed their sympathy for the soldiers—“…just like me: young, eager to see the world, looking for adventure. Except so many remained in a land they never got to know.” Another pilgrim wrote “…we read headstones…we looked at the ages of the dead—18, 19, 23—and thought about what we were doing at that age and how juvenile we still were”. Those attending the services appeared to also feel affection towards fellow attendees of the services. One pilgrim said that “…the ceremony was one of solemn respect and Australian larrikinism”, and another said that “…the people were obviously reflecting on the enormity of the occasion and were generally withdrawn”.

**Anger**

The emotion of *Anger* also emerged in the diaries. Singular emotions of scorn and resentment, for example, represent the emotional cluster of *Anger*. Some of the reflections in the diaries highlighted anger towards war generally and towards the apparent lack of planning in the tactics of the day in 1915; that only became obvious to them as a result of their new knowledge of the topography of the Peninsula’s rugged topography. For example, one pilgrim thought that “while the British troops swam in the sea and generally frolicked around, the Aussies were fighting for their lives a few miles away…”The whole campaign was a complete disaster—one mistake or bad decision after another”. Similarly another pilgrim indicated their anger because “…those men had nothing. They landed in the wrong spot (and you should see where they ought to have landed elsewhere—flat, easy, gentle rise, wide beach makes you sick…nothing was as they had been told it would be”.

**Surprise**

The emotional cluster of *Surprise* also emerged in the diaries. Surprise was manifested through the singular emotions of surprise and amazement. Those attending the services were surprised at the topographical characteristics of the Gallipoli Peninsula and particularly that of Anzac Cove, including its contrasting features of beauty and wilderness. “It surprises you how truly beautiful the Cove area”. For one pilgrim, it was difficult to reconcile the paradox between the beauty of the Peninsula and what happened there in 1915. This emerged in the following statement, “…my thoughts struggled between how beautiful the landscape of Gallipoli is and how much blood shed must have occurred”. Surprise also emerged in the diaries at the ‘fun’ that the Anzacs were having just prior to their landing—unaware of the impending disaster they were to experience. Surprise was also evident in the number of people in
The emotional cluster of Fear was also evident in the diaries, however to a lesser extent than the other emotional clusters. Fear was captured in the diaries when the pilgrims recognised that thousands of soldiers were killed in this small, but peaceful, place. There creation of the terror of the battle in the minds of the pilgrims can be seen in the following quotes: “The Turks were waiting at the top of the hill… lots of them were killed on the very day they landed… they didn't have a chance” and “In the background of the picture you can see the terrain that had to be faced…frightening”.

DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis indicate that this Anzac Day pilgrimage elicits a spectrum of emotions. Schaver's typology of emotions provided a valuable operational tool to consider the emotions that comprise the experiences of a pilgrimage tourist, such as Joy, Sadness, Love, and Anger, which were evident in the experiences of the pilgrims to the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. The analysis of the diary excerpts highlights that the pilgrimage evokes a complex set of emotions—contradictions—that are very powerful in terms of resulting consumer behaviour. For example, strong emotions and subsequent behaviour intentions emerged with regard to 'being Australian'. One pilgrim said that as a result of their visit to Gallipoli, they would go back to Australia and spread the “Gospel of Gallipoli”.

The dominant emotions that emerged from the data were Joy (a positive emotional cluster) and Sadness (a negative emotional cluster)—an interesting finding, as the emotional clusters are opposite to each other in terms of their valence. This might be a result of the prevalence of Pride (a manifestation of Joy) in the diaries, which counteracts the prevalence of the strong emotions associated with Sadness that emerged in the transcripts.

Specific aspects of pilgrimage tourism were captured in the emotional analysis of the diaries, including liminality and ‘communitas’. For example, it became clear that some of the pilgrims were on the ‘threshold’—their experience on Anzac Day on the Gallipoli Peninsula, this remote destination, provided them with opportunities to absorb themselves in their own culture and understand how they relate to that culture. The pilgrimage provided a time for cultural and emotional reflections that they would not experience within the physical boundaries of their home. This seemed to be most strong in the emotion of Surprise that they experienced. For example, one pilgrim acknowledged that the Gallipoli Peninsula was a ‘remote and exotic’ destination and it was here, at that remote and exotic destination, that they found a ‘real link’ with Australia. Similarly, the feeling of ‘communitas’ emerged in the diaries through the emotions of pride. Pilgrims felt a sense of connection with the ‘man with the flag’; the people singing Waltzing Matilda; and when they cried with other Australians after the services.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the past few years, considerable interest has been directed towards the study of emotions. From a marketing perspective understanding the emotions associated with consumer behaviour is of vital importance. In tourism understanding experiential phenomena is particularly important, as emotional reactions and decisions often prevail amongst consumers.

For the pilgrimage tourists of this study, their experiences at the Anzac Day services on the Gallipoli Peninsula elicited strong emotions. The emotional cluster of Joy featured strongly in the transcripts, which was specifically operationalised by the emotion of pride. This finding is not unexpected given the nature of the pilgrimage; in that it is related to Australian national culture. While tourism per se is often associated with the elicitation of positively valenced emotions (because it is essentially an hedonic consumption experience), this study highlighted the fact that negatively valenced emotions, particularly within the emotional cluster of Sadness, were elicited through this pilgrimage experience. This is not surprising given that the pilgrimage to Turkey is to a significant battlefield site. These negative emotions did not, however, detract from the consumption experience; indeed, they appear to have contributed to a holistic touristic experience for consumers.

The knowledge gained from this study suggests that to say that all forms of tourism are hedonic is too general an assertion. Negative emotions seem to be legitimate within the context of pilgrimage tourism and a ‘natural’ part of this consumption experience. It gives rise to the notion that tourism experiences can elicit both positive and negative emotions, which are both useful for the consumption experience. For example, we would also expect that emotions of Fear are likely elicited within the context of adventure tourism.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research on pilgrimage tourism is warranted, particularly in light of the emerging roles of pilgrimages, be they religious or secular in nature, within contemporary societies. Research is required to understand emotions and their relationships with other related psychological concepts, for example, personal values, attitudes, motivations and subsequent consumer behaviour, within the context of tourism. Within the context of pilgrimage tourism, it may be necessary to consider incorporating theoretical concepts from the pilgrimage literature, specifically liminality and ‘communitas’ to understand consumer behaviour relating to pilgrimage tourism.

The results of this exploratory study of emotions within the context of pilgrimage tourism, which employed secondary data, indicates that further research, using primary data that has been collected specifically for a study of emotions, is worthwhile. Moreover, we recommend that further research is undertaken to understand the influence of emotions on tourists' experiences.
of emotions on consumer behaviour within the context of pilgrimage tourism, as well as in different tourism contexts. It may also be worthwhile using alternative frameworks of emotions as these may assist to more effectively decipher the type and range of emotions that are elicited within this context, as well as triangulate any further information obtained on this topic.

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People live “storied lives” that is, they construct accounts of their experiences laden with personal, social and cultural meaning. These stories are valuable and relevant not just to themselves but also to others they judge worthy of sharing the experience. This film investigates how consumers of the third highest bungy jump in the world construct their “story”. These are the stories that will be told to their relevant communities shortly after consumption via technological means or in person upon their physical return, using merchandise that symbolises and tangibilises their consumption such as video, photos, t-shirts and certificates.

**Festival Frenzy: On the Streets with Arts Festival Attendees.** Kate Daellenbach, Victoria University of Wellington, Richard Seymour, University of Sydney, and Cynthia Webster, University of Newcastle.

It is common knowledge that arts organisations frequently struggle to make ends meet, and box office/admission is an important part a successful result. In the interest of gaining arts attendance we turn to understanding the arts consumer. This film takes us into the streets, lobbies and cafes of Wellington, to talk with and observe arts attendees at the 2004 New Zealand International Arts Festival, and to paint a picture of the arts festival attendee. An introduction to the festival begins the film, and comments of festival management provide a backdrop for a series of consumer interviews and observations.

**Opportunity Identification through**

**Observational Consumer Research: Behind Closed Doors.** Cynthia Webster, University of Newcastle, Richard Seymour, University of Sydney, and Kate Daellenbach, Victoria University of Wellington.

Opportunity identification is inherently a social process in which events, actions or things are recognised as fitting, suitable, appropriate, convenient or timely (Little, Fowler, Coulson and Friedrichsen, 1973). "Behind Closed Doors" incorporates videography with naturalistic observations to expose the creativity, problem solving, and variety seeking behaviours of one family. Trace analysis and occurrences of actual behaviours are presented in five themes to exemplify the distinctive ways in which mundane products are transformed through novel applications.

**Why Don’t Consumers Behave Ethically? The Social Construction of Consumption.** Giana Eckhardt & Timothy Devinney, Australian Graduate School of Management, & Russell Belk, University of Utah.

Corporate social responsibility is not possible without consumer social responsibility. Are consumers as noble as the polls would lead us to believe? Are people willing to sacrifice for a higher cause? Is there any truth to the saying that people may profess to be social radicals in surveys but are most definitely economic conservatives at the checkout counter? This film gives you a bird’s eye view of how consumers in different countries react to alternative ethical situations. Consumers in America, Australia, Germany, Spain, Sweden, India, Turkey or China differ only in why something is unimportant, not in the fact that any of them care particularly about a specific cause. Corporations, NGOs and governments looking to the population of consumers and voters to guide them will find little in the way of a consensus here. Even worse, consumers who behave in ways quite different from the opinions they express may deceive them.

**Ivar on Being a Citizen - Actions of Care in the Public Space,** Ingeborg Kleppe, Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, and Bjorg Taranger. Artist Workshops CS 55 Bergen Norway.

This project is about care. Care is an expression of a universal human value - everyone needs care. Actions of care are a result of choices we make in our daily life. The defamilization of care means that people have to give and receive care in the public space – be it in specific service encounters or random contacts with other people. However, in the public space actions of care often compete with concerns for economic efficiency. The project is an interdisciplinary co-production and a synergy between artistic interpretation and methods of social research. We use three video-cases to visualize care performed in the public space.

**Prosuming Multiple Gendered Selves: A Multi-country Study of Young Female Achievers,** Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sydney, Ingeborg Kleppe, Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Paul Henry, University of Sydney.

For first time in history, many women have the opportunity to strongly determine their gender roles, lifestyles and consumption activities. An important question is: How are they reacting to this situation? Are they behaving like their feminist forebears or engaging in a feminist backlash? In this film, we address such questions by examining the lives of young female mainstream achievers in Sydney, Oslo and Shanghai. We depict this cohort as typically enacting multiple selves, comprising a mix of feminine and masculine traits. We conclude the despite freedom in pro-suming their gendered selves, they accept that maintaining socially
approval means that feminine traits pre-dominate or are equal to masculine traits in most gender role domains.

**What is Authentic Culture? Hyperreality Strategy at Santa Village in Finland**, Junko Kimura, Hosei University.

Using concept of hyperreality, this video investigates how tour destination creates cultural authenticity. Visitors in Finnish Santa Claus Village look very happy when they see “real” Santa. But who can decide which Santa is authentic? The Village strategically uses three hyperreality tactics and succeeds in creating genuine and real Santa. The manager insists that their Santa is the original, however this video points out a paradox: in order to create original and authentic Santa, reference points are needed. In other words, without people’s images being constructed through motion films, TV commercials and books, Finnish Santa cannot be authentic.

**Headbanging as Resistance or Refuge**, Marylouise Caldwell and Paul Henry, University of Sydney.

Heavy metal music (HMM) participants are often characterized by wider society as simply angry, aggressive, and aberrant, but is this the reality? Are they predominantly engaged in acts of social resistance in which they consciously reject mainstream social values, or are they primarily seeking a place of refuge amongst an accepting social group? This video explores formative experiences that have shaped their self identity, and how (successfully) they negotiate the dual worlds of HMM subculture and place in wider society.
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